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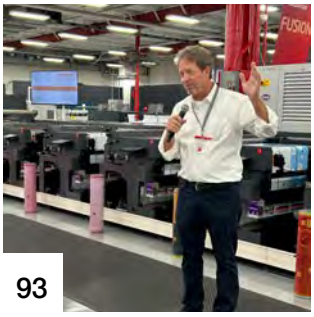
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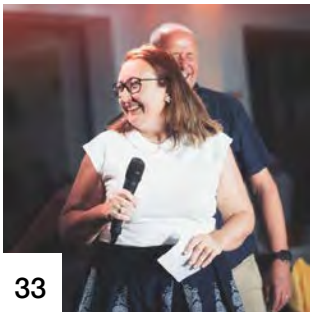

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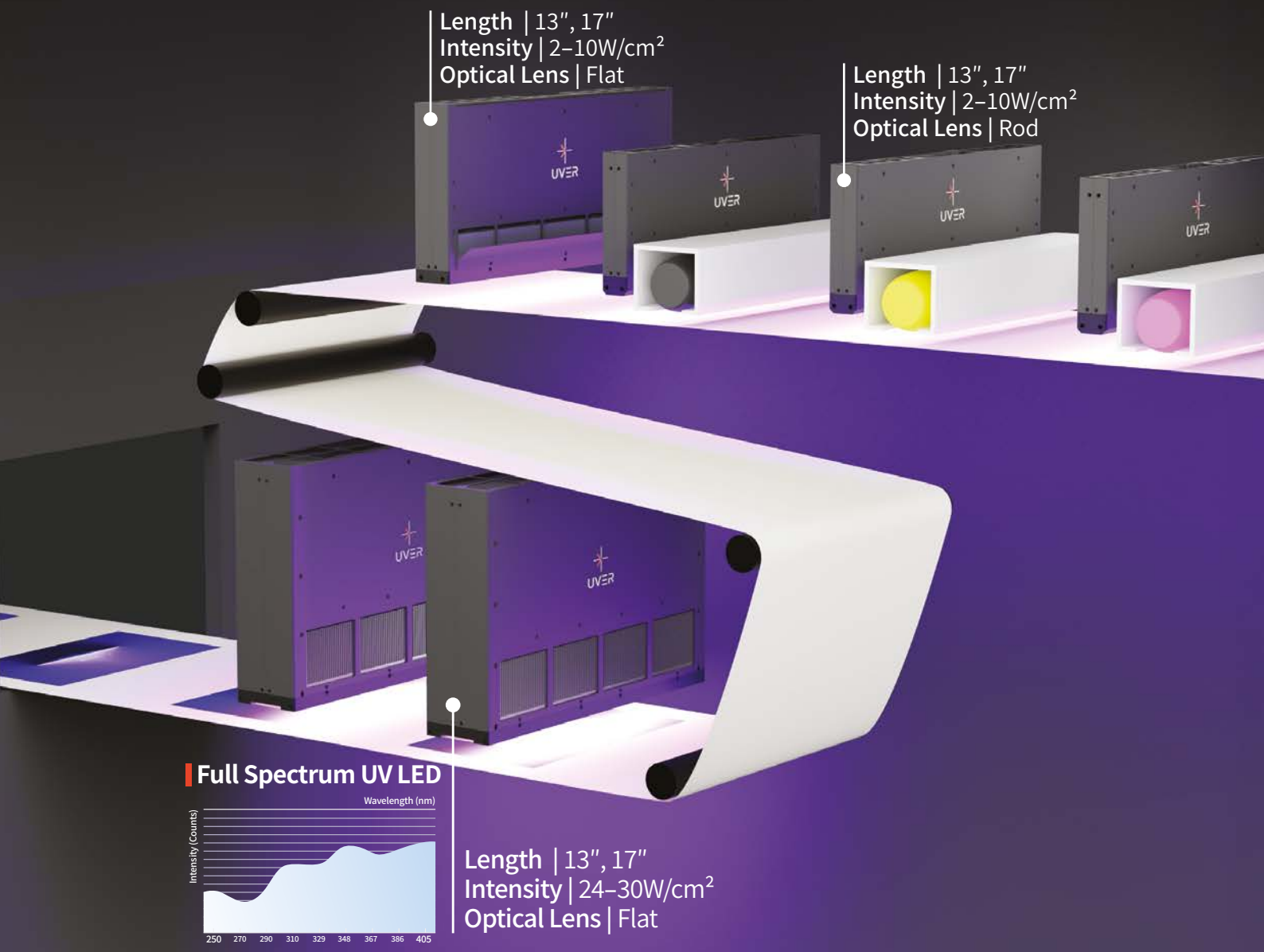
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Growth beyond labels

Editor's note

There is a clear trend that is defining the pages of this issue, and one that appears to be reshaping the label industry. For four decades, labels have been the foundation of this magazine. That legacy continues.

But across the world, and across these pages, we're seeing label converters increasingly diversifying into adjacent markets such as flexible packaging and folding carton. Brand owners are looking for label and packaging suppliers who can provide broader portfolios, shorter lead times and greater flexibility. Customers want more options, and they want it faster than ever. Smart converters recognize this shift, listen closely to their customers and expand capabilities to meet these evolving market dynamics. The learning curve is steep, but converters are often rewarded with higher margins, access to new markets and stronger brand loyalty.

"The learning curve is steep, but converters are often rewarded with higher margins, access to new markets and stronger brand loyalty"

Advances in press technology are making it easier than ever for converters to leverage existing expertise, while innovations in materials allow them to expand into new applications.

The skills required to produce high-quality labels are the same for neighboring package print segments: color management, substrate knowledge, workflow automation, quality control and production efficiency. Label converters know better than anyone the demands of managing short runs and responding quickly to changing requirements.

Flip through the pages of this magazine, and a clear theme emerges. From Spanish converter Lappí, which entered the flexible packaging market through acquisition, to Canadian label printer Altro, which is taking a measured approach to folding cartons, to India's Candle United, which moved from producing tickets to manufacturing advanced pharmaceutical labels.

And yet, diversification doesn't mean walking away from labels, but rather it's about building on customer needs. Take a look at the story about Blue Label Packaging Company on Page 48. The company added direct-to-can printing to meet growing demand from its craft beer and beverage customers. Blue Label president Andrew Boyd's philosophy is all about meeting the customers where they are. Not fighting against them. The Blue Label Packaging story was less about starting over and more about applying decades of experience in new ways.

This issue explores not just where the opportunities lie, but how converters are successfully making that transition. From Seville to Vancouver, Ohio to India, these articles demonstrate that diversification is as much about a mindset shift as it is about machinery, materials and market opportunities. The future belongs to converters that look beyond traditional boundaries and leverage their expertise to meet the needs of an expanded label and packaging market.



Chelsea McDougall, Editor



Installations



Bobst Master M5

LOC España, Spain

LOC España has added its second Bobst in-line flexo press, a Master M5. The converter has had a relationship with Bobst for more than a decade, driven in part by Feimar, Bobst's official distributor in Spain. LOC España's first Bobst press was a Master M4. When the converter decided to expand production capacity, it chose to invest in an evolution of the same model to maximize tooling compatibility, share operator expertise and enable smooth job transitions between production lines. 'Bobst has helped us achieve the speed and reliability needed to meet very tight deadlines, as well as to offer efficient finishing solutions such as multilayer and linerless labels,' said Zoilo López, CEO of LOC España.

Rotocon RFP 350S

Bube Concept, Germany

Bube Concept has invested in Rotocon's RFP 350S, a servo-driven, modular sleeve-based flexo press, to increase production efficiency and expand into new markets. The press comes with triple-servo precision, fast job changeovers and production speeds of up to 200m/min. 'We chose this machine because Rotocon could provide all of our special requirements from a single source, beyond the pure flexo printing units,' said Ingo Bube, managing director of Bube Concept. 'Folding units, sheet feeders, turner bar units, fully automatic turret rewinding, die-cutting units, a digital print head for variable print images, as well as a unit for separating liner and top material, could all be integrated into one machine without requiring third-party interfaces.'





Omet iFlex 440

Cellopack, Egypt

Cellopack has invested in an Omet iFlex 440, a new 440mm version of its standard 370mm iFlex platform. The press is configured with 10 LED colors, Omet Cold Foil Saver technology designed to reduce foil consumption by more than 50 percent, self-wound lamination, the new Peel and Seal multi-layer label production system, and an ECDC die-cutting unit. 'After careful examination of the printing presses available on the market, Cellopack chose the new iFlex 440 for its outstanding print quality, the strong reputation of the manufacturer as an industry leader, and the reliability of the service and support provided over more than 60 years,' said Mohamed Hamza, managing director of Cellopack.

Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI S

Grafiche Pradella, Italy

Grafiche Pradella has installed a second Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI S in a hybrid configuration with Lombardi flexo equipment. Its first Screen press enabled Grafiche Pradella to support smaller production runs, expanding its overall client base. 'After our first Screen Truepress Label 350UV SAI S allowed us to expand into new markets with digital printing while continuing to meet client expectations, we knew that we would need to expand our digital production workflows as our business continues to grow,' CEO Gabriele Pradella said. Grafiche Pradella's management team already foresees plans to add a third Truepress Label digital inkjet press, further expanding productivity and offering opportunities to explore new markets and labels.



Installations



Mark Andy Performance Series P7E

Seen Print, Romania

Seen Print has installed a Mark Andy Performance Series P7E at its facility in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The press has eight flexo print stations, a 510mm web width and a full UV-LED curing system. It handles a wide range of substrates, including unsupported film, shrink films, IML, self-adhesive stocks and light carton board up to 450 microns. It supports Seen Print's packaging output across the food and beverage, cosmetics, chemicals, automotive and pharmaceutical markets for national and international brand owners. 'The new Mark Andy P7E will allow us to expand and boost our business,' said Ionut Stef and Mihai Iuga of Seen Print. 'We are delighted with Mark Andy's customer support, sales process, expertise and dedication.'

HP Indigo 6K+

NextGen Label Group, US

NextGen Label Group has invested in an HP Indigo 6K+ digital press for Syracuse, New York facility, expanding its digital print capabilities across wine and spirits, food and beverage, health and beauty, medical and industrial labels. The press supports seven ink stations with specialty ElectroInks, including silver, white, invisible and fade-resistant options. It matches up to 97 percent of Pantone colors within 2.0 Delta E and prints on a broad range of substrates. The machine offers a maximum print area of 12.48x38.58in and variable data capability. 'By expanding our digital capabilities, we are ensuring that we have the technology, flexibility and capacity to support our customers at every stage of their growth,' president and CEO Dan Rosenbaum said.





Nilpeter FB-Line Pro

Bookworld, Zambia

Bookworld, a Zambian book and stationery group with 21 stores nationwide, has entered label printing with a Nilpeter FB-Line Pro 17in flexo press. This investment extends the printer's vertically integrated, made-in-Zambia philosophy into a new label segment. 'For more than three decades, Bookworld has been built on quality, trust and a belief in what can be made right here in Zambia. Stepping into the label market is a natural next step for us, and choosing Nilpeter was an easy decision. We wanted a partner with a proven platform, world-class engineering and the support to help us grow into this new business with confidence. The FB-Line Pro gives us exactly that,' director Shivani Patel said.

Hontec FlexiCon 350 and MPX350

Fagra, Argentina

Fagra has installed two FlexiCon 350, 8-color flexo presses, along with an MPX350 modular finishing machine, all from Hontec. The FlexiCon350 flexo presses deliver stable, high-quality multi-color printing with register control, with a compact design and servo-driven system that ensures consistent output across a wide range of label applications. The MPX350 finishing machine is equipped with a flatbed hot stamping system for embellishment, semi-rotary flexo unit for varnishing, a flatbed die-cutter for complex shapes and semi-rotary die-cutter for high-speed production. This combination enables Fagra to perform multiple processes in a single pass, improving productivity while reducing waste and setup time and meeting the growing demand for premium packaging.



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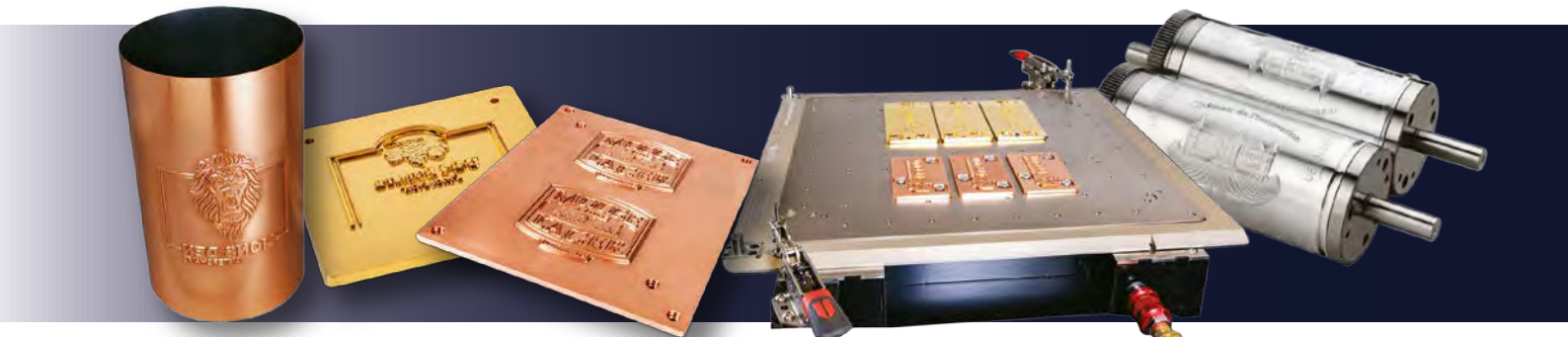
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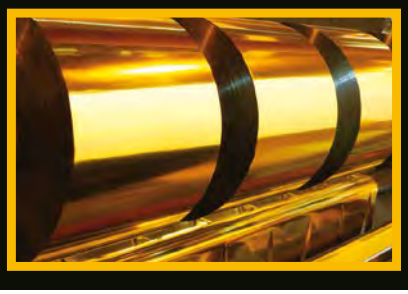
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Appointments



Carmen Becker
President, US, MCC
In her new role, Becker will lead profit and loss responsibility for MCC's Americas business, with a focus on commercial execution, customer partnerships, forecasting discipline and operational performance, including quality, service levels and productivity. She will also serve on MCC's executive leadership team.



Alex Webster
Chief strategy officer, Polytag
Webster will support Polytag's next stage of growth in response to demand for next-generation product data technology. He will focus on shaping long-term growth strategy, strengthening its position in the connected packaging ecosystem and supporting brands in maximizing the commercial and sustainability value of data.



Christian Schøyen
Group president and CEO, Miller Graphics
Schøyen brings more than 25 years of leadership experience, including 13 years as CEO. Over the course of his career, he has held senior positions at companies such as Tieto, IBM, PwC and most recently has been active in entrepreneurial ventures.



Håkon Volldal
CEO, Elopak
Volldal has served as president and CEO of Nel and Q-Free. He has also held several senior leadership roles at Tomra, including executive vice president and head of Tomra Collection Solutions. Volldal holds a Master of Science in industrial engineering and technology.



Danny Allouche
President of materials group, Avery Dennison
Allouche has been with Avery Dennison for 16 years, during which he has led global strategy, corporate portfolio and development activities and overseen all mergers, acquisitions and venture investment activity. He also served as interim chief financial officer for a brief period beginning in late 2024.



Lauren Smith
Chief marketing officer, ePS
In her new role, Smith will oversee global marketing strategy, brand positioning, demand generation and go-to-market alignment across the business. She will work closely with commercial and product leadership teams to strengthen how ePS communicates its value to customers and partners worldwide.



David Donnelly
Chief operations officer, Wikoff
In his new role, Donnelly will have end-to-end accountability for manufacturing, supply chain, quality, environmental, safety and health, PMO and IT functions. He brings more than 20 years of experience in program management and operational leadership across the life sciences, manufacturing and defense sectors.



Eric Zaremski
CEO, Unilux
Zaremski brings expertise in robotics and aerospace systems to the New Jersey-based manufacturer of stroboscopic inspection systems. He will lead the company's expansion into integrated machine vision, combining its established stroboscopic inspection platform with AI, advanced cameras and software capabilities.



Rolando Martinez
Senior director of marketing, Canon USA
Martinez brings more than 25 years of experience across commercial, label and packaging markets. He will lead the market introduction of Canon's current production portfolio, including the varioPress iV7 B2+ digital press, the varioPrint iX1700, the Colorado XL series and the LabelStream LS2000 press.



Linnea Keen
President, Appvion
Keen will build on Appvion's strong foundation while continuing to invest in innovation and sustain the company's leadership in direct thermal materials. Prior to Appvion, Keen has served as president and CEO of TLMI and vice president of sales for North America at UPM Raflatac.



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Andy Thomas-Emans: Circular economy is a business opportunity

ELF 2026 set the perfect platform to discuss how label converters can lead the transition to a sustainable circular economy. Andy Thomas-Emans writes

The Finat European Label Forum (ELF) held in Seville, Spain, gave attendees an excellent opportunity to take stock of where we are on the journey toward the circular materials economy, envisaged by the European Union through its various mission statements, mandates and legislative initiatives.

Discussions at ELF 2026 demonstrated that we need to be talking now with the wider supply chain and with brand customers to ensure the requirements of the PPWR can be met without the cost burden falling disproportionately on the label and package printing converter.

Indeed, label and package print converters are in a unique position to influence the successful implementation of PPWR and the wider circular materials ecosystem.

If we take, for example, the EU's Design for Recycling (DfR) guidelines, label converters absolutely need to be involved, using their expertise in materials selection to assist brands in making packaging recyclable from the outset.

This means in practice using single-polymer materials where possible and avoiding combinations of materials that hinder recycling, such as multi-layer laminates or incompatible inks and adhesives.

Recycled outputs must be of sufficient quality to replace primary materials in new products, so each element of the pack must be identifiable in automated materials sorting systems. At the same time, each incompatible element of the packaging must cleanly separate in a standard mechanical recycling system.

This is now urgent. Compliance with DfR guidelines becomes mandatory in 2029. Packaging defined as below 70 percent recyclable will be banned from the EU market from 2030, from which date the target progressively increases to 80, then 95 percent.

Suppliers to the labels, flexible packaging and folding carton industries have made impressive strides toward providing sustainable options that meet the DfR requirements.

Setting the example

Label adhesives can now cleanly release from both plastics and glass containers, aiding both clean material recovery and circular reusable packaging systems; new primers allow inks to separate cleanly from shrink sleeves, avoiding contamination of the PET flakes and shrink sleeves themselves can now be floated clear of the PET container recycling stream; new barrier coatings allow multi-layer flexible packaging to be replaced by mono-material constructions in some applications; and similarly in folding cartons PE laminations can be replaced for bakery and other food applications.

Even the tougher challenges presented by RFID labels are being tackled. This is potentially a serious issue as electronics, metals and adhesives can contaminate packaging recycling streams. Avery Dennison recently launched its AD CleanFlake RFID technology, which allows RFID labels to separate cleanly from containers.

"This is now urgent. Compliance with Design for Recycling guidelines becomes mandatory in 2029"

Suppliers are working on other areas of RFID, such as printed electronics, biodegradable and recyclable substrates, to make the overall system more sustainable.

Label converters are in a unique position in the supply chain to provide expertise in these areas, particularly to smaller and mid-sized brands that do not have dedicated packaging compliance departments and will rely on their suppliers for guidance.

A fine example is Austrian label converter D.O.G. Label, which is using the recently launched Herma digital GreenGuide tool to advise brand customers on optimal material strategies to comply with PPWR/DfR and EPR guidelines. One of the most interesting findings of AnnaCarin Speneder-Magnet, head of business development at D.O.G. Label, who has pioneered the use of GreenGuide, is that sometimes brands are surprised to find they need to spend more on the label material to generate larger savings on EPR fees.

Then take another area where label and package print converters will be on the front line: the incorporation of post-consumer recycled (PCR) materials in plastics films and packaging. This PPWR requirement will apply starting January 1, 2030, when PCR percentages of 30-35 percent will apply depending on the packaging type, with targets ramping up over successive years.

But already we are hearing reports of potential problems running materials with high percentages of PCR recycled materials. At a Gallus-Esko flexo masterclass in St Gallen earlier this year, Esko's Geert De Proost drew delegates' attention to the factors that might cause printing issues, including local variation of surface tension, contamination residues, uneven material thickness and surface roughness influencing ink laydown, all impacting dimensional stability.

Tackling potential PCR-related print quality issues will require strong partnerships with materials suppliers and with brands, who will need to understand how the increasing use of non-virgin materials might impact costs and consistency.

Overall then, label and package print converters will have a key influence on the success of the EU's circular economy directives. They also have a major business opportunity to become trusted sources of guidance for brands, leveraging the expertise of their supply chain partners.

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Maximizing trade show ROI beyond the booth

With Loupe Americas knocking on the door, a structured pre-show strategy can transform one's time on the show floor into measurable business growth, writes Lois Ritarossi

Loupe Americas is right around the corner. It will be the largest gathering of brand owners, suppliers, manufacturers, converters, OEMs and industry thought leaders for the label and packaging community. Attendees and exhibitors will gather to explore and evaluate new equipment, materials, services and partners.

"The key to success is planning. Do your research so you are not wandering the floor and looking for booths or customers"

The show presents many opportunities to network and learn about innovation impacting every aspect of label and package design and production from supply chain and workflow, to materials, AI and sustainability.

How do you calculate your return on investment (ROI) for attending trade shows such as Loupe?

For exhibitors, the ROI for a trade show is a straightforward formula. The total cost of exhibiting, shipping, travel, training and marketing equals the total cost. This number is divided by the number of new leads plus new opportunities with existing clients.

By scanning badges, collecting cards, and monitoring follow-up from show conversations, exhibitors can calculate the cost per new lead and new business generated by show activities.

As an attendee, consider planning the best use of your experience to deliver an ROI for your time and travel. Learning and networking will happen across show floor interactions, conference sessions, keynote presentations and hosted social events. To make the most of your time at Loupe, plan to allocate your time in the following categories:

- 30 percent in the exhibit hall
- 30 percent attending keynote/ educational sessions
- 30 percent networking
- 10 percent doing something fun in the Chicago area.

The key to success is planning. Do your research so you are not wandering the floor and looking for booths or customers. Inquire about dinners and receptions to see colleagues. Wise planning will deliver ROI for your conference. With over 400 exhibitors, the agenda includes:

- Live technology demonstrations with real-world applications
- Education on digital transformation, workflow, sustainability and market trends
- Keynote sessions and workshops
- Networking with converters, brand owners and innovators
- Comprehensive coverage of labels, flexible packaging and folding cartons.

Client meetings

I expect some readers and sales teams may have taken advantage of the advice from my last column (L&L Issue 2) and scheduled client planning meetings and calls over the summer before Loupe. The purpose of these quarterly business reviews (QBRs) and strategy planning sessions was to uncover business needs and goals for your customers' future projects.

Armed with this critical information, your schedule will include several meetings with customers to discuss your specific offering and how it can achieve their business objectives for labels and packaging.

With jam-packed agendas during the show, your customers will have plenty to fill their calendars. Take the time by phone or email to confirm customer and supplier meeting times, locations and central time zone details one to two weeks before the show. The day before important meetings, reconfirm by text to secure productive face-to-face meetings with your customers and partners.

Planning means reading the show agenda, website and news updates to determine which educational sessions, keynotes and demos you want to attend and which exhibitors you want to meet. Do your research to find conference sessions or keynote presentations that will enable you to learn and network. With the expanded number of conference sessions and workshops, consider suggesting relevant sessions for your customers to attend with or without you. They will remember you as a resource focused on their business goals.

Innovation and sustainability

Brand owners across many verticals are grappling with balancing sustainability with cost, performance, appearance, regulation and speed to market. They also need to manage SKU proliferation and brand differentiation. Brand owners attending Loupe will be seeking new partners and technology to meet their evolving label and packaging requirements. Have key messages ready to address the innovation and sustainability your products and services provide.

Make new contacts

Networking at a conference is a great way to meet new colleagues and find new resources for your company and your customers. You will be surrounded by people at hotels, restaurants and venues around the show. Be curious, be interested and be friendly. Ask the person next to you about the most innovative thing they have seen at the show. Your new customer or partner may be one conversation away.

I look forward to meeting new colleagues and catching up with friends at Loupe Americas. See you in Chicago!



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

A box is never just a box

A recent packaging design project for SkyPop and Costco reinforced lessons about balancing creativity, collaboration and commercial success, writes Vicki Strull

As a packaging designer and design strategist for more than 30 years, I've created a wide range of designs from labels, cartons, shipping boxes and shopping bags to logos, brochures, t-shirts and posters. And like a parent, I don't have a favorite design, but occasionally, a project challenges me with something completely new. One recent project did exactly that.

This year, I designed the logo and packaging for SkyPop, the world's first protein soda. It was fun and exciting, and very quickly, SkyPop got picked up by Kroger, Target, Walmart and several other retailers. In those retail environments, SkyPop is sold in individual cans. You can see on the cans (See Image 1) that the packaging strategy and design are intended to make it pop on the shelf. When designing for retail, I focus on engaging shoppers, providing instant information and standing out from the competition.

A few months after SkyPop's launch, my client gets the news that Costco wants to carry SkyPop, but Costco doesn't sell individual cans. Products must be packaged and sold in multipacks. So, my client asked me to design a 15-can multipack carton.

To begin, I need the dieline of the carton and a blank paper mock-up. Once I have the paperboard prototype, folded and in hand, I start concepting. Typically, when I design a carton, I start with what I consider the most important panel, the primary display panel. For the SkyPop multipack, I assumed the front panel (the largest panel) would be the primary display panel and that the handle side would be the top.

The physical reality

After I concept and design the large panel, suddenly it strikes me that I didn't consider exactly how the cans will fit into the carton. Do the cans lie sideways or stand upright? This makes me rethink which side will be the primary display panel and which side will be on top. So, I set up a meeting with my client to discuss it.

Turns out, the cans go in vertically, standing up. Here's why: the tops of aluminum cans are reinforced, so they can be stacked on top of each other, either singly or in cartons, on shelves. The sides of the cans are non-reinforced aluminum; you know this if you've ever crushed a can.

This was especially important input to consider, given that Costco doesn't have shelves. Costco merchandises through the pallet, displaying product cartons on large pallets in the aisles. So, shoppers will see the multipacks stacked, cases upon cases. That's when I had my 'a-ha' discovery: the SkyPop cartons can't stack with the largest panel facing out, because that would mean the cans would be on their side inside the cartons. And when those cartons are stacked one on top of the other, all that weight on the sides of the cans adds up, and the cans could crush. Instead, the SkyPop multipacks would need to stack with the largest panel on top, and a different panel facing outward.

"As designers, we always need to be thinking about *how* the package sits, not just *where*"

So now I need to know the pallet dimensions and configuration. Seriously, when else does a designer ask for a *pallet configuration*? But I need to know this if I'm going to design not just a carton, not just a multipack, but a cohesive, intentional, engaging merchandising *display*, with the correct panel facing outward.

You know how I'm always talking about design strategy? THIS is design strategy. As a designer, not only do I need to know which way the cans fit in the carton and which panel is the primary display panel, but I also need to know exactly how my cartons will be palletized. (See Image 2.)

Seeing the pallet configuration confirms my insight that the largest panel (the one I've already designed) will not be the one facing out to shoppers.

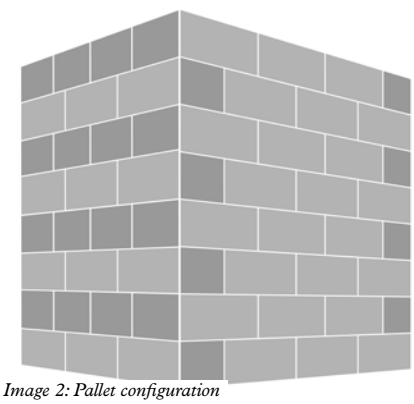
The 'money side' revelation

So here I am, having designed the largest panel first, thinking that will be the one that faces customers, but no. The carton will sit on the shelf with the *side* panel facing customers. That's right! The cans sit right-side-up in the cartons to hold the weight of the other cartons on top. (See Image 3A.) My first designed panel is now actually the top view, like a bird's-eye view. Even though it's the largest real estate of the carton, in this instance, it's *not* what I call 'the money side', the side customers see first. Instead, I now need to design one of the smaller side panels to be front-facing, since it will be the primary display panel for this carton. (See Images 3A, 3B, 3C)

The more questions I ask, the more important information I learn for the design. Not only are one of the smaller panels the customer-facing one, I learn that the handles are facing in. I learn that Costco's pallet configuration is 48in long by 40in wide. I learn that there are nine rows of multipack cartons on a pallet. And, when cartons are lined up in a row on a pallet, three of the side panels show outward, plus one glue-flap panel.



Image 1: SkyPop Protein Soda


Image 2: Pallet configuration

"We, designers, don't necessarily love a barcode on every panel, but I understand logically why it's required"

I'm neck-deep into this now. Many designers would simply be designing the best multipack carton they could, based on brand guidelines, layout and so on. But I couldn't just go and design a great-looking box that would fit in any store. I couldn't design in a silo. My client will sell this 15-can multipack only in warehouse retail environments, such as Costco. It must be specifically designed to be palletized. Yes, I used the word palletized.

Billboarding

Now let's talk about the artwork's view from the pallet. Look at Image 4; this is how the cartons sit on the pallet. I've highlighted where they change from one carton to the next. You'll see that I have the artwork *intentionally* extending beyond the cartons. This is called billboarding. As the cartons sit side-by-side on the nearly four-foot pallet, the customer doesn't see a harsh break from carton to carton. I created certain pieces of the artwork to overlap, so it's like a huge billboard for SkyPop. See where I've marked the end of one carton? I have some clouds crossing over, the gradation crossing over. The goal is for your eye not to register a start-stop pattern. Instead, it's like one big sky.

You see three cartons with the money-side facing out, and then one with the glue-flap side facing out to fit the pallet configuration. This is how the billboarding is displayed to the customer.

Don't ignore the seams

Another thing I made sure is that the carton's seams don't obstruct the design. When I was working with the prototype, I considered the seam in the glue panels. Since folding and gluing the carton are automated, not every seam will fit together precisely every time. There's often a little shift. Naturally, I didn't want any artwork crossing those seams. So, I deliberately designed the glue panels so that artwork is just above and just below the seam, and no seam interrupts the artwork. And I did that on every panel that has a seam, including the top panel with the handle. If I have a crossover, I need it to be precise, intentional and built into the design.

Look at Image 5 for instance. I've highlighted the seam. See how there is no artwork here? Just the color gradation. And if that doesn't line up precisely, that's not concerning. However, if the word 'protein' doesn't line up precisely, that is concerning. If the can artwork is misaligned, that's concerning. So that's why I put artwork above and below the seam and made sure the artwork is unobstructed on the individual cartons.

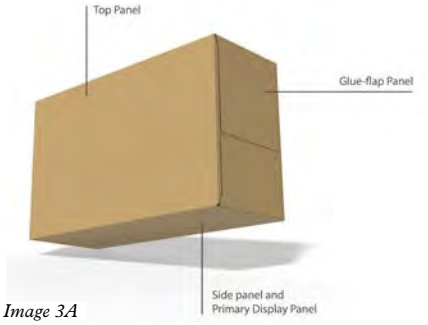


Image 3A



Image 3B



Image 3C


Image 4: Billboarding



Image 5



Image 6: As people pick up the cartons and take them off of the pallet, they will see the bird's-eye view panel

Designing for the system

You might be wondering about the barcode (probably not, but I'm going to tell you about it anyway). Costco requires a UPC barcode on every panel of the carton, because they don't always know exactly how a customer will have the product sitting in their cart. With the barcode on every panel, a Costco employee can walk up to the cart with their scanning gun and scan the product quickly. Efficiency is essential at Costco.

We designers don't necessarily love a barcode on every panel, but I understand logically why it's required. And the goal is to sell the product. So, from a design perspective, no, UPC codes aren't attractive. But from a practical standpoint, I get it. This is also part of being a design strategist versus a designer who does not consider a user's or retailer's experience; my goal is to help my client sell products. We're not designing for design's sake. We're selling products. If the barcode isn't readily visible, and it takes cashiers longer to scan that product, then eventually Costco might get annoyed with that product or brand and not want to sell it anymore. So, in this case, the design isn't just for my client; it isn't just for the customer buying SkyPop; it's also for the buyer at the retailer and the cashier who has to scan it.

The how's and why's

As you can see, I learned a lot designing the SkyPop Costco carton. And most of it happened mid-design. Understanding the physical reality of the packaging was just one part of the learning; recognizing the reality of the retail environment was a huge additional part. As designers, we always need to be thinking about how the package sits, not just where.

That's thinking beyond the box, and that's why, when it comes to packaging, a box is never just a box.



Vicki Strull has over 25 years of experience in the marketing and design industry as a brand strategist, creative director and packaging designer. 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

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Experts launch algae UV ink

Collaboration between Actega, Living Ink Technologies and Waiākea has brought algae-derived UV flexo ink technology from concept to reality. Akanksha Meena reports

The search for more sustainable packaging materials has largely focused on substrates and recycling infrastructure. Equally important are inks, an essential component of every printed package and label.

A new collaboration between inks and coatings manufacturer Actega and bio-based pigment expert Living Ink Technologies has introduced what the companies describe as the first commercially-available UV flexo ink formulated with carbon-negative algae-derived black pigment.

The launch of ACTExact UV Black Algae Ink marks the commercialization of a technology years in development, overcoming technical barriers that had limited the use of algae-derived pigments in demanding UV flexo printing.

US converter NextGen Label Group has already commercially validated the ink for Waiākea Hawaiian Volcanic Beverages labels, the first food and beverage brand to adopt algae-based ink commercially across its label supply chain.

From concept to reality

The innovation was sponsored and supported by Waiākea, which first began R&D with partner Living Ink Technologies five years ago to replace petroleum-derived carbon black ink with an algae-derived alternative for all flexo applications.

Ryan Emmons, co-founder and CEO of Waiākea, says: 'From the beginning, we've felt a responsibility to build a brand that constantly pushes sustainability forward in CPG. After becoming the first beverage brand in North America to commercialize 100 percent post-consumer recycled bottles in 2012, we began an eight-year R&D cycle focused on nano-additives that could address end of life while simultaneously focusing on rigid biopolymers derived from algae.'

The brand selected 100 percent rPET for its environmental benefits and existing infrastructure, then focused on carbon-based inks used in flexographic and lithographic label applications, which are among the broadest applications across CPG products globally.

The brand had experimented with multiple sustainable inks starting in 2018, but none offered print quality, production reliability and measurable carbon reduction required for large-scale deployment.

The previous iterations failed across three critical performance standards unique to the beverage industry. Early water- or soy-based eco-inks completely broke down when exposed to the heavy condensation of a refrigerator or an ice bucket. The labels would bleed or smudge when a consumer gripped the bottle.

> **"We brought together Living Ink Technologies, Actega, and NextGen Label Group because each organization saw the opportunity to help move the packaging industry forward"**

Bottled water undergoes immense vibration and friction during transit. Previous sustainable options lacked the rub and friction resistance of carbon black ink. By the time the pallets arrived at retail, the text on the back labels was scuffed, scratched and unreadable.

Water bottles are handled, squeezed and twisted by consumers. Early sustainable formulations were brittle; they didn't bond seamlessly with recyclable polypropylene (plastic) labels. The ink would flake off under physical stress.

In 2024, Actega, Living Ink Technologies, NextGen Label Group and Waiākea partnered to combine bio-based pigment expertise, ink formulation capabilities and packaging technology to develop a high-performance, UV-curable flexo ink with reduced carbon emissions.

Carbon-negative pigment

Unlike conventional carbon black, derived from petroleum, Living Ink's Algae Black pigment is produced from discarded algae biomass generated as a by-product of large-scale algae cultivation for the natural food colorant and nutrition industries.

'It is a true waste product that would otherwise go to a landfill,' explains Dr Scott Fulbright, CEO and co-founder of Living Ink Technologies. 'To ensure consistency as we scale, we work with a large commercial partner for a reliable, high-volume supply. We put this raw biomass through a strict purification and stabilization process to normalize any natural variances and meet a precise chemical profile, ensuring every batch performs identically on press.'



This project has replaced 100 percent of Waiākea's black ink with ACTExact UV black algae ink

According to Dr Fulbright, this approach contributes to the pigment's carbon-negative Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), which reports a net footprint of -4.16kg CO2 equivalent per kilogram of pigment.

'This calculation accounts for the carbon absorbed by the algae during photosynthesis minus any emissions generated during our pigment manufacturing process. Because we use discarded waste biomass, our model includes landfill avoidance, preventing the release of methane and CO2 from decomposition. The amount of carbon the algae permanently traps outweighs the emissions generated during our processing, making our pigment into a tool for permanent carbon sequestration on the printed packaging,' he adds.

UV flexo challenge

Although Living Ink had previously commercialized algae-based inks for conventional flexo, offset and screen printing, UV flexo presented an entirely different challenge.

The biggest challenge was ensuring consistent performance in flexo and litho label printing under demanding commercial conditions. Key hurdles included formulation, curing, print consistency, scalability and compatibility with existing manufacturing systems.

'UV flexo printing runs at ultra-high speeds with very thin ink layers, requiring instant curing without smudging,' Dr Fulbright explains. 'The algae biomass itself remains the same, but at a later stage,

"We've even received feedback from some partners that Algae Black actually surpasses the depth and richness of the petroleum-based standard they used previously"

Algae Black pigment is surface-treated to be compatible with Actega's UV materials and formulation. This ensures it doesn't interfere with the UV chemistry and allows it to cure flawlessly on high-speed presses.'

Actega's R&D team tackled these formulation challenges to successfully integrate the algae-derived pigment into a commercially viable UV-curable ink.

'The pigment did not originally provide an intense black color; it was a bit grayish. Also, the UV inks made with it had a very high viscosity, which would increase even further in a relatively short time,' explains Claudio Kristeller, head of global R&D technology group – inks at Actega.

The development focused on achieving optimal pigment dispersion to address formulation challenges. Rather than redesigning the ACTExact ink platform, Actega developed a pigment dispersion that closely replicated the physicochemical properties of conventional pigments, for seamless integration into a commercially viable UV ink.

'The ACTExact system, its resins, photoinitiator packages and additives, already had a robust performance that allowed the final ink to run on press directly replacing a standard carbon black-based ink,' Kristeller says.

This compatibility means converters can integrate the algae-based ink into conventional UV flexographic production without modifying existing equipment or press configurations.

According to Dr Fulbright, another hurdle was overcoming perceptions of bio-based pigments. Early alternatives often produced a washed-out charcoal gray that brands found unacceptable. Through proprietary milling and formulation techniques, Living Ink optimized pigment loading and dispersion to match the performance of conventional carbon black.

'We've even received feedback from some partners that Algae Black actually surpasses the depth and richness of the petroleum-based standard they used previously,' he notes.

Commercial validation on press

Commercial acceptance of the ink depended on press performance, and NextGen Label Group subjected the new ink to extensive qualification before approving it for Waiākea's labels.

'The product ran with minimal operational changes,' says Paul Roux, chief technical officer at NextGen Label Group. 'By final qualification, we were using press settings consistent with conventional UV-cured products, which made integration straightforward for our press team.'

Importantly, throughput remained comparable to existing conventional UV inks and coatings.

Before commercial approval, the ink successfully met the requirements for workability, durability and fitness for the intended application. That included multiple press trials, environmental simulation studies and standard pressroom testing such as density, rub, coefficient of friction and tape testing to confirm consistent on-press performance.

The current formulation replaces 100 percent of Waiākea's conventional black ink with algae-derived pigment.

'With our penultimate algae-based ink, we successfully developed a high-performance, UV-curable flexo ink. It provides the exact same rich visual density, high rub resistance and waterproof adhesion as traditional carbon black, but with a net positive environmental footprint. It is a seamless "drop-in" replacement that withstands freezing, squeezing and shipping friction without changing printing equipment,' Emmons explains.

While the technology is presently limited to black, Living Ink Technologies confirmed that development of additional colors is already underway.

'We brought together Living Ink Technologies, Actega and NextGen Label Group because each organization saw the opportunity to help move the packaging industry forward, and a big part of this was the understanding that we would commit our entire supply chain yet also open source to the public,' Emmons says. 'NextGen understood that if we could successfully commercialize a carbon-negative pigment that performed at the same level as conventional inks, the impact could extend far beyond Waiākea. They invested their time, expertise and press capacity because they believed in the long-term potential of the technology.'

Barrier to adoption

Despite its technical success, the companies acknowledge that widespread adoption will depend on the economics of scale.

Because production volumes remain relatively small, the algae-based UV ink carries a premium over conventional petroleum-based carbon black inks.



Waiākea Hawaiian Volcanic Beverages is a premium beverage company from Hilo, Hawaii

Kristeller of Actega believes this cost gap will narrow as manufacturing scales up. 'While this ink currently carries a higher cost than traditional carbon black-based alternatives, primarily because the technology is still scaling and economies of scale have not yet been fully realized, we anticipate that costs will decrease as adoption grows.'

He also notes that black ink represents only a small proportion of the overall label cost, making its impact on finished packaging relatively limited compared with substrates, coatings and other converting materials. 'Importantly, this innovation enables a meaningful reduction in carbon footprint, which is increasingly significant for brand owners and, ultimately, for society as a whole,' he adds.

NextGen Label sees a similar picture.

'Like many emerging sustainable technologies, this ink carries a premium versus conventional alternatives, so adoption depends on a brand's willingness to balance environmental benefit with commercial realities,' Roux says.

Beyond flexo

The innovation could extend further than UV flexo.

Because the breakthrough lies in the pigment rather than a specific ink chemistry, NextGen Label Group believes algae-derived products could eventually find applications in digital inkjet and other printing technologies.

For now, ACTExact UV Black Algae Ink is available for commercial trials and bulk ordering across North America, with wider geographical rollouts planned.

Scan the QR code to learn more about ACTExact UV black algae ink

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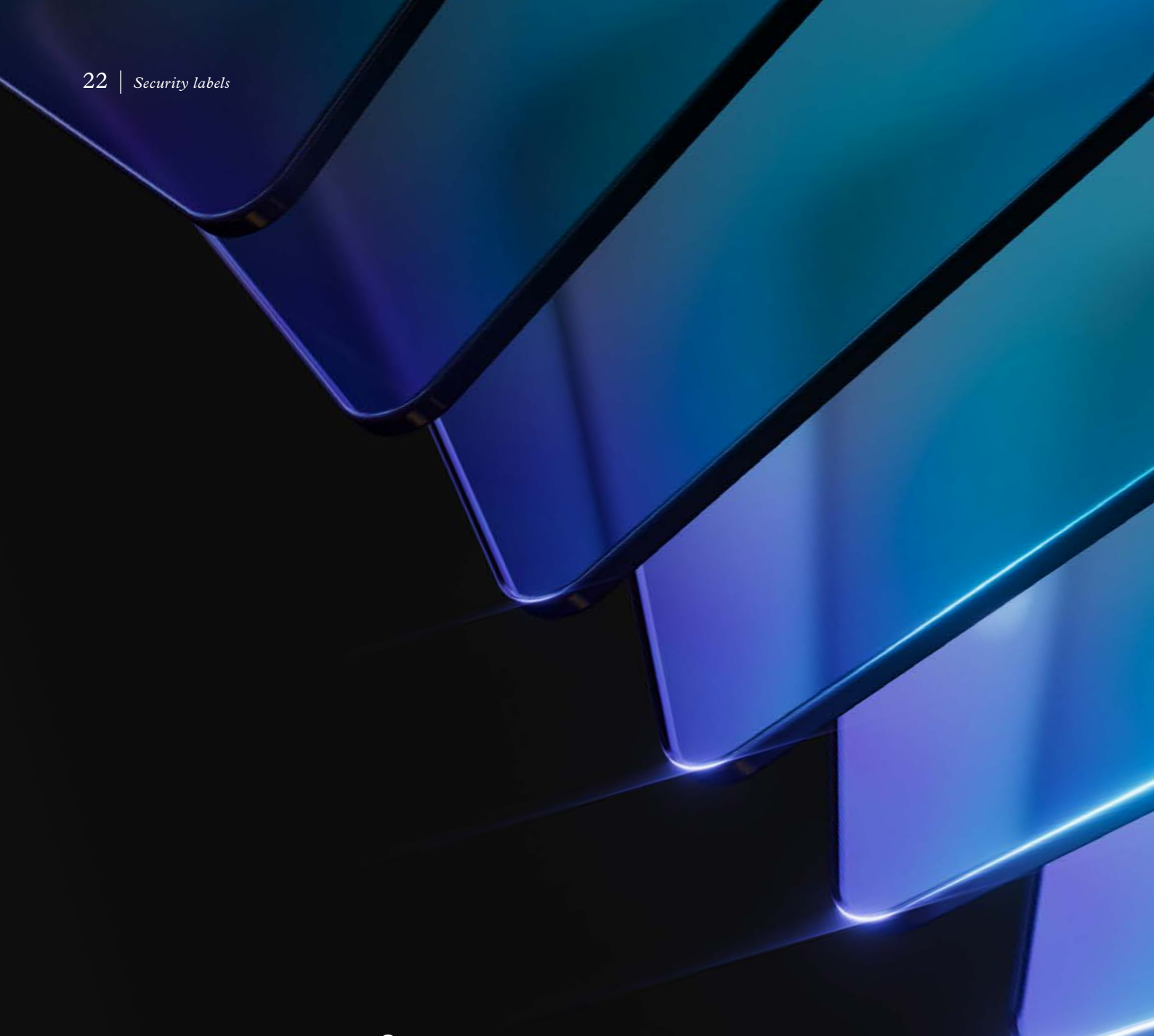
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Multi-layer defense against counterfeiting

As counterfeiters become more sophisticated, brands are turning to equally advanced authentication technologies to stay one step ahead. Akanksha Meena reports

Counterfeit products are rising across industries, posing growing risks to consumer safety and brand trust. From life-saving medicines to everyday consumer goods, recent cases show that no sector is immune to counterfeiting.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently warned of falsified cancer medication discovered in the Maldives and Mexico after they were distributed through unauthorized suppliers. In the cosmetics sector, counterfeit Korean beauty products caused an estimated 15.1 million USD in damages in 2025, fueled by increasingly sophisticated fakes. Food fraud has also escalated: authorities in Spain and Italy seized more than 260,000 liters of falsely labeled extra virgin olive oil in 2023, while Portugal confiscated over 17,000 liters of fraudulent olive oil in 2025. In Turkey, officials seized nearly 30 million USD worth of counterfeit honey in just a few months in 2025.

While these incidents have been exposed, the true scale of counterfeit products remaining undetected in the market is impossible to know.

The risk of fake goods is growing as counterfeiters are adopting increasingly sophisticated techniques that make fake products harder to detect. The consequences extend beyond lost revenue, damaging brand reputation, eroding consumer trust and, in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and food, posing serious health and safety risks.

'Counterfeiting, gray market diversion, return fraud and unauthorized resales have become harder to manage across increasingly fragmented channels, and for many brands, the risk is not just lost revenue,' says Ashley Burkle, director of business development at Identiv, provider of specialized IoT inlays, tags and labels. 'Flooded support channels, false warranty claims and reviews, shaped by products that were never genuine, compound that exposure. This leads to consumers bearing a more immediate cost, unknowingly paying full price for products that compromise performance and, in some cases, their safety.'

TRADITIONAL SECURITY NOT ENOUGH

Consumers are increasingly falling victim to counterfeit products because counterfeiters now have access to high-quality printing and packaging technologies.

'Traditional, static security features are becoming increasingly insufficient because counterfeiters today have access to advanced printing technologies, digital design tools and global manufacturing networks that allow them to replicate visible security elements with a high degree of accuracy,' says Nina Zehetmaier, head of sales at Securikett, Austrian security and brand protection label manufacturer.

Classic security features such as holograms, special inks, taggants or security print still provide a high level of protection, but effective protection relies on proprietary technologies, custom-developed security elements and controlled manufacturing processes that are not publicly available or easily sourced.

Zehetmaier explains: 'The higher the barrier to understanding and reproducing a security feature, the more effective it becomes as a deterrent against counterfeiting. Security features that are readily available on the open market can, by definition, also be accessed by counterfeiters. Once they are copied, every counterfeit product can carry the same feature.'

She notes that the company has come across cloned labels from time to time, including imitations of its own labels. 'While some of them may appear quite convincing at first glance and could potentially mislead an uninformed consumer, they are usually relatively easy for a trained eye to identify as counterfeit. The reason is that counterfeiters typically focus on replicating only one element, most often the visual appearance of the label. However, effective product protection is not based on a single visible feature, but on a layered security concept.'

MULTIPLE LAYERS OF SECURITY

As counterfeiting becomes more widespread and sophisticated, brands are moving beyond reactive measures and embedding product authentication into packaging from the outset.

'We are observing a clear shift from a reactive protection approach to proactive security design,' says Stefan Wiedemann, senior director, strategic marketing and business development at Schreiner MediPharm, pharma and healthcare label expert and business unit of Schreiner Group. 'Instead of adding security features only after a problem occurs, brand owners increasingly want labels to be part of the product protection strategy from the start. At the same time, there is growing demand for connected, smartphone-enabled authentication solutions that make verification easier, generate data and support more transparent supply chains.'

This shift recognizes that a single security feature is no longer sufficient. As counterfeiters become more adept at replicating packaging and security elements, brands are adopting multi-layered authentication strategies that combine several independent forms of protection.

'Each security layer operates independently while contributing to the overall system. This means that even if one element were to be copied or compromised, the remaining layers would continue to protect product integrity,' explains Zehetmaier.

Rather than relying on a single overt feature such as a hologram, modern product protection combines overt, covert and digital security elements with serialization and track-and-trace



Example of a security label with multiple authentication features including void effect, luminescence ink, hologram foil, microtext and Physical Unclonable Feature (PUF)

> "Counterfeiters today have access to advanced printing technologies, digital design tools and global manufacturing networks that allow them to replicate visible security elements with a high degree of accuracy"



How ELSCAN OMS5 sets a new benchmark in digital web monitoring

In modern label and print production, manufacturers face increasing demands for higher production speeds, tighter quality tolerances, and lower waste. To meet these requirements, operators must detect register deviations, color variations, and print defects as early as possible without interrupting production.

The ELSCAN system: Digital web monitoring for higher quality and productivity

The ELSCAN web monitoring system from Erhardt+Leimer supports these goals by providing continuous, high-resolution monitoring of moving webs throughout the entire production process. Critical print features such as register marks, color bars, and other quality-relevant areas are displayed in real time, allowing operators to identify deviations early and maintain stable production. A core feature of the platform is the proven “dualView” technology, which combines a wide-angle and a telephoto camera. The system automatically switches between the two cameras depending on the zoom level, enabling smooth, nearly lag-free zooming while preserving excellent image quality even when displaying the image at many times the original resolution.

ELSCAN OMS5: Premium features for advanced quality control

The ELSCAN OMS5 is the premium version of the ELSCAN system with high-resolution imaging and intelligent software, designed for demanding print applications. Its two 18-megapixel cameras deliver highly detailed images, while an optimized lighting concept with an additional varnish flash supports reliable inspection of coatings. Even gold and silver foils remain visible in true color for accurate quality assessment.

An extensive software package helps operators monitor print quality more efficiently. Features such as automatic scanning, a 100% repeat overview, image stabilization, and master image comparison simplify inspection and enable quick detection of even the smallest production changes. The integrated DeltaE color comparison supports objective inline color monitoring by detecting even minimal color deviations, while image stabilization ensures that the correct color area is analyzed if slip or web elongation occurs. A setup wizard and remote maintenance capabilities further simplify installation and service.

By combining high image quality with intelligent inspection tools, the ELSCAN OMS5 helps manufacturers improve consistent print quality, reduce waste, and increase production efficiency.



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technologies. This layered approach enables companies to authenticate individual products, monitor their movement through the supply chain, identify diversion and detect suspicious activity far earlier, making counterfeiting significantly more difficult while generating valuable supply chain intelligence.

To strengthen protection, so-called 'phygital' labels combine multiple layers of security, including overt and covert physical features, unique digital identifiers and cloud-based authentication. As a result, phygital labels are increasingly being adopted.

Overt features allow consumers or field staff to perform a quick visual check. Covert features give trained personnel an additional level of verification, while forensic elements provide highly secure evidence for expert analysis.

Wiedemann of Schreiner MediPharm says brand owners are increasingly seeking an integrated, label-based security system rather than standalone anti-counterfeit features. 'The goal is not simply to raise the hurdle for counterfeiters, but to create a solution that supports authentication, protects brand integrity and fits into existing packaging and supply chain processes.

'Unlike approaches that focus solely on either physical or digital protection, our phygital labels bring both worlds together,' he says. 'They not only protect products against tampering and counterfeiting but also connect them to a secure digital identity.'

This layered approach makes counterfeiting more difficult, supports different authentication scenarios and gives brand owners more flexibility to adapt the security level to the risk profile of a product or market.

That digital identity transforms packaging from a passive label into an interactive touchpoint. According to Burkle of Identiv, packaging has traditionally been a one-way communication tool, but phygital technology allows brands to continue engaging with consumers long after a purchase. A smartphone tap can verify authenticity while also providing product information, warranty activation, reordering, loyalty rewards or other digital services. Securikett's Codikett platform links every label to a unique digital identity, enabling authentication, track-and-trace, consumer engagement, analytics and compliance with emerging initiatives such as the Digital Product Passport (DPP).

Identiv's NFC embeds a unique hardware-based identity into each product, enabling secure item-level authentication.

GROWTH IN SECURITY LABELS

Demand for product authentication is growing across industries as counterfeit goods become an increasingly widespread challenge. While the underlying technologies are often similar, implementation varies according to industry needs.

'For instance, in the pharmaceutical industry, regulatory compliance, serialization, tamper evidence and patient safety are key, while cosmeceuticals often require premium-looking security features that protect exclusivity and brand value,' says Wiedemann.

Most brand owners now recognize the risks posed by counterfeiting, product diversion and unauthorized distribution. However, adoption often lags, with many companies delaying investment until a counterfeiting incident occurs, a clear business case is established, or regulatory requirements make implementation unavoidable, according to Zehetmaier of Securikett.

The pace of adoption also varies by region. In Europe and parts of North America, authentication and traceability initiatives are largely driven by regulatory requirements. In contrast, emerging markets are more heavily influenced by consumer demand and the direct impact of counterfeiting.

'In China and several other Asian markets, consumer awareness of counterfeiting is exceptionally high,' Zehetmaier adds. 'We also see growing interest in regions with a particularly high incidence of counterfeiting, including parts of the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia. In these markets, concerns around product authenticity, consumer safety and supply chain integrity are driving increased awareness and demand for advanced authentication solutions.'

Beyond that, regulation remains one of the strongest drivers for adoption worldwide.

'Particularly in pharmaceuticals, where serialization, traceability, and tamper evidence requirements have accelerated the use of security labels worldwide. These requirements encourage companies to implement labels that not only identify products, but also help verify authenticity, ensure product integrity and protect users,' says Wiedemann.

Similar momentum is building across other industries as governments place greater importance on product safety, supply chain transparency, sustainability and consumer protection. DPP could have a similar transformative effect by creating a common framework for product-level identification, traceability and digital engagement across multiple sectors.



NFC-enabled packaging operates at close range, enabling encrypted, secure data exchange with the tap of a standard smartphone

> "Instead of adding security features only after a problem occurs, brand owners increasingly want labels to be part of the product protection strategy from the start"

OVERT, COVERT AND CONNECTED

As counterfeiting becomes more sophisticated, brand protection demands a multi-layered response. By pairing overt, covert and connected digital traceability features, brands can achieve complete visibility from factory to shelf.

Overt features are visible security elements on labels or packaging that can be verified with the naked eye. Examples include holograms, color-shifting inks, hot/cold foils, tamper-evident shrink-wraps, security tear tapes, destructible 'void' labels and embossed or debossed patterns.

Covert features are hidden security elements that are invisible to the naked eye and require specialized tools or expertise for verification. Examples include microtext, UV/IR invisible inks, digital watermarks and microscopic or DNA-based taggants and forensic markers.

Digital and traceability features connect products to secure databases for authentication and supply chain tracking. Examples include smart QR codes, RFID/NFC tags, unique serial numbers, barcodes or 2D codes used for track-and-trace and recall management.

Consumer expectations are also evolving in favor of brand protection technologies. According to Burkle, consumers no longer accept packaging at face value; they increasingly want to verify a product's authenticity and claim for themselves. A recent GS1 US survey found that more than 65 percent of consumers are willing to interact with packaging to access additional product information.

'As trust and transparency become central to purchasing decisions, traditional packaging is no longer enough. While it can communicate product information, it cannot verify where a product has been, whether it has been tampered with or whether the label corresponds to the specific item in hand. Embedding secure digital identities into packaging enables brands to provide real-time, product-specific information that consumers can trust,' Burkle explains.

BARRIERS TO ADOPTION

Despite growing interest in product authentication, cost and implementation challenges continue to slow adoption.

While cost remains an important consideration, Wiedemann says it is no longer the primary obstacle. Many brands are more concerned about integrating authentication technologies into existing packaging lines and supply chain processes. Successful adoption depends on demonstrating that security technologies can be implemented with minimal disruption while delivering measurable business value.

'Customers are especially receptive to technologies that integrate smoothly into their existing processes, can be verified reliably, and offer clear benefits for brand protection or supply chain visibility. Smartphone-based authentication, connected product identification, tamper-evident concepts and combined analog-digital solutions are gaining attention where they are supported by a clear communication and security strategy,' Wiedemann adds.

Zehetmaier agrees that the biggest barriers are often economic and organizational rather than technological. 'While brands may be aware of the risks posed by counterfeiting, they struggle to justify the investment before a concrete problem has occurred. Hence, they view security measures as an insurance policy rather than a strategic business tool.'

Another challenge is complexity. Many advanced authentication labels require integrating multiple technologies, vendors and systems, which can be difficult for organizations with limited resources or technical expertise to manage. Brands often also lack the dedicated personnel and organizational resources needed to implement, maintain and actively leverage these systems. Even when the technology itself is available, managing authentication programs, analyzing data and acting on the resulting insights can be challenging without the necessary internal capabilities.

Another barrier is the perception that sophisticated security technologies are only relevant for large multinational companies or heavily regulated industries. In reality, counterfeiters often target brands that tend to have fewer protection measures in place.

Finally, there is often a lack of visibility regarding the true scale of the problem. Counterfeiting can remain undetected for years, making it difficult to build a compelling business case.

'As technology becomes more accessible and cloud-based platforms reduce implementation complexity, we expect these barriers to continue to decrease,' Zehetmaier notes. 'The key challenge is helping brands understand that modern security labels are no longer merely a cost of protection but an investment in trust, transparency and business intelligence.'

Burkle of Identiv echoes this view, noting that the challenge lies less in coordinating packaging, supply chain and cloud-based systems at scale. As a result, adoption has been fastest in sectors where the cost of counterfeiting is most apparent, including pharmaceuticals, luxury goods, beauty, and wine and spirits.

> "In the pharmaceutical industry, regulatory compliance, serialization, tamper evidence and patient safety are key, while cosmeceuticals often require premium-looking security features that protect exclusivity and brand value"



Regulation is driving adoption, particularly in pharmaceuticals

UV AND IR PIGMENTS IN BRAND PROTECTION

UV and IR pigments enable rapid authentication by brand owners, inspectors and law enforcement agencies while helping combat counterfeiting across high-value products.

UV for fast visual verification

UV pigments or UV fluorescent inks are colorless or barely perceptible (invisible) under normal visible light, but under ultraviolet illumination they become immediately visible. Because the effect lasts only while the UV source is present, these inks are particularly suitable for fast authenticity checks using handheld UV lamps.

IR for covert, machine-readable security

IR pigments or infrared inks operate differently. Unlike UV inks, IR fluorescent inks can only be detected using an IR camera.

As a result, IR systems in printing are used mainly as covert, machine-readable security features. At the same time, UV systems more often provide rapid visual feedback that a human operator can also check.

IR fluorescent taggants are generally regarded as offering a higher level of security. Simple UV markings, by contrast, are now often seen as a baseline protection feature unless they form part of a more sophisticated multi-color or multi-wavelength system.

Scan the QR code to read more on connected packaging in Labels & Labeling

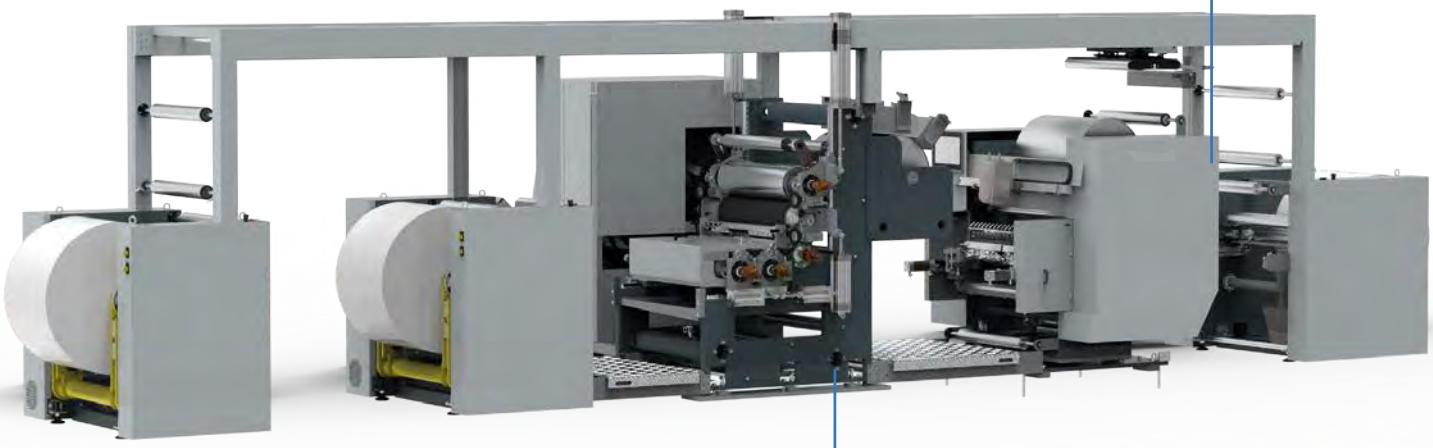
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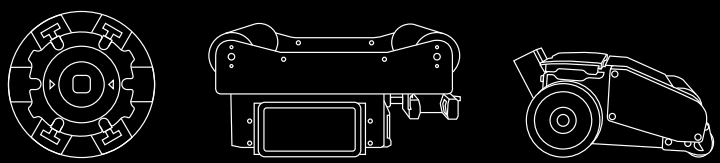


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Lappí grows beyond labels

Spanish converter Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging has an ambitious growth strategy focused on targeted acquisitions and buoyed by artificial intelligence. Chelsea McDougall reports



Antonio Lappí Perea

"Each of the companies that have joined has contributed to expanding our capabilities, our knowledge of the market and our industrial presence"



Carmen Lappí Moreno



Juan Lappí Moreno

Flexible packaging was never part of the original plan for Spanish converting group, Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging.

But opportunity has an interesting way of presenting itself.

As customer needs evolved, Lappí began to view flexible packaging not as an additional product line, but as a strategic response to market shifts. Today, the group is pursuing targeted acquisitions in flexible packaging that add specialist capabilities, capacity and market access.

Lappí's most recent acquisition in July 2026 of Alempack in Portugal further expanded its footprint in the Iberian Peninsula and strengthened the company's offerings for flexible packaging in the fast-moving commercial goods market. The Alempack acquisition was the third of its kind for Lappí. It followed acquisitions of Gráfica Calipolense in 2019 and the Portuguese companies CPM-Penta in 2023, acquisitions that allowed Lappí to double its size and strengthen its presence in the region.

'With the incorporation of Alempack, we give continuity to a way of growing that we are very clear about in Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging: integrate solid companies with complementary capabilities and teams that reinforce our industrial project,' says CEO Antonio Lappí Perea. 'This is the third acquisition we have made in just over two years. Each of the companies that have joined has contributed to expanding our capabilities, our knowledge of the market and our industrial presence.'

For a company like Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging, acquiring an established flexible packaging company often makes far more business sense than building a greenfield operation. With these acquisitions, Lappí gains immediate access to specialist capacity, experienced teams and established customer relationships that would take years to build organically. It also created opportunities to serve customers across both labels and flexible packaging.

Lappí is now made up of six companies, seven manufacturing facilities and more than 390 employees across Spain and Portugal.

Alempack, which employs more than 40 people, will enable the group to double its flexible packaging business. Lappí is expected to reach estimated organic sales of 74M USD (65M EUR) in 2026, and is planning two more acquisitions this year.

History

The move into flexible packaging may seem like a significant shift for a company that's regarded as one of Spain's established label converting groups, but Lappí has always embraced opportunities rather than standing still.

And, really, if we look back at the company history, Lappí didn't set out to be a label supplier either. But through a series of strategic shifts, acquisitions and investments, it has set the course for Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging into one of the leading label and now flexible packaging groups in the Iberian Peninsula.

The company's origins date back to 1959 when it began as Lappí Industrias Graficas, a commercial printer. In the 1970s, Lappí Perea's father recognized the potential in the label space and secured the wet glue label business of an important bottled water brand in Spain. The customer helped propel Lappí firmly into the label space.

In 1990, the company expanded again by adding self-adhesive labels, which eventually became a major part of its business. Under the leadership of Lappí Perea, who joined the company in 1997, Lappí (then called Grupo Lappí) ramped up investment in shrink sleeve and wraparound label technology. Lappí Perea led the company through a series of acquisitions in the mid-2000s.

Investment from private equity group Diana Capital in 2017 supported the new stage of growth, while the Lappí family continued to lead the day-to-day operations.

Headquartered in Seville, Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging has seven production locations in Barcelona, Madrid and across Portugal, with approximately 60,000sqm of manufacturing space.

Lappí Perea is joined by his children, Carmen Lappí Moreno and Juan Lappí Moreno, who represent the third generation of the family business; a legacy that is not lost on either of them. Both of them have had successful careers outside of the industry before joining Lappí.

Juan Lappí Moreno says: 'I always say that my grandpa was the entrepreneur. He started with the crazy idea. My father took us to another level, and we, as the third generation, have to maintain this legacy. Your surname doesn't guarantee you a seat

"Start where it really hurts, do it properly, and then scale, learn, measure, govern and test"

as an executive of the company; you have to try your best, and you have to work as much as you can to preserve that legacy.'

Technology, end uses

Lappí's product portfolio represents a wide range of labels and packaging for consumer package goods and industrial end-use segments, including pressure-sensitive, wet-glue and wraparound labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging. Carmen Lappí Moreno describes the company as 'label generalists,' but is more targeted when it comes to flexible packaging.

'In labels, you can go to a very broad market, and we have,' she says. 'We do beer labels, pet food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food and beverage. But in flexible packaging, it's better to focus on segments and applications.'

Lappí's manufacturing platform has evolved alongside the group's growth and today combines a broad range of printing, converting and finishing technologies. Its capabilities include gravure printing, full HD and CI flexography, sheet-fed and rotary offset and digital printing for both labels and flexible packaging, supported by different web widths, and UV, conventional and solvent-based drying systems. These are complemented by advanced converting, automation and value-added finishing technology.

The group's technology base includes equipment from HP, Heidelberg, Nilpeter, MPS, Miyakoshi, Omet and Windmöller & Hölscher. This combination of production processes enables Lappí to manufacture a comprehensive portfolio, including pressure-sensitive, wet-glue and wraparound labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging. Its flexible packaging portfolio includes complex printed reel films, flowpack applications, lidding films, stand-up pouches, vacuum pouches, shrink pouches and other packaging structures.

The availability of multiple technologies and production routes allows Lappí's technical teams to assess each project based on material selection, print quality, functional requirements, run length and converting needs before assigning it to the most appropriate process and manufacturing site.

This industrial base is supported by Lappí's sustained investment policy. The company allocates approximately five to six percent of annual revenue to capital expenditure.

Artificial intelligence

As a company that has long prided itself on innovation and adaptation, it's no surprise that Lappí is further along than most when it comes to one of today's defining technologies: artificial intelligence.

Lappí's open-arm embrace of AI means the company is embedding it into its culture and building the digital foundations needed to scale, while at the same time preserving its customer and employee-centric focus.

Lappí has appointed Carmen Lappí Moreno to lead AI adoption across the company. She encourages AI experimentation, and is using it to improve processes and reduce manual work. (See boxout)

'We have always understood that growth is not only about expanding capacity, technology or markets, but about building a company prepared for the future while remaining faithful to the values and industrial discipline that have brought us to where we are today,' Lappí Perea says. 'AI is another step in that evolution. Not as an end in itself, but as a tool that will help us improve, make better decisions and continue building a stronger, more competitive and future-ready company.'

Carmen Lappí Moreno has established a dedicated committee of AI 'champion users', whose aim is to focus on practical use cases, while managing cultural shifts in the workforce. The goal, leadership says, is to enhance productivity, not replace people.

'I think that AI is about redefining the work and the skills of the people doing it,' she says. 'Our focus is not on removing people, but how we can sell more, produce more, and be better.'

Carmen Lappí Moreno spoke at Finat's European Label Forum in Seville this spring and described how any AI project at Lappí gets off the ground. Before embarking on any proposed AI project, the project must answer a key question. 'Does it help us work better, and what impact will it have on how we compete?' she explains. 'We prioritize based on impact and feasibility.'

For businesses exploring AI in their companies, her advice was simple: 'Start where it really hurts, do it properly, and then scale, learn, measure, govern and test.'

Lappí's expansion into flexible packaging and its early embrace of AI are rooted in the same philosophy: staying ahead of change rather than reacting to it. Whether the company is broadening its portfolio to meet evolving customer needs or leveraging AI to make its people and processes more efficient, the company continues to invest with the future in mind.



Antonio Lappí Perea and Carmen Lappí Moreno

AI agent transforms order entry

For Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging, order intake was once viewed as a largely labor-intensive administrative process. Not anymore, thanks to an AI-powered agent developed in-house.

Nearly all of Lappí's orders come via email and often in inconsistent formats, such as PDFs, Excel files or even text messages. This variability creates opportunities for human error. The company's head of AI, Carmen Lappí Moreno, says that roughly 10 percent of its orders contain some type of mistake that could lead to production issues, incorrect quantities or additional work.

The AI agent created by Lappí reads incoming orders, validates the information, applies customer-specific knowledge and predefined business rules, and converts unstructured data into reliable, structured information for the production system.

Importantly, the system is designed with what Carmen Lappí Moreno calls 'human in the loop', meaning its AI agent can still verify missing information or inconsistencies and flag the issue for human review rather than simply making assumptions. The goal here is not to replace employees, but to allow them to focus on higher-value tasks outside routine order processing.

The result is improved data quality, fewer errors reaching production and a more efficient process that gives Lappí a clearer view of customer behavior and business trends.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Lappí Labels and Flexible Packaging

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European industry celebrates new Finat president

Dana Kilárská brings her long experience as CEO of family-owned Purgina Labels to her new role as Finat president. Andy Thomas-Emans reports



Dana Kilárská makes her first speech as Finat president with former presidents Philippe Voet (L) and Chris Ellison (R)

"One growing beverage market segment is ready-to-drink cans. This is a very creative market with many customized designs for craft brands, and we are able to make them stand out with tactile effects even on lower volumes"



Dana Kilárská



Vito Giurazza

New team at Finat

Dana Kilárská's Finat presidency was confirmed by the General Assembly at the European Label Forum 2026 in Seville, Spain, along with the appointment of Vito Giurazza as vice president. Giurazza, who joined the Finat board in 2023, is CEO of Tikedo, one of Europe's leading label-converting groups with operations across Italy, Spain and Latvia.

The occasion also saw outgoing president Philippe Voet and former president Chris Ellison appointed as Finat honorary members in recognition of their service to Finat and the wider label community. Both Voet and Ellison remain engaged in Finat's leadership team.

Commenting on her appointment, Kilárská says: 'This role means the world to me, not because of the title, but because of the community behind it. Finat is made up of extraordinary people, and to lead them is a privilege.'

Slovak-based converter Purgina Labels, a specialist in premium food, wine and spirits self-adhesive labels, is likely to become a well-known name across the labeling world over the next few years.

This is primarily because the company's managing director, Dana Kilárská, has been appointed president of Finat, the European label association. This follows many years of support for Finat, both from Purgina as a company and from Kilárská personally.

She was a key early supporter of the Finat Young Managers Club, now the Young Professionals Network, elected first as treasurer, then president; and helping the YMC/YPN grow into the powerful and influential voice within Finat it is today.

She has also been a regular speaker at Finat meetings on a range of subjects including attracting young people into the label industry. Purgina has been a strong supporter of Finat and a regular participant in the Finat label competition, starting in 2012 with an award for its 'Art of Labels' promotional work, and continuing this year with an award in the flexographic print category.

Kilárská's appointment is also a notable milestone for Finat, as she becomes the first woman to serve as president.

Industry experience

Dana Kilárská brings to the Finat presidency more than two decades of international business experience across hospitality, printing and packaging.

Along with brother Radovan, Dana represents the second generation at family-owned Purgina Labels. The company was founded by Stefan Kilársky in 1991, and both Dana and Radovan were already heavily involved in marketing and technology roles when L&L first visited the company back in 2011.

The company was then operating a Gallus TCS250 intermittent offset press fitted out with screen, embossing, flexo coating and hot stamping, and a fully loaded Gallus RCS330, the first machine in the region to combine UV offset, flexo, screen and cold foil, along with an insetting capability.

These two presses allowed Purgina to enter markets in premium food, wine, liquor and cosmetics, helping the company differentiate itself from increasing competition in Slovakia and neighboring countries. Although most of Purgina's work comes from Slovakian customers, the company is increasingly successful in Hungary, Austria, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Since L&L's last visit, Purgina has renewed its press fleet. In 2020, with its 30th anniversary approaching, the Gallus TCS250 was replaced with a Wanjie WJPS 350 semi-rotary offset press configured with screen printing and hot foil. The press was supplied and installed by Madrid-based Wanjie Europe.

'We were already familiar with semi-rotary offset technology, so we were operating this press within two weeks of installation,' says Radovan. 'The TCS was only 250mm wide, which was a problem, and we wanted to move these jobs to a faster, wider (330mm) machine. We tested the Wanjie press in Madrid with the full range of substrates we use.'

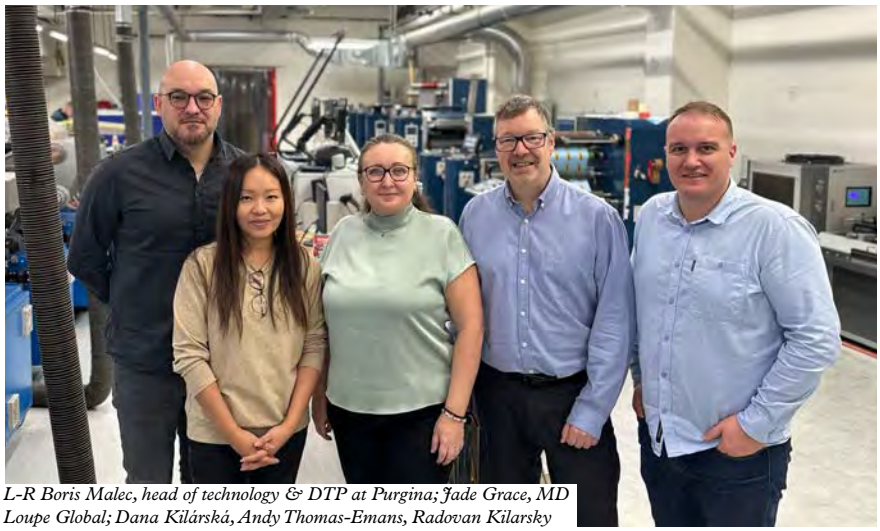
The configuration of the Gallus RCS press was also changed. 'We took off the offset units,' says Radovan. 'There are higher costs to keep everything running, and flexo is much easier. So now we just

have flexo for long runs and semi-rotary offset for shorter runs.'

At the same time, Purgina moved into digital printing with the installation of an Epson L-4533AW water-based inkjet press.

'We chose this press not only because water-based inks are environmentally friendly, but also because of the high-quality print on uncoated papers as the ink soaks into the substrate,' explains Radovan. 'The press has a wide color gamut. We can confidently hit 95 percent of Pantone colors, and we can print multiple designs, each with its own Pantone colors across the web. We can also offer variable printing; for example, we can give limited editions of wine bottles a unique number.' Along with the two new presses came a new Cartes finishing line.

Purgina also partners with several converters across Europe, giving the company flexible access to a broader range of technologies with far greater efficiency. 'This allows us to access the technology when we need it and learn all about it, but without the capital cost, and they get the clicks,' explains Radovan.



L-R Boris Malec, head of technology & DTP at Purgina; Jade Grace, MD Loupe Global; Dana Kilárská, Andy Thomas-Emans, Radovan Kilarsky

"'This role means the world to me, not because of the title, but because of the community behind it. Finat is made up of extraordinary people, and to lead them is a privilege"

Automation expert

One of Dana Kilárská's key areas of expertise is pre-press automation. Purgina installed the first Cerm MIS in the region as far back as 2008 and implemented the EskoArtwork Backstage server, connected via JDF Link, to automate the flow of artwork and production data. The company later added AVT inspection systems on its Gallus presses to automate error detection and rewinding.

Die-cut profiles are downloaded directly from pre-press to control the Digimask die-cut verification system, which is particularly useful for ultra-clear materials and complex die shapes.

'Purgina has always invested in automation and system upgrades to the extent its resources allow in the region and continues to see significant potential for further automation,' explains Dana. 'We are already looking ahead to future projects that will build on this foundation.'

When L&L visited Purgina in 2011, the premium wine label market was driving the company's growth as Slovak wine brands transitioned from wet glue to PS. Spirits were also emerging as a strong market segment, often utilizing clear-on-clear labels with complex embellishment. The company was moving away from its more traditional low-embellishment food customers to search out higher value-added work.

How have things changed today?

'The volume of wine and spirits has definitely declined,' says Dana. 'This has been balanced with a growing demand for alcohol-free beverages, though it's not clear yet if this will be a long-term trend. Demand declined in Slovakia because of the economy, and we even see some wine customers going back to wet glue for their cheaper wines.'

One growing beverage market segment is ready-to-drink cans. 'This is a very creative market with many customized designs for craft brands, and we are able to make them stand out with tactile effects even on lower volumes.'

Purgina has also had success moving into value-added food sectors, particularly for sandwiches and baguettes where a label is applied to the film. Indeed, Purgina won its 2026 Finat flexo award for a baguette label.

A significant part of Purgina's business remains in thermal labels for customers in the wider logistics industry, boosted by the continued growth of e-commerce. A significant trend is supplying pre-printed logos on VIP labels.

Purgina has a strong consultancy and design offering through its internal graphics department. The company also offers warehouse management to its key customers along with a labeling service where required.

Future trends

While Purgina has no plans to diversify into flexible packaging or folding cartons yet, Dana is enthusiastic about the Informa Group's decision to change the name of Labelexpo to Loupe. 'This is the way our industry is moving. While labels remain at the center of Loupe, narrow and mid-web flexible packaging and in-line folding cartons are becoming part of the offering of label converters. We are also involved in these discussions at Finat.'

A key theme of Dana Kilárská's Finat presidency will be sustainability and how the industry reacts to the challenges of meeting the EU's circular economy directives.

Dana says some customers, particularly in Austria, are requiring wash-off labels for glass and plastic bottles to promote refill and recycling. More broadly, she sees a general movement across the industry towards more sustainable alternatives and believes the key for converters is finding technology and products that comply without high added cost.

A subject which came up a lot at the European Label Forum 2026, and which impacts the label industry's future sustainability, is recruitment of young people. Purgina faces the same challenges here as other European (and not only European) converters.

'It is hard to find skilled workers,' says Dana. 'Even with the digital press you still need skilled craftsmen for the finishing machine where you are embossing and hot stamping.'

But despite the challenges, Dana Kilárská remains enthusiastic about the industry's prospects as she enters the first year of her new role as Finat president.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Purgina

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Labelisten scales business with automation-first model

The German converter has built its business around software, automation and digital production rather than adapting legacy workflows, with investments in HP Indigo's V12 platform and a rapidly expanding flexible packaging operation. Will Drysdale reports.

Walking around Labelisten's production facilities in Bavaria, it quickly becomes apparent that this is not a conventional label converter.

There are HP Indigo presses, laser finishing systems and pouch converting equipment, but the real engine behind the business is its software. Every stage of production, from customer order and artwork approval through to scheduling, printing, invoicing and payment tracking, is digitally connected. Rather than adapting analog workflows to accommodate digital printing, Labelisten has built its entire operation around automation.

That philosophy is reflected in the way founder and CEO Frank Plechschmidt describes the company.

'Many people say we're a software company with a printing company attached,' he says. 'For a long time, the software company just consisted of me.'

Operating from two facilities in Bavaria, one dedicated to labels and the other to flexible packaging, the company has become one of Europe's fastest-growing digital converters, recording annual growth of around 40 percent while investing heavily in both production capacity and software development.

The latest step in that journey is the installation of the HP Indigo V12, a press designed to move digital printing beyond its traditional short-run niche into industrial-scale production.

Building a business around digital

Plechschmidt originally trained as a media designer, then developed programming skills as a hobby before recognizing a gap in the market for short-run label production.

Many of his earliest customers operated in the dietary supplements and sports nutrition sectors characterized by large numbers of SKUs, frequent artwork changes and unpredictable ordering patterns.

'They needed 5,000 labels of one product and maybe only 500 of another,' he recalls. 'Finding somebody who could deliver those quantities quickly was difficult.'

After investing in its first HP Indigo press in 2017, Labelisten gradually developed an automated workflow capable of processing orders with minimal manual intervention.

'I was only printing for about two hours a day,' says Plechschmidt. 'We had to find the volume.'

The growth came steadily before accelerating dramatically during the pandemic, as manufacturers sought shorter supply chains and more responsive production partners.

That expansion has continued ever since, and today, Labelisten employs over 100 people across its operations and is supported by a growing software development team that continually refines the company's digital infrastructure.

Scaling with the V12

Production capacity has effectively tripled in recent years, culminating in the installation of the HP Indigo V12. Unlike earlier generations of digital presses that focused primarily on short-run work, the V12 has been developed to compete in higher-volume production without sacrificing digital flexibility.

For Labelisten, however, the investment is about preparing for future growth rather than solving today's production constraints.

'I expected the V12 to run for three or four hours a day,' says Plechschmidt. 'That's exactly what it's doing today.'

Rather than seeing that as under-utilization, he views it as evidence that the company has invested ahead of demand.

'Now our sales team has to sell the bigger volumes,' he added.

Even so, the nature of Labelisten's production remains very different from that of conventional converters. On one recent production day, the company produced around 45km of labels across approximately 400 separate jobs.

'Normally converters produce 40 or 80 kilometers with one job,' Plechschmidt says. 'We produced 45 kilometers with 400 jobs.'

Managing hundreds of short runs every day is precisely what the company's workflow is designed to handle. Unlike conventional production environments, where lengthy setup times encourage larger print runs, Labelisten continuously switches between jobs, keeping presses productive while producing only the quantities customers require.

The result is a business capable of responding to customer demand in days rather than weeks.

When asked whether customers prefer labels from a certain machine, Frank said: 'Our customers don't ask what print technology we use; they ask: "Can I have it tomorrow?"'

A broader shift

For HP, Labelisten represents more than simply another successful customer. It illustrates how digital printing is evolving across the wider label industry.

'We're moving into what I call industrial digital printing,' explains Mark Dempsey, HP's European V12 sales director.

'We knew we had to reinvent the technology if we wanted to win bigger volumes and longer run lengths,' Dempsey says.

'We've now got the fastest digital print system for labels on the market,' he added.

> **"Our customers don't ask what print technology we use; they ask: 'Can I have it tomorrow?'"**



Labelisten's V12 in action


Labelisten's flexible packaging site

"Many people say we're a software company with a printing company attached"

Despite rapid technological development, HP estimates that only around six to seven percent of global label production is digital.

'Packaging is probably one of the last industries still hanging on to its analog background,' he says.'The volume is still there. It's just divided into many more jobs.'

However, for businesses such as Labelisten, that shift is creating significant opportunities.

Advantage through automation

While the V12 may be the headline investment, Plechschmidt is quick to point out that the press itself is only part of Labelisten's competitive advantage. The real differentiator lies in the software that controls almost every aspect of the business, which is developed in-house.

Orders flow automatically from customer inquiry through artwork approval, pre-press, scheduling and production before invoices are generated and payments tracked. What would traditionally involve multiple systems and manual input has been consolidated into a single in-house digital workflow.

'Everything is automated,' says Plechschmidt. 'Even my bank account is connected to the system. Every 10 minutes it checks whether invoices have been paid.'

Before entering the printing industry, he trained as a media designer and taught himself programming, initially developing systems to solve problems within his own business. Over time, that hobby evolved into one of Labelisten's defining strengths.

'I started programming myself because I needed the software,' he explains. 'Now we have a dedicated software team, but everything started from trying to make production easier.'

Plechschmidt began using AI-assisted coding in 2023 and believes it has transformed the speed at which new functions can be developed.

'It accelerated development by maybe a factor of 10,' he says. 'We can build and improve systems much faster than before.'

The result is a production environment where software has become just as important as the machinery itself.

What began as a supplier-customer relationship has evolved into a close partnership, with Plechschmidt presenting the company's production model at HP customer events worldwide.

'They realized it wasn't just about the press,' he says. 'It was about the digital ecosystem around the press.'

Removing the bottlenecks

Rather than relying exclusively on conventional rotary die-cutting, Labelisten has invested in laser die-cutting systems from German manufacturer ALS, eliminating the need for physical tooling on many jobs.

For customers ordering hundreds of different SKUs in relatively small quantities, removing tooling requirements dramatically reduces both setup time and cost.

'With the lasers we can produce immediately,' says Plechschmidt.

The approach is particularly valuable in markets such as dietary supplements, sports nutrition and pet food, where products are regularly updated and artwork changes frequently.

Instead of manufacturing tooling before production can begin, digital files are simply loaded into the finishing system, allowing jobs to move straight into production.

Labor shortages

According to HP, automation is becoming increasingly important for another reason: the lack of labor. Across Europe, converters are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit experienced flexographic press operators, while fewer young people are entering traditional printing apprenticeships.

'Our customers are struggling to hire operators,' says Dempsey. Historically, becoming a skilled flexographic printer required years of experience.

'With analog technology, it can take two or three years before somebody reaches full competency.

'The V12 is a relatively deskilled operation. If somebody is technology-savvy, you can train them to a good competency in two or three months.'

That reduction in training time has become an increasingly important part of the investment case. Rather than competing for a shrinking pool of experienced flexographic operators, converters can recruit from a much wider labor market while reducing dependence on specialist skills.

'You can now run a V12 with one operator,' says Dempsey. 'In the past you would typically have needed two.'

For converters facing labor shortages alongside increasing production demands, that combination of higher productivity and simplified recruitment has become almost as important as print speed itself.

Hybrid or digital?

As digital presses become faster, comparisons with hybrid flexographic presses have inevitably intensified. HP is careful not to present the V12 as a replacement for every conventional workflow.

Instead, each customer is assessed individually.

'We always start with the business case,' says Dempsey. 'We look at their job basket, their run lengths, their applications and where they're making money.'

That analysis determines whether digital, hybrid or conventional flexo represents the most appropriate equipment.

Finishing

While hybrid presses complete printing and embellishment in a single pass, overall production speed is often dictated by the slowest finishing process.

'I've visited converters with presses capable of 150m/min running at only 15m/min because screen printing was the limiting factor,' says Dempsey.

HP instead advocates printing at the V12's full production speed before transferring reels to multiple near-line finishing lines.

'We say: "Print at 120m/min, then finish on two Digicons running at 60m/min each".'

This approach allows converters to maximize print productivity by separating printing from finishing, providing greater flexibility in scheduling production.

However, Dempsey says: 'One workflow isn't necessarily the answer for everybody.'

Expanding into flexible packaging

Although labels remain the largest part of the business, flexible packaging represents Labelisten's next major growth opportunity.

The company's second production facility, opened in October and has dramatically increased capacity while creating room for further expansion.

'We increased production capability by three or four times,' says Plechschmidt. 'We're producing around 50 percent more than before, but we can still double production again with almost the same headcount.'

The facility centers on HP Indigo 200K presses producing stand-up pouches, with plans already underway to expand into flat-bottom pouch production.

For Plechschmidt, the move into flexible packaging was a natural progression rather than a diversification. Increasingly, he believes converters need to think beyond labels altogether.

'In many cases it's more efficient to print directly onto the packaging instead of putting a label on it,' he says.

That convergence between labels and flexible packaging is becoming increasingly apparent across the industry, with many converters investing in both technologies to meet changing customer requirements.

Customers are no longer simply looking for labels or pouches. They are looking for the fastest, most efficient and most sustainable way to package their products.

Sustainability through efficiency

Sustainability is often discussed in terms of recyclable materials, recycled content and compliance with new legislation. Plechschmidt believes the industry's biggest environmental gains can be made long before a package reaches the recycling bin. Instead, he points to overproduction as one of packaging's greatest inefficiencies.

'Around 25 percent of all packaging is thrown away before it ever sees a product,' he says. 'Nobody knows the exact figure, but everyone agrees it's around a quarter.'

Many brands continue to order large quantities of labels or flexible packaging to reduce unit costs, only for products to be redesigned, reformulated or updated before the packaging is used. In sectors such as dietary supplements, where regulations and formulations frequently change, obsolete packaging can quickly become an expensive source of waste.

Digital production allows Labelisten to manufacture exactly the quantity required, reducing inventory while giving customers greater flexibility to respond to changing market demands. 'The customer shouldn't have to buy 10,000 labels if they only need 1,000,' says Plechschmidt.



Frank Plechschmidt, founder and CEO


The HP team in attendance at the Labelisten label production site

"Packaging is probably one of the last industries still hanging on to its analog background"

The company has also invested heavily in traceability, allowing every substrate used in production to be tracked back through the supply chain.

'If we produce a label today, I know exactly which roll came from Avery Dennison or UPM,' he explains. 'We can trace it all the way back.'

That capability has helped prepare the business for evolving sustainability legislation, including the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), while providing customers with greater transparency over the materials used in their packaging.

For HP, reducing waste is one of the most compelling sustainability arguments for digital printing.

'The first law of sustainability is avoiding use in the first place,' says HP's Dempsey. 'If you never needed to produce it, that's the best form of sustainability.'

Planning for growth

Despite growing by about 40 percent annually, Plechschmidt believes Labelisten is still in the early stages of its expansion.

The investment in the HP Indigo V12 and the new flexible packaging facility has created significantly more production capacity than the business currently requires, allowing future growth without immediate further investment.

'It's a luxury problem,' he says.

Looking further ahead, however, plans are already taking shape. The company has purchased land adjacent to its existing facilities where it intends to build another production site as demand increases, with a particular focus on expanding flexible packaging production and flat-bottom pouch manufacturing.

'If the V12 is full one day, we need another place,' says Plechschmidt.

Beyond Europe, the US represents the company's next major opportunity. Labelisten has already begun supplying short-run flexible packaging into the US and recently opened a sales office in New York as it looks to establish a stronger presence in the market.

Initially, production will continue in Germany, but longer-term ambitions are considerably bigger. 'In five years, maybe we have a plant there,' he says.

The future of digital converting

Businesses such as Labelisten provide a glimpse of where the wider label industry is heading. Although digital printing still accounts for a small share of global label production, the company expects adoption to continue to increase.

'Digital will continue to capture more of the market,' says Dempsey, 'but it won't happen overnight.'

Continued advances in automation and artificial intelligence will support that evolution, and HP is already developing AI-powered tools capable of monitoring press performance, identifying maintenance requirements before failures occur and helping operators optimize production.

'At some point I can see lights-out production becoming reality,' he says. 'Not tomorrow, but it's certainly where the industry is moving.'

Ultimately, however, both HP and Labelisten argue that digital transformation is about much more than faster presses; it is about reducing complexity throughout the production process.

For HP, that means lowering the overall cost of manufacturing labels by reducing labor requirements, minimizing waste and increasing productivity. For Labelisten, it means building a business around responsiveness.

Scan the QR code to learn more about Labelisten

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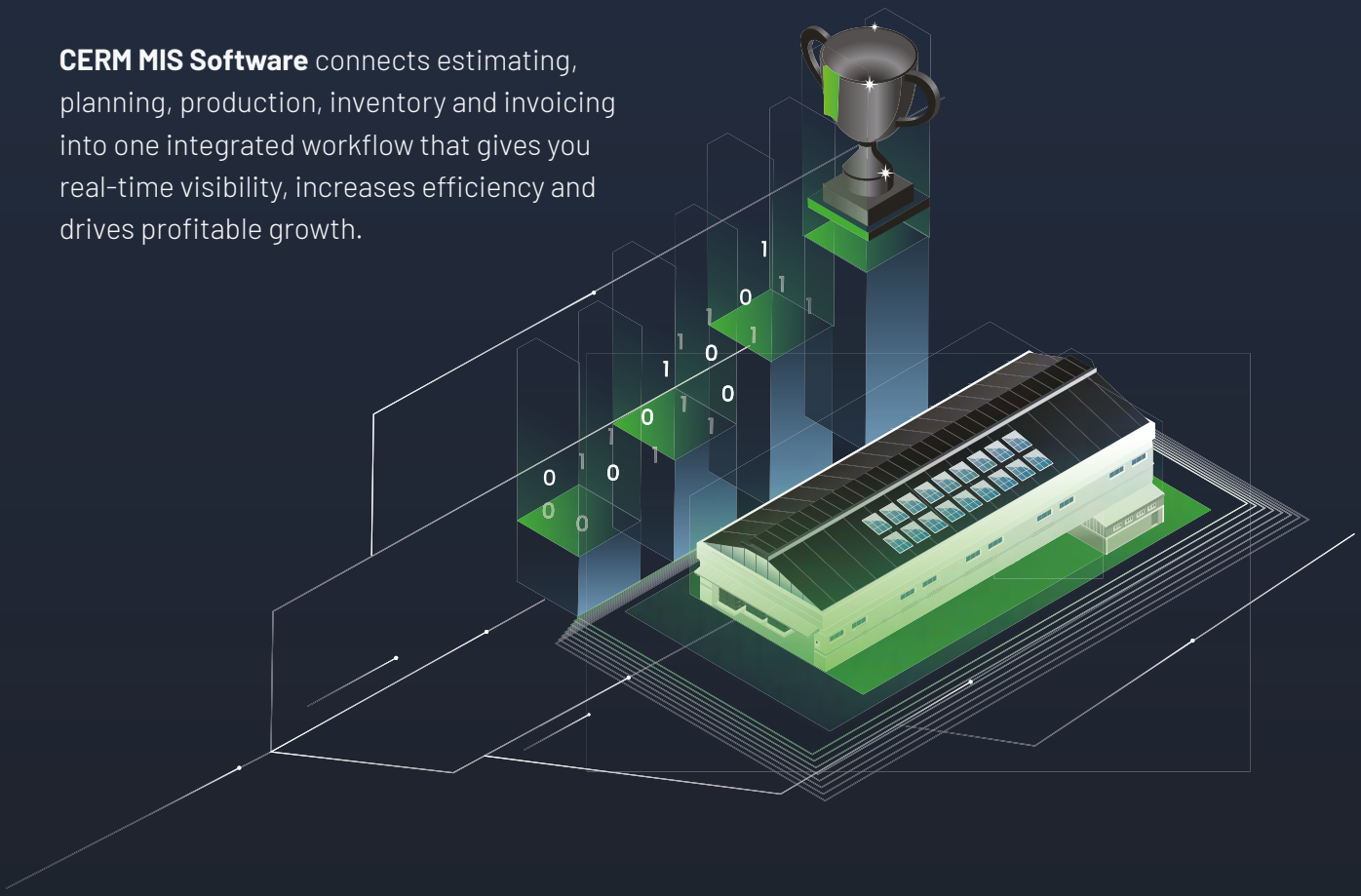
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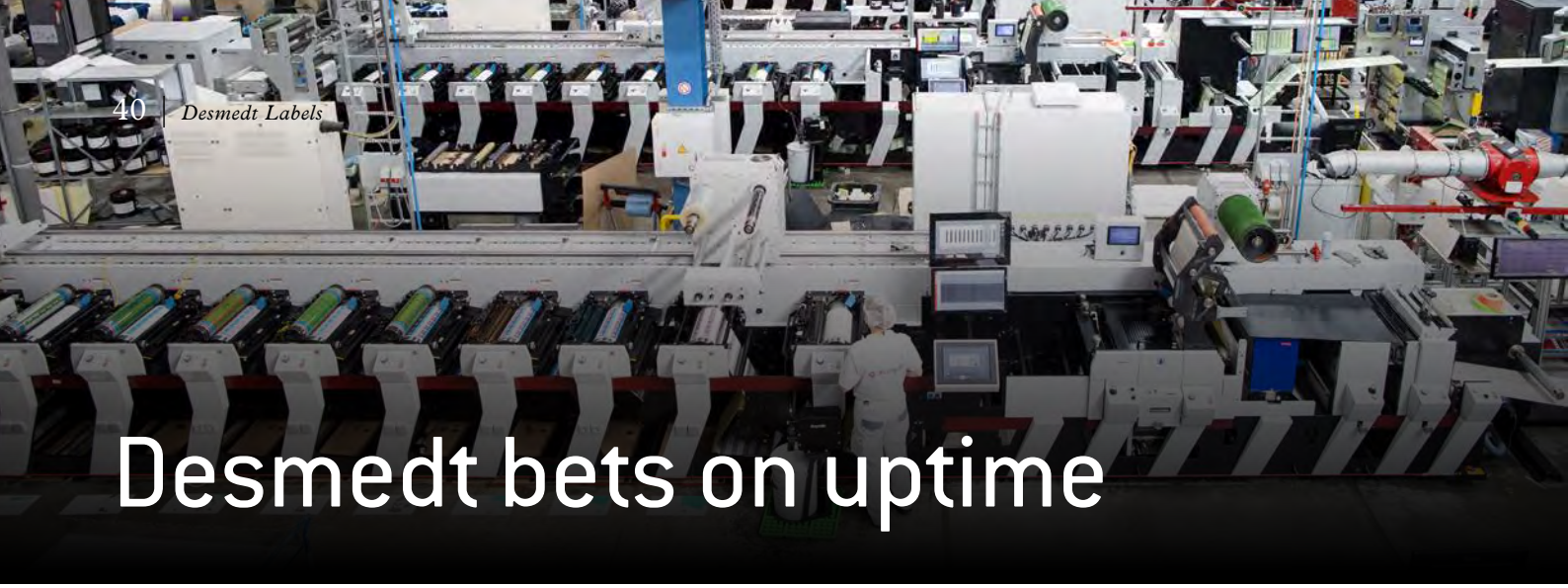
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Desmedt bets on uptime

Belgian converter builds one of the world's most automated narrow-web plants. Piotr Wnuk reports

Desmedt Labels produces nearly 1.8 billion labels a year. It employs 47 people. When Henri Köhler, the company's general manager, talks about competitiveness, he does not talk about adding headcount or buying bigger machines. He talks about eliminating five-minute interruptions.

"If a task does not add value to the product, the question is whether it should exist at all"

In early 2025, the latest example arrived in Bornem, Belgium: a Mark Andy Digital Pro Max hybrid press paired with a Martin Automatic non-stop splicer, the first such combination anywhere in the world. Köhler estimates the pairing will recover roughly one hour of production per shift. Across a three-shift, five-day pattern, that works out to around 750 production hours a year. For a converter with annual sales of 15.5m EUR, those hours matter.

But the installation is not really the story. It is the latest move in a decade-long program that has quietly turned a small, family-owned printer into one of the most automated narrow-web operations in the label industry.

Five generations of reinvention

François Desmedt founded the company in Brussels in 1889, specializing in hot gold leaf stamping on leather. Gummed labels followed in 1931. In 1945, Desmedt became the first company in Belgium to manufacture self-adhesive labels, and in 1970, the first label converter in Europe to invest in flexographic printing. A digital offset press arrived in 2000, another Benelux first.

Köhler, who represents the fifth generation of family ownership, took over in 2008. Four years later came the decision that reshaped the business: relocating from the company's 120-year-old site in Anderlecht to a purpose-designed facility in Bornem. Over more than a century, the former building had grown piecemeal. 'It no longer supported a logical or efficient production flow,' Köhler explains. Congestion and safety concerns in the neighborhood were making recruitment difficult.

People were the harder part. Not everyone made the move, and Köhler does not gloss over it. 'We focused on being transparent about the reasons and the long-term perspective, and that helped create alignment.' Those who did relocate gained something that the Brussels site could never have offered. 'It gave us the opportunity to rethink the entire layout and organize production in a more structured and scalable way, with room for future development,' he adds. Processes were standardized, new machinery installed and a proprietary Ultra HD flexo print standard adopted, which Desmedt says exceeds Full HD Flexo requirements.

Process before technology

'If a task does not add value to the product, the question is whether it should exist at all,' says Köhler. That sentence captures a philosophy that has guided every major investment since 2013, when he set out to replace one aging flexo press and ended up ordering three Mark Andy Performance Series P7 lines, each fitted with Martin Automatic MBSF butt splicers.

Output increased 25 to 30 percent once the splicers enabled continuous roll changes without stopping the press. Köhler is characteristically understated about this. 'Automatic roll changing is not particularly visible, but it removes a recurring interruption and improves overall flow.' He is less understated about the trap he sees other converters falling into. 'Investments often focus on visible elements such as new presses, but if the process is not right, you risk adding capacity to inefficiency.'

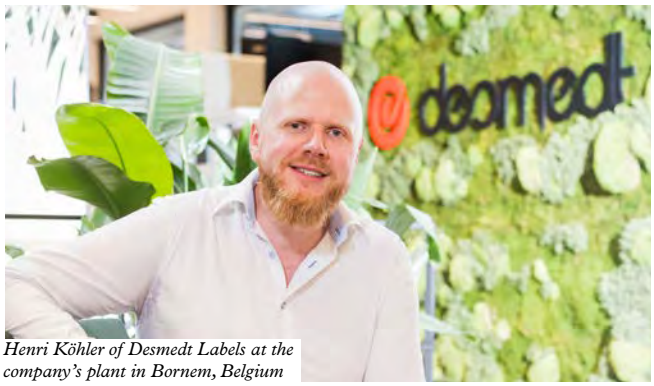
By 2018, two 10-color P7 presses had replaced three existing flexo machines and a digital line. For business development work, a 12-color P7 followed. All three ran 430mm webs with UV LED curing, making the plant Mark Andy's largest UV LED narrow-web installation at the time. Köhler had adopted LED curing early, in 2016, working closely with Siegwerk to develop a full range of LED-compatible inks for the flexo process when the technology was not yet widely established. Consuming roughly half the energy of conventional mercury vapor bulbs and lasting far longer, the lamps aligned with his preference for investments that compound over time. Martin Automatic units on each press were saving roughly five minutes per roll change, which he calculated to be about 1,200 extra production hours a year across the three lines.

Alongside the presses, a Matho Cuttopress waste-extraction system removes matrix waste from multiple machines into an external compactor. Martin's LRD rewinder, fitted with in-line slitting and a mobility kit, could be wheeled between presses depending on which job needed automatic rewind. 'Automation for us is about many small, consistent improvements rather than isolated, highly visible investments,' notes Köhler.

By 2024 the fleet had grown to five P7 lines. One detail stands out. As the flexo presses became faster to change over, Desmedt began pulling short-run work back from digital to flexo. Most converters are moving in the opposite direction. 'It's not about speed, it's about improving productivity by increasing uptime and reducing waste,' Köhler explains. If a flexo press with non-stop splicing can change jobs in minutes and run continuously, the economics shift. On digital, by contrast, each manual roll change still costs roughly five minutes of production with the press standing idle.

Hybrid fills the gap

Mark Andy's Digital Pro Max occupies a different space. It combines a 5-color CMYK plus white toner engine with servo-driven flexo



Henri Köhler of Desmedt Labels at the company's plant in Bornem, Belgium


The Mark Andy Digital Pro Max hybrid press paired with Martin Automatic non-stop splicer

"Sustainability has become a baseline requirement in the market. It does not necessarily win business on its own, but if you do not meet those expectations, you risk being excluded"

stations on a 330mm web, running at 20 to 40m/min depending on the job. At Desmedt, the configuration includes a web cleaner, corona treater, flexo units on either side of the digital engine, laminator, semi-rotary die station and slitter. Its modular construction lets converters add capabilities retrospectively, which suits Köhler's preference for equipment that adapts rather than gets replaced.

Paired with the press, a Martin Automatic MBSC compact splicer can load two full 4,000-meter rolls and features a laser-assisted tape alignment system designed to prevent matrix breaks. That non-stop feed is what generates Köhler's 750-hour figure. Beyond the time saved, the system reduces material waste by maximizing roll usage down to the core and enabling operators to reload partially used rolls without stopping the press.

Recruiting for mindset

Automation has changed who Desmedt hires, not how many. Staff comes from 10 nationalities, and each employee averages around 49 hours of training a year. Collaborative robots now work alongside operators on the production floor, handling repetitive lifting tasks. Asked whether automation will eventually reduce headcount, Köhler draws a parallel with automotive: 'They operate with large numbers of robots but still employ significant workforces. Repetitive tasks can be automated effectively, but variability remains difficult to handle.'

Operators now spend less time on manual work and more on process oversight. Finding people with traditional printing backgrounds has become harder, but Köhler says that matters less than it used to.

'We look for mindset. People who are willing to learn and adapt can be trained internally, which has become more important than prior specialization.'

Sustainability as continuity

Hard data tells the environmental story more concisely than certifications. Between 2020 and 2025, Desmedt's Scope 1 and 2 emissions fell 94.6 percent, from 331 to just 18 tons. What makes the figure striking is the breadth of operational changes behind it. A new HVAC system engineered for the production environment replaced high-GWP refrigerants with R290 propane. Central press cooling with free-cooling technology cut electricity demand. Compressed air systems were optimized after an energy audit revealed that reducing pipe pressure by one bar saved substantial power without affecting press performance. LED curing across the flexo fleet halved curing energy. An energy monitoring tool with sensors on power lines identified an additional 150 MWh in annual savings by eliminating standby consumption. Employee awareness programs targeting energy losses contributed too. Only after these reductions were locked in did Desmedt transition to 100 percent certified green electricity in 2025.

Ultra HD flexo now accounts for 77 percent of non-pharmaceutical production. Ink consumption per square meter of label produced has fallen 23 percent since the 2020 baseline, while residual waste is down 11 percent. All paper labels use FSC-certified stock.

In 2024, Desmedt won the Best First Sustainability Report award at the Belgian Awards for Sustainability Reports, and the company holds EcoVadis Gold for a second consecutive year, placing it in the top five percent of rated companies worldwide.

None of this is framed as altruism. 'More efficient use of materials, energy and processes typically leads to better performance and supports long-term profitability,' Köhler says. 'Sustainability has become a baseline requirement in the market. It does not necessarily win business on its own, but if you do not meet those expectations, you risk being excluded.'

Demand-driven logistics

Construction of a fully automated warehouse began in 2025. Rather than batch-driven logistics, the system is demand-driven. 'Material handling becomes directly aligned with actual production needs and customer delivery requirements,' says Köhler. 'This is very much in line with the just-in-time principles: ensuring that the right material is available at the right moment, rather than moving and storing it earlier than needed.' Safety is part of the rationale too, with less manual handling and fewer interactions with moving equipment.

Further flexo press investments are planned, each with non-stop splicers as standard.

Asked what sets the company apart, Köhler circles back to the same theme: 'It is not a standalone initiative, but part of a long-term approach where we continuously reduce waste, improve flow and strengthen the resilience of our business. Ultimately, every investment is about ensuring continuity for our customers, our employees and the next generation.'

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Impact Labelling doubles down on digital inkjet with Screen

Irish family converter builds inkjet platform for growth. Piotr Wnuk reports

Five years ago, Impact Labelling installed Ireland's first Screen low-migration inkjet press. It was a bet. The Limerick-based family converter was already running flexo presses, already serving food and pharma customers, already growing steadily. Digital inkjet was the accelerant, not the foundation.

That bet has paid off. Sales have more than doubled. The company now delivers over 2 million labels a day to customers in more than 70 countries. In April 2026, it commissioned a second Screen Truepress for a dedicated new unit at Eastlink Business Park. A 5,000sqft expansion of its premises is underway. The workforce has grown. So has the ambition.

'We need to keep growing to keep up with the larger groups,' says Evan Fox, managing director of Impact Labelling and second-generation head of the family business. 'Impact has a truly committed team that works hard every day and shares a clear passion for where the company is headed.'

Fox grew up playing around his father's factory and remembers copies of Labels & Labeling always being around. Now his own children spend school holidays sweeping the warehouse floor. This time, they will be able to find an article about them in the magazine.

Founded more than 25 years ago by Richard and Deirdre Fox, Impact Labelling operates from two sites at the same business park: a main production facility that houses flexographic printing, finishing and warehousing, and a separate Digital Hub now dedicated entirely to its Screen inkjet presses. The setup is deliberate. Fox wanted digital production consolidated under one roof, physically distinct from the flexo operation but close enough to share resources. It is a structure that reflects where the company is heading as much as where it has been.

Digital journey begins

The first Screen press, a Truepress L350UV+ LM, arrived in 2021. Impact Labelling chose it for a specific reason: low-migration inks certified by EuPIA, Swiss Ordinance and Nestlé, which opened the door to regulated food and pharmaceutical work that had been difficult to serve with flexo alone.

'This machine enables us to supply labels at competitive prices, with extremely short lead times and provides a consistently high-quality product every time,' notes Fox. 'The fact that Screen's technology is food and pharma safe was very important to us.'



Evan Fox, managing director of Impact Labelling

"The business is a huge part of our family life. We talk labels at Sunday dinner"

Short runs that would have been uneconomical on flexo became viable overnight. Changeovers were fast, substrate waste was minimal, and new customers followed quickly. The press opened doors to regulated markets that had previously required converters with specialist compliance credentials, giving Impact Labelling access to pharmaceutical and food industry clients who demanded both consistent quality and full traceability.

The effect on the business was immediate and measurable. Even with significantly higher volumes and more orders per day, Impact Labelling maintained an average turnaround of 4.5 days. To keep pace, the company added a second digital finishing line and introduced an additional shift. The growth was not just incremental. It fundamentally changed the balance of the business.

Second press adds capacity

The first machine's reliability made the case for a second. Over 4.5 years, the Screen press recorded uptime exceeding 90 percent, with only five days of downtime due to breakdowns. Those are numbers that justify a repeat purchase without much debate.

The new press is a Truepress Label SAI S running a six-color CMYK with white and orange configuration at speeds of up to 60m/min. The press was commissioned in late March 2026 and entered production the following week.

Fox frames the decision in terms of capacity rather than technology for its own sake. 'We have been extremely happy with the quality and uptime of the Screen press, so investing in a second machine was the logical next step,' he explains. 'Rather than expanding flexo capacity directly, doubling down on digital inkjet allows us to handle more work efficiently while also freeing up flexo capacity and adding digital redundancy. That gives us more room for growth across our core target industries.'

Local support comes from Litho Supplies, Screen Europe's distributor in Ireland, with engineers available remotely within minutes and on-site within two hours. 'It's important to find the right machinery for success in the label printing sector, but also the right partners,' adds Richard Styles, managing director of Litho Supplies. 'Impact Labelling needs mutual trust with clients and a reputation for reliability, two things they've already come to expect from Screen.'

Hybrid production model

None of this has come at the expense of flexo. Impact Labelling runs Mark Andy Performance Series presses alongside the two Screen machines, with an A B Graphic Omega SRI finishing system providing 100 percent camera inspection via FleyeVision. The flexo side handles the company's blue-chip accounts.

The crossover point from digital to flexo is higher here than at most converters. Impact Labelling focuses on low- to medium-run work, where makeready time matters most, and the Screen presses push the economics of digital further up the run-length scale than many competitors can match. Which jobs go where depends on each customer's specific requirements, but the bias is clearly toward digital for anything below a certain volume threshold.

What ties the two platforms together is Flint Group's Vivo color management system. Fox is emphatic about its impact.

'Vivo has been revolutionary for us, taking the guesswork and trial-and-error out of color matching,' he notes. 'It works seamlessly across both platforms, giving us either an ink mix for flexo or a Pantone reference we can then input to the Screen presses, consistently delivering matches under delta 2.' For customers whose work moves between digital and flexo depending on run length, that sub-delta-2 consistency means brand colors stay identical regardless of which press prints the job.

Local roots, global reach

Ireland has no shortage of good label converters. Impact Labelling has not tried to compete for the ultra-long-run accounts that attract the bigger groups. Instead, it has built its reputation on speed, service and flexibility, qualities that appeal equally to a local artisan food producer ordering a few thousand labels and multinational brands managing hundreds of SKUs across multiple markets. The company's labels end up on products in over 70 countries, but the relationships that generate that work are often personal and local.

'We always strive to deliver the same level of service and quality, whether it is for a household-name multinational or a local artisan producer,' explains Fox. 'We spend a lot of time pursuing household-name brands, as those relationships can take a long time to develop. Smaller accounts, on the other hand, often come through word of mouth or social media, which has been a massive tool in helping us spread our wings in recent years.'

The company sponsors the Blas na hÉireann Irish food awards and offers Kanban and VMI inventory management alongside anonymous delivery for trade customers and a 24/7 online ordering portal called Siteline, which integrates with the company's Label Traxx ERP. These are not bolt-ons. They are central to a service proposition designed to embed Impact Labelling deep into its customers' supply chains, making it harder for competitors to dislodge on price alone.

Sustainability and compliance

Impact Labelling earned its ISO 9001 certification back in 1999, when the previous generation was still at the helm. Fox points out that many of the practices, now labeled sustainable, were simply how the company operated from the start: waste reduction, energy efficiency and responsible sourcing. The difference now is that customers are asking for the paperwork to prove it.

Today, the certifications include ISO 9001:2015, ISO 45001 and ISO 14001 and EcoVadis recognition. Solar panels installed under the company's Impact Green initiative in 2020 now generate over 30 percent of on-site energy. Combined with food safety compliance through EuPIA, Swiss Ordinance and Nestlé-certified digital inks, the portfolio has become a genuine competitive advantage, particularly with customers who audit their supply chains before placing orders.



L-R: Bui Burke, senior VP of sales at Screen Europe; Evan Fox, managing director of Impact Labelling; Hiromi Sakurai, president of sales and business management at Screen Graphic Solutions and Richard Styles of Litho Supplies



The new Screen Truepress Label SAI S runs a six-color CMYKWO configuration at speeds of up to 60m/min

"Doubling down on digital inkjet allows us to handle more work efficiently while also freeing up flexo capacity and adding digital redundancy"

'In the last two to three years, especially, we have seen a huge push from customers toward leaner and more sustainable operations,' Fox observes. 'It is a journey we are delighted to support them with, not only because it is what customers want, but because it is important that we do what we can for the next generation.'

Investing for the future

The wish list for the next investment cycle is long: a 17-inch flexographic press, another digital finishing line, additional ABG Digicon modules for embellishment and crossover work, another camera inspection line and a potential upgrade to the main plain white line. The 5,000sqft expansion at Eastlink Business Park, secured in late 2025, is being fitted out to accommodate new machinery, additional warehousing and dedicated Kanban storage for key customers.

'This is the question that keeps me awake at night because there always seems to be more investment requirements, thankfully,' Fox admits. 'Most of our investment decisions are driven by customer requirements and lead times, so the timing will depend on which projects move first.'

Being family-owned shapes how those calls get made. Impact Labelling can move fast when it spots an opportunity. There is no board to convince, no quarterly earnings cycle to manage. But equally, every investment is weighed against the long term. Fox is already thinking about the generation after his own, and every decision reflects a simple question: will this still make sense in 10 years?

'The business is a huge part of our family life. We talk labels at Sunday dinner,' he comments. 'I want them to understand the business from the ground up so that, if they decide to take it on one day, they are as well prepared as I was, thanks to the way my father prepared me.'

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Konica Minolta develops dedicated label segment

Over the past year, Konica Minolta has built a standalone label segment to target mid-market converters. Selah Zighelboim reports

Konica Minolta has long been known as an entry-level press technology supplier, catering to small label converters and companies new to digital label printing.

The company is now seeking to change that reputation.

Over the past year, Konica Minolta has been building out its label segment into a standalone department. The company has been hiring experienced professionals from the label industry, hosting open houses to highlight its label commitment and presenting its label technology portfolio in a new way. The goal is to expand its label customer base, from small converters to mid-market ones in the 5-15 million USD range as well.

'Konica, for the longest time, has really undervalued or undersold what it's capable of,' says Michael Cox, director of category strategy for labels and packaging at Konica Minolta. 'We should be playing in those mid-market accounts, just as much as anybody else should be.'

At the heart of this new approach is an enhanced focus on its AccurioLabel 400 digital press, alongside strengthened sales and customer service teams for its label segment.

'We're putting our money on labels. That's why we created the entire program, infrastructure and support just for the label segment, and separated it from the rest of the business,' says Ashley Gorfine, vice president, North America, industrial print channel, Konica Minolta.

Technology

Konica Minolta offers two digital label presses: its more entry-level AccurioLabel 230, which the company launched at Labelexpo Europe 2019, and its AccurioLabel 400, released in 2023. This latter machine is a modular, flexible, CMYK+white press. Cox describes it as easy to use and maintain with a robust engine, and available at an attractive price point.

Konica Minolta's JetVarnish 3D Web 400, also for the label segment, is a modular digital embellishment machine capable of digital spot UV varnish and hot foil embellishments.

'Most of the time, people have just considered Konica Minolta an entry-level press; it's how you build your label business, not how you grow your label business,' Cox says. 'No, quite the contrary. We believe you can grow your label business with your AccurioLabel 400 specifically.'

In that vein, Konica Minolta is bringing the AccurioLabel 400 and the JetVarnish 3D Web 400 to Loupe Americas 2026.

New hires

To strengthen its expertise as it builds its label segment, Konica Minolta has been hiring experienced label professionals.

Its label segment's dedicated sales team has grown by about 40 percent over the past year, while its label support team has grown by about 25 percent.

Some notable label hires include Kent Wolford, who joined Konica Minolta in January 2026 as area vice president, industrial print packaging and labels. He brings 25 years of industry experience. Konica Minolta hired Bryan Topham as its director of industrial print business development and channel strategy in September of 2025. Topham has more than 10 years of label experience. Cox himself, who has been in the label industry for 25 years, was hired in December of 2025.



Konica Minolta's Artie Williams demonstrates the AccurioLabel 400 press

"In 2026, our strategy is almost a reintroduction of the Konica Minolta brand"

'In 2026, our strategy is almost a reintroduction of the Konica Minolta brand,' Cox says.

Open houses

Konica Minolta's new label strategy has motivated a series of open houses that the company has held over the past year at its Client Engagement Center in Ramsey, New Jersey.

Its most recent open house, on May 5, 2026, attracted the largest attendance yet, with 56 attendees from 42 companies. While most attendees were commercial printers, more than half of participants expressed interest in labels.

The event saw introductory remarks from Sam Errigo, president and CEO of Konica Minolta Business Solutions USA, and Michael Mathé, executive vice president and chief operating officer. Frank Mallozzi, president of industrial print packaging at Konica Minolta, then gave an overview of Konica Minolta's presence in different print segments and highlighted the support Konica Minolta provides to customers.

The open house's keynote speaker, Marco Boer of IT Strategies, gave a presentation on the challenges and opportunities facing the print industry. He noted that while the label industry's growth has been flat over the past few years, he predicts the segment will soon see a nine percent CAGR due to GS1 Sunrise 2027 and the retail industry's commitment to implementing 2D barcodes.

Following Boer's presentation and a customer panel he moderated, attendees broke up into groups to see demonstrations of Konica Minolta technology, including the AccurioLabel 230, AccurioLabel 400 and the Jet Varnish 3D Web 400.

'Konica Minolta knows where the market is headed in labels, and we want to stay ahead of it,' Gorfine says.

Scan the QR code to read more news about the North American label market

Blue Label Packaging expands with direct-can printing

The Ohio converter invested in a Velox digital inkjet direct-can printing machine to meet the evolving needs of the beer industry. Selah Zighelboim reports

The year was 1978. Norman Boyd, a so-called 'counter-cultural revolutionary', decided to climb Mount Everest. He hadn't brought the right equipment, so he wasn't able to reach the summit, but during the climb, he became good friends with his Sherpa, Ratna. When it was time for Norman Boyd to return to the US, he gave Ratna a parting gift: his brand-new pair of Nikes. The shoes didn't fit, but rather than accept that he couldn't wear them, Ratna used a knife to cut off his calluses and make his feet fit.

This is a story that Norman's son, Andrew Boyd, now president of Blue Label Packaging, often returns to, believing it offers valuable lessons for running a company.

'Your customers are going to be who they are,' he says. 'You can't change people's behavior, but what you can do is accommodate who they are and try to make your foot fit the shoe. That's where we've been as a business.'

This mentality has guided Blue Label throughout its nearly 70 years of operation. The converter has adapted and invested in new technology more than once to meet its customers' needs and wants. In its early days, it invested in digital label technology to fulfill the high-customization expectations of its client base, primarily churches at the time. More recently, Blue Label invested in direct-can printing technology to meet the evolving sustainability-driven needs of the beer industry.

Today, the bulk of Blue Label's work, about 85 percent, is in the beverage industry. Labels make up about 80 percent of its revenue, while shrink sleeves account for 10 percent and tags for five percent. Its newest segment, printed cans, make up the remaining five percent and are a rapidly growing part of the company.

Direct-can printing

Early this year, Blue Label Packaging officially began producing direct-printed cans with its Velox IDS-NC 500 inkjet machine.

Andrew Boyd made the decision to invest in direct-can printing because he believes that's the direction the beer industry is going in. Consumers are already familiar with direct-printed cans for sodas and large beer companies. Plus, direct-printed cans don't require a secondary piece of packaging, making them a more sustainable option. A few years ago, Quebec went so far as to ban plastic labels on aluminum cans, as they disrupt aluminum recycling streams.

This puts pressure on breweries to adopt alternative labeling methods. And for breweries needing multi-SKU work or runs shorter than 200,000 cans, digital printing makes sense.

'Customers are making a choice for their packaging mix due to a number of factors; some we can control, most we can't, be it cost, be it environmental reasons, be it application set-up, be it the performance of the drink itself,' Andrew Boyd says. 'In our mind, we wanted to be a part of that conversation, regardless of the direction they went, and we knew that, in order to do that, we had to provide something in the direct-object realm.'

Blue Label's direct-can customers generally have runs ranging from 6,000 to 50,000 cans, with some exceeding 100,000. These orders are larger than Blue Label's other products. Most of these customers are brands that Blue Label has never worked with before.

A handful of Blue Label employees have been trained to operate the Velox system. Each of them applied for the position and worked alongside the installation engineers to learn how to use it. The Velox machine requires more maintenance from Blue Label employees than the converter's other digital presses and finishing technology. 'They have a master's degree on that machine,' Andrew Boyd says.

Journey with Velox

Blue Label Packaging has been on a several-year-long journey with Velox to get to where it is today with digital direct-can printing.

At the time Blue Label was looking to invest, there were a few companies with digital direct can printing technology on the market, but Velox, an Israeli company, stood out to him because several former HP employees worked there. So, while on a trip to Israel in 2022 to visit HP, Boyd stopped by Velox's facility to see its machinery and meet the owners.

Six months later, Boyd cut the check.

Then, just a few months afterward, on October 7, 2023, Israel went to war, delaying the Velox machine.

The year after, in the fall of 2024, Velox began dealing with financial issues that have impacted its ability to produce more machines. This also delayed the Velox machine, which finally arrived at Blue Label's facility in 2025.

After nearly three years of navigating geopolitical obstacles and the supplier's situation. Boyd is relieved that the machine is finally operational. When he watches it run now, he does so

> "It prints 900x900 DPI. The color consistency is great. Color-matching abilities are great"



L-R: Joe Schorr, director of operations; Gopi Vemavaram, head of direct-to-object operations; Andrew Boyd, president; and Gareth Boyd, director of finance, in front of the Velox machine



Robotic arms load and unload cans onto and off the Velox machine

"Customers are making a choice for their packaging mix due to a number of factors; some we can control, most we can't"

smiling from ear to ear.

The Velox machine itself is massive, with 700 printheads, measuring 40x11x12ft and weighing 30 tons. It costs the equivalent of three or four label converting lines.

BW Integrated Systems robotic arms load blank aluminum cans onto a conveyor belt, also from BWIS. After the cans are printed on the Velox machine, the robotic arms load them onto pallets, and a Signode machine places bands around the pallets.

The machine is housed in a 30,000sqft room that was renovated for the machinery. Specific flooring had to be installed, and a wall had to be removed to move the Velox into the space. The room had previously been a warehouse for extra rolls of material. Next to the direct-can printing system, tall stacks of blank aluminum cans fill the room. Blue Label keeps a few million blank cans on hand to fulfill orders quickly.

Boyd is pleased with the quality the Velox machine produces.

'It prints 900x900 DPI. The color consistency is great. Color-matching abilities are great,' Boyd says. 'It's creating a product that for the industry is really top of the line.'

A family business

Family-owned Blue Label, then called One Write Company, was founded in 1957 to produce envelopes and forms, primarily specializing in church offering envelopes. As the company grew, the church offering envelope business was split off from the rest of the company, which produced commercial envelopes. The family sold the commercial envelope company in 2002 and retained the church offering-envelope segment.

With the rise of internet donations, the company looked into what other services it could provide to its 10,000 church customers. The company decided to start producing labels for these churches and invested in early digital printing technology with an HP Indigo 4K and an A B Graphic Digicon Omega, for micro-runs as small as 100 labels.

'For us as digital label printers, it's been about how do you economize on all the similarities between the work, so keep your costs in line, yet still be able to deliver a piece of custom packaging for each and every small business, which is far too small for somebody that has million-dollar accounts,' Andrew Boyd says. 'It's not uncommon for us to have a couple-thousand-dollar accounts. That's a huge part of our business in terms of volume.'

Around 2012, when Andrew Boyd joined the business, Blue Label decided to focus on digital label production. It invested in an HP Indigo 6K and a Series 2 ABG Digicon Omega with hot-foil stamping. The company also decided to pursue the beverage market, specifically craft beer, an emerging industry at the time that didn't require long runs for its bottle labels.

With Andrew Boyd, then vice president of the label division, the company expanded into labels for craft spirits, wine and cannabis, as well as specialty foods and nutraceuticals.

The company added shrink sleeves to its offerings in 2018, and in January of 2026, it officially began manufacturing its newest product: printed cans.

Digital technology

Blue Label has always been a fully digital label-printing company, using only HP label presses and ABG finishing equipment.

Its facility, located on the outskirts of Lancaster, Ohio, houses an HP Indigo 200K, four HP Indigo 6Ks, an HP Indigo 69K, a sheet-fed HP Indigo 5600 for tags and an HP Indigo 20K and 25K for shrink sleeves.

Blue Label uses the 200K, its newest label press, for labels and shrink sleeves. By taking advantage of its wider width and in-line slitting, Blue Label can print labels at double the speed.

Blue Label's facility also houses 10 ABG finishing machines, primarily Series 3 Digicons.

Boyd prefers to work with just a few suppliers, as it allows his team to develop greater expertise on the machinery. He says that HP and ABG have both been excellent partners, and he appreciates that both suppliers invest in R&D and are forward-thinkers.

Blue Label uses Cerm for its workflow software. Boyd says that Cerm has enabled the converter to scale quickly, including for its direct object printing operations. The software supplier already had a direct-to-object workflow.

With the number of SKUs Blue Label handles, having a seamless workflow system is crucial.

Cerm also invests in R&D, and the company constantly adds new capabilities.

'They want to be a one-stop shop for a packaging company for an ERP system,' Boyd says. 'They've grown so much, and they've added so much capability. It's good to see them profiting, and the money is going back into the business. Every year, you have more service techs, you have more capabilities possible with them. With Infigo, we launched e-commerce last year, and for the service side of it, they were able to get a lot done. We have a successful web storefront that actually hooks all the way into our MIS, and it's giving you live, real pricing.'

Now with the Velox machine, Boyd believes that digital direct-can printing could make up a quarter of the Blue Label's revenue within a few years. However, he's not sure he would recommend it for other label converters because of how much work it's been to implement.

At the same time, Boyd notes that direct-object printing may eventually serve as a disruptive force in the label industry, particularly in a segment like beverage cans.

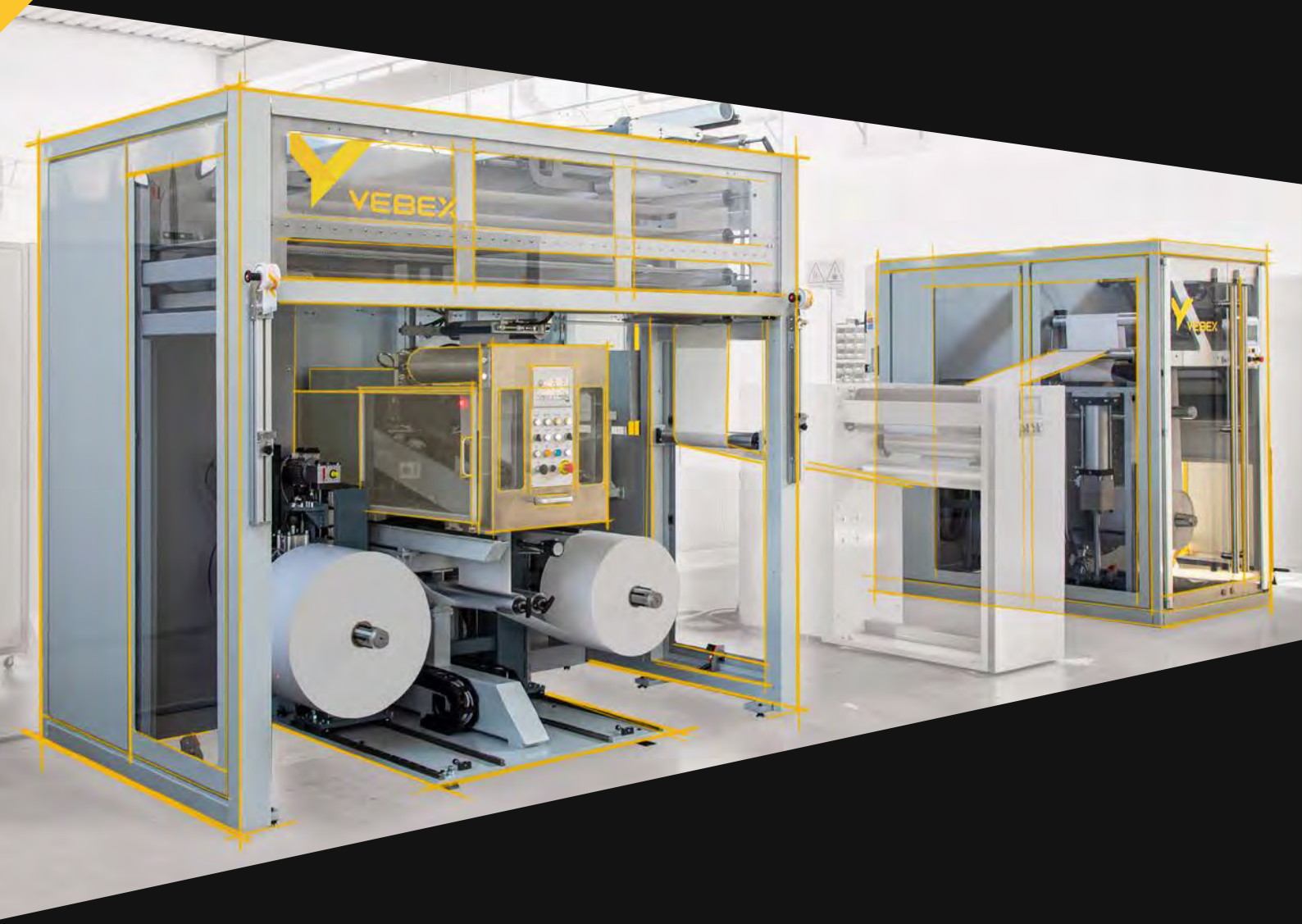
'People are going to make a decision either way,' Boyd says. 'You either have a solution for them, or you don't. It's hard to convince a customer to change; it is much easier to meet them where they are.'

Scan the QR code to learn more about Blue Label Packaging

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Liberty Marking Systems grows from thermal transfer roots

Throughout its 38 years of operation, the Cincinnati label converter has remained committed to its company culture. Selah Zighelboim reports

Tim Beam founded Liberty Marking Systems in 1988, with just two employees selling thermal transfer labels and ribbons out of a basement. He wanted Liberty Marking Systems to be the best place that his employees had ever worked, and for the company to prioritize work-life balance.

Now, 38 years later, much has changed at Liberty Marking Systems. The Cincinnati, Ohio, converter has 33 employees, occupies a 30,000sqft facility space, runs six presses and brings in 12 million USD in revenue annually. Tim Beam's son, Brian Beam, helms the company. But one thing that has stayed the same is Liberty Marking Systems' commitment to its culture.

'When Tim started the company, he said: "We're going to make sure that the people that come work for us, we take care of them; and that family is still their number one obligation,"' president Brian Beam says. 'If [you're] at work and something happens, not only are we going to allow you to take care of that, we expect you to go take care of your family.'

Today, the vast majority, about 95 percent, of the Liberty Marking Systems' products are pressure-sensitive labels, half of which are printed and half blank. The other five percent are tags.

The company specializes in functional, industrial and thermal transfer labels. Its biggest end-use markets are automotive, chemicals, warehousing and distribution, and food and beverage. Some examples of the company's labels include automotive labels found under car hoods and bakery labels with ingredient and nutritional information.

For many of its labels, Liberty Marking Systems produces printed and branded pressure-sensitive labels for a customer, and the customer then adds information via on-demand variable printing.



President Brian Beam and lead digital operator Laura McMillian in front of the Bobst Digital Master 340 press

"Ensuring that the print is durable enough for the environment where the labels are used is certainly something we must consider"

History

Before Tim Beam established Liberty Marking Systems, he worked for another company, repairing and selling thermal transfer printers. The clients he visited often asked him to sell them labelstock and ribbons, but the company wasn't interested in doing that. So, Tim Beam decided to start Liberty Marking Systems to sell those products himself.

The company expanded by adding a die-cutter and a Zebra printer, enabling Liberty Marking Systems to start selling printed labels. In 1991, it moved into its first building. One of the company's biggest clients in its early days was Kimball Electronics in Jasper, Indiana, which helped establish Liberty Marking Systems in the industrial industry.

Tim Beam still serves as chief financial officer, and he meets regularly with his son to go over the company's financials. Brian Beam has been with the company since he graduated from college in 2007.

'I did major in entrepreneurship at the University of Dayton, so I knew I wanted to own and run my own business,' Brian Beam says. 'Seeing my dad do that, it always looked challenging, fun and flexible, but I was never really involved much in the business growing up, so I didn't just expect or anticipate taking over the business or working for the business. But after spending a few months after graduation looking at different things, somebody made the recommendation to me that if I could work for my father, it's worth giving it a shot.'

Brian Beam started in the sales team for the company and, around 2014, he became a minority owner. A few years later, he began taking over operational leadership responsibilities, focusing on building out the company's software system.

Functional and industrial labels

Specializing in functional and industrial labels brings its own set of considerations at Liberty Marking Systems.

For instance, much of Liberty Marking Systems' work requires durable material, which is often more expensive and can pose challenges.

'Printing on durable materials is not always as simple,' Brian Beam says. 'We found that material might work well for the first couple thousand feet, and then you hit areas where the coating or the thickness of the material impacts the print that we're doing. Ensuring that the print is durable enough for the environment where the labels are used is certainly something we must consider. We use mostly water-based ink for our flexo presses, so we typically must put an overlaminate on those, which then just adds another element of quality control, making sure the laminate is flat, it's not wrinkling or bubbling, and not causing the labels to curl.'

Version control is also essential, as many of the labels they

"If we take care of the employees right, the rest of this will just fall into place"

produce look similar.

Additionally, many of Liberty Marking Systems' labels require the brand to perform some of its own printing, such as for nutritional information. Liberty Marking Systems prefers to provide all the elements a brand might need for this, so it can better support its customers.

'It's another variable that either needs to be taken into account, or that could go wrong, which is why we like to support everything from the software, the labels, the ribbon, the printers, the applicators,' Brian Beam says. 'If something isn't working at optimal levels, we don't have a lot of finger-pointing going on. We just say we've provided the whole supply chain. From the label project perspective, we've got to fix it. It is another element and another challenge, but it's also a major selling point for us that we can provide the whole gamut.'

Liberty Marking Systems does some work with prime labels, often for hardware store products that are not heavily brand-forward. The company has not pursued this segment more in part because of the high level of scrutiny, which requires practically flawless inspection and quality control.

Printing technology

Liberty Marking Systems has five flexo presses and one digital press.

The converter has four Nilpeter FB-Line presses and one Mark Andy 2200 press with a Domino printbar. Liberty Marking Systems invested in the printbar about three years ago, enabling it to expand its variable-data printing offerings. All its flexo presses are 13in.

Its digital press, a Bobst Digital Master 340, is the company's newest installation. Liberty Marking Systems used to outsource its digital printing jobs until it decided to invest in its own digital press, which was installed in October of 2024. The press offers faster turnarounds, with speedier set-ups and no changeovers or cleanups. Digital has also enabled Liberty Marking Systems to do some prime label work.

'Long-running single SKUs, or large volumes of single SKUs, still make sense to run on a flexo,' Brain Beam says. 'Digital is where your small and medium runs really start to play; lots of different SKUs, front-back combinations, things of that nature.'

For finishing technology, the company has three die-cutters from Kor Engineering, Pac-35 and Arpeco and five Mark Andy Rotoflex slitter rewinders.

Custom software

Liberty Marking Systems has its own custom software, which it began developing in 2016, when it transitioned to a new order entry system. This system grew to encompass job tracking, inventory, purchasing, quoting and accounting. It helps automate processes, something that has been a passion of Brian Beam's.

Liberty Marking Systems developed the software with a contractor. Brian Beam decided to go this route rather than with a software supplier because he wanted to create a system that built on what long-term employees were already doing.

'At that point, we had probably 25 employees. Most of them had been here for two decades or more, so they were very comfortable, familiar and successful with doing things the way we've always done,' Brian Beam says. 'I knew that we wouldn't be able to continue to let everybody have their own Excel spreadsheet and put information in their own silo, and I just felt like the custom system was meeting them where they were, versus a complete SAP overhaul or going with Oracle or Label Traxx.

'I just thought, this gives me and the team the control to do things the way we want to do,' he continues. 'We hadn't had a lot of experience with out-of-the-box software, and we had success with our first system.'

Liberty Marking Systems has been using this custom software successfully for the past 10 years.

'We certainly wouldn't be where we are today without it,' Brian Beam says.

Aritificial intelligence

Brian Beam is also a proponent of AI, and he strives to make Liberty Marking Systems an 'AI-first company'. He has encouraged his leadership team to experiment and become familiar with it. He even hired a local leadership organization, Leadership Excelleration, to conduct a four-week-long AI workshop with Liberty Marking's leadership team.

Liberty Marking Systems primarily uses ChatGPT for its AI needs and has also utilized Microsoft Copilot. It has leveraged AI to address a variety of challenges, such as analyzing job-level profitability to help the converter determine how to focus its time and effort.

Liberty Marking Systems created an AI policy, shaped by security and privacy needs, to guide employees on using the technology and to protect the company.

'We make sure that it's an effective



Liberty Marking Systems

document. Also, if there are other models or platforms people want to use, we should know which ones. We can test them, vet them, and ultimately, if they do become approved AI platforms, we can then make everybody aware of it,' he says.

Vision charter

With its 40th anniversary coming up in 2028, Liberty Marking Systems created a vision charter outlining goals for the company.

The charter focuses on six pillars: employee experience, culture of operationalizing, sales and marketing, finance, other stakeholders and the customer experience. Each pillar comes with five goals or success statements. These include employees having more frequent check-ins with managers and ensuring that standard documentation procedures are written down.

Of these pillars, Brian Beam feels that employee experience carries the most weight. Beyond the vision charter, the company's employee perks and benefits include access to educational workshops and a financial wellness program. Employees can offer each other recognition through its 'Thnks' program and gift each other a coffee, a lunch or an experience, funded by Liberty Marking Systems. Employees can also earn Core Value Cards that can be redeemed for experiences like sporting events.

'If we take care of the employees right, the rest of this will just fall into place,' Brian Beam concludes.

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Altro Labels adds folding carton

The family-owned business, based in the Vancouver area, views a new packaging segment as part of its vision to strengthen the supply chain resilience of Western Canada. Selah Zighelboim reports

When the Naemi family immigrated from Iran to Canada in the year 2000, they brought with them a familiarity with the packaging industry, rooted in a family history of working in pressure-sensitive adhesives.

The family members who moved, siblings Baha, Ata and Mahna and uncle Sam, worked in different industries when they first came to Canada. Then, in 2018, they decided to join forces and enter the Canadian label and packaging industry, founding Altro Labels with a 10,000sqft facility in the Vancouver, British Columbia area and an MPS-Domino hybrid press. Since then, Abi Naemi, Baha, Ata and Mahna's father, has also joined the company, serving now as CEO.

Over the next few years, the family founded two more companies: Canada Corrugated Industries (CanCorr) and Norlands Box Company. CanCorr was started in 2020 to meet regional demand for corrugated sheets, which British Columbia primarily imported from the US. In 2021, the family began building an 110,000sqft facility to house Altro Labels and CanCorr. In 2024, the family started Norlands Box Company for corrugated sheet converting, with another 100,000sqft facility next door. The family also owns warehousing spaces in the vicinity.

Altogether, the family businesses have grown from 10 employees and 10,000sqft in 2018 to more than 150 employees and 300,000sqft in 2026.

For the Naemis, running these businesses hasn't only been about profit. The family is passionate about strengthening the local economy and developing supply chain resiliency, with the goal of seeing Western Canada less dependent on the US for imports.

It's a goal they had pursued for years before the two countries began imposing tariffs on each other in 2025. The Naemis are strategic in how they add and grow new market segments, aiming to compete with international players rather than other regional companies.

This mindset informed Altro Label's recent expansion into folding carton.

'We are quite careful with not disrupting our local Canadian-owned competition,' says Baha Naemi, chief strategy officer. 'It is important for us, with all the geopolitical issues going on with the US and the tariff wars. Our intention is to make sure that we actually do contribute to Canada's supply chain resilience.'

Altro Labels technology

Altro Labels initially produced custom blank labels and packaging tapes. As the Naemis' portfolio of packaging companies grew, Altro Labels did as well, adding shrink sleeve and now folding carton capabilities.

Altro Labels has an MPS-Domino N610i press and an HP Indigo 6800 press for printing labels.

The company uses its own custom workflow software that it built when it was a smaller company, and which continues to meet its needs.

In April of 2025, Altro Labels installed an HP Indigo 35K for folding cartons. This sheet-fed digital press runs at 3,450 sheets/hour and can print on a maximum sheet size of 29.5x20.9in. Altro also added a Kama ProFold 74 folder-gluer for finishing folding cartons.

Folding carton expansion

The converter had previously sourced folding cartons from outside businesses in Eastern Canada and the US. By investing in a folding carton press, Altro Labels has brought this offering in-house and is strengthening the folding carton production capability in Western Canada.

Altro Labels looked at several different options for folding carton presses and, after discussing with clients on their requirements, the company selected the HP Indigo 35K. As a digital folding carton press, the machine is capable of shorter runs, multiple SKUs and versioning.

'We do have an HP label printer as well, so that relationship has been there, and we've been happy with what they provide,' Baha Naemi says. 'It has amazing quality, which means we can service pretty much every industry. We are going after low- to medium-volume clients with our digital printer, and that has been performing fantastically well. We continue growing that market, especially on the food and beverage side.'

HP provided the required training and support for Altro Labels as the company adapted to the new technology.

'As with any expansion into a new product cat egory, there was a learning curve,' Baha Naemi says.

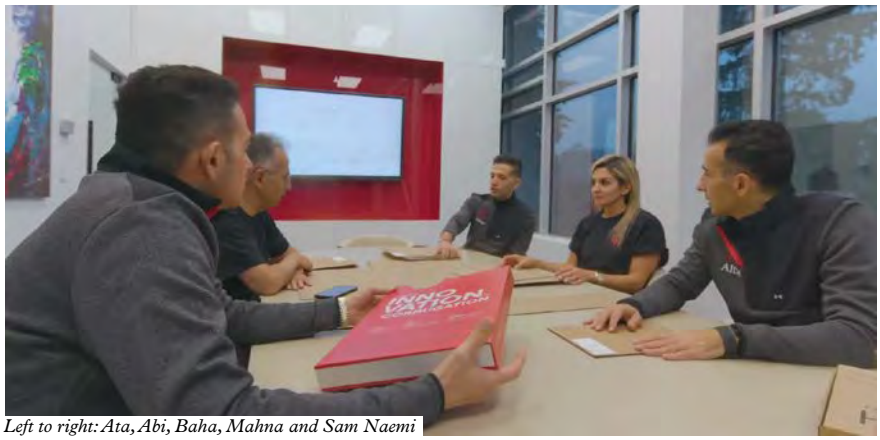
'Fortunately, HP provided excellent support throughout the implementation process, and several members of our team already had experience with folding carton finishing equipment, including Kama die-cutting and converting systems. That combination of internal expertise and strong vendor support helped us transition smoothly.'

Since the installation, Altro's folding carton business has grown by about 10 percent each quarter. However, Altro Labels is intentionally not growing this segment as quickly as it could, because the company

"As with any expansion into a new product category, there was a learning curve. Fortunately, HP provided excellent support throughout the implementation process"



The Altro Labels team in front of its HP Indigo 35K



Left to right: Ata, Abi, Baha, Mahna and Sam Naemi

"It is very important for us that there are really healthy, privately owned Canadian companies in British Columbia and Alberta that are active in folding carton"

wants to ensure it's not taking business away from other folding carton companies in Canada.

About 65 percent of Altro Label's business is still in labels, with folding carton, packaging tape and shrink sleeves following in that order.

Similar to its label business, the biggest markets for Altro's folding cartons are food and beverage, pharmaceuticals and nutraceuticals, agriculture and produce, manufacturing, distribution and moving and storage.

Supply chain resiliency

Supporting the regional economy and supply chain resiliency has been a significant part of the Naemi family's packaging work in Canada.

For example, before entering corrugated sheet manufacturing with CanCorr, the family researched the market for this in British Columbia and Alberta and found that regional corrugated converters imported most of their sheets from a few large American packaging companies, such as WestRock, International Packaging Corporation and International Paper.

'The main goal for us entering that industry was to be able to support local box converters by becoming a sheet feeder only, and that is a unique decision,' says Baha Naemi.

'I believe, from what I've read, that it hasn't been done in the past 50, 60 years, because that industry is saturated with fully vertically integrated corporations, so they have paper mills, corrugators and box converters. You basically never see someone be crazy enough to jump right in the middle of that supply chain.'

The Naemi family forged ahead with founding CanCorr because they believed Canada was different, as the country, particularly the western part, produced so little of its own corrugated sheets. The Naemi family entered this market intending to reduce Canada's reliance on the US for corrugated sheet imports.

When the US and Canada began imposing tariffs on each other's exports in the spring of 2025, that goal seemed more relevant than ever.

'You can imagine when the tariff wars started, it almost felt like our goal or our vision was being realized by the whole industry, because people understood that supply chain packaging products have direct effects on end-user consumer pricing,' Baha Naemi says.

'Western Canada being solely reliant on the US paper was a big risk, so we doubled down on that message, and thankfully the federal government in Canada also welcomed that messaging. That has convinced quite a lot of big players, even national accounts that generally sign contracts covering all of Canada, from east to west, to look at regionalized packaging strategies. That helped all three of our operations.'

To maintain this supply chain resiliency, Altro Labels has put a strategy in place to compete in the Western Canadian folding carton market.

'It is very important for us that there are really healthy, privately owned Canadian companies in British Columbia and Alberta that are active in folding carton,' Baha Naemi says. 'We don't want to flood the market or compete based on pricing. We want to gain our own share in the market. One of the things that helps us with our overall offering is that we do have a heavy focus on digital printing, and that gets carried from labels to folding cartons to corrugated boxes.'

Altro Labels does not approach labels with this same mindset, because this industry is more competitive globally and has more robust regional supply chains.

Western Canadian market

Altro Labels' location in Western Canada has informed its business strategy.

For example, the family has found that this regional market is relationship-driven, allowing them to secure an advantageous position in the region.

British Columbia, the westernmost province in Canada, is a unique market. It's not large, with a population of about 5.7 million, but it is home to the fourth-largest port in North America, and the largest in Canada. In 2025, the Port of Vancouver processed more than 170 million metric tons of cargo.

Baha Naemi notes that large companies and private equity firms often ignore British Columbia because it is a smaller market. When they do enter the region, they eventually exit it, leaving a void. This has been especially true with paper packaging.

Baha Naemi believes that the British Columbian market presents both opportunities and challenges. For example, Vancouver's status as one of the largest port cities in North America means that many goods enter and leave the region. As a result, there are many warehouses and distribution centers in the Vancouver area.

'Similar to what we've seen with paper packaging, there are other complementary packaging products that we believe can be added and are needed in Western Canada,' Baha Naemi says.

This could present unrealized business opportunities in Western Canada, such as co-packing, which the family has considered entering in the future.

'There's huge opportunity for a lot of local Canadians to start setting up shop and show that we can do much more than just be a port,' Baha Naemi says.

The family is proud to operate for Canadian companies.

'We really care about solving problems, especially when it comes to our own market and our own backyard,' says Baha Naemi. 'Our largest advantage or strength has been showcasing a really strong level of service as a Canadian independently owned converting operation.'

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Jackrom optimistic about Venezuela's future

Venezuelan converter Jackrom has ordered a Rotocon RFP flexo press to expand its flexible packaging production, amid optimism that better times lie ahead for the country. James Quirk reports

Venezuelan converter Jackrom is investing in a mid-web Rotocon RFP flexo press to expand its flexible packaging production.

In business for 54 years, the company is among the country's leading producers of labels, cartons and flexible packaging, having navigated times of boom and bust. With the Venezuelan economy beginning to bounce back following years of stagnation, Jackrom is optimistic about the country's future.

Jackrom was founded in 1972 by Juan Zaragoza. Beginning with a single one-color Heidelberg offset press, it printed labels for liquor brands before moving into the beer segment. Growth was gradual. Zaragoza added personnel and more Heidelberg presses to his fledgling operation, and then Blumer die-cutting systems to allow greater automation. The company also moved into food label production.

The addition of flexo printing in 2000, through the installation of a Mark Andy 2200, was a key moment in the company's growth. 'We broke the paradigm of flexo printing in Venezuela,' says Susana Zaragoza, managing partner and development and quality director. 'At the time, flexo was considered to be of poor quality. Local producers of plastic films would often also print on their materials themselves, but they were focused on extruding plastic rather than perfecting the printing process.

'In contrast, we were used to working to extremely high-quality standards. We have a reputation in the market for being one of the highest quality printers. We achieved excellent results and raised standards in the local flexo market. It helped that the Mark Andy machine produced high-quality results, and our knowledge of pre-press was also a key factor.'

In addition to moving some existing offset work to its Mark Andy flexo press, Jackrom began printing cigarette packs, becoming the sole supplier to the Venezuelan subsidiary of British American Tobacco.

Following success with the Mark Andy 2200, Jackrom further expanded its flexo capabilities and efficiency by installing a Mark Andy Performance Series 5 equipped with in-line die-cutting, embossing and hot stamping stations, as well as automated packaging systems for its printed labels.

Three years ago, says Zaragoza, Jackrom noticed that orders for short runs were becoming more common. 'We were uncompetitive at these smaller volumes, so we decided to partner with HP Indigo and add digital technology to the company as well,' she says.

Flexible packaging

Jackrom also spotted that stand-up pouches and other forms of flexible packaging were becoming increasingly popular around the world. 'We saw that no one in Venezuela was producing stand-up pouches,' says Zaragoza. 'Companies were importing flexible packaging from Colombia and Asia, but with long lead times and large minimum order quantities due to it being produced on wide-web machinery. So, we installed laminating equipment and other things in order to test the market, initially on a small scale.'

Jackrom's success with its initial foray into stand-up pouch production led it to research a new, wider press to increase capacity. 'We spoke to Mark Andy, which is a very reliable partner whose machines are excellent and incredibly durable. But with the complicated economic situation in Venezuela at the time, we wanted to choose something a little more economical. We also looked at presses from Asian suppliers but couldn't quite find what we were looking for.



L-R: Susana Zaragoza, director of development and quality, Carolina Zaragoza, director of administration and finance and plant manager Ángel Hernández

"We realized that to be competitive in the flexible packaging and stand-up pouch market, we needed a slightly wider machine"

'We attended Labelexpo Europe 2025 in Barcelona, and a machine on the Rotocon stand caught our attention. We saw it in action and liked its robustness. So, we decided to do some testing and visited some of their clients to see the machine running and saw what it was capable of. We were pleasantly surprised by the print quality.'

The Rotocon RFP S-Series is a modular sleeve-based flexo press with triple servo-driven precision, fast job changeovers and speeds of up to 200m/min. It combines advanced German engineering, automation and efficiency, and can be configured with a range of expandable smart modules, including rotary screen printing, hot foil embossing, lamination, multi-layer and booklet labels, and more.

Initially, Jackrom was keen to install the 530mm version of Rotocon's RFP S-Series, the lower end of the mid-web category, but just before finalizing the order, the converter switched to the wider 630mm option. 'We realized that for us to be competitive in the flexible packaging and stand-up pouch market, we needed a slightly wider machine,' explains Zaragoza. 'The 630mm web width is ideal for what we want to develop.'

The new six-color press is due to arrive at Jackrom's 2,850sqm facility in the Venezuelan capital Caracas, in November and will be complemented by a Rotocon RD 530mm rotary die-cutting finishing machine.

'The Rotocon press is very efficient, quick and easy to set up. It will allow us to enter the flexible packaging market more formally, while maintaining the high level of print quality that we are known



Susana Zaragoza, Jackrom's director of development and quality

"There's an atmosphere of excitement and progress. Foreign investment is increasing. People who had left are returning home. Companies are innovating"



Jackrom operator Elton Blumer working with the die-cutting and automation systems

for,' says Zaragoza. 'We will produce not only stand-up pouches but also rolls that we can supply directly to producers of dairy products and coffee, for example, both important sectors in the Venezuelan market, so they can fill the pouches at their plants.'

Jackrom plans to move some of its offset food label production to the Rotocon press too. 'If the experiment works, then we might well buy a second machine. With offset printing, you need to dry the sheets before moving on to the other processes. In contrast, flexo-printed labels come out dry and ready for processing, which is a big advantage that allows for quicker turnaround. Now that the quality of the work between offset and flexo is indistinguishable, moving more work to flexo will help us to be more efficient.'

As well as the possibility of a second mid-web flexo press, Jackrom plans to invest in further finishing and processing equipment for its flexible packaging production next year.

Conviction

Today, Jackrom is run by three of founder Juan Zaragoza's five children. Susana oversees development and quality control; Carolina runs admin and finance; Nathalie is in charge of sales and planning. A fourth, Daniel, works part-time for the company as machinery director while also managing business interests in Miami.

Seventy percent of Jackrom's production is for the food sector, with labels for liquor, particularly rum and beer, and cartons for the cigarette market, taking a large part of the remainder. The company's digital technology handles short runs of premium labels, finished on a Cartes converting system, as well as flexible packaging.

Jackrom largely imports materials from abroad, with 'very little' bought locally, according to Susana Zaragoza. Because of import tariffs, the company pays a premium for sourcing quality products not available locally.

'It's normal daily life in Venezuela,' she says. 'The productive sector is severely contracted. It is challenging to run a manufacturing company in a climate of currency exchange controls, political problems and an economic structure designed to prevent private enterprise. But we have innovated, grown and maintained a leadership position in the market, which leads us to have a strong conviction about Venezuela's potential.'

The events of January 3, when Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro was deposed and extradited to the US, signal that 'change is coming,' says Zaragoza. 'There's an atmosphere of excitement and progress. Foreign investment is increasing. People who had left are returning home. Companies are innovating. The market is undergoing a massive transformation. We were hoping for change for a long time, and we've prepared for it through our investments.'

Zaragoza's paternal and maternal grandparents emigrated to Venezuela from Spain and France, respectively, in the aftermath of the Second World War. The country's economy boomed in the 1940s and 1950s, driven by European and American demand for oil; Venezuela has the largest proven reserves in the world. In 1950, it had the fourth-highest GDP per capita globally; by the early 1980s, it was still the richest country in South America.

But the economic decline over the past two decades has been dramatic. An over reliance on oil exports, coupled with policies that crippled domestic industry, brought about years of hyperinflation following the oil price collapse in 2014, and acute shortages of medicine and food. More than a quarter of Venezuela's population has fled the country.

'We went from running shifts 24 hours to having just one short shift. Our staff headcount halved. We went from printing 100 million beer labels to under three million,' says Zaragoza. 'But being able to manage these storms is what allows you to survive. It makes you a strong person and a strong company.

'It never even crossed our minds to leave. This country welcomed our grandparents. We have always believed in Venezuela and the potential of the Venezuelan people. Despite the political and economic problems in the country over the years, Jackrom never stopped investing. We could always see opportunities for growth.'

Scan the QR code to learn more about Jackrom

Rotocon's increasing Latam focus

Rotocon is a relative newcomer to the Latin American market. It made its regional tradeshow debut at Labelexpo Mexico in Guadalajara in April 2025 and exhibited the RFP 340, a multi-substrate flexo press which can print labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging and runs at up to 200m/min. Rotocon Europe managing director Marco Aengenvoort believes the press is 'well-positioned for this market'.

The company appointed Francisco Soto, who has 19 years of industry experience from roles at Rotoflex, Grafotronic and others, as sales director for Canada, Florida, Latin America and the Caribbean last year to aid its push into the Americas. Soto believes Rotocon's equipment is a 'perfect fit' for the Latin American market. 'There is a clear trend toward automation, flexibility and efficiency. Customers are increasingly seeking equipment that minimizes waste and cuts set-up times, while supporting shorter run lengths,' he says.

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Grif celebrates 40th anniversary

The independent Brazilian label converter has built a reputation for high quality and exceptionally fast turnarounds. James Quirk reports

Grif Rótulos e Etiquetas Autoadesivas, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, has become one of Brazil's leading independent label converters thanks to a strategy of continuous investment in new technology, a focus on high-quality printing and spare production capacity, which allows it to turn around orders with exceptional speed.

Such is the focus on the latter point, for which it is famous in the local market, that once the converter reaches 50 percent capacity, it immediately begins to evaluate further press investment.

The result is an impressive fleet of 22 printing presses, mostly high-quality combination flexo machines from Nilpeter and Mark Andy, including five installations in the last five years.

'As soon as our production capacity reaches 50 percent, we will evaluate further investments,' says owner and founder Francisco Paz. 'Our strategy is based on a "just-in-time" philosophy, working as closely as possible with our customers to secure short, on-demand delivery. This requires free production capacity.'

Expansion

Grif was founded in 1986 by Francisco Paz, then aged just 24, and his three friends. The company began as a flat-bed screen label printer serving small local brands from a 120sqm facility in the São Paulo suburb of Vila Maria.

Two years later, by which time two of the founders had left (a third would depart after a further three years), the company added a three-color CI flexo press. This allowed the fledgling business, which still had only four employees, to expand its capacity and product range. This same machine is now on display in the company's reception.

A further CI flexo press was installed soon afterward as Grif began to establish itself in the food, beverage, household cleaning product and chemical drum label markets.

Further investment took place in basic sheet-fed offset and letterpress machines, but it was the addition of combination flexo presses from Mark Andy and Comco in 2000 that helped to supercharge the company's growth. Paz ordered both these machines (a year before Mark Andy acquired Comco) at that year's Labelexpo Americas exhibition.

The investments allowed Grif to move into the pharmaceutical and cosmetics markets, its two largest end-user segments today, as well as focus on variable data labels for retail applications.

Since then, investment in new presses and additional capacity has been a near-constant feature of Grif's operation. Today, the company's fleet features in-line converting options such as rotary screen, hot and cold stamping, lamination and die-cutting units, as well as flexo presses from Brazilian manufacturer Etirama. Grif can also count on a sheet-fed offset press and a small digital machine for producing mock-ups.

Five of these flexo machines have been installed in as many years: four Nilpeter presses, including two FA-17s, and, most recently, an SP Series from Etirama.

'Having 10 colors with in-line process combinations such as cold foil, screen and different types of laminations allows us to present more creative products to the market,' says Paz for the FA-17s.

Grif installed its first Nilpeter press, an MO-3300S, in 2008, and has since added multiple FB and FA models to its printing arsenal. 'Nilpeter provides outstanding support that gives us the operational security we need, which translates into confidence in our ability to print high-quality labels at high speeds with the least operational cost possible,' says Paz.

The company has also invested in 100 percent inspection systems as well as shrink sleeve capabilities, a fast-growing segment in the Brazilian market, in recent years.

'The move into shrink sleeves was driven by customer demand,' says Grif's sales director Fernando Pirutti, who joined the company 10 years ago and has spent his entire 53-year career working at label converters. 'Shrink sleeves have become very popular in recent years across many different markets, including cosmetics, which is our biggest sector. Lots of local brands are moving into shrink sleeves from self-adhesive labels.'

Grif has also significantly enhanced its pre-press department, which includes Esko workflow and machinery for in-house plate production and rotary screen engraving. This has helped speed up turnaround times, something for which the converter is well-known in the local market.

"We always aim to have spare capacity. It's a deliberate strategy to focus on work which requires very short lead times. It's something that differentiates us in the market"



Grif owner Francisco Paz with the company's first CI flexo press, installed in 1988



Grif has installed four Nilpeter presses in the past five years

Liner waste recycling

Grif takes the environmental sustainability of its production seriously. The company partnered with Rever Papéis Especiais, which acts as an intermediary in the liner supply chain and promotes the full reuse of liners discarded by printing companies.

One hundred percent of Grif's liner waste is collected by specialist recycler Polpel, the only company in Brazil to handle this waste, and transformed into raw materials such as cellulose pulp. This is then used to create products such as paper towels, which Grif uses in its facility. The company also regularly highlights its involvement in the recycling program to customers.



Grif keeps three months of stock in its warehouse



Grif runs a fleet of 22 presses

"Our flexo presses can handle short runs very effectively thanks to their quick set-up times and features such as automatic registration"

'We always aim to have spare capacity,' explains Pirutti. 'It's a deliberate strategy to focus on work which requires very short lead times. It's something that differentiates us in the market. Investing in our pre-press department helps us to achieve that quick turnaround. We also keep three months' worth of raw materials in our warehouse, so we are always prepared.

'Brazilian brands frequently change their plans at the last minute. We often receive calls from customers who need their labels within a very short delivery time, and we can do that. We are known in the market for our rapid turnaround.'

Self-adhesive labels make up around 95 percent of production, with the recent venture into shrink sleeves now accounting for the remainder; but that figure is growing. Grif's largest end-use sector is cosmetics, a huge local industry in Brazil, followed by pharmaceutical labels. Both frequently require booklet label production, while the company's pharmaceutical labeling expertise has led it to create separate, closed-off rooms equipped with a press for dust-free production. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Grif was a major printer of vaccine labels.

'We have very good internal control and quality standards thanks to being certified to ISO and GMP, so the pharmaceutical market trusts us,' says Pirutti.

Food and beverage labels are also a key sector. 'We can produce long and short runs on our presses, any size of job,' says Pirutti. 'Our focus is on high quality, fast delivery and support to our clients.'

Philosophy

'Grif's philosophy is always to invest in the company,' says Pirutti. He reveals that Grif is researching possible investment in a hybrid press, regarded as an effective way to replicate screen printing, while digital embellishment equipment is a further possibility.

'Given the rising number of SKUs, to have some sort of digital capability would be an advantage,' he says. 'But our flexo presses can handle short runs very effectively thanks to their quick set-up times and features such as automatic registration.

'We are less interested in the brand of the press as we are in the quality it can produce. We have highly experienced press operators who can print to very high standards.'

As well as conducting online research when deciding on new equipment, Grif visits trade shows such as Labelexpo (now Loupe) in Europe and the US, as well as Brazilian event Flexo & Labels, says Pirutti, to see the machines in action.

Investment continues outside of Grif's technology capabilities, too. The company has upgraded to new facilities twice since its early days in a 120sqm site. The first move, to a 3,500sqm factory, came in 1996. It relocated to its current 11,000sqm site in Guarulhos, which houses its 110 employees, 10 years later.

But recently Grif has bought a 70,000sqm plot of land 20km from its factory, on which it plans to construct a new, larger facility, allowing even greater capacity, into which it can move in the coming years.

Grif remains an independent business. Pirutti, whose longevity in the local industry lends credibility to his opinion, believes Grif is the largest independent label converter in Brazil, behind only big multinationals in the scale of its production. He credits Paz for the company's success. 'The energy he has is amazing. He's very hands-on, having run the sales and production departments at various times during the company's history. I've been here for 10 years, but many of my colleagues have worked for Grif for much longer. It's a great place to work.'

Pirutti is confident of continued growth in the Brazilian label market. With a local population of 213 million people, the country is large enough that Grif doesn't focus on export, though a small percentage of production is sent to a Brazilian customer's bases in Colombia and Italy. After four decades in business, and with a new, larger facility on the horizon, Grif's rapid growth looks set to continue.

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Zoom Prints enters labels market with unique approach

Breaking the traditional mold, Zoom Prints entered the label industry with digital before scaling backward into conventional flexo. Akanksha Meena reports

In the label and packaging industry, a company's path to technology upgrades follows a predictable pattern: a conventional label converter, seeing a growth in short runs, invests in a digital press to complement its flexo infrastructure.

But at Delhi, India-based Zoom Prints, the team decided to take an entirely different route.

Digital roots

To understand Zoom Prints' unique approach, one must look back at the company's history. Founders Atul Bhatt and Harish Setia, along with managing directors Vikas Bhatt and Kapil Setia, started the parent company, Printmart, in 2013 as a commercial print business. The founding team brought distinct backgrounds to the table.

As Atul Bhatt recalls: 'After about five and a half years, moving from an on-the-job trainee to a senior engineer at Konica Minolta distributor company in India, I felt unfulfilled. I decided to transition out of corporate employment and start a print business.'

Taking a leap of faith, the team relied strictly on the technology they knew best. Harish Setia and Atul Bhatt purchased their first Konica Minolta press from a vendor in Delhi and started the business out of their home. Because their background was entirely hands-on with digital machinery, they had no prior knowledge of conventional printing methods like flexo or offset.

The business quickly took off. 'After running the first press successfully, we felt confident adding two more Konica Minolta digital presses. Then Vikas joined us temporarily, and seeing success with Printmart, he decided to join full-time and eventually began to enjoy the business,' Atul Bhatt explains.

Starting with just one facility, the business has scaled to 35 facilities today.

Diversification

As the print industry in India grew, the commercial print market started to see intense competition. While Printmart was still profitable and growing, margins began to shrink.

'We decided to diversify primarily because our original commercial business had reached a saturation point and was no longer growing according to our expectations. We reached a point where we had no real USP left to sell our product, causing our profitability to stagnate even as we invested more capital,' Vikas Bhatt says.

Consequently, the team decided to diversify. Vikas Bhatt focused on the publishing segment, while Atul Bhatt handled labels. The team originally added an Epson Surepress L-6534VW UV inkjet digital press for a different application, but it ultimately served as their entry point into the label industry.

The team started Jambui for short-run book publication and Zoom Prints for short-run labels and packaging in 2020.

The returns in the labels segment immediately felt healthier than the cutthroat commercial print space. 'Our entry into labels was accidental, but today, I am thoroughly enjoying it. Over the last month or two, I've truly started to find fulfillment in this segment. Previously, we were simply reinvesting everything we earned from the commercial market into this new venture. Ultimately, I believe we diversified into publishing and labels at the exact right time,' Atul Bhatt explains.

'If we had waited another five to seven years, our risk tolerance might have decreased with age, and we might not have made the leap at all. And fortunately, it has been a positive journey so far.'

The company prints its label on the Epson Surepress, which offers a printing speed of up to 50m/min, embellishment capabilities and up to 88 percent Pantone coverage with digital varnish ink. The company also houses an MGI embellishment press for special effects on labels.

'The great thing about the Epson press is that it delivers an excellent ROI, which is the primary reason we are already looking to add another machine. It ultimately comes down to service. Even a mediocre product can succeed with the right support, but here we have a great machine backed by an impeccable, highly knowledgeable service team. We have never been disappointed by their technical support and that reliability is what drives us to invest further,' Vikas Bhatt adds.



Atul Bhatt, founder of Zoom Prints with Epson Surepress L-6534VW UV inkjet digital press

"Our entry into labels was accidental, but today, I am thoroughly enjoying it"

Ashish Joshi, assistant manager, sales and marketing at Epson India, adds that a major advantage of Epson is that it is currently the only manufacturer in the digital label segment that manufactures its entire technology in-house.

'While other manufacturers piece together unwinders, rewinders or web paths from different third-party vendors, Epson builds everything, from the media handling to the printheads at the heart of the machine, as a single system. Because all the components are designed to work together perfectly, it delivers incredibly fine, high-quality results. Fulfilling the market's strict quality expectations has been key to growing our business,' he says.

Beyond the press's technical capabilities, Zoom Prints preferred working with Epson due to the close cultural alignment and shared values between the two companies.

Currently, the company prints 2000sqm a day on its Epson press and plans to add another water-based Epson digital press to bring daily production up to 5000sqm.

'I believe Epson digital label press is the best press to enter the label segment in terms of quality and ROI,' Atul Bhatt adds.

From digital to flexo

However, when the demands of its growing customer base shifted toward high-volume



Zoom Prints has installed Hyde i3S 330 10-color flexo press, supplied by GSP

"We cannot afford to turn these clients away or suggest they look elsewhere, because if they migrate to a competitor for their long-run needs, they will inevitably take their short-run business with them next time"

orders, Zoom Prints found itself in an unusual spot, buying a flexo press to complement its agile digital setup.

As Zoom Prints' brand presence in the label segment grew, the team realized that its digital offering was both a blessing and a competitive vulnerability. Keeping the customers they had already won became a challenge as their demands evolved.

'When an existing client's volumes increase, they request a transition from short-run digital to long-run flexo production. We cannot afford to turn these clients away or suggest they look elsewhere, because if they migrate to a competitor for their long-run needs, they will inevitably take their short-run business with them next time. That dilemma forced our expansion into flexo, a technology we are still learning to navigate,' Atul Bhatt says.

To solve this, in 2026, Zoom Prints installed a 10-color flexo press from Hyde, a Chinese manufacturer, with the machine supplied by GSP (Graphic Solution Providers).

Flexo was a completely new language for the team, which had been working with digital and offset in the past.

'We are not conventional printers. We don't have the DNA for conventional print. Digital presses offer flexibility, and we are used to that flexibility. The same flexibility is not available with flexo or conventional print,' Atul Bhatt notes.

Additionally, printing a label is only the first step. Labels also require intricate finishing and embellishment, which means investment in necessary cutting tools and embellishment equipment.

The transition brought a stark operational culture shock.

With no prior background in flexo printing, Zoom Prints faced a steep learning curve. Its initial press purchase from Hyde included a comprehensive package of anilox rollers and cylinders tailored to the job requirements.

To a digital native, tooling and components in flexo were unfamiliar.

An economic advantage

Despite the learning curve, the Zoom Prints team views the mechanical friction of flexo as an economic advantage. Because the initial investment is substantial and the printing process is so intricate, Atul Bhatt notes that it creates a strong barrier that prevents casual competitors from easily entering the label market.

Coming from a digital background, the team initially assumed the process would be like conventional offset printing. However, entering the label space revealed a much more complex workflow involving precise coordination of specialized cylinders, rollers and plates. The team also faced unexpected logistical hurdles and lead times for external tooling, such as semi-rotary dies, alongside the commercial challenge of negotiating these added setup costs with customers who expected them to be absorbed into large-volume orders.

For Zoom Prints, investing in a flexo press wasn't a choice; it was a strategic decision to provide end-to-end service.

As Atul Bhatt summarizes: 'Ultimately, once you enter the industry and invest in a digital label press, you must fulfill the customer's end-to-end requirements. Otherwise, your only alternative is to exit the industry altogether.

'The goal must be to provide an A-to-Z service so that once a customer comes to you, they have no reason to look elsewhere. That is exactly how both Vikas and I view it now. Once we stepped into labels and set up the press, we began enjoying it because we could see viable margins, whereas the commercial retail market is no longer showing us those kinds of returns. So, it made sense to direct some investment here.'

With growth in a new segment and investments in place, adding professional factory floor manpower was the next logical step for Zoom Prints.

Realizing these industrial processes require dedicated expertise, the company has hired a production manager alongside dedicated sales and marketing personnel. To further drive this vertical, it is also actively recruiting experienced conventional printing professionals for leadership roles.

Epson India strengthens digital label footprint

Driven by the rise of emerging brands demanding short runs, personalization and eco-friendly labels and packaging, the Indian label industry is seeing rapid digital printing adoption. Capitalizing on this momentum, Epson India continues to reinforce its market footprint with key installations of its Epson SurePress L-6534VW UV digital label press for converters looking to diversify into digital labels.

Apart from Zoom Prints, another example of this transition is Ludhiana-based Dulari Printpack, which recently installed the Epson SurePress L-6534VW to mark its official entry into label manufacturing. Building on its established foundation in commercial digital printing and photo album production, this strategic investment enables Dulari to tap into high-growth, high-value label applications with faster turnarounds.

Beyond recent installations, Epson is set to demonstrate its full digital capabilities at Loupe India 2026. The manufacturer will showcase the SurePress L-6534VW for high-volume commercial and industrial label conversion, alongside its ColorWorks C6550A and ColorWorks C8050 on-demand desktop color label printers.

Together, these machines demonstrate Epson's ability to address diverse labeling requirements, helping businesses improve flexibility, reduce waste and bring products to market faster in an increasingly dynamic environment.

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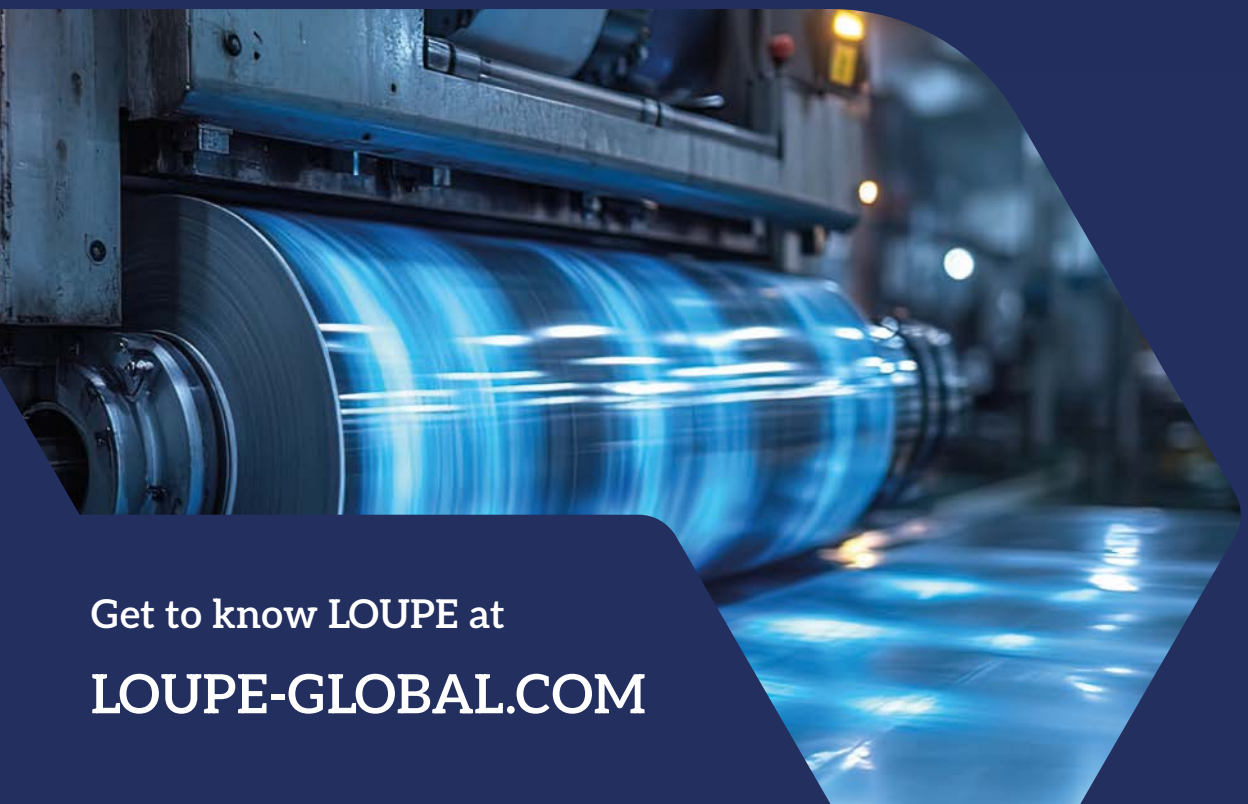


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Holostik expands with Weigang

With pharmaceutical and security label applications becoming increasingly complex, Holostik India has invested in a Weigang flexo press to enhance capacity and support high-security packaging. Akanksha Meena reports

Holostik India has installed a new Weigang ZJR-350G 12-color flexo press, expanding production capacity while reinforcing its focus on security, sustainability and premium pharmaceutical labeling.

The company's existing production capacities were nearing optimal utilization, prompting the need for additional manufacturing bandwidth and greater flexibility to meet sophisticated customer requirements.

'The new press strengthens our manufacturing capabilities while supporting our long-term strategy of expanding our presence in high-value, security-driven labels. It also offers the flexibility to handle specific need-based applications, to cater to a wider range of customer needs,' Ankit Gupta, joint managing director of Holostik India says.

With the latest Weigang press, the company has grown from two to five flexo presses in the last three years.

Designed for high-security labels

The new Weigang ZJR-350G at Holostik has been configured for high-end security label applications. Running at speeds of up to 180m/min, the press features a full Siemens servo control system and a 15in human-machine interface (HMI) for precise registration and ease of operation.

One of its features is Weigang's focus on asset lifecycle protection. The press has been engineered to maintain compatibility with magnetic rollers and tooling from Holostik's existing ZJR-330 press purchased in 2018. This backward compatibility allows the company to leverage its previous investments while transitioning to a wider 350mm web width and a more automated production platform.

The 12-color configuration provides greater design flexibility and supports premium pharma-grade labels, larger SKU formats and specialty applications requiring high print consistency. The hybrid platform also offers different ink systems and includes in-line die-cutting, delam and relam capabilities for producing complex multilayer constructions.

Specialized peeling and composite devices have been added specifically for security labels using aggressive adhesives, enabling waste stripping, reducing material loss and improving production sustainability.

Additional features include dual cold-foil units with RE tension control and a dedicated leveling system for premium varnishes and security coatings. A 32in BST stroboscope enables real-time inspection of microtext and intricate security elements across the full web width, while a Hefeng dual-sided corona treater and advanced web-cleaning system optimize substrate preparation, reducing chemical consumption and energy waste.



Weigang ZJR-350G 12-color flexo press at Holostik India

"We believe responsible manufacturing is as important as sustainable products"

Expanding capabilities

The new press is expected to increase Holostik's label manufacturing capacity by 15-20 percent.

'It also improves production planning flexibility, shortens lead times and enables us to respond more efficiently to growing domestic and export demand while maintaining the quality standards our customers expect,' Gupta highlights.

The press allows the company to manufacture more sophisticated security labels that combine functionality with premium aesthetics. It also supports water-based varnish applications and is compatible with advanced inspection systems and serialization technologies, enabling integration with product authentication and traceability.

Sustainability initiatives

Alongside investments in manufacturing, Holostik has installed more than 1100kWp of combined onsite solar power capacity across its manufacturing facilities, currently supplying around 15 percent of its electricity requirements. Holostik plans to increase this share to approximately 50 percent over the next three years.

'We believe responsible manufacturing is as important as sustainable products. As a manufacturing company, we recognize our responsibility to adopt cleaner energy that support long-term business resilience,' Gupta says.

Holostik has also implemented waste reduction and recycling programs, operates an effluent treatment plant (ETP) for responsible wastewater management and continuously optimizes production processes to reduce material waste.

Its office spaces are designed to maximize natural lighting with glass architecture, reducing artificial lighting and air conditioning.

These initiatives have earned the company recognition through the CII EHS Award for excellence in environmental, health and safety practices and the CII Energy Champion Award for solar energy utilization.

Looking ahead

Holostik sees the future of labeling moving beyond product identification toward intelligent packaging ecosystems that integrate authentication, traceability, consumer engagement and regulatory compliance.

'Industries such as pharma, FMCG, automotive, agrochemicals and electronics are adopting high-security labels to combat counterfeiting and improve supply chain visibility. Sustainability will also play a greater role, encouraging wider adoption of recyclable materials, environmentally responsible manufacturing and printing technologies,' Gupta concludes.

Holostik plans to invest in advanced security printing, smart packaging technologies and integrated physical-digital brand protection technologies that combine overt, covert, forensic and digital authentication technologies. It also intends to include AI-enabled and blockchain-based track-and-trace systems, and next-generation security labels, while expanding its renewable energy infrastructure.

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Mudrika Labels charts hybrid future with Rotatek

The India-based converter becomes the first company in the world to install a Rotatek 850 hybrid press. Adyasha Sinha reports

The landscape of Indian packaging is undergoing a profound paradigm shift, driven by growing demand for cost-effective short- to medium-run production, substrate versatility and sustainable manufacturing practices. Accelerating this evolution is Mumbai-based Mudrika Labels, which installed India's first fully configured Rotatek Universal 850 hybrid press at its facility in Vasai, Maharashtra.

This major investment marks a significant milestone for the label sector, positioning Mudrika Labels as the global reference site for the newly redesigned Universal 850 platform. Managed by directors Manish Desai, Sandip Kadakia and Vipul Desai, the enterprise is bridging the operational gap between narrow-web label applications and mid-web flexible packaging.

Over four decades of heritage

Though officially incorporated 25 years ago, the company's roots date back nearly 40 years, the foundation of which was built on customer focus and technological agility.

Through the late 1990s and early 2000s, Mudrika earned a reputation for engineering and manufacturing precision industrial labels. The directors recognized early on that a product's label forms its crucial first impression on the store shelf, playing an important role in consumer decision-making. Guided by this insight, the company established local manufacturing capabilities to reduce the domestic market's reliance on imported products.

Talking more about the company's approach, Manish Desai, director at Mudrika Labels, shares: 'A definitive example of Mudrika's market-disruptive approach was its development of localized heat transfer label (HTL) technology. Historically, Indian consumer brands were heavily dependent on importing high-end heat transfer films from Korea and China, which lengthened lead times and inflated capital expenditures. Mudrika invested heavily in the necessary research and equipment to manufacture these films domestically.'

Today, the company commands an estimated 80 to 85 percent share of the domestic market for localized HTL, serving as an end-to-end partner for the nation's largest FMCG, cosmetics and industrial product manufacturers.



L&L and Loupe team with Manish Desai from Mudrika Labels

As an ISO 9001:2015-certified organization, the company has scaled its manufacturing footprint across distinct business verticals, specializing in premium folding cartons, printed corrugated boxes, point-of-purchase displays and customized corrugated shipping packages. This diverse portfolio has allowed Mudrika to provide an all-inclusive, under-one-roof packaging suite.

Before the acquisition of the Rotatek Universal 850, Mudrika had an extensive fleet of multi-color in-line flexographic and offset presses, including multiple Lombardi flexo lines. Over the past decade, the company achieved significant growth in self-adhesive and in-mold labeling (IML).

However, as consumer brand dynamics shifted toward product diversification and regionalized marketing, the company identified an unfulfilled market opportunity within the broader medium-run flexible packaging sector, a territory historically dominated by high-volume wide-web rotogravure printing.

Bridging the gap

Commenting more on the company's diversification, Desai adds: 'In the traditional packaging supply chain, a stark division has long existed between label printing and flexible packaging production. Narrow-web flexographic and digital presses efficiently handle pressure-sensitive labels and short-run shrink sleeves. Conversely, wide-web rotogravure and CI flexo presses dominate the flexible packaging segment, optimized for producing millions of linear meters of unsupported films and laminates.'

However, rotogravure carries a heavy capital penalty: the high cost of engraving copper cylinders makes short- to medium-run production economically unviable. For brands launching seasonal campaigns, limited-edition variants or regionalized product lines, gravure's lengthy setup times and rigid volume requirements posed severe bottlenecks at Mudrika.

> **"When you install a completely new machine, you need patience. You cannot expect 100 percent capacity utilization in year one"**

Desai explains: 'Upon analyzing the flexible packaging market, the company identified a clear operational gap. Gravure cylinder costs remain exceptionally high, which limits brands' ability to experiment with shorter product life cycles. On the other end, digital printing, while flexible, becomes cost-prohibitive as volumes scale into medium-run lengths.

'The team realized that by combining the high graphical fidelity of offset printing with the in-line converting efficiency of flexo on a mid-web platform, they could bridge this gap. The Rotatek Universal 850 provides the exact sweet spot, offering customers lower pre-press costs, rapid job changeovers and high print quality on an extensive range of unsupported materials.'

Mudrika found its preferred machine through its long-standing technology partner, Vinsak, which represents and supports the Spanish press manufacturer.

Desai was directly involved in designing the press, its module layout and component selection. He made up to ten trips to Rotatek's headquarters over the past year to shape the final configuration before unveiling and announcing its purchase at Rotatek's open house in Barcelona in January 2026.

Technical deep dive

The Universal 850 engineered for Mudrika Labels represents the pinnacle of Rotatek's hybrid sleeve technology, specifically



Manish Desai, Mudrika Labels and Ranesh Bajaj, director Vinsak Group and Rotatek, exploring the Rotatek Universal 850 at a Rotatek open house in Barcelona, Spain

configured for high-volume producers of pharmaceutical inserts, folding cartons, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging. Featuring a maximum substrate width of 870mm and a maximum printing width of 850mm, the press handles print formats ranging from 508mm to 1016mm and operates at mechanical production speeds up to 400m/min.

The machine has a redesigned offset roller train, incorporating a fourth ink-form roller into the system, drastically improving ink distribution uniformity, reducing ghosting anomalies and ensuring flawless solid-ink coverage alongside high-screen halftones.

To maintain absolute process control during prolonged production runs, the press integrates a refrigerated ink fountain roller system.

Furthermore, the implementation of a fully adjustable oscillating ink roller system allows operators to fine-tune lateral ink movement based on the specific chemistry of the consumables being utilized, whether running standard UV, advanced LED or conventional grease-based inks.

'What distinguishes this installation is its uncompromising, highly customized architecture, which blends seven in-line web-offset printing units with two specialized flexographic stations. The press is designed to master a wide range of substrates, running ultra-thin 12-micron unsupported films; specialized shrinkable materials such as BOPP, PET and PVC from 15 to 400 microns; self-adhesive papers; and heavy carton board ranging from 150 to 400g/sqm,' notes Desai.

He further adds: 'We have not left out a single high specification on this press line. Whatever automation options, register controls or efficiency mechanisms were available from the manufacturer, have been fully incorporated, serving as a lighthouse installation for the global industry.'

Advanced sleeve technology and servo automation

The press utilizes lightweight, interchangeable sleeve technology for both the plate and blanket cylinders. A new pneumatic locking system secures the sleeves in place, providing easier installation, reduced manual handling and a more secure operational lock. The resulting reinforced chassis eliminates micro-vibrations, ensuring high print stability even at maximum mechanical speeds on cartonboard.

To achieve the precise tension boundaries required for handling stretchy, ultra-thin 12-micron films alongside rigid 400g/sqm cartonboard, the Universal 850 has replaced all traditional mechanical drive architectures with Bosch Rexroth servo motors. Every single print unit, draw roller and tension zone is governed by independent servo control, providing unparalleled web handling flexibility, micron-level registration precision and rapid automatic register pre-setting. The transversal register precision has been significantly upgraded, ensuring instantaneous alignment adjustments during dynamic speed transitions.

Converting and in-line embellishment

Beyond the seven offset units, the two in-line flexographic stations provide versatile coating, solid-color back-printing or specialized varnish applications. Integrated into the web path are high-value converting options, including an advanced cold foil lamination system for premium metallic embellishments, an automated inking supply system that maintains constant fountain levels and an automatic blanket washing system that drastically slashes downtime between jobs.

Adding more details about the press, Desai shares: 'For complete quality assurance, the press features a 100 percent video inspection system.

This technology scans the entire width of the web in real time, comparing the live print against a golden master PDF to instantly detect, log and flag minor print defects, color shifts or hickeys before the web reaches the final rewinder.'

"What distinguishes this installation is its uncompromising, highly customized architecture, which blends seven in-line web-offset printing units with two specialized flexographic stations"

Pioneering sustainability

Beyond mechanical speed and material versatility, the configuration of the Universal 850 at Mudrika Labels addresses the printing industry's modern imperative: energy conservation and carbon footprint reduction.

'To pioneer a more sustainable manufacturing paradigm, we have outfitted the press with a specialized near-infrared (NIR) drying system on its coating modules. Operating at optimized light wavelengths between 700 and 2500nm (nanometer), the NIR technology penetrates deep into coating layers instantaneously, drying the chemistry from the inside out,' comments Desai. 'This targeted thermal transfer reduces energy consumption by approximately 50 percent compared to conventional long-wavelength IR systems, while preventing the substrate from overheating or stretching.'

Additionally, the UV curing zones across the offset and flexo units utilize LED lamps. By transitioning away from conventional mercury UV systems, the press achieves an immediate 50 to 60 percent reduction in power consumption within the curing phases.

Global ambitions

Desai remarks thoughtfully on the operational rollout strategy, noting: 'When you install a completely new, highly sophisticated platform of this magnitude, you need patience. You cannot expect 100 percent capacity utilization in year one. Our immediate focus remains on process standardization, which entails aligning the pre-press workflow, mastering hybrid ink profiles and validating advanced substrate applications.'

He concludes: 'The company will first standardize and then scale.'

By running complex in-mold labels, shrink sleeves, flexible laminates and folding cartons on a single web platform, Mudrika Labels is not just expanding its product catalog; it is rewriting the operational rules for the modern packaging converter.

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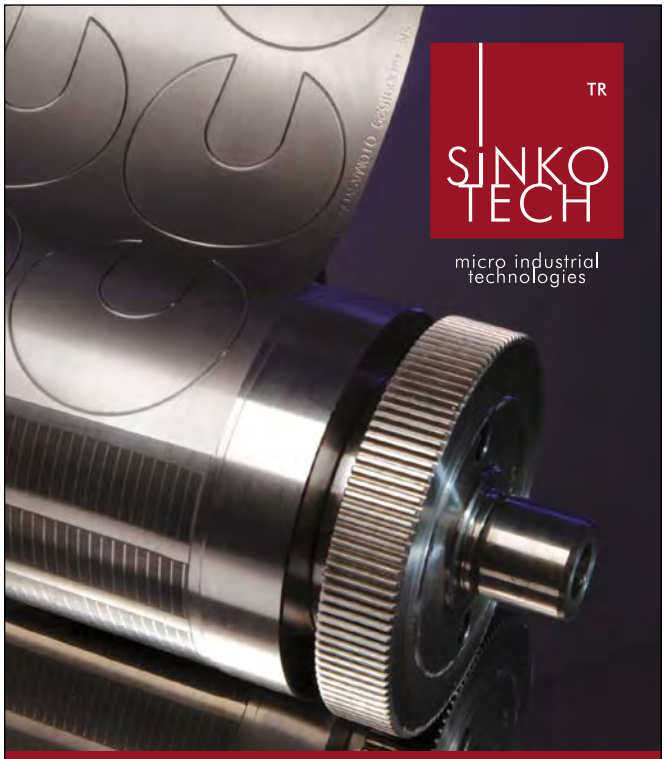
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Delivering your potential

Four generations of reinvention at Candle United

A 50-year-old Haryana print business successfully pivoted from ticket production to advanced pharmaceutical label converting. Adyasha Sinha reports

It could be said that the modern trajectory of Candle United was changed by a humble movie ticket. Of course, for a 50-year-old printing business based in Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, India, there were many operational shifts before high-precision label conversion redefined its market position. But to understand the sheer scale of the company's industrial evolution, one must return to its origins in regional transit and entertainment ticketing.

During the 1970s, the family-owned enterprise operated as a small, home-based commercial job printer. Utilizing traditional, manual letterpress technology, the workshop's daily survival depended on producing mass-produced bus and cinema tickets, as well as standard office stationery, for the local market. Today, that same business operates out of a newly developed 70,000sqft industrial facility, deploying advanced dry-toner digital technology to print tight-tolerance pharmaceutical barcodes on labels designed for small-volume packaging.

Diversifying into screen and offset

'As the regional economy expanded in the 1980s, the company recognized that relying exclusively on transit and cinema tickets left its revenue vulnerable to shifting local dynamics,' shares managing director Vansh Kapoor. 'To broaden its market reach, the company invested in silk screen printing equipment alongside its original letterpress machines.'

'However, the true turning point toward the modern packaging value chain occurred in the 1990s,' says Kapoor. 'Recognizing that standard commercial job printing was becoming increasingly commoditized, we made a strategic decision to enter the sticker and label printing segment. This transition was marked by a major upgrade in shop-floor technology, as our company diversified by investing in sheet-fed offset printing machinery and hot stamping foil systems.'

To support these new technical capabilities, Candle United established its first dedicated industrial footprint: a 2,000sqft manufacturing facility. This specialized space brought together four distinct production processes under one roof, combining high-opacity screen printing used to produce durable stickers and marking labels for utensil manufacturers and construction material industries, specifically plywood and panel manufacturers, hot foil stamping to achieve metallic finishes for premium product decoration, offset printing to deliver fine halftone imagery and in-house adhesive gumming operations to develop chemical expertise in substrate coatings and adhesive behavior.



Vansh Kapoor with Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230

> "Setting up a conventional press for a short-run was highly uneconomical"

Over the years, this gradual transition provided the family with decades of hands-on experience in labels, printing technologies, finishing processes and specific customer requirements before they ever entered advanced digital label production.

Between 2000 and 2020, industrial manufacturing moved rapidly away from manual, sheet-fed sticker application toward high-speed, automated label-dispensing lines. To keep pace with these changing assembly lines, Candle United expanded its existing production operations to approximately 4,000sqft.

'During this two-decade phase, the company gradually transitioned into roll-to-roll sticker printing by integrating in-line hot foil stamping with robust rotary and flatbed die-cutting capabilities,' notes Kapoor. 'This allowed the company to begin delivering self-adhesive labels in roll formats, ready for high-speed automatic applicators.'

The flexographic upgrade

A major turning point for Candle United came in 2021 with a formal transition in corporate leadership. Kapoor, representing the fourth generation of the family print business, returned to India to assume control as managing director after completing his bachelor of business (honors) degree, majoring in accounting and financial planning, from La Trobe University in Australia. He arrived on the shop floor with a highly structured, analytical objective to modernize and scale the family business into a future-ready label manufacturing company capable of serving India's rapidly growing packaging industry. Following Kapoor's return, the company significantly accelerated its modernization strategy, and his first major capital investment was the installation of a narrow-web LED roll-to-roll flexo press.

This press allowed Candle United to break out of the regional industrial sticker market and enter highly regulated corporate packaging sectors, with an explicit focus on serving the high-compliance pharmaceutical sector, fast-moving consumer goods brands and the high-volume packaged drinking water industry. Flexo changed the direction of the business, but as brand requirements shifted, conventional technology eventually hit a hard operational ceiling.

The short-run challenge

Brands faced intensifying pressure to reduce physical inventory overheads, manage frequent regulatory text updates, launch localized marketing variations and support a massive proliferation of individual stock-keeping units.

'As the market evolved, customers increasingly required smaller order quantities, faster turnaround times, multiple SKUs and greater flexibility, making digital printing an ideal choice for our operations,' explains Kapoor.

Before adopting digital technology, the company faced major operational bottlenecks when attempting short-run



Label samples from Candle United

"Our growing pharmaceutical clientele was frequently demanding exceptionally sharp text, fine details and flawless barcode clarity"

corporate jobs on conventional flexographic equipment. 'Setting up a conventional press for a short-run was highly uneconomical because it involved extensive setup times, mechanical plate adjustments, ink balancing and substantial substrate waste during initial registration,' shares Kapoor. 'Furthermore, our growing pharmaceutical clientele was frequently demanding exceptionally sharp text, fine details and flawless barcode clarity for small-volume packaging, such as 1ml and 2ml vials. Attempting to consistently hit these tight tolerances on conventional machines for tiny order volumes was eating into our overall profitability.'

Selecting the technology

Kapoor approached the digital investment decision methodically, analyzing multiple equipment options in the market. The team evaluated several alternative digital label printing machines, including inkjet-based systems from Monotech, high-end Xeikon digital presses and various Chinese digital printing machines.

'Candle United chose the Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230 primarily because of its dry toner technology, which delivers excellent print quality and consistency for short-run label production,' Kapoor notes. 'It was a perfect fit to meet the pharmaceutical label standards, our immediate short-run production requirements and long-term growth plans.'

The impact of digital infrastructure

The installation of the Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230 digital press instantly transformed production dynamics at the Yamuna Nagar plant. The investment allowed the company to split its production strategy neatly down the middle, meaning that long, high-volume runs remained on the flexo press, while complex, short-run, multi-SKU corporate orders were immediately routed to the digital line.

Since commissioning the machine, Candle United has experienced significant, measurable benefits in terms of daily productivity, overall operational efficiency and regional business growth.

'The machine has enabled faster job changeovers and reduced setup times, allowing the company to process multiple short-run pharmaceutical label jobs more efficiently,' Kapoor states. 'Its high-quality dry toner output ensures sharp text, fine details and barcode clarity, which are critical requirements for small pharmaceutical labels.'

By moving short-run friction away from their conventional presses, Candle United eliminated the front-end bottlenecks that typically plague growing converters, significantly reducing unit manufacturing costs for versioned label sets and eliminating the need for physical plates, heavy substrate startup waste or extensive color-matching adjustments.

Building for scalability

To fully leverage this advanced digital capability, Candle United undertook its largest capital expansion to date during 2025–2026. Moving away from its historically space-constrained workshop, the company completed the acquisition and development of brand-new, purpose-built industrial premises spanning nearly 70,000sqft of land.

'Designed from the ground up to accommodate lean manufacturing workflows, clean production zones required for sensitive pharmaceutical labels and automated material handling, the site reflects a long-term corporate vision focused on scalable manufacturing, automation and next-generation label production,' says Kapoor. Importantly, Kapoor has built the facility with massive future capacity in mind. 'I plan to develop the newly acquired site through phased development workflows that offer clear potential to scale up to nearly 200,000sqft through multi-story construction as regional volume demand increases.'

To complement the Konica Minolta press, Candle United also installed advanced finishing and converting machinery from Denchern, China, alongside its existing sheet and roll-handling assets. Today, the company operates an integrated fleet of approximately seven to eight machines across its printing and finishing operations, a balanced configuration that allows it to remain highly responsive and agile, handling short, medium and long runs with identical commercial efficiency.

'With the successful commissioning of its new manufacturing facility and the Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 230, Candle United is now focused on expanding its production capabilities and customer base,' Kapoor concludes. 'The company plans to further strengthen its presence in the pharmaceutical, FMCG and packaged goods sectors while increasing its share of short-run and premium label applications.'

The roadmap ahead

The future roadmap for the Yamuna Nagar converter is clearly defined. With continued investments in technology, infrastructure and deep operational modernization, the company aims to position itself as the primary flexible, technology-driven label manufacturing partner for both emerging and established brands across India. Kapoor says that going forward, the company intends to invest in additional automation, advanced printing and finishing technologies and expanded manufacturing infrastructure to support long-term growth.

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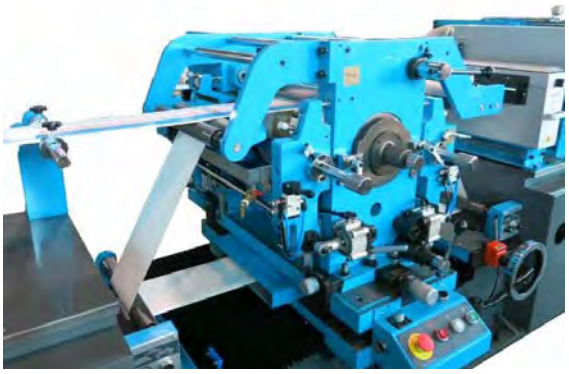
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First Gallus One comes to UAE

Radiant House secures short-run market with the latest Gallus One hybrid press investment. Akanksha Meena reports

Dubai-based label converter Radiant House has become the first company in the UAE to install a Gallus One digital label press, marking a significant step in its evolution from a label trader to a full-scale label and packaging manufacturer.

Founded by Sayed Shamsuddin, Radiant's journey reflects the rapid growth of the region's label industry. Shamsuddin arrived in Dubai from India in 2004 to work in the printing sector before establishing his own business in 2007. Initially, the company operated as a label trader, purchasing self-adhesive labels from manufacturers and supplying them to small brands looking to save time. By 2014, Radiant had moved into production, investing in a second-hand Multitec flexo press. As demand grew, the company expanded its production capabilities with two flexo presses in 2019 and 2021. With its latest Gallus One digital press investment, the company is capturing short-run label market in the UAE.

Today, Radiant serves a broad range of industries, including lubricants, cosmetics, detergents and logistics, while also producing shrink sleeves. However, changing market requirements prompted the company to explore digital production.

Short-run challenge

According to Shamsuddin, increasing demand for short-run label jobs was becoming difficult and expensive to manage on flexo technology.

'Before investing in the Gallus digital press, it was becoming very costly for me to produce short runs on flexo. I was spending from my pocket and did not see repeat orders,' he says.

The challenge is particularly relevant in the Middle East, where shorter production runs are common due to smaller market sizes and frequent product variations.

Biju George, general sales manager, Heidelberg Gulf, explains: 'We see a lot of short runs [in the Middle East] because the population is very low compared to India and other markets. More than 50 percent of the jobs are short runs below 3,000 linear meters.'

Historically, converters could generate healthy margins on long-run jobs while absorbing losses on shorter jobs. The Gallus One investment intended to change that equation for Radiant, according to George.

Radiant is now able to achieve profits on long and short runs after adding the Gallus One hybrid press. The converter uses



Sayed Shamsuddin with his Gallus One digital press

"Before investing in the Gallus digital press, it was becoming very costly for me to produce short runs on flexo. I was spending from my pocket and did not see repeat orders"

the new machine to produce self-adhesive labels on paper, PP and PE substrates, for customers requiring only around 2,000-3,000 labels.

One of the key advantages for Radiant has been the reduction in setup times and the increase in productivity.

'It takes considerable time to set up a job in flexo. In digital, we can produce up to two to three times more jobs compared to flexo,' Shamsuddin says.

He reports a significant increase in throughput for short-run work. 'For example, recently, we produced around 40 digital short-run jobs within 14 hours, with average run lengths lasting half an hour and around 1,000 meters.'

The improved efficiency is also helping the company win additional business. With the new Gallus press, Radiant can deliver far more jobs, much faster.

One-pass production

A major factor behind Radiant's decision to choose Gallus One was its ability to complete complex label jobs in a single pass.

The press combines digital printing with a flexo unit, semi-rotary die-cutting, cold foiling, lamination and varnishing. The hybrid configuration allows converters to print and finish labels in one pass, without moving jobs to separate finishing equipment.

'By avoiding a second run, Radiant is not only saving time but also eliminating the material waste that usually comes with a second finishing run,' says George.

Radiant is already exploring additional embellishment opportunities on the press, including installing cold foil capabilities ahead of the digital printing unit to enable printing directly over foiled effects.

Ease of operation

Gallus has designed the Gallus One around the company's established Gallus Labelmaster flexo platform, helping operators transition more easily between conventional and digital production.

'Working on it feels just like operating a traditional flexo press, only with a DPU [digital printing unit] integrated into it,' George explains. 'The platform has been designed for maximum operator convenience, offering easy substrate qualification, an ultrasonic cleaning system and automatic nozzle compensation.'

Shamsuddin also praised Gallus' training and after-sales support: 'Gallus team trained my operators, and their service is very good and quick.'

The success of the installation has already prompted plans for further investment. Radiant had initially intended to install a second Gallus press in 2026. However, disruptions in the Middle East that began this year and the supply chain challenges it brought, have delayed the project by approximately a year.

'The disruptions in the Middle East have slowly stabilized, so we expect things to be back to normal within three to four months,' Shamsuddin says, noting that the situation had affected material procurement for the company.

For Gallus, the installation represents an important milestone in the UAE's digital label printing landscape.

Gallus is already planning additional installations in the region.

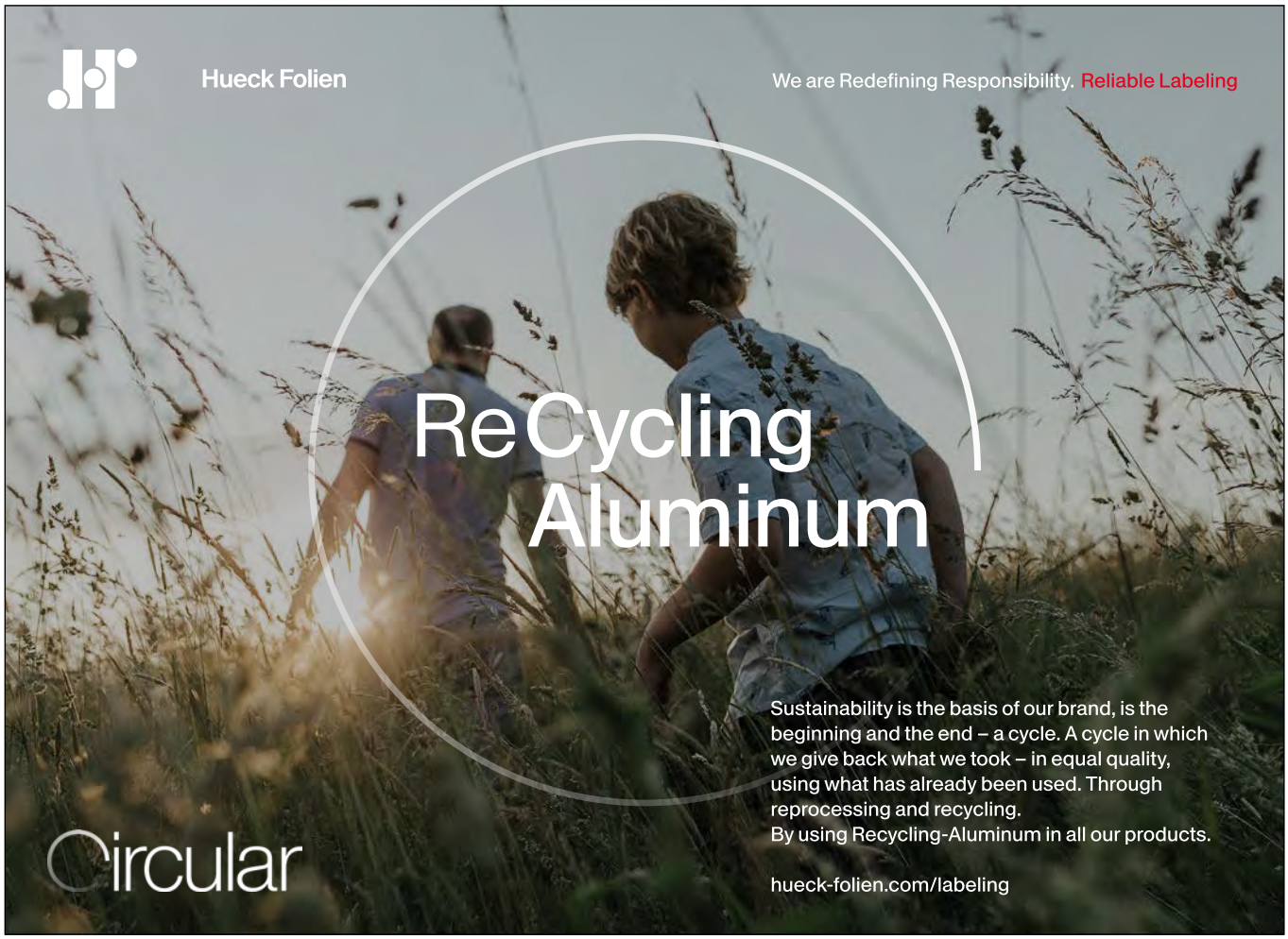
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Dayang upgrades with Spande flexo press

Xi'an-based converter has installed a Spande S5 450 flexographic press to expand into higher value-added sectors. Yolanda Wang reports

Dayang Label, a specialist converter of self-adhesive labels, has installed a Spande press to expand into new markets.

Founded in 2001 and located in Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, in Northwest China, Dayang Label is well positioned as an industrial hub for label manufacturing in the region.

The company's establishment stemmed from the couple Jiang Leibo and Yang Xuanying's sharp market insight. After graduating, Xuanying took a role in a state-owned enterprise before moving to manage the operation and maintenance of cash registers in a supermarket. During this job, she spotted the robust market demand and promising profit margins for supermarket price tags. Before founding Dayang Label with her husband, she conducted extensive field research in southern China, which solidified her entrepreneurial resolve.

In the startup phase, the couple grappled with low brand recognition and limited client trust. With her outgoing personality, Dayang Label gradually built a roster of loyal core clients. In 2013, the company relocated to its current manufacturing plant, ushering in a new chapter of growth.

Its machinery fleet has expanded from early semi-rotary letterpress to full rotary letterpress, offset, flexo and digital presses. This was accompanied by a focus on automation and digitization.

Dayang Label's product portfolio has expanded from solely supermarket price tags to a wide range of labels for pharmaceuticals, food, personal care and other market verticals.

New investment

Flexography represents a core technology for Dayang Label. In 2023, the company invested in its first flexo press to relieve a production bottleneck and increase capacity for long-run jobs. The Spande S5 450 flexographic press newly installed at Dayang Label marks the first installation of this machine in the area.

Leibo shares: 'We visited peer manufacturers before the investment. Combined with our five-year corporate strategy and market demand forecasts, we chose this model. The core Spande S5 450 machinery is aligned with our long-term growth. Its automated control system, ultra-precise print quality and high production speed fully match our development plan focused on mid-to-high-end custom labels.'

> **"In the current era of rising competition, sustainable core competitiveness never comes from vicious price wars"**

To unlock the full capacity of the new press, Dayang Label has optimized its workshop layout, implementing a standardized production workflow to reduce movement to and around the press and reduce process waste.

Transformation

Faced with multiple industry headwinds including sluggish consumer demand, cutthroat market competition and fluctuating raw material costs, Dayang Label has updated its operational strategy to fuel steady business growth.

In terms of customer portfolio management, the converter prioritizes long-term cooperation with high-value core clients. It gradually weeds out low-margin, low-quality orders to optimize its overall customer structure.

Alongside this, Dayang Label has restructured its business into two dedicated functional centers. The printing center is responsible for production, with a core focus on strict quality control, production cost optimization and efficiency improvement. In contrast, the label application center focuses on expanding end-market services. It taps into additional product value through innovative R&D and process optimization.

Dayang Label is accelerating its transformation into a turnkey label provider, as Leibo reveals: 'We are leveraging our decades of accumulated printing expertise to help our team develop practical, market-driven label solutions to improve products' shelf presence and boost brand value for customers. This marks our core strategic shift from a pure label manufacturer to a supplier of value-added label services.'

When talking about the prevalent industry pain points, Leibo is realistic: 'Raw material price volatility is an inevitable cyclical phenomenon across the printing industry, so label converters do not need to panic excessively. In the current era of rising competition, sustainable core competitiveness does not come from vicious price wars. Instead, it relies on lean production efficiency, process-focused management and exclusive value-added services. Enterprises should take the initiative to review internal cost structures and optimize production and operational workflows to uncover internal profit potential. Furthermore, we need to precisely capture clients' underlying demands and develop customized supporting services to build long-term win-win partnerships with customers.'

To adapt to evolving industrial trends and address the talent shortage, Dayang Label has broadened its business focus by launching new service modules, including a new media operation and personalized creative design.

The company is gradually reducing its reliance on low-margin, print-only business. This youthful, diversified and service-oriented business model aligns perfectly with the future development trend of the global label printing industry.

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Female leaders make a mark in Chinese industry

Within the technology-driven label printing sector, women leaders continue to forge their unique industry stories with thoughtfulness and grit. Yolanda Wang reports

For years, China's print and packaging industry has been defined by rapid technological advancement, fierce competition and relentless innovation. While leadership roles have traditionally been dominated by men, a growing number of women are helping shape the sector's future, from driving transformation to leading business growth. Their perspectives are influencing not only how companies innovate, but also how they attract talent, build teams and respond to an evolving marketplace.

In this article, Labels & Labeling highlights two women whose careers reflect the changing face of China's print industry. They share the experiences that have shaped their professional journeys, the challenges they have overcome and the opportunities ahead.

Zhang Min, general manager of Tianrui

Zhang Min, general manager of Tianrui Packaging, was originally a physics teacher. After her family fell ill and she faced financial pressures, she moved into the printing industry. Now, with over two decades of experience, she looks back on how she transformed a small workshop of just a few dozen sqm into a label-printing company with an annual output value of 30m RMB (4.4m USD).

Reflecting on how she entered the industry, Min recalls that she initially took a temporary position at a book and periodical printing factory in Qingdao, which she thinks is somewhat related to her previous job as a teacher. After returning to Jinan to care for her family, she worked in pharmaceutical packaging sales at a local packaging and printing company.

Despite her outstanding work performance, the company was on the verge of collapse due to poor management decisions. At that point, having already become well-versed in the printing sector, she made the bold decision to start her own business, focusing exclusively on label printing.

'I settled on label printing for several key reasons,' Min recalls, 'Firstly, it aligns with my prior experience in the printing sector. Secondly, there's no overlap with my former employer's business lines. Thirdly, compared with conventional packaging printing, label printing requires lower investment, making it ideal for a startup. Most importantly, I saw massive growth potential in the label market. As industries are moving toward standardized packaging operations, demand for labels is bound to surge.'

Tianrui Packaging was officially founded in August 2014. 'We started out in a tiny workshop in central Jinan with only seven employees, one Weigang offset press and several die-cutting machines,' Min shares. As the founder, she handled multiple roles, including sales, client negotiations and deliveries and took care of all company affairs.

In the startup's early stages, orders were sparse, and the firm barely broke even in the first year. 'But we guaranteed quality products and attentive service for every client, however tiny the order,' Min adds. The company's dedication paid off. Tianrui turned profitable the following year, kicking off stable growth after that.

As the business expanded, the old workshop couldn't comply with national environmental regulations or meet higher output demands. In 2016, Min purchased a new factory and moved to a new site at Jinan Xinmao Industrial Park in 2017. 'Our output quadrupled the year after relocation, greatly lifting team morale,' she continues.



Zhang Min, general manager of Tianrui

"Over the years, I don't just love this industry; I carry a profound sense of responsibility for it"

Tianrui Packaging has since undergone steady upgrades. The company kept expanding its equipment lineup: the initial single offset press grew to three, followed by a 10-color flexographic press purchased in 2021, plus a 12-color flexographic press and a seven-color digital press installed in 2023, forming a complete production equipment system. Today, the firm employs a team of over 50 people.

Fierce cut-throat competition now pervades the label industry. Min shares: 'In this saturated market, converters should focus on building their internal capabilities.'

For team development, the company launched an all-staff communications program in which employees hold daily group-sharing sessions and monthly company-wide exchanges to foster personal growth. It also rolled out a 100-day sprint campaign with clear departmental targets to rally collective efforts. While not all goals were fully met, the output still rose by 20 percent year-on-year, strengthening team cohesion.

Tianrui also stays agile amid industrial shifts and adjusts its strategies promptly. Post-pandemic, growth slowed, and national centralized drug procurement policies drastically altered pharmaceutical labeling requirements. Min made a decisive pivot: alongside its existing business, the company expanded into beverage labels, diversifying its product portfolio to hedge market risks.

This validated her early insight that the label sector demands diversified development.

Min believes women hold unique strengths in the technically and physically demanding label printing industry. 'Women are more meticulous, focused and persistent. As well as physically taxing roles like printing and die-cutting machine operators, they excel in sales, order scheduling, pre-press file processing, inspection and warehousing,' she explains.

As an experienced female industry practitioner and entrepreneur, Min prefers hiring female staff. 'Female employees tend to be more stable, dedicated and attentive, with smoother communication.' Today, female staff account for half of the workforce at Tianrui Packaging and are a core driving force behind the growth.

As a female manager, Min has a deep understanding of the struggles female employees face in balancing work and family, and she offers ample care and support enabling them to fulfill their personal potential. She also leads by example. Amid her heavy workload, she sticks to regular workouts to relieve stress and stay sharp, and maps out clear long-term strategies for the company.

Recalling hardships along her entrepreneurial journey, Min is filled with emotion. 'One memory stands out above all. During summer vacation, I brought my son to client meetings. When I finished the visit, I found him asleep at the gatehouse.' Yet these hardships never made her back down. 'Over the years, I don't just love this industry; I carry a profound sense of responsibility for it. When I worked as an employee, I was accountable to clients. After starting my own business, I also took on responsibility for all my staff. This industry is ingrained in me; I have never considered switching careers.'

Rao Xuemei, vice general manager of Colink

Rao Xuemei, vice general manager of Colink, has been engaged in the label printing industry for 22 years. Growing from a rookie to a core management leader, she has witnessed the industry's continuous development. With persistent dedication, she advocates for the irreplaceable value of females in this sector.

Over the years, she has focused on two core businesses: customer management and production. She accurately identifies customers' pain points, aligns demands and coordinates resources to maintain long-term customer trust. Meanwhile, she oversees the entire production process, optimizes work procedures, and manages product quality and delivery schedules. She strikes a balance between service quality and production efficiency, sticking to her original aspiration with professionalism and responsibility.



Rao Xuemei, vice general manager of Colink

"May we embrace life with tenderness, forge ahead bravely in the printing industry and live up to our times and ourselves "

After 22 years spent gaining deep knowledge of all aspects of the industry, what brings her the greatest sense of achievement is not technological breakthroughs but the joint efforts required to meet customers' needs, along with the solid teamwork in fulfilling commitments side by side with her colleagues.

The company once faced a sudden surge of orders and huge delivery pressure. Xuemei and her team worked round the clock for nearly a month, resting only a few hours per day and napping briefly on office chairs when exhausted.

She often returned to the company at 10 or 11 pm, after putting her children to bed, taking over machine operators' shifts to keep production lines running 24 hours a day.

What touches her most is not only her own perseverance but also the team's joint efforts to get through difficult times. Countless late-night discussions and mutual encouragement have bonded the team tightly together. Timely product delivery and sincere recognition from customers make her fulfilled. The team spirit of delivering on missions and the trust gained from meeting customer demands have become her most precious source of satisfaction.

She believes her strong sense of responsibility stems from treating customers' problems as her own and prioritizing service quality at every stage of production and communication. Consistently leading the team to stick to this original intention is her greatest achievement over the past 22 years.

The label printing industry is generally regarded as male-dominated due to its technical and physically demanding nature.

However, Xuemei proves by her own experience that women's attention to detail, empathy and tenacity are unique and irreplaceable strengths in this industry.

'Faced with challenging customer demands, female staff can better perceive clients' anxieties, ease conflicts through gentle communication and make customers feel valued with patient listening and giving a detailed explanation of a proposed solution,' explains Xuemei.

'In production management, women's carefulness and rigor help detect potential production risks in advance. Moreover, female practitioners show outstanding tenacity under tight delivery deadlines. They withstand heavy pressure, coordinate resources efficiently and take on heavy responsibilities with gentle but firm strength.'

Xuemei admits that sticking to the industry for 22 years has never been easy. She will keep her passion and original aspiration in the days ahead. Meanwhile, she sends blessings to all female peers in the industry: 'May we embrace life with tenderness, forge ahead bravely in the printing industry and live up to our times and ourselves.'

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LABEL CONVERTERS EYE CARTON OPPORTUNITY

As in-line technologies blur the line between labels and folding cartons, the entry barriers are lower than many converters expect. Piotr Wnuk reports



Global consumption of cartonboard reached 56.3 million tons in 2025, valued at 58.9b USD, according to new research from Smithers. This will be converted into 52.4 million tons of packaging, valued at 132.8b USD. The demand will push global consumption of folding cartons to 63.1 million tons in 2030, with value increasing to 159.6b USD at constant pricing.

Behind the numbers is a structural shift: plastic packaging formats are losing ground to paper-based alternatives, pushed by regulatory pressure in Europe and mounting brand owner commitments to recyclable materials. For label converters already running flexographic presses, that shift carries a specific implication. The market they have been serving is expanding into adjacent territory, and the equipment to enter it may already be on their production floor.

Single-pass flexographic presses capable of handling board substrates up to 700 microns, with in-line die-cutting, foiling, lamination and embossing in a continuous process, are the same presses that have defined premium label production for decades. Some converters are already making that connection. The question is not whether it can be done, but whether the economics work and, if so, for which jobs.

The answer from four press manufacturers is consistent: yes, in the right run length range, with the right substrate knowledge and workflow thinking, it works. And for many converters, the gap between where they are and where they need to be is narrower than they expect.

THE SHEET-FED GAP

Traditional folding carton production is built on sheet-fed offset lithography: a mature, cost-effective technology for high-volume standardized runs, but one that carries structural costs when run lengths shorten or job complexity rises. Plate production, multi-stage finishing, high work-in-progress inventory and long makeready times create friction precisely where the market is moving fastest: toward shorter runs, more SKU variation, faster turnaround and greater design flexibility.

Sheet-fed offset handles long, stable runs efficiently. In the short-run, high-variability carton work, the economics are harder to defend. That is the gap in-line flexo is filling. Consolidating printing, embellishment and finishing into a single continuous pass eliminates the touchpoints that make short-run carton work a loss leader on a sheet-fed line. The resulting production model closely maps onto the work label converters already understand: variable, embellished, time-sensitive, margin-sensitive.

THE ENTRY POINT

For label converters considering the crossover, single-pass flexo is the most practical starting point. Mid-web flexo platforms from several manufacturers can all be configured to handle cartonboard substrates with in-line die-cutting, creasing, foiling, lamination and screen printing and even quality control in a continuous process. The press widths, substrate tolerances and finishing options across this group cover most of the run length and format range where in-line carton work is commercially viable.

Edale, a Canon company, has positioned its CartonLine platform most explicitly at the label converter audience. At Labelexpo Europe 2025, it demonstrated an FL6p configured with six LED-UV flexo units, a rail-mounted turnbar, lamination, an EZ Foil unit and an in-line flatbed die-cutter, running at up to 180m/min on substrates up to 700 microns at web widths up to 600mm.

"IT IS NOT ABOUT STARTING AGAIN; IT IS ABOUT USING WHAT THEY ALREADY KNOW"

'The label market is very competitive. Carton work can be more profitable, and many label converters are already outsourcing that work,' says Lachlan Buirds, managing director of Edale. 'They know flexo and what good production looks like. For these businesses, the question is how quickly they can turn a familiar production process into a new source of performance and margin.'

A common misconception, Buirds notes, is that entering folding cartons means becoming a traditional sheet-fed carton producer. That framing makes the opportunity look larger, more expensive and more complicated than it needs to be. 'In reality, a lot of label converters already have many of the skills they need. They understand flexo, color, embellishment, workflow and brand expectations. It is not about starting again; it is about using what they already know.'

The economic case is evident most clearly in run-length analysis. Edale's Carton Cost Calculator indicates that in-line flexo holds a production cost advantage over sheet-fed litho at run lengths up to around 75,000 cartons, though the figure varies by job. 'It could be 10,000 on one job. It could be 83,000 on another,' Buirds explains. 'The issue for sheet-fed producers is that some of these shorter or more variable jobs have become loss leaders. With in-line flexo, there is an option to make money on those jobs instead.'

New York Label & Box Works, a family-owned converter with operations in New York and New Jersey, became the first company in the US to install an Edale FL5 press in 2021. It now runs both pressure-sensitive labels and folding cartons under one roof. The ability to match color between label and carton jobs has become a distinct selling point: brand customers can consolidate both formats with a single supplier and get consistent output across packaging types.

Tamar Packaging Solutions, based in the Tamar Valley in Southwest England, took a different path. Starting from a label background, the company moved entirely into in-line flexo carton production on Edale FL5 presses, carving out a niche in direct-food-contact cartonboard for the bakery market. Its competitive edge is not press speed but coating expertise: the ability to apply grease- and moisture-resistant barriers in-line, eliminating the plastic barrier layers traditionally used in food packaging. With 12 production staff and AA-grade BRC accreditation, it is a tight, efficient operation built on the workflow discipline that label converting instills.

TRAFFIC MOVES BOTH WAYS

Omet's view of the market adds an unexpected dimension to the crossover story. Andrea Angeli, export sales manager at Omet, notes that the movement is not running exclusively from labels to cartons. Established carton producers are adding label capability to



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"THE EFFICIENCY GAINS FROM RUNNING EMBELLISHMENT IN-LINE RATHER THAN AS A SEPARATE OFF-LINE STAGE ARE SIGNIFICANT"

their platforms as the boundary between the two segments blurs in both directions.

Omet was among the first narrow web press manufacturers to enter the folding carton market, and the Varyflex platform was designed from the outset for multi-application production. It handles printing, embellishment, die-cutting and finishing in a single pass across both label and carton substrates, giving operators the latitude to allocate work by run length, complexity and lead time rather than channeling every job through the same production route.

'In-line embellishment, foiling, cast and cure, screen, transfers very straightforwardly from label to carton production on Omet platforms,' adds Angeli. 'The efficiency gains from running embellishment in-line rather than as a separate off-line stage are significant, and they apply equally whether you are producing a label or a folding carton.'

On substrate handling, Angeli is direct about the knowledge gap converters face when moving from PS stock to cartonboard. Tension management is the main adjustment: the board behaves differently from self-adhesive film or paper under press conditions, and the setup needs to reflect that. Omet has developed dedicated systems on the Varyflex to address board-specific tension requirements, which reduces the learning curve for converters who are new to the substrate.

Web width is a question Angeli hears consistently. A range of 21in/530mm to 26in/670mm is the sweet spot for integrated in-line production, wide enough for efficient board utilization on carton work and narrow enough to fit within a label converter's existing plant footprint. Demand for presses in that range is growing, in part from converters who want a single platform for both applications without separate equipment lines.

THE 26IN ARGUMENT

Mark Andy's Performance Series S9 approaches the carton opportunity from a specific point in the width spectrum. At 26in/660mm, the press aligns with the B2 format, which is standard in sheet-fed offset, meaning label converters adding carton work can transfer many existing designs and artwork setups without changing their pre-press preparation.

'The Performance Series S9 was designed to be both a complement and, in many applications, an alternative to B2 sheet-fed machines,' notes Lena Chmielewska-Bontron, marketing manager Europe at Mark Andy. 'It combines high production efficiency with the flexibility of web-fed technology, allowing converters to handle short and medium runs economically and respond faster to brand owner needs.'

The customer profile that Mark Andy sees in Europe differs slightly from that observed by Edale and Omet. In Europe, customers using Performance Series presses are mostly flexible packaging converters seeking an economical route for shorter runs. Label converters are evaluating the move, but sheet-fed offset remains dominant in European and North American folding carton production.

Where Mark Andy sees the strongest crossover interest from label converters into carton production is in cosmetics and dietary supplements, segments defined by frequent versioning, seasonal launches and premium presentation requirements. The dynamic Chmielewska-Bontron describes is not a classic technology switch: brand owners want a single supplier capable of delivering both labels and cartons, and that commercial pressure, more than any technology argument, is driving label converters to evaluate their carton capabilities.

'This resembles the transformation we saw earlier in the label market, when label converters gradually took over more complex applications from traditional offset printers,' she notes. 'A similar process is now beginning to emerge in folding carton.'

The hybrid digital-flexo dimension is where Mark Andy's offering most clearly diverges from the pure flexo platforms on the market. The Digital Series HD HighSpeed 1200 hybrid addresses the demand for short runs, personalization, versioning and variable data in carton work by combining digital and flexo print capability in a single pass. The practical effect is substantial. Converters can handle many versions of the same carton job without new plate preparation, respond to regulatory changes in artwork without reprinting entire stocks and produce market tests or seasonal variants at quantities that would be economically unviable on a conventional plate-based line.

ONE PLATFORM, THREE MARKETS

Bobst's Master M6 was designed explicitly to handle labels, flexible packaging and folding cartons from the same machine, with DigiFlexo automation and oneECG extended color gamut technology supporting repeatable, highly automated production across all three substrates.

The M6 runs at web widths up to 26in/670mm and offers reel-to-reel, reel-to-sheet and reel-to-converting output configurations. Optional Excellence kit and V-Flower technology support fast cylinder exchange and fully automatic flexo job changeovers in under one minute, a makeready speed that changes the economics of short-run carton work considerably when set against the changeover times on a conventional sheet-fed line.

'A growing share of interest in the M6 is coming from converters looking to diversify beyond labels and into adjacent packaging formats, including folding cartons,' says Ludovico Frati, sales and marketing director at Bobst. 'Rising SKU complexity, shorter product lifecycles and increasing sustainability expectations are prompting converters to look for platforms that can support more than one packaging type while preserving the efficiency of narrow-web production models.'

The market segments where Bobst is seeing the strongest demand from label converters adding carton are pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, personal care and premium food. Pharma is particularly compelling because of



Omet Varyflex platform

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Bobst Master M6 in production on cartonboard

"THIS RESEMBLES THE TRANSFORMATION WE SAW EARLIER IN THE LABEL MARKET, WHEN LABEL CONVERTERS GRADUALLY TOOK OVER MORE COMPLEX APPLICATIONS FROM TRADITIONAL OFFSET PRINTERS"



Mark Andy Performance Series S9 mid-web press

its compliance demands: frequent versioning, serialization, tamper evidence and variable data all favor a production model that is accurate, repeatable and flexible, a description that fits the operational profile of a well-run label converter precisely. Cosmetics and personal care follow similar logic, with in-line embellishment capability and fast turnaround for seasonal launches, adding weight to the case. Premium food shares the visual differentiation driver, with the additional pull of fiber-based, recyclable packaging formats that brand owners are under growing pressure to adopt.

The Bobst Digital Master DM55, an all-in-one system that combines digital and flexo printing and coating, embellishment, quality control and die-cutting into a single device, further extends the ecosystem for converters who want a scalable route from print to finished packaging.

Other press manufacturers showing or developing in-line folding carton production systems include Nilpeter, Lombardi, Spande and Hontec.

BRIDGING THE KNOWLEDGE GAP

Press technology is the easiest part of the transition. The harder work is operational and commercial and it falls into three distinct areas: substrate knowledge, finishing discipline and workflow costing.

On the substrate, Bobst's Frati explains that cartonboard, typically running at 200 to 350gsm, is stiffer, heavier and less forgiving than pressure-sensitive materials or unsupported films. It does not stretch or conform under press tension the way labelstock does, but it shrinks and swells with temperature and humidity variation. 'Operators need tighter, more precise tension zones to move the board cleanly through the in-line flexo units without slipping or drifting and require less stressing, drying and curing processes to avoid issues with shrinkage, swelling and curling. Deep process knowledge is key to mastering carton production at industrial scale,' he explains. Ink and coating performance also requires a different approach: cartonboard is porous, so ink holdout differs substantially from filmic or laminated label materials, and anilox volume and primer selection need to be matched to the board grade rather than carried over from label-side settings.

Coating coverage on the reverse side of the board requires particular care. Varnish or coating over glue tabs will prevent the carton from bonding properly during final box assembly. Spot coating, uncoated glue tabs or specific surface treatments are needed to preserve the capability of forming a strong, durable adhesive join. This consideration simply does not arise in label production, and catches converters out if not addressed at the job specification stage.

Die-cutting and creasing represent the sharpest departure from label converting practice, and the tooling choices label converters face are more complex than anything they will have encountered on the label side. There are three principal technologies to understand: flatbed die-cutting, rotary solid dies and rotary flexible dies. Flatbed die-cutting, the mainstay of sheet-fed carton production, offers superior cut quality and versatility across substrates, and tooling is robust and relatively straightforward to replace. Rotary flexible dies are better suited to the short-run, agile production model that label converters already operate, with minimal set-up time and low tooling cost. They are less robust than flatbed equivalents and not always suitable for heavier gauge cartonboard.

For converters entering carton production on a web-fed in-line platform, rotary cutting and creasing dies enable single-pass production at speed, while in-line flatbed die-cut and crease modules (as demonstrated by Edale on its CartonLine at Labelexpo Europe 2025) offer a practical alternative for short to medium run lengths where cut quality and registration precision are the priority.

The creasing requirement is where label converters most frequently underestimate the knowledge gap. Cartonboard must be creased accurately before it can fold cleanly: the crease compresses the board fibers along a controlled line to create a hinge, and if the male rule and female matrix are not precisely aligned to the board grade and caliper, the surface coating or print will crack at the fold. That is a tolerance and setup discipline with no direct equivalent in pressure-sensitive label production.

The good news for converters entering the market from a flexo background is that the tooling supply chain is already familiar. Kocher + Beck, Wink, Maxcess/Rotometrics, Sysco and Lartec all supply die-cutting and creasing tooling to both the label and carton markets, and their



Paul Baker, operations manager of Tamar Packaging Solutions, in front of the Edale FL-5 carton press with in-line flatbed cut-crease module

"RISING SKU COMPLEXITY, SHORTER PRODUCT LIFECYCLES AND INCREASING SUSTAINABILITY EXPECTATIONS ARE PROMPTING CONVERTERS TO LOOK FOR PLATFORMS THAT CAN SUPPORT MORE THAN ONE PACKAGING TYPE"

flexible die ranges cover cutting, perforating and creasing across roll-fed and sheet-fed applications. Technifold, which exhibited at Labelexpo Europe 2025, offers a retrofittable Technicrease cassette designed to replace custom male and female creasing dies, reducing tooling cost and changeover time on existing press configurations.

For converters who want to prototype carton blanks before committing to full tooling investment, laser cutting offers a lower-barrier entry point. Lang Laser's Cartos Singular, developed specifically for the folding carton market, allows converters to produce carton samples and scale up to production runs, with simpler operator training than conventional die systems.

'Press is often the easiest part of the move,' says Edale's Buirds. 'The bigger shift is understanding that you are not just printing a carton; you are producing a three-dimensional pack that must work in the customer's environment.'

The structural design knowledge gap sits upstream of the press entirely, and it is the one area where label converter experience provides almost no foundation. Carton blanks must be engineered before they can be cut and creased. Blank dimensions, panel layout, glue tab positioning and crease line placement all affect how the finished pack performs in the customer's filling line and on shelf. Esko and Hybrid Software both offer full folding carton workflow capability including structural design and 3D visualization, tools that are standard in dedicated carton operations but largely absent from label converter pre-press environments.

The workflow and costing gap is the third area. Buirds illustrates it by reference to a customer visit in China, where a sheet-fed process was running six separate operations involving 12 people. With single-pass flexo, much of that is consolidated into a single controlled flow. 'The comparison is not only print quality,' he notes. 'It is labor, energy, floor space, work in progress and handling between stages.' Structural design, board utilization and finishing efficiency all affect whether a carton job is commercially worthwhile, and converters who cost those jobs the way they cost label jobs will find it difficult to read the margins accurately until they have recalibrated their thinking.

Substrate sourcing on the roll adds a direct cost saving. Board purchased on the roll costs five to 10 percent less than the sheet equivalent, according to Edale's analysis. Combined with the elimination of plate costs for digital-flexo hybrid configurations and reduced setup waste compared with sheet-fed litho, the total cost picture shifts meaningfully in favor of the right jobs.

Tamar Packaging's experience is instructive on where the right jobs are. The company found early that it could not compete against litho producers on large blank sizes, with too few blanks per repeat to make the economics work. The competitive ground shifted when format size, coating requirements and in-line embellishment aligned. Finding that ground and being honest about where it does not exist, is the practical intelligence that separates converters who make money from the move from those who do not.

LOUPE CONFIRMS THE SHIFT

The industry confirmed the direction of travel at Labelexpo (now Loupe) Europe 2025, where folding carton featured as a dedicated segment for the first time. Over 25 percent of exhibitors carried portfolios spanning labels, flexible packaging and folding cartons. Mid-web presses configurable for in-line carton production were shown by Mark Andy, Lombardi and Spande alongside Edale's dedicated CartonLine. Omet's long history in folding carton on the Varyflex platform was well represented. Mark Andy also announced that its MAPP division, which supplies consumables and plate-making equipment to packaging converters, would expand its range to include folding carton consumables. This detail signals how seriously the industry is now treating this crossover at the supply chain level. A Label Academy masterclass addressed converter diversification into carton packaging directly. The show reflected decisions that converters in multiple regions are already making.

The regulatory context gives those decisions added urgency. The PPWR and parallel national frameworks are raising recyclability thresholds across packaging categories and putting brand owners under pressure to iterate faster on both structures and artwork. Digital and hybrid press platforms that can produce carton versions of existing label jobs without lengthy cylinder preparation cycles are well-suited to that environment.

The ability to change artwork quickly, produce short compliance runs economically and test new formats without large minimum orders is not a niche requirement. It is becoming a baseline expectation.

Label converters who have made the move share a consistent observation: the barrier was not the technology. It was the decision to look carefully at the equipment already running in the plant and to recognize that the distance between a label press and a carton press on the right platform is shorter than the industry's historical segmentation suggests.

The converters doing this well are not treating carton as a separate business. They are treating it as a production extension of what they already do, serving customers who want fewer suppliers and greater capability from each. The market is moving that way. The technology is ready. The question left for most converters is timing.

Scan the QR code to learn more about how Tamar Packaging Solutions shows how in-line converting can create a powerful niche in the folding carton market.

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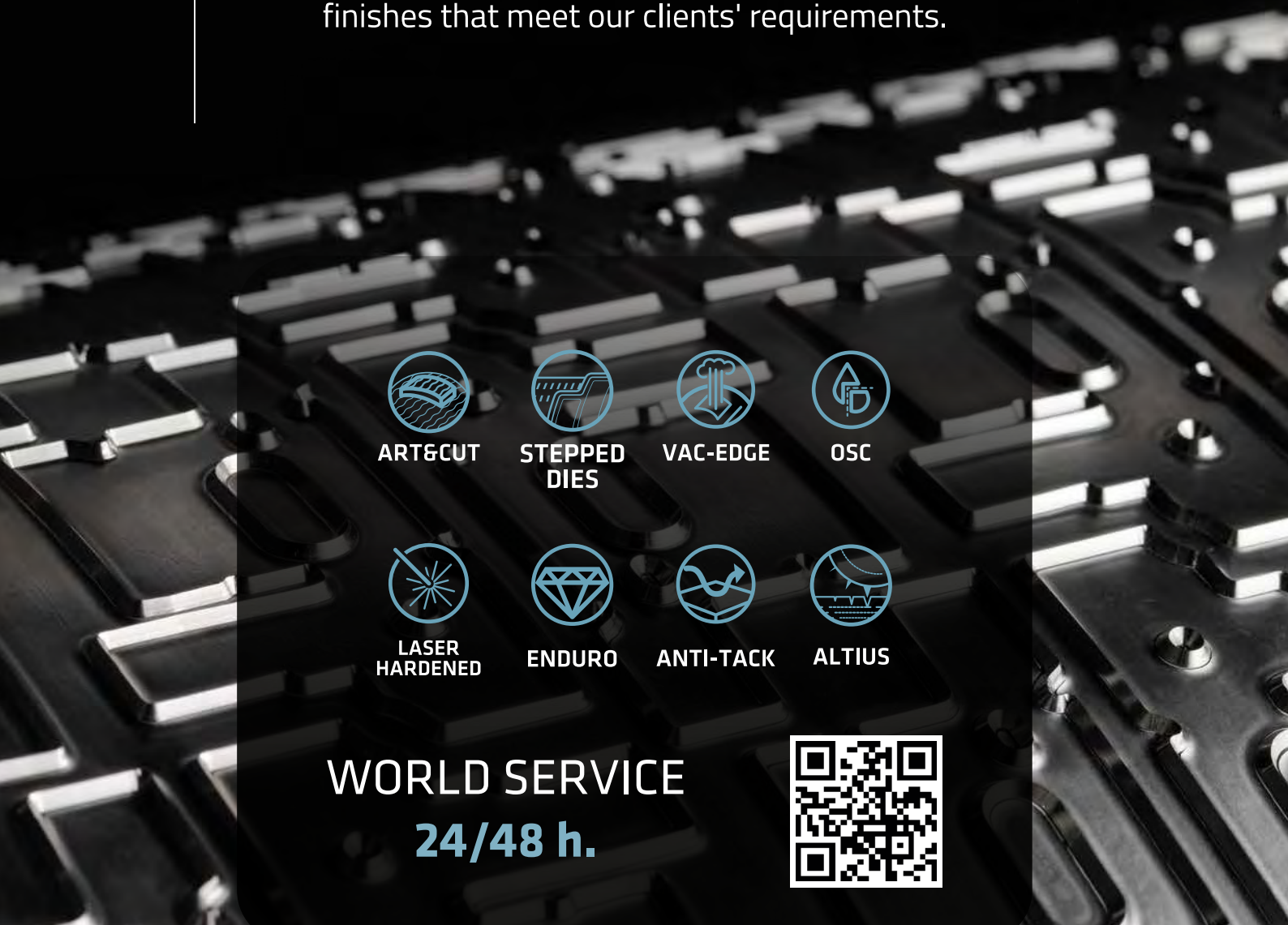
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New technologies improve food-safe flexible packaging

Advancements in materials, coatings and UV curing are improving the recyclability and safety of flexible packaging for food applications. Selah Zighelboim reports

Flexible packaging is the second-largest packaging segment in the world. It is also one of the fastest growing, at a CAGR of 4.7 percent, according to Grand View Research. In Europe, flex pack dominates on grocery store shelves. In the US, it accounts for more than 20 percent of the value of the packaging market, or 42.6bn USD, according to the Flexible Packaging Association's 2025 State of the US Flexible Packaging Industry Report.

Sustainability is driving much of this growth, as flex pack's lightweight material provides more energy-efficient transportation.

Food is the largest end-use segment for flexible packaging, providing a range of benefits beyond branding and energy-efficient transportation. Flexible packaging also poses unique challenges.

'Packaging may often seem like a secondary product to the product itself,' says Martin Tielberg, global marketing manager at Nilpeter. 'But in reality, it, of course, plays a vital role in protecting the product and in branding. It ensures shelf life, it prevents contamination, and it safeguards the consumer. If the packaging fails, it can actually be a real threat to the brand reputation and to consumer safety.'

Currently, multilayer substrates ensure food safety and shelf stability. But those same substrates also create barriers to recyclability. Companies across the packaging supply chain are working to improve this, particularly with new monopolymer materials and low-migration inks.

These innovations were highlighted at a Nilpeter open house hosted at the press manufacturer's Technology Center in Cincinnati, Ohio in April. There, Nilpeter presented its FA-26 press, capable of producing both labels and flexible packaging, alongside a day of education on the latest advancements in the food safety and sustainability of flexible packaging.

Throughout the event, suppliers emphasized the importance of collaboration to address these challenges.

'Expectations are rising across the board,' Tielberg says. 'Regulators are tightening requirements, particularly around migration and documentation. Brand owners expect full transparency and accountability. Consumers are more aware of the packaging and its potential impact. All of this creates a lot of pressure on all of us, whether you are a press manufacturer, ink supplier or material supplier, but it's also what drives innovation.'

Substrates

Regulations, such as Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws, are driving material suppliers to develop monopolymer substrates to meet recyclability requirements.

At the Nilpeter open house event, David Parsio, vice president of sales and marketing at Multi-Plastics, a film supplier, explained that packaging that once required a multilayered substrate with three or four polymers can now be achieved with an advanced single-polymer film. The industry is shifting toward using 100 percent monopolymer laminations in polyethylene and polypropylene substrates, such as specialized blown film polyethylenes and cast-tentered polyethylenes, which can replace some multipolymer materials.

However, these new substrates come with their own set of challenges. They have lower stiffness and higher elongation,



Actega's Robbie King speaks about low-migration inks

> "If the packaging fails, it can actually be a real threat to the brand reputation and to consumer safety"

affecting how they run on presses. This makes tension precision critical to maintaining registration, emphasizing the importance of press control systems. Product design can also play a role, as stronger engineered surface layers can help with the elasticity of these more sustainable materials.

At the same time, sustainability demands are also driving the development of more sustainable multi-plastic films. These new films are becoming thinner.

While more lightweight, these thinner films make web breaks more likely, again underscoring the importance of press control systems for stable production.

Overall, these new sustainable substrates are less stable, and running presses at their maximum speeds isn't necessarily economically advantageous with these new materials.

'Every day, we're in the field helping converters balance that speed and press variability,' Parsio says.

Parsio notes that brand owners are highly interested in materials made of post-consumer recycled (PCR) content, and the cost difference between PCR and virgin material is not as significant as it used to be.

'The next three or four years of flexographic performance won't be defined by just speed alone,' Parsio says. 'It's going to be defined by how we handle increasingly complex and variable substrates, and that's going to require close collaboration across the entire value chain.'

Inks and coatings

Standard inks and coatings can migrate through packaging. In food, this is a threat to safety and can also impact taste and odor.

As a result, low-migration inks and coatings, which are specifically designed to prevent this migration, have become the industry standard across a wide range of applications. Food is the primary driver of these low-migration inks and coatings, but they are also used in pharmaceuticals, baby products, tobacco and cosmetics industries.

'If it goes on a flexographic press, and there's a chance it could affect taste, smell or safety, low-migration inks are your standard,' says Robbie King, strategic account manager at Actega.

There is no global legal standard for low migration. The term simply means that the components stay below certain safety levels to prevent migration.

Despite that, the industry does follow two primary benchmarks, the Swiss Ordinance and the Nestlé Guidance Note on Packaging Inks, in defining what ingredients are allowed in low-migration packaging inks. The lists of acceptable ingredients are regularly updated. If a raw material is not on either benchmark, then it must demonstrate migration below 50 parts per billion.

'Low migration is not a marketing term,' King says. 'It's about protecting your customer from recalls, protecting your plant from liability and protecting your long-term contracts.'

King urges converters to get third-party certifications, such as those from Rutgers University, for low-migration products.

On the future of what sustainable inks could look like, King looks to one brand: Waiakea Hawaiian Volcanic Beverages. This water bottle and coffee company worked with converter NextGen Label Group, Living Ink Technologies and Actega to successfully use Actega's ACTExact UV Black Algae Ink in its labels. The implementation of this algae-derived ink is carbon neutral, and came following five years of R&D. (See page 21)

King concludes: 'Low-migration inks and coatings aren't just nice to have. They're how we make sure nothing unwanted crosses the line.'

UV curing

UV curing is a popular method of drying inks, coatings and adhesives in flex pack because of its environmental benefits. Compared to systems for water-based and solvent-based inks, UV curing systems emit fewer VOCs, can be all-electric, consume less energy and take up less space.

However, many UV-curable photoinitiators pose migratory risks, particularly if curing is insufficient and/or unknown, so their use in flexible packaging must be carefully considered, especially for direct-contact primary packaging in food, beverage and pharmaceuticals.

Measurable and migratory-compliant curing is the focus of many advancements in UV curing. Currently, UV curing is not common for direct-contact primary food packaging, but advancements in UV curing technology have made it an option for secondary food packaging and may one day open the door to food-safe, UV-cured primary packaging.

One of these advancements is nitrogen inertization, where nitrogen is injected into the curing area to inhibit oxygen and help the curing process.

Another is to increase the UVC component of a UV curing system, thereby reducing the amount of photoinitiators needed.

'If there's less photoinitiator, there's less chance of migration, and so more confidence that what you're producing is suitable for applications that are sensitive to migration,' says Ryan Turner, R&D manager at GEW.

Turner notes several GEW technologies that provide more confidence in UV curing and mitigate migratory risks. For example, GEW's OxyGuard Precision Control System samples a small amount of gas from the curing chamber to determine how much nitrogen is needed. Its DoseGuard Precision Control System measures UV output from the curing lamp and adjusts to ensure that the inks and coatings receive the exact UV energy required. GEW's ExciRay lamp requires no photoinitiators while enabling a matte finish; however, it does need to be paired with either another UV lamp or an electron beam to ensure it cures completely.

As a UV-LED technology supplier, GEW is also developing UVC-LED systems. Most UV-LED systems for the printing and converting markets today are UVA, whereas the technology they replace (medium-pressure mercury arc lamps) is polychromatic and therefore emits across the full UV spectrum. Therefore, UV-LED curing works with fewer materials than UV in general does, so reducing the photoinitiators needed is more challenging. Introducing UVC-LED with UVA-LED allows for a greater number of raw materials to formulate with. So far, the testing for this product has been positive.

'We're hoping that if we provide a UVC-LED solution, it provides more options to create materials that can be used in flexible packaging,' Turner says.

While these innovations have not yet made UV inks appropriate for primary flexible food packaging, there are still other uses for them today.

'There's so much more in flex pack that doesn't have the same migratory requirements,' Turner says. 'For example, it could be in bagging. There's so much within flexible packaging that today is suitable for UV curing.'

Scan the QR code to learn more about the North American label market

"Low-migration inks and coatings aren't just nice to have. They're how we make sure nothing unwanted crosses the line"



Nilpeter senior sales consultant Tom Clawson demonstrates the Nilpeter FA-26 press

Nilpeter FA-26 represents labels and packaging convergence

In addition to featuring education on food-safe, sustainable flexible packaging, Nilpeter's open house in April also highlighted the company's FA-26 flexo press.

The FA-26 is Nilpeter's widest label press. The machine can handle a variety of materials and inks, making it suitable for flex pack, shrink sleeve, in-mold labels and pressure-sensitive labels.

Jasper Jorgensen, global sales manager at Nilpeter, notes that the FA-26 offers a high degree of web-tension control, an important consideration when handling more sustainable films, which are often less stable.

Through its ability to produce both labels and flex pack, the Nilpeter FA-26 is an example of an industry-wide trend, where segments of the packaging industry are increasingly converging. As more label converters enter the flex pack market, particularly in short-run flex pack, suppliers are providing them with technology that meets their needs.

'The FA-26, targeting the flexible packaging market, takes all the virtues that we find in label printing, where we do everything in-line, so we can be smarter and more efficient, especially in smaller jobs,' Jorgensen says.

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LOUPE AMERICAS 2026 PREVIEW

Loupe Americas 2026, taking place at the Donald E Stephens Convention Center in Rosemont, Illinois, from September 15-17, is the very first show under the Loupe brand. The technology on display underscores what this global event series is about: all things label printing and converting, alongside the converging packaging segments, particularly flexible packaging and folding carton. This comprehensive Loupe Americas preview highlights the innovation taking place across the industry and on the show floor.

Compiled by Selah Zighelboim, with contributions from the global Labels & Labeling team

PRESS TECHNOLOGY

BOBST • BOOTH 5805/5905

Bobst showcases connected packaging production workflows for labels, flexible packaging and folding carton, including a live demonstration of Digital Master 340, a modular, upgradable label press with in-line quality control. It operates at speeds of up to 100m/min at 1,200 DPI and is available in four- or six-color configurations, with an optional digital white. It combines printing with automated flexo and converting modules, handling printing, embellishment and die-cutting in a single pass across a 340mm print width.

The company also promotes Bobst Connect, a digital platform for production data and workflow visibility.

BROTECH • BOOTH 5615

Brotech exhibits its FFX AI Series, an AI-powered flexo platform combining machine intelligence, real-time sensing, closed-loop color management and continuous learning to deliver smarter, more consistent and more profitable production.

CANON • BOOTH 6000

Canon demonstrates its Edale LabelLine Series, a modular label converting platform designed to streamline flexographic and digital workflows while supporting short, medium and long-run production.

Canon also presents its latest innovations in desktop label production with the new Canon L Series on-demand label printers, as well as the award-winning imagePrograf and Colorado M-series large format printers.

Canon also previews its LabelStream LS2000 and corrPress iB17.

DANTEX GROUP • BOOTH 6415

Dantex showcases the PicoJet 1200 digital inkjet press, as well as the PicoColour 254, demonstrated in a hybrid configuration alongside the Grafisk Maskinfabrik GM DC350 in-line finishing unit, converting the press from a roll-to-roll system into a roll-to-hybrid production line with integrated finishing.

Dantex also promotes new software for the PicoJet and PicoColour platforms covering quality control, operator workflow and press maintenance functions.

DILLI • BOOTH 3110

Dilli showcases Neo Picasso Plus, designed for label and flexible packaging production. The press supports media widths up to 350mm and delivers print widths up to 330mm. It handles a wide range of substrates, including coated and uncoated papers, films and flexible packaging materials.

Additionally, the company promotes Dilli Vision, its proprietary in-line inspection technology.

DOMINO • BOOTH 6025

Domino exhibits the N610i-R, a digital retrofit module that adds UV inkjet printing capability to existing flexographic presses. Based on the Domino N610i UV inkjet print engine, the module mounts on top of an existing flexo press and supports full hybrid printing, digital-only and flexo-only configurations on the same platform.

Also on show is the K600, a monochrome (black ink) digital UV inkjet printer capable of reaching speeds of up to 492ft/min. It mounts onto a flexographic press, rewinder or finishing system for printing variable data such as text, graphics, bar codes, QR codes, 2D codes or images. Standard print bar widths are 4.25in, 8.69in, 13.1in, 17.5in and 21.96in and custom wider sizes are also available.

DURST • BOOTH 3121

Durst debuts Tau G3 Peak, a high-speed UV inkjet label press delivering 1,200 DPI resolution at speeds of up to 382ft/min. The new features include Durst ARC automatic register control and Durst MEP material edge protection.

Also on show is the KJet, a hybrid UV inkjet press.

HEIDELBERG GALLUS • BOOTH 3524

Heidelberg and Gallus highlight its modular press platform, with the System to Compose concept as the centerpiece of the booth. System to Compose is a configurable production platform that enables converters to build and adapt press configurations to their specific application requirements. Supporting the exhibit is the Gallus machine configurator, an interactive tool allowing visitors to explore custom machine combinations and production workflows.

In addition, Gallus Screeny showcases its new screen-printing unit for high-value label applications.

HP • BOOTH 3223

HP displays the HP Indigo 6K+ digital press, which combines Indigo's print quality with intelligent automation and AI-powered tools.

Also on the stand is the HP Indigo 200K digital press, enabling the production of both flexible packaging and labels with digital technology. HP will spotlight virtual demonstrations of the HP Indigo V12 digital press.

KONICA MINOLTA • BOOTH 3627

Konica Minolta exhibits its AccurioLabel 400 press and its JetVarnish 3D Web 400, with new product launches. The AccurioLabel 400 is a flexible digital press, while the Web 400 is a modular digital embellishment machine capable of digital spot UV varnish and hot foil embellishments. The booth highlights short-run, print-on-demand RFID labels. Throughout the event, Konica Minolta hosts regular live equipment demonstrations.

MARK ANDY • BOOTH 219

Mark Andy exhibits Performance Series S9, a mid-web flexographic press with web widths up to 26in and speeds up to 1,000ft/min. The press supports pressure-sensitive labels, shrink sleeves, unsupported films and light cartons, with sleeve tooling and automated drying capability.

Also on show is HighSpeed 1200, a digital hybrid press operating at speeds up to 480ft/min with variable data capability, high-opacity white and security ink options, available in roll-to-roll and fully in-line converting configurations.

Also on display is Rotoflex VLI-440, an inspection, slitting and rewinding system that offers high-speed finishing performance for film, film packaging and tension-sensitive materials. At the same time, SupplySmart by Mark Andy Print Products brings scan-and-go inventory visibility, smart replenishment and simplified consumables management to the pressroom floor.

MPS PRINTING • BOOTH 5940

MPS Printing highlights its EFA flexo press platform, with a focus on the 26in EF packaging flexo press. It delivers precise register control, fast job changeovers and consistent performance across a wide range of flexible packaging and label applications.

NILPETER • BOOTH 1021

Nilpeter demonstrates the versatility and performance of its FA-17 flexo press on the Leonhard Kurz stand.

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Dilli

OMET • BOOTH 3111
Omet highlights two press platforms, spanning labels, flexible packaging, shrink sleeves and folding carton applications.

Its KFlex K6 is a modular narrow web press built around Omet's Switch system, which allows the machine configuration to be changed by swapping print technology modules within the same platform. The press combines flexographic printing with offset, gravure, screen and digital technologies in a single line.

The second machine on show is Omet's XFlex X7, a mid-web press designed for shrink labels and flexible packaging, which combines flexographic printing with rotogravure capabilities to achieve special effects and embellishments.

ROLAND DGA • BOOTH 5721
Roland DGA exhibits the LSINC PeriOne, a high-speed UV rotary printer for cylindrical surfaces. Also previewed is the Roland DG RC-300 UV rotary printer, scheduled for release in the second half of 2026. Designed for direct decoration of cylindrical and lightly tapered objects, including bottles and containers, the RC-300 supports short-run and variable production. It is engineered for use with Roland DG's forthcoming Hard UV Ink, formulated for industrial durability requirements.

ROTOCON • BOOTH 719
Rotocon makes its North American debut at Loupe Americas 2026. The booth features live demonstrations of a complete in-line label production line: a non-stop unwind with butt splicer feeding into the RFP C-Series flexographic press, finishing on a two-spindle non-stop turret rewinder. The RFP C-Series on show is the 17in, 8-color version. The company also features a slitter/rewinder finishing system.

SCREEN • BOOTH 3535
Screen promotes Truepress Label 350UV SAI Series, a UV inkjet label press that prints at 600 x 600 DPI and reaches speeds of up to 60m/min. The 7-color configuration covers CMYK plus white, orange and blue inks, with white ink opacity suited to metallic and transparent substrates. The press supports vinyl, polyester, film and BOPP substrates and meets UL certification requirements for indoor and outdoor durable label applications.

Also on show is Truepress PAC 520P, a roll-fed aqueous pigment inkjet press for paper packaging, operating at up to 80m/min on a 520mm web width. The press uses food-safety compliant aqueous inks supplied in lightweight, recyclable bag-in-box ink tank units.

XEIKON (FLINT GROUP DIGITAL XEIKON) • BOOTH 5821
Flint Group Digital Xeikon showcases three printing presses: the TX500, PX3300HD and the new subscription-based Ecolyne digital press. Visitors can see Titon's food-safe, durable toner technology, which delivers resistance to heat, solvents and scratches without the need for varnish. The PX3300HD offers UV inkjet capabilities for high-quality label applications, while Ecolyne helps businesses scale efficiently while meeting evolving demands for sustainability, productivity and premium print performance.

FINISHING AND CONVERTING

A B GRAPHIC INTERNATIONAL • BOOTH 3226/3410
A B Graphic International (ABG) shows 14 machines.

Making its North American debut, the Galaxy GS20 Plus with Pouch Jet demonstrates ABG's latest flexible packaging capabilities. Visitors can see the DigiLase Duo laser finishing system for the first time in North America, showcasing high-speed, precision laser converting for digitally printed labels and packaging.

The stand features a dedicated wine specification Digicon, demonstrating embellishment and finishing capabilities for wine and spirits applications, alongside an RFID converting line equipped with NSU and Vectra technologies for intelligent inspection and RFID-enabled production.

Completing the showcase are ABG's Packaging Lines Static Machine, TI200, Vectra, DigiLite, Horizon, as well as entry-level SRI and SR inspection systems.

ADA • BOOTH 5605
ADA highlights its A-200 RFID labeling converting machine for small batch production of RFID labels. The equipment integrates six functions: skew control, label laminating, vision detection, online detection, defective product marking and finished product collection, for small and medium-sized label orders.

ADA also features its RF-500 RFID encoding and rechecking machine, which uses a barcode printer for surface printing and encodes UHF RFID labels through a UHF RFID reader (such as Impinj). It also uses 1D or 2D barcode scanners to verify that the printed surface content matches the encoded RFID data. The system integrates hardware and software to manage personalized label printing and code verification. The machine supports roll collection of finished products, with optional sheet-cutting.

ASHE CONVERTING EQUIPMENT • BOOTH 832
Ashe Converting Equipment highlights its Solitaire 800 Duplex slitter rewinder, complementing 600-800mm wide digital presses. The slitter rewinder comes with full flexo print capabilities, allowing floor or spot varnishing for all materials. Auto set options for the slitting knives are available with various drying lamps dependent on the inks used.

BINBAO • BOOTH 229
Binbao Machinery showcases its labelstock roll converting equipment. Its featured slitter rewinder processes labelstock rolls, release liner paper rolls and other related label and packaging materials. This machine rewinds rolls up to 6,000 meters long while maintaining a stable operating speed of 600m/min. The machine allows flexible changeover between differential friction shafts and air expanding shafts, making it suitable for


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Global Label Awards

Labels & Labeling will once again present the global label awards during Loupe Americas 2026.

The Labels & Labeling Global Awards will honor outstanding achievements across five categories: innovation, sustainability for both converters and suppliers, Converter of the Year and Future Leader.

The winners will be announced during a networking reception and celebration on the opening day of the event. The event starts at 4 pm on Sept 15 at the Spotlight Stage located on the show floor of Loupe Americas. The event will feature food, drinks and networking to follow the awards ceremony.

The shortlisted nominees are:

- **Converter of the Year**: **Catapult Printing** in Orlando, Florida; **Hub Labels** in Hagerstown, Maryland; and **Steinhauser** in Newport, Kentucky.
- **Innovation**: **AVT** for Helios varnish inspection module; **Cerm** for Cerm C-Pilot; and **Esko** for its CDI Quartz ecosystem.
- **Sustainability, Converter**: **Brook + Whittle** for its GreenLabel BlockOut recyclable light-blocking shrink sleeve; **Desmedt Labels** for its integrated sustainability reporting and reduction framework; and **Holostik** for Paperogram.
- **Sustainability, Supplier**: **Actega** for its ACTExact black algae ink; **DuPont Cyrel** for its ReNew series; and **Siegwerk** and **Enplanter** for a high-barrier mono-layer polypropylene pouch.

A new recognition this year is the **Future Leader award**, which honors outstanding early-career professionals, who are shaping the label and packaging industry. The award is given to **Rachel Jackson** of **Columbine Label** in Centennial, Colorado.

different types of labelstock and release liner materials. It also offers automatic positioning system for the slitting knives, improving accuracy, reducing manual adjustment time and ensuring consistent slitting quality.

BLUMER MASCHINENBAU • BOOTH 1424

Blumer Maschinenbau features the Atlas 1110 Dual die-cutting machine. Its dual-mode concept enables production with or without counter-pressure on a single machine, allowing converters to process everything from standard jobs to demanding materials and complex shapes. The Atlas 1110 Dual delivers die-cutting precision of up to ±0.004in and up to 75 percent higher output than conventional counter-pressure die-cutters.

BW PAPERSYSTEMS • BOOTH 1517

BW Papersystems highlights the SpeedLiner X, its newest RFID converting machine, which delivers automation, multi-track production capability and workflow management.

CARTES • BOOTH 5710

Cartes presents its portfolio of flexo printing, semi-rotary die-cutting, laser die-cutting, digital embellishment, screen printing, hot stamping, flat-bed embossing and converting technology. A key focus is its digital embellishment technology, including the Jet D-Screen system, which enables converters to create high-value effects such as spot varnish, tactile finishes, high-build embellishments and foil applications with precision and flexibility.

DIGITAL INKJET SOLUTIONS • BOOTH 737

Digital Inkjet Solutions exhibits the Jetsci dSpark digital embellishment press from Monotech Systems, making its US launch at Loupe Americas 2026, alongside narrow web corona treatment systems and the Ozonash ozone destruction system from IEEC.

The dSpark uses drop-on-demand piezo inkjet technology to apply spot foil, spot UV and spot holographic effects without screens, plates or dies. The system is compatible with both digitally and conventionally printed substrates across label and packaging applications.

The company also highlights IEEC corona treatment systems, developed for label, packaging, plastics and industrial applications, alongside the Ozonash system for ozone management in corona treatment environments.

DPR LABELING • BOOTH 6122

DPR Labeling presents the latest evolution of its Leo digital finishing system. Designed to eliminate the need for traditional dies, Leo combines lamination, digital cutting, matrix removal, slitting and rewinding into a single compact workflow. The system utilizes multi-head knife-cutting technology, reducing setup times and tooling costs.

DPR also highlights its portfolio of digital finishing technologies, including laser die-cutting, digital embellishment and automation technology.

ETI CONVERTING EQUIPMENT • BOOTH 718

ETI Converting Equipment highlights the Cohesio in-line coating and converting system, the LinerO linerless label platform, and its range of adhesive technologies, including hotmelt, UV-curable acrylic hotmelt, water-based acrylic emulsions and silicone release coatings.

FAES • BOOTH 5802

Faes promotes slitting and rewinding equipment for thermal transfer ribbon, dye sublimation and label manufacturing. The TTR range operates at speeds of up to 800m/min. For converters operating existing equipment at 400 or 600m/min, Faes offers a retrofit upgrade program to bring older machines up to the 800m/min standard, covering mechanical and electrical modifications, as well as structural and safety upgrades.



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GIC (GRAPHIC INTERFACE CONCEPT) • BOOTH 5607
Graphic Interface Concept exhibits label, RFID and custom machinery products, drawing on more than 30 years of experience across graphic arts, adhesive label, digital finishing and RFID markets.

GOLDEN LASER • BOOTH 3423
Golden Laser exhibits two laser die-cutting systems. The LC-350 is a roll-to-roll and roll-to-sheet laser die cutter operating at speeds of up to 100m/min. The modular system integrates flexo printing, varnishing, cold foil, automatic slitting and sheeting in a single line, and supports full-cut, kiss-cut, perforation, numbering, engraving and anti-counterfeiting applications. The LC-5035 is a sheet-fed laser die-cutter with an automatic continuous sheet loading system, designed for dieless cutting of labels, stickers and cardboard boxes.

GM FINISHING • BOOTH 6311
GM displays the DC350Flex with a laser die-cutter for label production, the high-speed DC350Flex Basic, the DC350Mini paired with RS350 sheeting technology, the RD350 RFID machine, the HF350 hot foil and embellishment unit and the CC160 converting system. These technologies improve short-run efficiency, add premium embellishments, help converters enter the RFID market and maximize existing digital press investments.

GRAPH-TECH USA • BOOTH 6133
Graph-Tech USA demonstrates the RFIDRunner, a high-speed UHF RFID tag printing and encoding system. The system encodes and prints up to 10,000 RFID tags in under 12 minutes using a triple-Impinj architecture with dedicated modules for TID identification, encoding and quality verification. The configuration supports both roll-fed labels and individual tags.

Also on show is the eZ-Inkjet range, a series of high-speed digital printing systems delivering 600 DPI print quality with GTUS Controller integration. The systems support variable data printing, serialization, coding and personalization across industrial and packaging applications.

GUANGZHOU CHI LI AUTOMATION EQUIPMENT • BOOTH 3311
Guangzhou Chi Li Automation Equipment presents high-speed equipment for different RFID production processes, including converting, encoding, inspection and labeling. It provides supporting equipment and related system integration projects for RFID tag automation production and application on production lines. The CL-822-3N RFID Label Automatic Lamination Machine can reach speeds of 60m/min. With the dry inlay special die-cutting module and hot-melt glue mechanism, it can laminate dry and wet inlay labels.

HOACO • BOOTH 5820
Hoaco showcases its latest RFID converting machine, designed to meet the growing demand for high-speed, high-precision RFID tag manufacturing.

Hoaco provides other RFID production and inspection technologies, including RFID encoding and testing, vision inspection, defective tag rejection, variable data printing, code verification and integrated quality control. The company also offers rotary die-cutting technology for pressure-sensitive labels, airline baggage tags, tickets and other specialty labels.

JENNERJAHN • BOOTH 1317
Jennerjahn Machine showcases the Model JJF 54, a 54in-wide, fully automatic slitter rewinder engineered to convert both linerless and standard linered pressure-sensitive labelestock rolls on a single platform. Its web width enables converters to increase throughput by accommodating wider master rolls. The machine features shaftless rewind technology that eliminates traditional mandrel shaft systems by utilizing interchangeable chucks to securely hold a wide range of core sizes during the winding process. It accommodates rewind core outside diameters from 0.625 to 3.50in. For linerless applications, idlers coming into contact with the adhesive side of the web are plasma-coated. A quick changeover enables converters to switch easily between linerless and conventional PSA labelestock.

JFZ LABEL & PRINTING • BOOTH 1515
JFZ Label & Printing highlights RFID technology for the global fashion and retail industry. Through its RFID 360-degree products, JFZ supports brands with end-to-end visibility across the supply chain, from manufacturing and inventory management to retail operations and customer engagement. It enhances efficiency, traceability and real-time product intelligence. JFZ also supports sustainable compliance through Digital Product Passport (DPP) and Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR).

KARLVILLE • BOOTH 3417
Karlville Swiss highlights its Combi Laminator for flexible packaging, shrink sleeves and self-adhesive labels. For select applications including film labels, durable labels, roll-fed labels and HP Indigo 200K crossover work, solventless lamination delivers lower applied adhesive cost than traditional UV adhesive lamination, plus a press productivity gain by printing in reverse. The Combi Laminator lets converters evaluate both approaches on one platform: solventless lamination for cost-sensitive production, and thermal lamination for textured, just-in-time production, and micro runs for growing greenfield brands.

Karlville also showcases the K3 Plus Shrink Sleeve Seamer, featuring a precision-forming station with automated lay-flat feedback control, independent speed and pressure flow control for seam integrity, and optional laser perforation for tamper-evident applications.

KROENERT • BOOTH 3602
Kroenert promotes tailor-made high-performance coating and laminating lines for web-like materials such as paper, foil, film, cardboard and non-woven. The lines run with web widths of up to 3,300mm and coating thicknesses ranging from 100nm to more than 1mm. Kroenert production machines can achieve processing speeds of up to 1,300m/min.


Cartes

KTI / QUANTUM DESIGN • BOOTH 840

KTI showcases the MTR Series, a four-spindle turret rewinder for narrow web label and packaging applications, alongside the SmartSlit Advantage Series automated knife positioning system from Maxcess Tidland. The MTR Series features an automated core loading system with proprietary hopper technology, handling cores from 0.75 to 3in with adjustable spacing for varied roll configurations. An integrated roll closure system includes an in-line print-and-apply capability for applying labels with variable data, including job information, lot numbers, barcodes and production dates. The SmartSlit Advantage Series automates knife positioning, with stored and recallable slit patterns to reduce setup times and eliminate positioning errors.

KURZ • BOOTH 1029

Kurz features live production of label designs in collaboration with Nilpeter, Pantec, Avery Dennison and UPM Adhesive Materials. Kurz shows how hot stamping and cold transfer technologies can be integrated into modern label production workflows to create visual effects, enhance shelf appeal and support efficient manufacturing.

LEMORAU • BOOTH 3623

Lemorau showcases a range of label finishing equipment, with the Smart-L Premium as the centerpiece exhibit. The compact digital finishing machine combines flexo printing, die-cutting, slitting and rewinding in a single platform. Also on show is the Smart-L, a compact digital finishing machine, and the ICR4, an inspection, slitting and rewinding machine for high-speed roll finishing. The CR slitter-rewinder rounds out the press finishing range. Auxiliary equipment on display includes the CTA 1500 automatic core cutter and the ER400 roll lifter.

LEMUGROUP CEI • BOOTH 628

LemuGroup CEI exhibits three systems following the integration of CEI into LemuGroup.

The MI 350 Inkjet Digital is a varnish-application and digital foiling system, offering greater coating thickness than standard inkjet systems, with instant job changeovers and no tooling requirements. The RDX RFID is an inlay inserter with integrated verification capability. The Boss Lite is a compact, modular label converting line combining die-cutting, a flexographic printing module and the GTU Lite configurable rewinding turret.

MARTIN AUTOMATIC • BOOTH 615

Martin Automatic exhibits the MBS automatic butt splicer and LRD transfer rewinder for label and converting applications. The MBS is a non-stop unwind splicer featuring a patented linear shear butt splice unit and integrated roll loading mechanism, designed for labels, flexible packaging, shrink sleeves, laminates and light paperboard. The LRD is a two-spindle nonstop transfer rewinder with automatic finished roll unloading and an optional slitting module with differential winding capability.

MUHLBAUER • BOOTH 6406

Muhlbauer showcases the IL 30000, an inlay insertion line for smart label production. The system enables the fully automatic insertion of RFID inlays into conventional self-adhesive labels in a stand-alone reel-to-reel process. Label converters can continue using their existing printing presses and transform standard labels into smart labels by integrating wet RFID inlays between the label and liner. Muhlbauer also offers other RFID production technology, from chip attachment and converting to personalization.

PRATI • BOOTH 3529

Prati showcases Saturn, a slitter inspection rewinder that is fully modular and can integrate upgrade options. Thanks to its motion technology and the FastCut device for automatic blade positioning, Saturn processes self-adhesive labels on paper and filmic substrates, as well as booklets, lamitubes, alufoil, Tyvek, cardboard and multilaminate materials.

Prati also shows its Digi Compact, a compact digital finishing line that is easily adaptable for roll-to-roll and roll-to-sheet applications. Running at speeds of up to 80m/min and featuring a minimized web path, Digi Compact helps reduce material waste between jobs and enables the production of different label formats using a single stacker across multiple substrate types. Its flexo unit is suitable for varnishing and spot printing applications.

RALOYAL • BOOTH 6116

Raloyal exhibits a dual turret slitter rewinder with a fully automated workflow covering blade setting, shaftless loading, core cutting, core feeding, core positioning, finished roll sealing, turret operation and mechanical arm unloading.

REBORN • BOOTH 5812

Reborn showcases the RBJ-Remix 3DW 370 digital UV embellishment machine, equipped with a 2,000-meter unwinding and rewinding unit with forward and reverse rewinding functions. It also features auxiliary functions such as dust removal, anti-static, and corona treatment. The machine can operate at a maximum speed of 50m/min and features 12 printing heads that can achieve digital embellishments such as multi-layer stacking, layered spraying, reverse varnish, braille and more.

SAPA INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY • BOOTH 5910

SAPA Intelligent Technology exhibits the DMS digital embellishment portfolio, covering roll-to-roll and sheet-fed systems for labels, shrink sleeves, flexible packaging and folding carton applications. The modular roll-to-roll system combines digital foiling, 3D embossing, spot varnish and holographic transfer in a single platform, with optional semi-rotary flexo units and rotary or flatbed die-cutting modules. The sheet-fed system features a vision registration system with accuracy to 0.1mm, targeting premium packaging applications including cosmetics, wine packaging and luxury goods.



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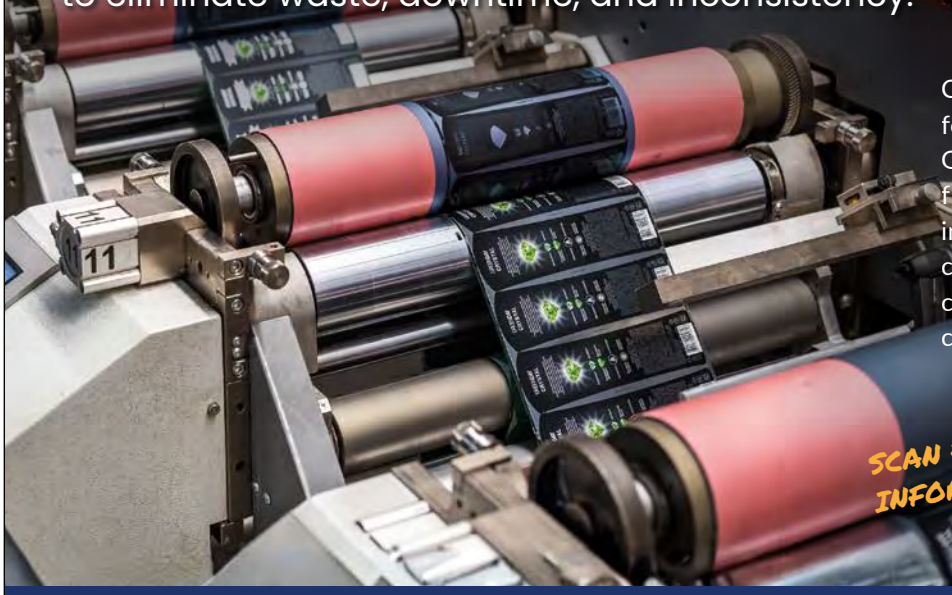
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SEAORY • BOOTH 6611
Shenzhen Seaory Technology highlights its RFID labels production line. It starts with precise bonding, ensuring the chip and antenna connect perfectly. Next, layers are fused through automated laminating. Each label undergoes performance testing, while visual inspection ensures its appearance.

SEI LASER BY MATIK • BOOTH 6101
SEI Laser by Matik runs a fully automated digital label factory on the show floor, taking blank rolls to ship-ready labels in a single, uninterrupted workflow. Powered by the SEI Laser Labelmaster with integrated KyoJet and KlimtJet modules, this platform combines digital inkjet printing, cold foil, digital spot varnish and laser finishing in one automated process, eliminating separate passes, extra handling, and the bottlenecks that slow short-run and custom label production. Available in 13.75in and 23.6in web widths, Labelmaster can be configured with up to four lasers and reaches speeds of 330ft/min. Also on display is the SEI Laser Combat, a single-laser digital finishing system for converters looking to eliminate tooling costs and simplify short-run production.

SPGPRINTS • BOOTH 901
SPGPrints showcases the Marble RSI-unit, a rotary screen-printing unit for industrial label production.

The Marble supports print widths of 10, 13, 16, 20 and 26in at speeds of up to 125m/min. The unit is designed for opaque whites, tactile finishes, braille and RFID applications. Key features include recipe-driven interfaces, automated ink level controls and Industry 4.0 connectivity with MES and ERP integration. The modular, compact design is intended to broaden access to rotary screen printing across a wider range of label converters.

TAMARACK PRODUCTS • BOOTH 1411
Tamarack Products introduces two products. The first is an automatic inlay roll splicing system for Tamarack's RFID insertion equipment, designed to eliminate downtime during inlay roll changeovers and enable continuous production without stopping the label press or off-line insertion equipment. The second is the Fusion Label Applicator, an in-line label application system developed for applying RFID labels to folding cartons on folder/gluer lines. The system is compatible with any pre-die-cut material and is engineered for high-speed application with tight registration accuracy.

TELSTAR ENGINEERING • BOOTH 303
Telstar Engineering highlights press enhancement and retrofit units designed to mount on existing presses. The company designs and builds full-frame press constructions alongside modular retrofit units for converting and decorating applications. The company promotes its Telstar Decomod decorating cold foil module and Cast & Cure holographic label effects module which uses only varnish.

YMJ • BOOTH 6020
YMJ launches YMJ-RDSR40, a compact label editing and replacing machine designed to automate the removal of defective labels and their replacement with correct ones in a single in-line process.

MATERIALS

3M • BOOTH 1107
3M highlights durable label materials designed to withstand exposure to heat, chemicals, abrasion and weathering while maintaining integrity in industrial environments.

AEBO • BOOTH 1043
AEBO presents its range of thermal transfer ribbons, including wax, premium wax, wax-resin, resin and near-edge grades. The ribbons deliver high-quality printing results on wide range of different substrates.

ARMOR-IIMAK • BOOTH 537
Armor-Iimak launches AWR XL flathead wax thermal transfer ribbon coated with a 3.35 micron PET film. The extended-length roll design delivers up to 40 percent more running time per roll, reducing changeover frequency and operational costs. The thinner film also reduces plastic consumption by 26 percent.

AVERY DENNISON • BOOTH 119
Avery Dennison features label materials and RFID technology, including AD Fusion, a program offering customizable label materials with pre-inserted RFID inlays. The company also presents RFID and label technologies for fresh produce applications targeting shelf-life extension and performance on wet and cold surfaces, and OCC-E certified labels combining RFID functionality with recyclable construction for logistics applications.

Also on show are UV barrier laminations for pharmaceutical labels, designed to protect light-sensitive medical products.

BREIT TECHNOLOGIES • BOOTH 6239
Breit Technologies presents cast and cure decorative coating process, which creates gloss, matte and holographic surface effects using embossed UV coatings and varnishes. Cast and cure creates its decorative effect by embossing ultraviolet coatings and varnishes.

CHANNELED RESOURCES GROUP • BOOTH 1011
Channeled Resources Group shows its dual-division expertise in press-sensitive roll label materials and blank and custom labels. CRG also provides high-quality blank and custom labels at competitive prices. This includes standard thermal transfer and direct thermal labels, alongside custom-engineered labels tailored to the specific performance demands of any application or end-use environment. Attendees can learn about the company's online inventory tools, designed to let customers filter by spec, view specials and request quotes in real time.

CHIRIPAL POLY FILMS • BOOTH 3618
Chiripal Poly Films Limited (CPFL) presents facestock and release liner products for pressure-sensitive label applications. The portfolio includes top-coated BOPP facestock films for both reel-to-reel and sheet-fed applications, available in white cavitated, solid white, transparent and metalized variants. The company also presents barrier-coated BOPP films for enhanced adhesive receptivity, along with top-coated BOPET facestock films

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in transparent, matte and metalized finishes. Visitors can explore CPFL's transfer metallized paper that combines premium aesthetics with reliable performance. In the release liner segment, the company showcases silicon-coated BOPET films, as well as BOPET and BOPP base films suitable for silicone coating applications. The company highlights its sustainable label technology, featuring facestock and liner products incorporating up to 40 percent PCR PP and up to 90 percent PCR PET content.

CONVERSOURCE • BOOTH 354

Conversource exhibits flexographic printing supplies, operating as a 3M Channel Partner and tesa Platinum Partner. The product range covers plate mounting tapes, doctor blades, tint sleeves, splicing and specialty tapes, anilox cleaning equipment and cleaning chemicals. Custom-cut formats are available across the range.

COSMO FILMS • BOOTH 238

Cosmo Films exhibits pressure-sensitive facestock films, flexible packaging films and synthetic paper. The pressure-sensitive range includes Green Graphics PVC-free films, PET top-coated facestock films, direct thermal printable films, PETG label films and barrier-coated films for aggressive adhesive applications. Flexible packaging highlights include an anti-fog transparent BOPET lidding film for fresh food applications, pet food packaging films with advanced barrier structures, heat-resistant TR-BOPP films and high-barrier BOPP and retort lidding films. Cosmo Synthetic Paper, compatible with multiple printing technologies, is also on show.

DUPONT TYVEK • BOOTH 327

DuPont shows DuPont Tyvek for graphics, a material for durable tags, labels and demanding printed applications. This product is a sustainable advancement of Tyvek products supporting a circular economy and reduction of product carbon footprint.



Martin Automatic

DURICO C&T • BOOTH 1225

Durico shows its full range of direct thermal and inkjet coated products. Durico's direct thermal facestock offerings include a new generation of phenol-free products. Durico also presents its inkjet facestock line, with highlights including BS5609 and GHS compliant products, DuPont Tyvek based products, and other highly durable PP films.

FAR EAST JINKAI • BOOTH 1252

The company showcases digital foils, cold foils and hot stamping foils used to enhance high-value packaging materials, labels and advertising materials, for 3D jet varnish.

FEDRIGONI SELF-ADHESIVES • BOOTH 3107

Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives shows pressure-sensitive materials for wine and spirits, food and beverage, and home and personal care applications. For wine and spirits, the booth features premium papers designed to elevate shelf presence while supporting real-world performance demands.

FÉRON • BOOTH 1215

Aluminium Féron shows synthetic substrates for labels and tags. The company's portfolio includes Monotex for digital printing as well as substrates and Tritex for applications where durability is needed. Féron's Monotex and Tritex products for tags and labels are used in industries that include horticulture, construction, apparel, healthcare, leisure and tourism, logistics, chemicals, automotive and steel processing.

FLEXCON • BOOTH 1010

Flexcon exhibits label materials for packaging, pharmaceutical and durable applications.

Featured products include Flexcon DPM EcoFocus materials for durable labeling and Flexcon OptiFlex EcoFocus BOPP films for packaging. Also on show is the Flexcon OptiFlex Reseal range, a portfolio of resealable film constructions for flexible packaging applications.

FRANZ VEIT • BOOTH 3817

Franz Veit exhibits paper roll products for retail, printing, food service and industrial applications. The range covers thermal and cash register rolls, labels, credit card and scale rolls, lottery rolls, streamers and industrial rolls for flexographic printing, self-adhesive papers and packaging applications.

HANSOL PAPER • BOOTH 439

Hansol presents phenol-free and BPS-free thermal face stocks, as well as thermal


Muhlbauer

transfer and C1S papers. Hansol also features release liners such as clay-coated kraft (CCK) and super-calendered kraft (SCK). The company introduces thermal innovations, including high-heat-resistant thermal paper and back-barrier-coated thermal paper, the latter of which offers enhanced protection against moisture and oil.

HENGMU • BOOTH 358

Hengmu shows release papers and films. The range covers glassine, CCK, SCK, MGK and PCK release papers alongside PET release films.

HENGYUAN • BOOTH 1329

Hengyuan features thermal transfer and direct thermal, glossy paper, PP, PET, PE and synthetic paper. Its products are ISO 9001, FDA, MSDS and FSC certified.

HSF FILMS • BOOTH 1040

HSF Films showcases its range of BOPP, CCPP and PET films. It features acrylic-coated BOPP, CCPP and PET films from 38 to 100 microns; matte-coated synthetic papers from 45 to 400 microns compatible with UV flexo, digital and water-based inkjet printing; conformable films; metalized films; and a conformable BOPP graphics range for HP Indigo, eco-solvent and inkjet applications.

HX PRODUCTION GROUP • BOOTH 835

HX Production Group exhibits PC, PET and hard coat films for printed electronics and label applications across automotive, electronics and electrical insulation markets. The range covers membrane switches, touch display panels and overlays for domestic appliances; GPS units, car dials, emblems and touch controls for automotive interiors; and insulation and flame-retardant films for EV chargers and AI storage boards.

HYF • BOOTH 110

Hubei HYF Packaging presents its APR-certified CPET shrink film, its PETG shrink film, its rPETG shrink film, its PLA shrink film and its cast PVC shrink film for capsules.

IDENTIV • BOOTH 935
Identiv exhibits a portfolio of RFID, NFC, BLE and sensor-enabled inlays, tags and labels for authentication, traceability and environmental monitoring. Featured products include ID-Garment, an NFC tag for apparel and luxury goods authentication; ID-Safe, a tamper-evident tag for pharmaceuticals and high-value goods; and ID-Tiny, a secure identification tag for small form factor applications.

INNOVIA FILMS • BOOTH 820
Innovia Films showcases label films supporting sustainability, performance and premium aesthetics across pressure-sensitive, shrink sleeve and IML applications. Additionally, Innovia features APR-friendly pressure-sensitive films, floatable polyolefin shrink films and IML materials designed to support recyclability while delivering reliable converting and application performance.

INTERNATIONAL MEDIA PRODUCTS (IMP) • BOOTH 131
International Media Products exhibits its thermal transfer ribbon range covering wax, wax/resin, resin and near-edge/TTO ribbons for barcode labeling, flexible packaging, date coding, logistics, healthcare, manufacturing and retail applications.

JCR PACK • BOOTH 269
JCR Pack exhibits flexible packaging materials covering shrink films, barrier materials, adhesive tapes, stretch film, zippers, biaxially oriented nylon and absorbent pads.

JOY LABEL & PACKAGING • BOOTH 1213
Joy Label & Packaging exhibits self-adhesive label materials compatible with flexographic, screen, offset, digital, laser, inkjet and UV printing processes. Also on show are void security labels, available in non-transfer, half-transfer and total-transfer constructions for anti-counterfeiting and tamper-evidence applications, as well as wash-off labels.

JOY PAPER • BOOTH 3816
Joy Paper exhibits release liners, functional coated papers and kraft paper tape materials. The release liner range covers CCK, glassine, PEK and PET constructions for labels, adhesive tapes, medical products and composites. Functional coated papers for packaging and specialty markets are also on show, alongside self-adhesive and water-activated kraft paper tape materials as alternatives to plastic-based packaging tapes.


SEI Laser by Matik

LANYING • BOOTH 1316
Lanying exhibits hot stamping, holographic and cold foil products. The range covers hot stamping foil, cold flexo foil, cold offset foil, cold screen foil, holographic foil, cigarette tipping foil and pigment foil.

LAXCEN TECHNOLOGY • BOOTH 1511
Laxcen Technology shows its RFID product range covering hardware, tags and associated systems for applications in apparel, aviation, retail, healthcare, library management, logistics, supply chain and vehicle tracking.

NOBELUS • BOOTH 5916
Nobelus showcases thermal flexible packaging films and laminates with a focus on materials designed for digital printing workflows. Its StrataFlex METPET thermal pre-lams are pre-laminated films with a thermally activated adhesive layer. Also on show is the Nobelus specialty finishes range, available as both films and thermal laminates. The portfolio includes soft-touch, rough-touch and holographic finishes, alongside scratch-resistant constructions. New additions to the range include Karess soft touch, FineGrit rough touch and FineGrain.

OSP GROUP • BOOTH 3001
OSP Group exhibits its Dot Tack linerless direct thermal labelstock range, available in paper, white film and transparent film constructions. The adhesive coating is designed to remove cleanly without residue and is has reduced adhesive usage.

POLYART GROUP • BOOTH 626
Polyart Group shows substrates for digital technologies, including dry toner, HP Indigo, water-based and UV inkjet. Substrates include Polyart Laser, a white opaque PET with a matte coating that is water- and tear-resistant. Sustainability is also central to the portfolio, with recyclable and/or recycled options such as r-Polyart, which is made with 30 percent post-consumer recycled content yet prints and performs like virgin material, and Fiberskin Tag, an 100 percent paper-based, tear-resistant, recyclable, biodegradable and compostable material.

PPG • BOOTH 5919
PPG introduces a new sustainably advantaged product grade to its PPG Teslin substrate portfolio that contains approximately 30 percent bio-content derived from feedstocks that do not impact food systems. PPG also showcases its PPG Teslin facestock portfolio, engineered for specialty label applications requiring durability, printability, static dissipation, strong adhesion and long-term performance.

PROPYPLAST • BOOTH 3702
Propyplast shows its cast polypropylene film range for the in-mold labeling sector. The range covers clear and white films from 60 to 280 microns. Additionally on show is the company's LMG-registered trademark film, which is printable in both directions and compatible with high-label stacks. The range also incorporates barrier properties to extend product shelf life and reduce preservative use in food applications.

RICOH • BOOTH 1020
Ricoh shows two new products. The first is a direct thermal linerless portfolio in two constructions: a high-sensitivity facestock with permanent adhesive for demanding applications, and a general-purpose facestock with removable adhesive. The second is a removable adhesive label range for short-term applications, including a removable tote label for retail operations and a removable prescription label for pharmacy workflows.

SANYO CORPORATION OF AMERICA • BOOTH 155
Sanyo Corporation of America shows Crisper and Kamishine label facestocks, tag and card materials.

SHENZHEN LIKEXIN • BOOTH 1121
Shenzhen Likexin Industrial shows freeze-grade hot-melt adhesive labels, specially formulated for frozen food and cold-chain applications. The labels are compatible with both flexographic and digital printing, supporting variable data, barcodes and high-quality graphics without compromising bond strength. They meet strict food safety and regulatory standards for direct and indirect food contact, making them suitable for use across the entire cold chain.

TAGEOS • BOOTH 420
Tageos showcases its portfolio of Rain RFID (UHF), NFC/HF and Bluetooth Low

Energy (BLE) inlays and tags designed for label and packaging converters, printers and brand owners. The Tageos portfolio covers a wide range of smart label and connected packaging applications.
One of the highlights at the stand is Tageos' new, sustainable EOS-932 Zero Lite PR1301, a FlexIC-based NFC inlay, developed in close collaboration with Pragmatic Semiconductor.

TAILORED ADHESIVES • BOOTH 1418
Tailored Adhesives shows its portfolio, which includes hot-melt adhesives, water-based adhesives, emulsion polymers, mastics, urea and synthetic resins, and other engineered formulations to support industries such as furniture, automotive, packaging, construction and textiles.

THAI KK INDUSTRY • BOOTH 140
Thai KK Industry shows labelstock range, including jumbo roll and sheet formats, with grades optimized for dry toner, UV inkjet and water-based inkjet printing. Sustainability-focused materials on show include FSC-certified facestocks and water-soluble label constructions.

TODAYTEC • BOOTH 929
Todaytec shows TDR345, a resin ribbon that offers printing blackness for sharp, highly readable barcodes and text. It prints well on a wide range of substrates, from coated papers to synthetic films. TDR345 is widely used across the electrical appliance, equipment and electronics industries.

UNIVACCO • BOOTH 917
Univacco exhibits three cold transfer decoration products: cold transfer holographic transparent effect combining transparency with holographic patterning, cold transfer for in-mold label applications, and cold transfer for shrink sleeves.

UPM • BOOTH 435
UPM shows its ProCycle range of recycling-compatible label materials. Designed for rigid PET and HDPE plastic packaging, the range targets beverage, food, and home and personal care applications, offering adhesion performance, converting efficiency and print quality on recyclable packaging formats.

WAUSAU COATED PRODUCTS • BOOTH 1145
Wausau Coated Products shows three new products. The Deckle Edge is a material designed to deliver an artisanal, handcrafted aesthetic. Black Vellum Laminate is a dark laminate construction aimed at premium and luxury label applications. Castile Copper Dual Metal combines copper tones with a dimensional finish.

XIMAX • BOOTH 245
Ximax shows self-adhesive labelstock constructions covering paper, film and thermal facestocks across a range of adhesive and liner combinations. The paper range includes cast-coated, semi-gloss and woodfree facestocks, available with hotmelt or water-based acrylic adhesives on glassine, yellow or white silicone release liners.

YG GROUP • BOOTH 1229
Jiangxi Zhenguan NewMaterial highlights semi-gloss, thermal direct and transfer, PP film labels, PET film labels, over lamination and self-adhesive tapes.

INKS AND COATINGS

ACTEGA • BOOTH 519
Actega shows primers, inks and coatings, and launches several new products.
The ACTDigi LEP Primer is developed in partnership with HP for the HP Indigo 6K, 6K+ and 8K digital press series. Also launching are the ACTSmart Infusion Ink Film System, a water-based ink system designed for high-speed production, and the SafeShield UV-LED low-migration ink range, formulated to meet requirements across seven industry regulations in a single product line. Ecoleaf, Actega's on-demand metallization technology, is also featured alongside samples from the company's broader inks and coatings portfolio for pressure-sensitive labels, shrink sleeves and in-mold labels.

ARCHROMA PACKAGING TECHNOLOGIES • BOOTH 841
Archroma Packaging Technologies presents its range of coatings, adhesives, primers and colorants for fiber-based packaging, marking the company's first appearance at the show.

BIC • BOOTH 3038
BIC shows a range of printing inks and coatings for label and packaging applications, spanning water-based inks, UV flexographic inks, UV-LED digital inks, specialty inks, anti-counterfeiting and security inks, as well as water-based and UV-curable coatings.

CYNGIENT • BOOTH 1101
Cyngient partners with Imageworx, demonstrating how inks, coatings, adhesives, embellishments and digital technologies can help converters elevate their offerings and create greater value for brand owners. Visitors can see Cyngient's UV, LED and water-based technologies, including its Hyper-Bond adhesive platform, high-performance laminating products, specialty coatings and embellishment effects.

FLINT GROUP PACKAGING SOLUTIONS • BOOTH 5821
Flint Group Packaging Solutions' Narrow Web segment highlights inks, including conventional UV (Flexocure LEAP), UV LED (EkoCure dual-cure inks) and water-based inks. Flint's technical experts are at the booth to discuss process optimization, compliance and sustainability.

INTERACTIVE INKS & COATINGS • BOOTH 1347
Interactive Inks & Coatings demonstrates its inks in action, running them live on a 260mm, 6-color Kromia KL1 UV-LED flexo press, in partnership with HR Flexo and Kromia Equipamentos Flexográficos. Its label ink and coating portfolio delivers vibrant color density, high-quality adhesion and process consistency across pressure-sensitive, shrink sleeve and wraparound constructions.

INX INTERNATIONAL INK • BOOTH 129
Inx International Ink exhibits inks, coatings and color management products, with a focus on low-migration performance and recyclability-compatible formulations. The nitrocellulose-free portfolio features Innova Plus NCF and BelleFlora NCF, developed for flexible packaging production. Also featured



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BOOTH 753

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is the Genesis range of washable and floatable ink technologies for shrink sleeves and roll-fed labels.

MICHELMAN • BOOTH 3133

Michelman highlights its range of primers, coatings and barrier materials for digitally printed label and packaging applications, developed in collaboration with HP Indigo.

DigiPrime print-receptive primers deliver adhesion and print quality on paper, film and metalized substrates in a water-based, PFAS-free, food-contact-compliant formulation. The coatings are designed to seal at low initiation temperatures without impeding substrate recyclability or composability.

NASTAR • BOOTH 1042

NAStar exhibits specialty pressure-sensitive coating products covering temporary adhesives, linerless constructions and pattern-coated label materials. Products on display include the T1055 removable adhesive designed to adhere to cold and damp surfaces, including wood and textured plastic, while removing cleanly without residue, as well as the Print'N Stick linerless direct thermal range. The TwoFer Linerless Sheeted Label range features two recyclable face sheets pattern-coated back-to-back without a liner, eliminating liner waste at the point of use.

SIEGWERK • BOOTH 1024

Siegwerk shows its latest portfolio of inks, coatings and adhesives.

Among the highlights are two dual-cure systems compatible with both UV and LED-UV technology: Sicura Orbis LEDTEC, and Nutriflex Orbis Dual Cure. Siegwerk also presents the latest generation of its Aquantum water-based ink series, including Film III ES, Poly Screen III and Ultra Pro inks, developed for film and paper substrates. Also on show is FastMatch Cloud, Siegwerk's color matching system.

STAHL • BOOTH 727

Stahl shows Repura, a range of barrier coatings for direct and indirect food-contact applications. Designed for paper-based packaging substrates, the coatings are positioned to support converters and brand owners transitioning away from plastic-based packaging structures while maintaining food safety compliance.

SUN CHEMICAL • BOOTH 326

Sun Chemical features UV and UV-LED flexo inks, including SolarFlex Max D 1.5, SolarFlex AccuFlex, SolarWave DS, SolarWave DS LM and SolarWave CRCL UV LED. Additional technologies on display include SolarLam UV laminating adhesive, SunCure Matte UV coatings and SunCure Primer for shrink sleeve, digital print and lamination structures. Visitors can explore Sun Chemical's MX12 Hybrid and HMJ ink dispensing systems, alongside SunClean and SunVisto consumables.

SUPER COLOR INK • BOOTH 3312

Super Color Ink presents UV flexo inks that feature fast-curing, high-quality printability, strong abrasion resistance and eco-friendly performance, suitable for various flexible substrates.

UVITEC PRINTING INK • BOOTH 134

UVitec Printing Ink shows UV and LED-curable inks, coatings, primers and adhesives. DL-545 is a white ink that transitions to black when activated by a low-energy CO2 laser for variable data imaging. The DL-600RC.2D is a white ink optimized for generating Grade A linear and 2D barcodes with high-density black contrast. Also on show is a flexo and rotary screen ink range for shrink and pressure-sensitive applications, covering high-opacity white inks, cold foil and laminating adhesives, tactile coatings including high-build, texture and soft-touch variants, and decorative metallics, pearlescents, glitters and glow-in-the-dark formulations. Adhesives, release coatings and deadeners for ECL and IRC applications are also featured.

ZELLER+GMELIN • BOOTH 911

Zeller+Gmelin highlights its DualCure UV/LED ink range across narrow web flexo and sheet-fed offset applications. Also on show is the sheet-fed offset 98 DualCure UV/LED process ink range, featuring monopigmented options for color matching accuracy. Zeller+Gmelin's coatings and adhesives range is also exhibited, covering applications requiring edge definition and resistance to common print defects.

INSPECTION AND TESTING

APPLIED RIGAKU TECHNOLOGIES • BOOTH 266

Applied Rigaku Technologies presents the NEX QC II Series, a second-generation benchtop X-ray fluorescence analyzer for silicone coat weight measurement and metal catalyst analysis, including ultra-low coating weights. Designed for at-line or laboratory use, the system targets day-to-day quality control in silicone coating operations. Also on show is the NEX LS, an in-line process analyzer for continuous, real-time silicone coat weight monitoring across the full roll width.

AVT • BOOTH 3523

AVT showcases its 100 percent inspection systems and demonstrates how intelligent data processing moves beyond traditional defect detection to support proactive process optimization across the entire workflow. AVT systems provide continuous real-time visibility into print performance, enabling operators to identify trends, reduce waste, shorten setup times and maintain stable output at high production speeds. The company showcases AVT Helios systems along with its workflow technology and runs live demonstrations of its multi-layer varnish inspection capability.

AXICON AUTO ID • BOOTH 6211

The company promotes the Axicon 15000 series of linear and 2D barcode verifiers. The system uses a specialized array of LEDs



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CISC SEMICONDUCTOR • BOOTH 6123

CISC Semiconductor exhibits its Xplorer series of RAIN RFID, NFC and BLE measurement and quality assurance tools, with live demonstrations running in partnership with Delta ModTech, Tamarack, Mühlbauer, Rosas and DPI. The Xplorer series covers in-line RFID quality assurance, encoding and encryption for high-speed production environments, as well as laboratory testing instruments for RFID variable analysis.

EYEC AMERICA • BOOTH 423

EyeC America highlights EyeC ProofRunner Highlight UHD, an in-line 100 percent print inspection system equipped with an 8K camera, demonstrated in partnership with MPrint on an integrated rewinder configuration. The system incorporates AI-driven defect classification and uses press data to evaluate roll quality and reduce unnecessary production stops. Combined with automated rewinder control, the setup enables operators to identify and remove defects without halting the line. Also on show is the EyeC Proofiler DT series, an off-line inspection system updated for faster operation and improved handling.

IMASS • BOOTH 1152

IMASS exhibits materials testing instruments for pressure-sensitive adhesives, including peel test equipment with controlled initial delay and averaging times for repeatable, objective measurement. The range also covers high-rate ramped release testing, RMS force measurement and real-time statistical analysis.

KETT • BOOTH 128

Kett exhibits near-infrared moisture and composition analyzers alongside portable thickness gauges for label converting, flexible packaging and folding carton applications.

On show are handheld and desktop NIR moisture meters for substrate spot-checking and continuous online NIR process analyzers that measure moisture, barrier coat weight and film thickness in-line without sample preparation. The portable coating thickness gauge range uses magnetic inductance and eddy current technologies to verify laminate and adhesive layers. A feature of the NIR instrument range is factory calibration stability; once calibrated to a specific substrate, the calibration remains valid for the life of the device without routine recalibration. Visitors can bring material samples for on-site testing at the booth.

MOISTTECH CORP • BOOTH 5704

MoistTech showcases its IR3000-C Series near-infrared moisture sensors for converting applications including paper, film, foil, adhesive and coating processes.

The IR3000-C provides real-time measurement of moisture, coat weight, thickness and temperature. Each sensor is factory pre-calibrated using customer-specific samples and can store calibrations for up to 50 different products or product variations. The system maintains measurement accuracy across common production variables, including material height, color changes, ambient lighting and temperature fluctuations and automatically compensates for conveyor surfaces, inert materials and foreign objects.

The non-contact sensor requires little routine maintenance



Interactive Inks & Coatings

and is engineered to remain stable over time without drift or recalibration. Its cast aluminum enclosure is designed to dissipate heat, improving stability in demanding production environments.

The IR3000-C is designed for in-line installation without additional hardware or software, and integrates with oven and dryer controls to support energy optimization.

MONARCH INSTRUMENTS • BOOTH 6508

Monarch Instrument showcases patented Nova-Pro LED Stroboscopes offering operators portable, on-demand visibility. Operating as simply an aim, dial in the flash rate to match web speed, and the moving print appears frozen in place. The company also showcases more permanent, hands-free monitoring with illumiNova LED Stroboscopes that mount directly in-line to deliver consistent, high-intensity illumination.

ROSAS MASCHINENBAU • BOOTH 6133

Rosas Maschinenbau exhibits Leopard 300, a tabletop RFID inspection platform integrating the Erhardt+Leimer Smartscan 200 percent inspection system and CISC Rain Xplorer RFID testing technology. A newly integrated code verifier extends the system's capabilities to include optical quality inspection, RFID encoding linked to QR codes or barcodes, variable data verification and automatic removal of defective tags. The system handles both the inspection of RFID labels and the encoding of embedded tags.

Also on show is the Viper 750 rewinder, featuring the Rosas Infinity 4K inspection system. The platform operates at web speeds of up to 750m/min.

SGS – IPS TESTING • BOOTH 1353

SGS – IPS Testing promotes its independent laboratory testing services for paper, films, labels, packaging and nonwoven materials. Its lab covers physical testing, analytical chemistry, fiber science, microscopy, defect analysis, repulpability and sustainability testing.

TECHKON USA • BOOTH 5902

Techkon holds demonstrations of its ChromaQA7 with SmartInk and SmartAnilox, the company's latest color management software release, which adds new features for color management, interoperability and AI. Techkon also showcases its SpectroDens spectrophotometer/densitometer, a handheld spectrophotometer device, available for hands-on trials. Additionally, the company exhibits its SpectroDrive with PressLink, a closed-loop product for offset presses.

THWING-ALBERT INSTRUMENT COMPANY • BOOTH 3603

Thwing-Albert debuts the FP-2265 Friction/Peel Tester, an updated quality testing instrument for label and packaging converters. It features a redesigned touchscreen interface, dual load cell capabilities and built-in pneumatics, with an optional handheld remote. The instrument measures coefficient of friction, peel strength, seal strength and light tensile strength up to 22 lb/100N

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across films, paper, adhesives, labels and packaging materials, testing to ASTM, ISO and TAPPI standards. The unit is compatible with MAP4 software. Also on show are the VantageNX Universal Testing Machine, ProGage Thickness Tester and sample preparation tools for quality control and R&D applications.

TROIKA SYSTEMS • BOOTH 6330

Troika Systems launches Troika Evo, a compact 3D scanning microscope for anilox rolls and gravure cylinders, which captures surface topography data, including cell volume, depth and wall thickness, providing quantifiable metrics for press setup and quality control. Troika also debuts FlexoCAM, a fully handheld flexo plate measurement device with an integrated screen, designed for on-press inspection without removing components from the line. Both devices feed measurement data into Troika's management platforms for wear-trend tracking and asset-lifecycle monitoring.

SOFTWARE AND WORKFLOW

CERM • BOOTH 3419

Cerm highlights its workflow software. Its technology connects CRM, estimating, order management, production planning, inventory, shop-floor data collection, shipping, invoicing and business intelligence.

EPRODUCTIVITY SOFTWARE • BOOTH 1125

eProductivity Software (ePS) presents its software portfolio, including Praxis, a cloud-native ERP platform for small and growing label converters; Radius ERP, a business management platform for label, flexible packaging, folding carton and corrugated manufacturers; PrintFlow, a production scheduling and planning technology; Auto-Count 4D, a real-time production data collection and manufacturing intelligence platform; and the CommandCore Platform, which connects ERP, MES, scheduling, quality, analytics and sustainability applications.

FLEX-METRICS • BOOTH 1450

Flex-Metrics exhibits its OEE data collection and analytics platform for label and packaging. The company launches a new voice/AI feature at the show. It combines operator voice input with machine sensor data, allowing operators to describe production events in their own words at the point of occurrence. The system links the verbal narrative directly to the corresponding machine event, providing context for downtime and performance data to support root cause analysis.

HIFLOW SOLUTIONS • BOOTH 3131

HiFlow Solutions showcases HiFlow ERP, its AI-powered ERP, MIS and MES platform, built for label, flexible packaging, folding carton and corrugated box manufacturers. It connects estimating and order processing, scheduling, production, warehouse management, purchasing, business analytics, shipping and invoicing in a single, unified platform. Live demonstrations showcase real-world AI capabilities actively running in converter operations today, including AI-assisted workflows that eliminate manual data entry, accelerate processing and improve accuracy across the business. HiFlow also introduces HiFlow Quote, its standalone estimating technology.

HYBRID SOFTWARE • BOOTH 3007

Hybrid Software showcases the latest version of the PDF editor PackZ, which introduces new AI-powered tools that assist operators with support, scripting and custom actions directly within the pre-press workflow.

The company also promotes CloudFlow, featuring CloudFlow Matches and demonstrates jAImes, an AI-powered technology that automates the processing of customer emails and production requests. The latest version of Artflow from Hybrid Software Brandz is also on show, For packaging visualization and design, Hybrid Software Brandz demonstrates the latest version of iC3D, which includes enhanced asset management capabilities and support for native CF2 structural design files.

For OEMs, Hybrid Software Helix unveils the latest SmartDFE release, built for the GPU-powered future of print production.

SmartDFE also introduces GPU-native Harlequin RIP, reducing hardware requirements while maintaining Harlequin's quality and performance.

NEETRY • BOOTH 3540

Neetry presents PrintHub, a digital operating platform for print manufacturing. PrintHub was designed to maximize press utilization, accelerate quotation turnaround and eliminate production bottlenecks. It unifies sales, instant estimating and quotation, order management, production planning and post-press operations into a single connected workflow.

SISTRADE • BOOTH 837

Sistrade showcases its MIS/ERP/MES platform, with the newly launched Sistrade Atlas. Atlas integrates AI-driven analytics with cybersecurity capabilities, providing real-time dashboards for monitoring KPIs, profitability and resource utilization. The platform detects production trends and anomalies to support continuous improvement and centralizes technical datasheets for production management.

DIES AND TOOLING

DMS • BOOTH 939

DMS exhibits hot stamping and foil handling equipment, including the FV-Series hot stamping system and associated tooling. Also on show are foil handling systems, an auxiliary unwind/rewind unit and a turn bar unit equipped with air bars.

KOCHER + BECK • BOOTH 3210

Kocher + Beck displays its GapMaster EM (Electronic Move), featuring a servo-driven



EyeC

adjustable anvil system, intuitive rotary dial control and digital input with haptic feedback.

The company also highlights its latest advancements in die-cutting technology with the Industry 4.0-ready KMS pressure gauge system, alongside its newest motorized version with integrated sensors. It provides enhanced control, consistency and real-time performance insight, ensuring reliability at every stage of production.

Also on display is a selection of flexible dies, along with precision-engineered magnetic and print cylinders, designed to deliver performance and durability. Additionally, the company's TecScreen Printing Plates are suitable for intricate and delicate print applications.

MAXCESS • BOOTH 818

Maxcess exhibits web-handling and converting equipment across its portfolio of brands, including RotoMetrics, Fife, Tidland, Magpowr, International Cutting Die, Componex, Webex and Valley Roller. Featured products include RotoMetrics flexible dies engineered for abrasive ink applications, including titanium dioxide and RFID label converting; the Tidland SmartSlit automated narrow web slitting system; enhanced Fife web guiding systems; and the Magpowr Maxtrac, a new tension controller consolidating open and closed loop control into a single unit. Componex presents new FDA-compliant plasma coatings for improved release performance and wear resistance.

WILSON MANUFACTURING • BOOTH 335

Wilson Manufacturing presents engraved cutting dies, flexible sheet dies, magnetic cylinders, print tooling, accessories and additional custom products.

WINK • BOOTH 521

Wink showcases flexible dies, rotary cylinders and steel rule dies manufactured using CNC technology. Featured products include flexible dies with MCR UltraChrome coating for extended tool life, and non-stick-coated dies designed to minimize adhesive and ink residue. Also on show are solid dies for a range of applications and the SmartGap adjustable anvil system.

PLATES AND PLATEMAKING

ANDERSON & VREELAND • BOOTH 428

Anderson & Vreeland premieres the AVxpose, a UV-LED exposure unit for thermal and digital flexographic platemaking. It delivers high-intensity UV-LED exposure designed to produce flat-top dots without additional consumables. The unit includes a dual post-exposure and detac combo drawer, an air flow cooling system, LED touchscreen controls and a PLC interface, with an optional vacuum bed. The LED light source requires no warm-up time and maintains a stable temperature profile throughout operation.

BETA INDUSTRIES • BOOTH 6100

Beta Industries exhibits BetaFlex Pro2 plate image and print analyzer, which provides 2D and 3D measurement and process control for flexographic pre-press and pressroom applications, covering dot percentage, dot structure analysis and highlight measurement down to 0.5 percent at 300 lpi. New capabilities include microcell analysis, hybrid screening analysis, 3D topographical imaging of ink laydown and four focus levels down to the plate floor for washout verification and cleanliness inspection. The company also introduces a new BetaFlex Micrometer Table and database software.

Also on show are the BetaFold and BetaCorr instruments, Beta Precision Digital Electronic Rulers, BetaColor LED densitometers



Thwing-Albert

and spectrophotometers, a fluorescent UV ink densitometer for security printing applications and BetaColor viewers for CMYK color evaluation.

CONTITECH • BOOTH 6612

ContiTech showcases its Conti Laserline direct laser engravable flexo plates that offer consistent quality even under demanding production conditions. The company also promotes its printing blankets, which include adhesive-backed printing blankets for 'indirect flexo' applications, demonstrating high-quality ink transfer, fast release and run stability.

DUPONT CYREL • BOOTH 327

DuPont Cyrel introduces the new Cyrel ReNew flexo plate family, incorporating more than 50 percent ISCC PLUS-certified bio-circular raw materials. It is designed to deliver standard flexo print performance while reducing reliance on fossil-based inputs. Also featured is the Cyrel Fast thermal platemaking workflow, which has achieved GreenCircle Certified Energy Savings for its solvent-free process.

JALEMA • BOOTH 3705

Jalema showcases Grafi-System, the company's most flexible vertical filing system for storing and protecting photopolymer plates, mag/flex dies, film, proofs and samples. One-point suspension files with dual or single compartments securely hang from a T-Bar for easy storage and retrieval. Mobile transport carts are also available in a variety of sizes.

LUMINITE PRODUCTS CORPORATION • BOOTH 1048

Luminite Products Corporation exhibits direct-engraved elastomer sleeves, produced as seamless and laser-engraved cylinders in a single step. The sleeves eliminate plate joins and the variables associated with photopolymer plate exposure, washout and mounting. The construction is designed for chemical resistance and stability under repeated cleaning cycles and aggressive ink exposure. The company also promotes its new approach to embossing production.

RAILEX • BOOTH 1328

The company showcases plate storage and trolley products, including vertical-hanging file technology, manufactured using sustainable materials. The portfolio includes flexo plate storage systems and durable polypropylene files for storing flexo dies. Railex plates and dies files are produced with steel hooks for quick retrieval and reducing operational downtime. The trolley systems allow easy transportation.

ANILOX ROLLS AND CLEANING SYSTEMS

APEX INTERNATIONAL • BOOTH 1146

Apex International exhibits its GTT 2.0 anilox engraving

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Education at Loupe Americas

Loupe Americas 2026 will host a full educational conference during the first two days of the exhibition.

The program will feature keynotes, breakout tracks and hands-on workshops, covering topics such as sustainability, RFID integration, workforce development, digital transformation, M&A trends and folding carton and flexible packaging expansion. Each day will begin with a keynote address, followed by concurrent conference sessions, and the program will conclude with an interactive workshop each day. Those who purchase an 'education pass' will have full access to all sessions, along with access to digital session summaries so they can see all educational content without missing any action on the show floor.

KEY SESSIONS

Key sessions include a converter panel where attendees can learn how fellow converting companies have navigated growth, change and opportunity; and an ambassador forum that offers a forward-looking conversation on the forces shaping packaging's next chapter.

The keynote session, by Lauren Ryder of Mintel, on Day 1, will explore the packaging trends of the future; while on Day 2, Mark Denzler of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association and Corey Reardon of AWA Alexander Watson Associates will share useful insights on today's manufacturing reality.

Other high-value sessions include:

- **The talent landscape**: Led by **Claudia St John** of The Workplace Advisors, covering workforce recruitment, retention and training strategies.
- **Inside M&A activity**: Led by **Thomas Blaige** of Blaige & Company, offering an analysis of current market valuations, private equity investment and acquisition trends.
- **Smart packaging & retail rollouts**: Practical examinations of real-world RFID implementations, including Amazon's integration of RFID technology and automated checkout systems in partnership with Avery Dennison.
- **Flex pack, folding cartons & diversification**: Technical deep dives exploring material structures, pouching processes, shrink sleeves and in-line carton converting.

Capping off each day will be practical, hands-on sessions designed for immediate implementation:

- **Day 1: AI Workshop**: Facilitated by AI expert Steve Metcalf, it focuses on building, customizing and deploying practical AI agents for converting workflows.
- **Day 2: Women's Leadership Roundtable**: An open interactive forum exploring career development, mentorship, personal branding, work-life balance and supporting future women leaders in packaging.

Scan the QR code for more information on the education program at Loupe Americas 2026:

technology, alongside its range of precision-engineered anilox rolls and sleeves. GTT 2.0 is designed to reduce ink spitting and ink aeration. The engraving geometry is engineered to cover multiple conventional engraving specifications within a single roll, reducing the number of anilox changes required during production. The technology is suited to applications including fine-screen process printing, soft-touch coatings, high-gloss and matte coatings, metallics and specialty varnishes.

EAGLEWOOD TECHNOLOGIES • BOOTH 647

Eaglewood Technologies showcases its latest technologies in anilox cleaning and inspection. Highlights include the L20 and L30 laser anilox cleaning systems.

In addition, Eaglewood features the latest advancement to its Sitexco+ laser cleaning platform: an integrated automated microscope system. This enhancement enables converters to automatically audit, measure and track their anilox inventory with the push of a button. The Sitexco+ system combines cleaning and inspection into a single streamlined workflow.

FLEXO WASH • BOOTH 415

Flexo Wash launches FW LaserX 2000. The LaserX 2000 is built around Galvo scanning technology and a high-speed NIR-MOPA laser, delivering faster, more consistent cleaning with less mechanical wear than conventional direct-laser systems, and with zero chemistry, water and waste. New features include a new design for easier tool-free roll loading, automated 3D inspection with integrated microscope for cycle optimization, CleanLink inventory management via RFID and barcode, industrial-grade 3-stage air filtration (HEPA, Active Carbon, Spark Arrestor), collision detection and surface-specific cleaning parameters for Chrome, Steel, Tungsten. The LaserX 2000 is class 1 laser rated with no safety goggles or dedicated ventilation required.

HARPER CORPORATION • BOOTH 517

Harper Corporation of America showcases ceramic anilox rolls and sleeves, including XCAT, engraving technology that blends consistent pocket structures with a 60-degree channel-flow design to support cleaner, more predictable ink transfer. The company also promotes HarperScientific products, including the QD Flexo Printer, a tool for testing inks, substrates, plates and anilox combinations in a controlled setting before going to press.

INTERFLEX LASER ENGRAVERS • BOOTH 518

The Interflex Laser Engravers highlights its full range of HD and custom anilox engravings. Using advanced fiber optic laser engraving technology, Interflex produces some of the industry's tightest tolerances, up to .0002in TIR. Interflex's specialized cell geometries, including HD Flexo, interrupted channel, UVFlex and other custom engravings, can help improve color density, reduce pinholing and spitting, minimize dot gain and enhance press performance.

SONIC SOLUTIONS • BOOTH 305

Sonic Solutions exhibits the Phoenix Line of ultrasonic cleaning systems to restore cell volume, improve print consistency. Technologies accommodate narrow web rolls, large-format sleeves and custom configurations, providing ultrasonic cleaning for converters of any size. Advanced features such as safer 68 kHz ultrasonics, external replaceable generators, automatic low-level shutoff, safe heating mechanics and fully customizable designs deliver reliable performance and long-term value.

Sonic Solutions also showcases its Sonic Kleen and Eco Kleen cleaning detergents, formulated specifically to maximize ultrasonic cleaning performance.

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CURING TECHNOLOGY

EXCELITAS • BOOTH 6305

Excelitas showcases its full range of UV curing and IR drying technologies for labels and packaging. Its new Phoseon VeriCure water-cooled UV-LED curing systems are designed for wide-format high-speed printing. The Phoseon Nexus II UV-LED systems, offered in air- and water-cooled configurations, deliver high UV power output for flexo printing. These systems also feature real-time remote monitoring. The Phoseon FireJet air-cooled UV-LED system supports high-speed curing across small to grand format digital printing, as well as large single-pass UV inkjet applications. Phoseon FireLine water-cooled systems are designed for web and conveyor-based curing, with a scalable architecture supporting lengths up to 2m. For thermal drying, the Noblelight Infradry Compact IR system is suitable for water-based inks and coatings. Noblelight Amba mercury arc lamps, available in various lengths and power levels, is suitable for UV curing across a wide range of label and packaging applications.

GEW • BOOTH 3511/3500

GEW highlights new cooling and precision control products, as well as its new EOS Power & Control System. EOS replaces GEW's Rhino Power infrastructure. A redesign of GEW's power supplies, control electronics, cabling and UV system control software brings efficiency and modularity, while in-house manufacturing provides quality control and expertise. Its intelligent, serialized lampheads enable improved telemetry and OEM integration options, with serviceability and support for modern communication protocols. New reporting features such as hour and reflector counters come as standard, along with enhanced remote monitoring functionality. The EOS platform remains fully compatible with GEW's patented, interchangeable ArcLED technology, and introduces end-to-end encryption of all communications traffic. GEW also introduces two technologies: its new Air Blast Cooler, and its DoseGuard laboratory unit.

HEIGHT-LED • BOOTH 3619

Height-LED showcases a UV-LED curing system for high-speed flexo, digital and hybrid printing. Tailored brackets enable easy retrofit for both new and existing presses. This mercury- and ozone-free system improves safety and reduces energy consumption by up to 70 percent. An automatic width sensor adjusts irradiation width based on substrate size, further reducing energy use. The system also supports interchangeability between UV-LED and conventional UV. Optimized thermal design enables shrink sleeve printing without a water-cooled roller. It offers over 30,000-hour lifespan and modular design.

IST AMERICA • BOOTH 3310

IST America highlights UV, LED and hybrid curing technology. The company launches its new Swap 4 Cure concept, a flexible curing platform that allows users to interchange multiple light sources within one system housing. The concept is designed to support conventional mercury UV, FREEcure, water-cooled LED and IR cassette options. Running live on the booth is cassette exchange and UV Analyzer measurement to demonstrate system performance and dose levels. IST also presents the full system concept, including newly developed controls, electronic cabinet design and supporting components.

IUV • BOOTH 3711

IUV showcases its LED UV curing systems, designed for integration with narrow web label presses. The systems are available for both new installations and retrofit applications.

UV PRO • BOOTH 136

UV Pro showcases UV Ray's hybrid curing systems and air-cooled MaxLED technology. Modular cassettes allow fast switching between traditional arc lamps and LED arrays to match any ink or substrate, while air-cooled LED units deliver high performance with lower energy use, minimal heat and no chiller required.

WEB HANDLING AND CLEANING

COAST CONTROLS • BOOTH 1234

Coast Controls exhibits web guiding systems for converting applications, covering its All-Air pneumatic range and electromechanical systems developed in partnership with Selectra SRL. The All-Air systems use low-pressure air power, eliminating electrical and hydraulic components. The electromechanical range offers touchscreen-enabled control across a broader range of converting applications. Also on show are retrofit kits for legacy system upgrades and roll-to-roll configurations.

FMS USA • BOOTH 1201

FMS USA exhibits web tension measurement, control and web guiding equipment. The company features the FMS-segFORCE segmented tension measuring roller, which measures web tension across individual material lanes rather than total web tension. The system is designed for slitting, coating, laminating and multi-lane processes where tension variation across the web width affects alignment, winding quality and finished roll consistency. Also on show are precision force sensors, tension measuring rollers, compact web guiding systems, digital tension amplifiers and closed-loop tension controllers with industrial bus communication including EtherNet/IP, PROFINET and EtherCAT.

MEECH INTERNATIONAL • BOOTH 3600

Meech exhibits the CyClean and CyClean-R web cleaning systems. Both systems use non-contact cleaning technology combining



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Duane Pekar, CEO of Mark Andy.

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Rotoflex VLI-440: Inspection, slitting, and rewinding for film and tension-sensitive materials.

SupplySmart: Scan-and-go inventory visibility and smarter consumables replenishment.

Digital Pro MAX: Scalable toner-based digital printing with hybrid flexibility, low cost to print, and simple operation.

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balanced positive and vacuum airflows with integrated ionization to neutralize static charges and extract particles down to 0.3 microns from the web surface. The compact design is intended for integration into existing production lines across a range of substrates.

MONTALVO CORPORATION • BOOTH 1234

Montalvo Corporation exhibits tension control equipment for web-handling, including load cells, tension controllers, brakes, clutches and the LionGrip pneumatic material-handling system.

RE USA • BOOTH 836

Re USA showcases upgrades to its ReVision NET print inspection system, alongside web guiding and tension control equipment.

The updated ReVision NET delivers up to 64 MP resolution with 16x optical zoom and an enhanced touchscreen interface. The system supports up to two touch displays from a single control point, providing access to multiple ultra-compact cameras. Color rendering is designed for demanding print effects, including gold leaf, fluorescents and embossed prints.

Also on show is the company's web guiding range, available in multiple sizes and configurations, with a controller interface designed for straightforward installation and calibration.

Re USA unveils a new web tension controller featuring a touch interface, alongside its existing range of tension control systems, load cells, pneumatic and electromagnetic powder brakes, safety chucks and pneumatic and friction shafts.

CODING AND MARKING

CODESOURCE • BOOTH 1211

CodeSource presents tesa Secure 6973 and CodeSource laser systems for coding, identification and marking. tesa Secure offers an alternative to conventional coding, identification and marking methods. As robust as metal plates, yet with the flexible handling associated with labels, tesa Secure 6973 laser labels are suitable for endless marking applications that require durability, flexibility and resistance to forgery.

GAINSCHA • BOOTH 1513

Gainscha highlights barcode and POS printers, offering a range of products for retail, catering, logistics, healthcare and manufacturing industries. Its integrated platform covers design, development, production, sales and services, ensuring smooth operations and customer support.

GODEX AMERICAS • BOOTH 1324

GoDex Americas showcases its thermal printing technologies. Featured is the GX4000i Series industrial printer for high-volume production environments. The GX4000i is equipped with a large 5in color touchscreen, intuitive user interface, video-assisted



Sonic Solutions



Lundberg Tech

operation and aluminum die-cast construction. The series offers multiple resolution options, including a 600DPI model. GoDex also promotes its complete thermal printing portfolio, including desktop, industrial and mobile printers, along with software and labeling technologies.

GRAPHIC CONTROLS • BOOTH 239

Graphic Controls exhibits a range of labeling and packaging equipment alongside consumables for thermal printing. The company also shows thermal transfer ribbons, labelstock, replacement printheads and printer cleaning products.

MCS • BOOTH 6615

MCS showcases the Harrier, a CMYK process-color inkjet system available in print widths from 4.25in up to 51in. The system prints four-color labels at speeds of up to 600ft/min at 1,200 DPI, using water-based inks. The Harrier is engineered by HP and is demonstrated live at the booth.

TEC-IT • BOOTH 1519

TEC-IT Datenverarbeitung showcases its latest technologies for creating, printing and managing variable data and GS1-compliant identification technologies across the label and packaging industry. The portfolio includes Barcode Studio, an advanced barcode design package supporting all major linear and 2D symbologies, including GS1 Digital Link QR Codes, Data Matrix and RFID-related applications. Also on show is TFORMer, a label and document automation platform that streamlines label production, compliance labeling and variable data printing workflows.

TOOTECH • BOOTH 3003

Tootech showcases the TTE-72FK laser label printer for durable, high-quality identification printing. The TTE-72FK uses laser-based printing/marking technology to create clear, stable text, barcodes and 2D codes on compatible label materials without relying on traditional printing consumables such as ink and ribbon. The TTE-72FK is suited for applications where labels must remain readable in challenging environments while supporting traceability and compliance needs.

XPRINTER • BOOTH 1326

Xprinter highlights its direct thermal label printers, thermal transfer label printers, portable Bluetooth label printers, desktop label printers, RFID barcode printer, wristband printers and industrial label printers.

ANCILLARY PRODUCTS

AGERGAARD NORTH AMERICA • BOOTH 3709

Agergaard North America showcases three product lines.

The AkeBoose Nova TK is a chamber doctor blade system for tool-free blade and seal changes. Compatible with UV,

water-based and solvent inks and coatings, it targets short-changeover label and narrow web pressrooms.

The EPP peristaltic pump range is designed for use with the Nova TK or existing chamber systems. The compact, low-pulsation design maintains a closed ink circuit suited to shear-sensitive inks and coatings. The EPP 200-LQ1 variant is engineered for reduced ink residuals after job completion, targeting applications involving specialty coatings and high-value varnishes.

AGSflexo is a range of doctor blades and chamber seals for flexo applications.

BISHIXI • BOOTH 1149

Guangzhou Bishixi Technology highlights its label rewinder, label dispenser and label applicator technology.

DIGITAL SIGN TECHNOLOGIES • BOOTH 1103

Digital Sign Technologies exhibits a range of printhead maintenance and validation instruments for inkjet printing operations. The Print Head Doctor (PHD) is available in AI-enabled models PHD17 and PHD18, designed for printhead maintenance and recovery. The Print Head Tester (PHT) assesses nozzle health following cleaning or storage. The Ink Tester is a compact instrument for ink evaluation with specific printheads. The company launches PHT-M modular multi-head printhead tester designed for operations using more than one printhead type, allowing validation of different printhead models within a single device by swapping modules.

DIP COMPANY • BOOTH 803

DIP Company showcases disposable ink pan liners and catch trays. The company's disposable pan liners are placed inside pans, trays and related equipment and removed after each run, reducing manual pan washing or mechanical washing equipment. Depending on the application, cleanup can be reduced to roughly five minutes by turning pan washing into a simple remove-and-replace step.

DOUBLE E GROUP AND DOTEC • BOOTH 1038

Double E Group and Dotec exhibit web handling and material handling equipment. The Double E Group portfolio on show includes Appleton core cutters, differential and cantilever shafts, precision rollers, WrinkleStop wrinkle abatement technology and trim collection systems. Dotec equipment for roll lifting, positioning and rotating is also demonstrated at the shared booth.

FLEXO CONCEPTS • BOOTH 6329

Flexo Concepts shows PolyLam XL, a doctor blade built from pressroom feedback.

The company also offers TruPoint PolyLam, which provides complete metering for everyday process printing. On display is also TruPoint Orange for enhanced stiffness, durability and performance.

LUNDBERG TECH • BOOTH 619

Lundberg Tech showcases the MatrixCompactor 160 for efficient label matrix handling. The system captures and compacts waste directly from production, improving throughput while reducing transport volume and lowering CO2 impact. Its automated waste handling minimizes paper core disposal while eliminating repetitive tasks and heavy lifting for press operators.

OX INDUSTRIES • BOOTH 6021

Ox Industries showcases converted paperboard products. Made from 100 percent recycled fiber, the products deliver consistent strength, reliability and sustainability across fast-moving production environments.

PINEBERRY MANUFACTURING / XIJET CORPORATION • BOOTH 1311

Pineberry Manufacturing demonstrates the XiJet Galaxy Series industrial inkjet platform integrated into a Pineberry roll-to-roll transport system. Atlantic Tape & Packaging and The Solutions Group are also present at the booth. The Galaxy Series uses piezo inkjet technology with both UV-curable and water-based ink options. The platform supports scalable print widths in 100mm increments and is designed for integration into hybrid press configurations or standalone production systems.

RAE PRODUCTS • BOOTH 1150

RAE Products exhibits converting cores for narrow web, flexo, digital, sleeve and pouch applications, with a focus on high-volume recutting capabilities and automated core production.

RTAI • BOOTH 6634

RTAI exhibits its Color Label printing system alongside a range of compatible printing materials, for consumer goods, entertainment and commercial label applications.

The system combines a color label printer with a materials portfolio covering glossy, matte, transparent, metallic, holographic and specialty film substrates, including media for smartphone case decoration. The platform is designed for short-run and personalized label production.



Coast Controls



Montalvo



Meech



GoDex

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For the converter, a clear understanding of the performance characteristics, handling and storage of inks and coatings is essential in today's legislation-drive label production process.

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Label trends

The folding carton packaging market is benefiting from brand-owner efforts to replace single-use plastics with recyclable paperboard formats across several packaged goods categories

Industry outlook

The folding carton packaging market size is expected to increase from 66.06 billion USD in 2025 to

70.39 billion USD in 2026

and reach 99.51 billion USD by 2031

The market is growing at a CAGR of

7.17 percent

over 2026-2031

Market drivers

Expansion of the food and beverage processing sector's impact on CAGR: **+2%**

Growth of e-commerce packaging demand's impact on CAGR: **+1.6%**

Rising demand for sustainable packaging's impact on CAGR: **+1.2%**

Increased adoption of digital printing for short-run cartons' impact on CAGR: **+0.8%**

Government excise tax on plastic packaging's impact on CAGR: **+0.5%**

Rapid growth of meal-kit start-ups requiring small-batch cartons' impact on CAGR: **+0.3%**

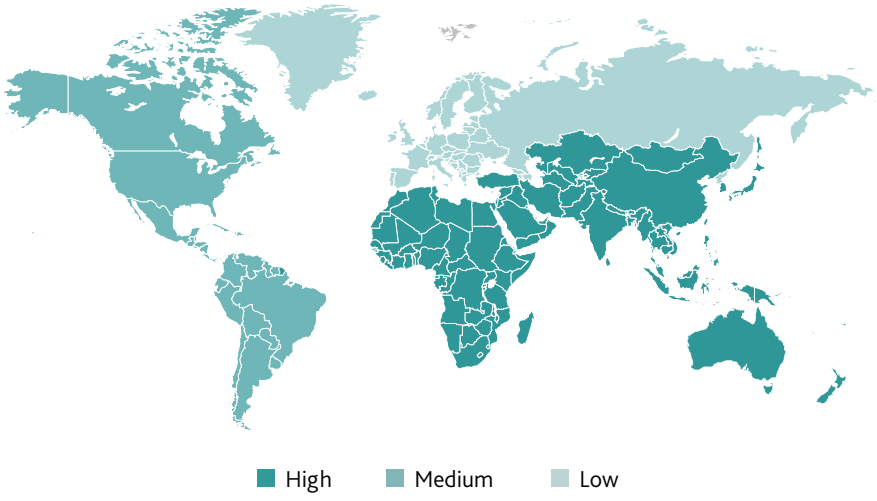
Market by geography

Asia-Pacific accounted for **42.89 percent** of the folding carton packaging market share in 2025 and is forecasted to grow at an 8.03 percent CAGR through 2031

China accounted for **49 percent** of Asia-Pacific demand, supported by food processing modernization

North America remained the second-largest region in the folding carton packaging market, but it is currently experiencing softer demand and supply rationalization

Europe retained a structurally important position in the folding carton packaging market because Germany, France and the UK remain core centers for carton demand and converting capacity.



Source: Folding carton packaging market size & share analysis - growth trends and forecast (2026 - 2031) by Mordor Intelligence

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