

Labels & Labelling

The wider world of Narrow Web

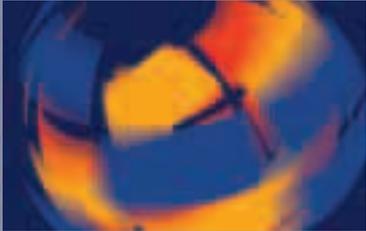
25th Anniversary

Volume 25 Issue 4

Labels and Labelling

August/September 2003

Labelexpo



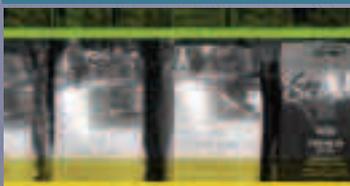
Inside, a major preview of the premier labels and web converting exhibition Labelexpo Europe 2003

Analysis



Logistics labelling is one of the fastest growing industry sectors

Technology



Converting pouches represents a major narrow web opportunity

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The view from the top is breathtaking. Let's see it together. Visit us at Labelexpo Europe 2003 in Hall 5 stand number 5A40.



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Leader



This year's Labelexpo Europe will be the biggest show yet for the narrow/mid web converting industry. To survive and prosper in this business it is absolutely essential to add value to your production processes. All these added value areas will be covered at the show, from new options for shorter run digital printing, to more efficient converting techniques, smart labels, variable information and new decoration technologies.

European converters will get their first chance to see significant new press technologies converting a wide range of substrates from high value pressure-sensitive labels, to rotary processing of in-mold labels, shrink sleeves, unsupported films and folding cartons. Converters can assess at first hand emerging technologies such as high speed multi-colour inkjet, laser die cutting and RFID label construction and testing systems. New to the show are 'secondary converting' technologies which show you how to seam shrink labels or fold and glue cartons before dispatch to the end user. Another significant addition to this year's line-up is a hands-on workshop looking at optimising productivity on-press presented by L&L contributor Vince Ditrolino and Gallus.

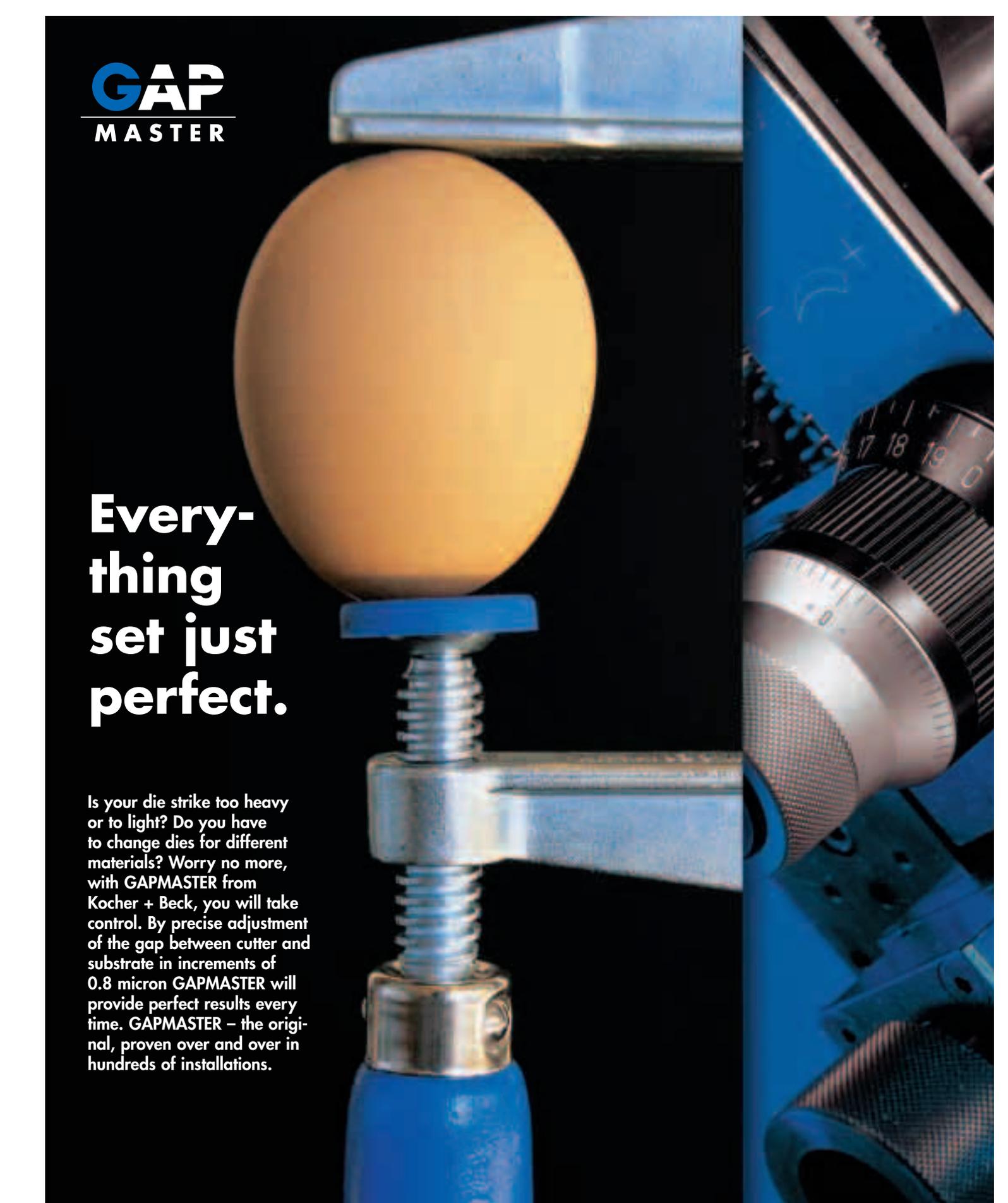
Digital workflow is another key area to be examined. Not only setting up information networks within the plant, but also communicating directly with suppliers and end users to cut down the label design/approval cycle and take costs out of the logistics chain. Key to the successful label plant of the future will be statistical process control and the ability to validate label production through inspection and software analysis/reporting, and there are many interesting demonstrations of these techniques on show.

“European converters will get their first chance to see significant new press technologies converting a wide range of substrates”

There will also be a powerful series of seminar sessions covering all the major technology and marketing opportunities for narrow and mid-web converters. Sessions include end-user market trends, implementing process control regimes, meeting end users' requirements for brand protection, and emerging technologies for shrinkwrap, stretchwrap and package printing applications on narrow and mid-web presses.

Labels & Labelling is proud to be the sponsor of the show, and we look forward to meeting you on stand Q40 in Hall 11.

Andy Thomas
Group Managing Editor



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Raflatac revealed

Pentti Kallio, president of Raflatac, talks to **Mike Fairley** about the Group's on-going development, and the challenges that still need to be faced

It is little more than nine months since Pentti Kallio was appointed president of the Raflatac Group in October of 2002. Part of UPM-Kymmene, one of the leading forest products and paper producers in the world, Raflatac has factories on five continents and a network of terminals and sales offices worldwide. It employs over 2,000 people and has a turnover in excess of EUR 740 million.



Pentti Kallio,
recently
appointed
president of
Raflatac

Nine months on, despite some of the problems faced by the label industry worldwide, Pentti Kallio tells Labels & Labelling that he has been particularly encouraged by what he has seen of the Group's international achievements and growth.

'We're very proud of our US operation,' he explained. 'Inaugurated in 2001, the new machine, factory and operations were the Group's most sizeable investment ever and we're pleased to say, they have gone pretty well according to all our expectations – with sales more than doubling.

Having said that, we still have the capacity to increase volumes and to further diversify the product portfolio, particularly into the whole area of films.'

'Further development of the North American market is behind our proposed acquisition with MACtac – an acquisition targeted at strengthening our market position in both the US and elsewhere. The effects of this acquisition would be realised as a product range that expands into new areas. It also means that Raflatac's knowledge base would be extended into new production technologies – and new people.'

'Currently (at the time of writing) we are awaiting the outcome of the U.S. Department of Justice's attempt to block this acquisition – but we remain committed to the transaction and still believe it will have a positive outcome. We are also exploring other different options that are open to us.'

'As far as Asia is concerned, our factories in Australia, Oceania, Malaysia and China have all taken part of the growth in that area. Australia and Malaysia have been particularly successful, while our Shanghai production facility in China was inaugurated in September last year and is already in full production with two lines supplying the Chinese market with new, locally manufactured paper-based and synthetic self-adhesive laminates for all key labelling end-use areas.'

'China will undoubtedly be a major market for the future growth of Raflatac in Asia. Additionally, we will be intensifying our presence in Thailand quite soon. Nevertheless, we still need further investment in Asia, but the prospects for us certainly look good.'

'In Europe,' Pentti Kallio continued, 'internal projects have resulted in improved service capacity and cost-efficiency. For example, we closed Hirschhorn (sheeters and a coating machine were transferred to Spain) and down-scaled the Jyväskylä operations. Tough measures to take, but necessary. Against this, we are putting a new slitting unit into Hungary this year to serve the rapidly developing central eastern European market areas, due in part to continuing EU enlargement.'

“There is little doubt that synthetics offer the most interesting growth prospects for the industry – with demand over the coming years expected to enjoy double digit growth”

'The acquisition of the CYG plant in Spain in 1998 – now Raflatac Iberica S.A. – gave Raflatac the opportunity to significantly invest in this southern European facility with a redesigned and re-built factory, updated laboratory, automated warehouse and two new automated packing lines. Now fully operational, the plant is producing sheet and A4 products for the European market, and also acts as a distribution centre for the Iberian Peninsula.'

‘Outside of pure labelstock investment, we have been particularly pleased with what we have achieved with RFID label technology. It’s been a great success. The Board is fully committed to this aspect of the Group’s development and we believe that Rafsec can look forward to good long-term growth in the RFID market place.’

However, there are still challenges for Raflatac in the label market. ‘There is little doubt,’ says Pentti Kallio, ‘that synthetics offer the most interesting growth prospects for the industry – with demand over the coming years expected to enjoy double digit growth. Paper, on the other hand, will have only moderate growth in the future and may even see a small decline in those markets shared with synthetics.’

‘Raflatac is unquestionably already at the forefront of the world’s paper-based laminate market place. Our challenge is to reach that same position with synthetic materials. Constantly gaining new ground because of the unique advantages they offer throughout the entire life-cycle of products and packaging, synthetics offer new kinds of end-uses, technologies and packaging solutions. Customers and end-users alike are undoubtedly welcoming our moves in this direction.’

‘In addition to new product and market development, Raflatac still needs to put a lot of work into the further development of its supply chain management concept. Good progress has been made in minimising working capital and improving consistency of service – but there is always more to do.’

‘Additionally, all players in the value chain need to enhance their cost-efficiency. Materials are becoming thinner and less expensive – important in offering cost savings to end-users, in terms of waste legislation, and providing longer application running with more labels per reel – while coating efficiency must be increased.’

As part of its strategic development of the synthetics laminate market, Raflatac now have a polyethylene film (85 and 100 micron gloss, white and clear) extrusion facility in Finland and are outsourcing BOPP (50 micron gloss clear and 60 micron gloss and matt) films as well as buying-in polyester films. Top coating capabilities are available in house.

‘We have also combined some of the best properties of PE and BOPP films to produce Raflex, a biaxially orientated polyolefin-based film,’ explained Mika Sillanpää, vice president area director, Raflatac Europe. ‘This material offers end-users the flexibility of a polyethylene based material while providing the higher quality print register of a polypropylene. At only 50 microns in thickness, and with good resistance to water, oil and chemicals, Raflex is primarily used for cosmetics, techno-chemical and health and beauty labels.’

‘Another new product introduced by the Group is Raflatac Duoface, a patented no release liner product that incorporates two face papers back to back, and which is printable on both sides. This has been a joint end-user development approach which we believe has interesting potential for the future.’

Outside of synthetic and new product development, it is in paper laminates for product labelling and VIP printing where Raflatac has its traditional strengths – in high gloss, mid gloss and special coated papers, such as Pharmagloss,

Foodgloss and Raflatyre. Other special products include metallised papers, wet strength papers, digital products, boards, etc.

However it is in the fields of information labelling – which is much wider than just VIP products – where some of the highest laminate growth is being achieved, both for the industry and for Raflatac.

According to Juha Pietilä, business area manager, Information Labelling, ‘Direct thermal materials are growing at up to 12 per cent per annum. Used in transport and logistics labelling applications, we are experiencing the best growth with ‘eco’ grades. Thermal transfer too, is achieving double digit growth through economical vellum TTR through to new transfer XTRA with high white matt coated providing excellent TTR printability.’

“It is in the fields of information labelling where some of the highest laminate growth is being achieved, both for the industry and for Raflatac. Direct thermal materials are growing at up to 12 per cent per annum”

‘Market growth in A4 sheet labels is also still close to 10 per cent per annum, with certain areas such as ink jet printable sheets growing at up to 25 per cent. Clearly increasing is colour laser printing, due largely to a significantly decreased technology cost base. Additionally, there is good growth coming from the SOHO (small office/home office) market in products such as CD labelling, photo applications, invitation cards, etc.’

Certainly the strategy and investment employed by Raflatac has successfully transformed them over the years from a small Scandinavian self-adhesive labelstock producer in the 1970s and early 1980s, into a global world-class leader with an ever increasing portfolio of paper, synthetic, product and informational labelling solutions, as well as high tech labels products such as RFID.

‘Nevertheless,’ says Pentti Kallio, ‘we still all need to work together in order to further increase the demand for self-adhesive labels – and to raise awareness of the technical properties of self-adhesive labels and the possibilities of self-adhesives that can be offered from the design perspective. With new product innovations we can also win ground from competing label methods.’

Despite the global economic situation and other international issues, self-adhesive labels continue to experience healthy worldwide growth, providing new solutions, new applications, solving user problems and enhancing world trade. Raflatac is undoubtedly at the forefront of this ongoing growth and seems well placed to remain a key market leader in the changing world of self-adhesives.



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Show Preview

This year's Labelexpo Europe, held in Brussels between the 24-27th September, is the continent's biggest show aimed specifically at the narrow web converting industry. As the media sponsor, Labels & Labelling presents an in-depth preview of the show, which includes a powerful series of conference sessions. Please note the exhibitor's list below was

correct as we went to press, but for the latest updates be sure to check out the Labelexpo Europe website at www.labelexpo-europe.com.

Labels & Labelling will have a major presence at the show at stand 11Q40, and visitors are welcome to drop by for a chat on the hottest developments at the show.

Labelexpo Europe 2003 Exhibitors

3M Belgium	Chemsultants	Fad Fabriano Autoadhesivos	Japan Pulp & Paper
AB Graphic International	Cheshire Engraving Services	FAG	Jet Europe
AB Kelva	Ciba Speciality Chemicals SpA	Feket UV	Jud Ecamo
Accuweb Inc	CMR	Fellinger Industrie Elektronik	Jufo Thermal
Advanced Machinery NV	Codimag	Feron	K Laser Technology
AGFA-Gavaert NV	Color-Dec Italy	Fife-Tidland	Kadant UK
AjoWiggins	ColorMatic AS	Finat Labelling News	Kanzan
Akzo Nobel	Commercial Arqué	FLEXcon	KDO International West
AL Tech	Compass Business Systems	Flexo Wash	Keymax International
Alipack Europe/Tendeur	Computer Productivity Services Inc	Flexolaser	King Label
Universal	Converpress	Flexotech	Klemm Siebdruckmaschinen
Alpha-Cure	CP Films Inc	Flexotech Hungary	Klockner Pentaplast & Co. KG
Alphasonics	Creo	Flytec	Kocker + Beck
AP Maschinen AG	Daco	Focus Label Machinery	Kodaek Polychrome Graphics
Apex Europe	Dantex Graphics	Franchini & Co	Kongskilde
API Coated Products	David Hulme Machinery	G & K Techmedia	Kopak International
API Foils	DCM	Gallus	Kuhnast Strahlungstechnik
Appleton Papers	De Rossi Vittoriano	GamSys	Kurz
Applied Laser Engineering	Delna	GBC (Speciality Chemicals)	Label & Narrow Web
Araytech	Demak	Gerhardt Int	Label Aire AS
Area Etichette Spa	Deutscher Drucker	GEW	Label Etiquettes Info Magazine
Arccure Technologies	Dev A/S	Gi Due	Labelmen International
Arconvert S.p.A.	Diaures S.p.A	Global Vision	Labels and Narrow Web Tech
Arcotec	DMR Elettromeccanica .	GMP srl	India
Arets Graphics NV	Domino UK	Goldschmidt AG	Lablemate LLC
Arjobex	Douglas Hanson	Graficon	Laem Systems Srl
Armor	Dow Corning	Grafische Systeme	Laner UV Lacquers
Artwork Systems	DPL Industri A/S	Grafisk Maskinfabrik ApS	Leonardus Holographic
Asahi Photoproducts	Drello & Co	Gramex	Technology
Ashe Converting Equipment	Drent Goebel Inc	Graphic Systems International	"Link Label Machinery Co., "
Astro-Med Quick Label Systems	Du Pont de Nemours (Deutschland)	Gre Engineering	Lintec
ATN	Dunmore Corp	Gretag-Macbeth AG	LMC Duo
ATP Alltape Klebetechnik	Dynic UK	GSB-Wahl	Lohmann & Co KG
Automation	EasyLabel Europa	Hanita Coatings	Loparex
AV Flexologic	Eckart & Co. KG	HB Fuller Europe	Luminescence
Avery Dennison Roll Materials Europe	Edale	Heights France S.A.S	Lundberg H Maskinfabrik
AVT Advanced Vision Technology	Edale	Henkel KgaA	M Print Morlock & Co.Kg
B Bunch Co inc	Electro Optic	HIFLEX	Macdermid Graphics
Baltea Srl	EMA	Hoenle UV Technology	Mactac Europe S.A
Bar Graphic Machinery	Encres Dubuit	Holweg	Madico Graphic Films
Baumuller Benelux B.V.	Environmental Inks & Coatings	HP Indigo	Manter
Berra SRL	Ergeca	Hueck Folien	Map 80 Systems
bi.esse adesivi s.p.a	Erhardt + Leimer	Hunkeler AG	Marabuwerke & Co. KG
Bielomatik	Ernolli Group	Ichemco	Maratech Int
Blumer Maschinenbau AG	Esko Graphics	Idea Paper SRL	Marbach Karl & Co. Kg
BLV Licht- und Vakuumtechnik	Esterlam International	IGF Tape	Mark Andy
Brodbeck	ETI Coverting Equipment	IGT Testing Systems	Martin Automatic Inc
BST	Etilux	Imak	Matan Digital Printers
Buchel	Etipol	Imer s.a.	MDV Papier
Cab Karlsruhe	Etisoft	Impresstik Pty	Mecamare Malbate
Calgraph	Eugen Drohmann	Inspection Systems Inc	Medata AG
Calor	Euro Drop S.A.S.	Interoat	Megraform Gbr
Carl Ostermann Erben	Euro Plus d.o.o. Computer Engineering	Intercolour	Melzer
Cartes Equipment	Eurographie	Ist Metz	Mey Systems
Cerm Benelux n.v.	Euroto	Italnastr	Mezzadri Srl
Cezar Printing House	Eurovert Packaging	Itasa	Mida Maquinaria
Chaisa	ExxonMobil Chemical	Ibw Thermal Films	Mirage Inks
Cham Paper Group		Iwasaki International	Molco
		J.M. Heaford	Multi Print Systems
		Jagenberg AG	multiSTIQ
		Jalema	Nam Sing Ribbon (H.K.)
			Nastrificio di Cassano
			Newfoil Machines Limited
			Nilpeter
			Nordenia Deutschland
			OHKA Europe
			Omega Systems
			Omet
			Open Data
			Optaglio
			Optimum Metallising
			"Package, Print & Converting International"
			Papeteries Du Pont De Claix
			Paragon Inks
			Paxar
			Peter Schiller Machines and More
			Phoenix Inks
			Picon
			Pinewood Label Systems
			Polinas
			Polygraphica Equipment
			Polyonics
			Power Forward
			Prati Pietro
			Praxair Surface Technologies (Europe)
			Precision Coated Products
			Primarc
			Print Concept
			Printech Tools & Technology
			Printex
			Prisma Srl
			Productos Concentrol
			Propeteer International
			Pulse Roll Label Products
			Punto Luce SRL
			Radicci Film Spa
			Radius Solutions Limited
			Raflatrac Group
			Rapid Machinery Company
			Rassegna dell'imballaggio
			RDP Marathon Inc
			Re Spa Controlli Industriali
			Recyl
			Redex
			Reel to Reel International
			Regma Transfert Thermique
			Rhodia
			Ricoh
			Ritrama S.p.A.
			RK Print Coat Instruments
			Rogers NV
			Rohm and Haas (UK) Limited
			Roll Cover Italiana .
			Rossella
			Rotatek
			Rotoflex Int
			Rotometrics
			Ruco
			Sam Meccanica S.N.C

Labelexpo Europe 2003

Conference Program

Sato Europe NV
Schleipen & Erkens AG
Schlumpf AG
Schober
SEI S.P.A.
Serame
Sericol
Sicpa
Sihl
Silom Group
Simec Group
Sinel Systems
Smag Graphique
Sneep Industries
Sohn MFG
Solutions Graphiques SARL
Sony Chemicals Europe

Sopal Panoval
Sovereign Specialty Chemicals
Spilker
Storaenso
Stork Prints
Stork Prints
Stratos
Sun Chemical/Coates
Super Film Industry Trading Co
Surf Scan Technologies
Surface Specialties PLC
Synthesia
TANDLER Zahnrad- und
Getriebefabrik
Tantec A/S Denmark
Techcell
Techni Form

Tectonic International
Teknek Electronics
Tervakoski
Tescan Electronics Limited
"The "Cleaning Card.com"
Company"
Thermo Code Systems
Thioller
Timsons
Tools & Production Inc
Torraspapel
Toshiba Tec
Total Register Machines
Trend Graphic Services
Trespaphan
Tritonics
Trotec Produktions- und

Vertriebs
Trucolor Video Systems Inc
Tullis Russell Coaters
Ultralight AG
Ungricht
Union Chemear Netherlands
UPM Label Papers
UV Ray
UV-Technik
Uviterno AG
Vacumatic
Vale-Tech
Valeron Strength Films
Valmet
Van Den Bergh Engineering NV
Van Pamel
Vectra Systems

Vetaphone A/S
Visel Italiana srl
Visi-Tech Systems
VisTech
VPP
VTI
Wacker Chemie
Wandres micro-cleaning
Watson Marlow NV
Wink Stanzwerkzeuge
Wrapid Manufacturing
X-Film Selbstklebefolien
Xeikon International
Xynatech Inc
Yupo Europe
Zecher
Zeller & Gmelin

Day One (Wednesday September 24th):

Booking Ref: LE01

Label End-User Markets and Trends

11.00 – 11.45 Keynote Presentation
Current & Future Label Needs of Brand Owners

- Label performance
- Standards & protocols
- Creative marketing requirements
- Internet enabled service
- Brand identity
- Globalisation

Speaker from Eurocommerce

Booking Ref: LE02

12.15 – 13.00 Stream 1
Meeting the Narrow Web Needs of the Food Sector

- Specifications and performance
- Food standard service levels
- An integrated approach
- Cartons & labels
- Control & consistency

Alan Jones, Managing Director, Tamar Labels

Booking Ref: LE03

12.15 – 13.00 Stream 2
Pharmaceutical & Healthcare Requirements

Pharmaceutical Packaging

- WhiteStock Packaging - process and financial benefits
- WhiteStock Labelling
- The global approach - White Lines
- The challenges of pharmaceutical packaging in a global environment

Peter Frei, Head of Business Development & System Sales, Romaco AG

Booking Ref: LE04

12.30 – 13.00

Maximising Print Profitability and Margins

Demonstration utilising the Gallus servo driven RCS 330. This session will take place on the Gallus Stand (Stand No. 5B50) in Hall 5.

- Optimising cost structures
- Improving set-up times
- Effect on the operation flow
- Ensuring operational costs are minimised

Klaus Aarestrup, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Gallus Group
Vince DiTrollo, DiTrollo Flexographic Institute, Inc. (Provisional)

Booking Ref: LE05

13.15 – 14.00 Stream 1

Image is the Key to Cosmetics & Toiletries Labelling

- A b2b approach
- Brand rationalisation
- Consistency and performance
- Collaboration and partnership

Booking Ref: LE06

13.15 – 14.00 Stream 2

Improving Process Control in the Labelling Plant

- What is World Class Manufacturing?
- Today's Manufacturing Challenges
- The First Step to Improvement
- Leveraging Knowledge and Technology
- Case Study

Jason P. Premo, Executive Vice President & Six Sigma Black Belt, Cernotec

Day Two (Thursday September 25th):

Booking Ref: LE07

Innovation in Labels Materials and Technology

11.00 – 11.45 Materials, Technology & Business Needs of Converters

- What do converters need from their suppliers?
- Do today's presses meet the needs of converters?
- Is digital printing technology providing new opportunities?
- What are the key pressures from customers?

Mike Fairley, Labels & Labelling Consultancy

Booking Ref: LE08

12.15 – 13.00 Stream 1

Developments in Pre-Press & Workflow Solutions

Opportunities in Supply Chain Optimisation for Label Converters

- Esko-Graphics company introduction
- The customers' perspective
- Prepress tools for Shrink Sleeve production
- Opportunities in digital platemaking for flexo

Jan de Roeck, Director Marketing Packaging Software, Esko Graphics

Networked Graphic Production in a Labels and Labelling Environment

- The industry trend of squeezing margins continuous
- Need for collaboration and integration increase
- NGP (Networked Graphic Production) as a proposed solution

Labelexpo Europe 2003

Conference Program

- Prinerly Powerpack: Creo work flow management solutions

Amnon Shalev, Segment Marketing Manager, Packaging, Creo Europe S.A.

Booking Ref: LE09

12.15 – 13.00 Stream 2

Panel Presentation: The New Rise of Digital Printing

- Evolution and needs of the digital market
- Advances in digital printing technology
- Where is digital going for the future?

Christian Menegon, Sales Manager, Industrial Products, HP Indigo N.V.

Andreas Jahr, Digital Project Manager Rako Etiketten GmbH

Jason Oliver, Director, Sales & Marketing, Integrated Solutions, Jetrion

Ken Daming, Mark Andy

Booking Ref: LE10

12.30 – 13.00

Maximising Print Profitability and Margins

On-stand demonstration utilising the Gallus servo driven RCS 330. This session will take place on the Gallus Stand (Stand No. 5B50) in Hall 5.

- Optimising cost structures
- Improving set-up times
- Effect on the operation flow
- Ensuring operational costs are minimised

Klaus Aarestrup, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Gallus Group

Vince DiTrollo, DiTrollo Flexographic Institute, Inc. (Provisional)

Booking Ref: LE11

13.15 – 14.00 Stream 1

New Security & Brand Protection Solutions for the Converter & Brand Owner

- Brand protection & security issues
- New technology & materials solutions
- Developing a strategy

Jeremy Plimmer, Chairman

Product & Image Security Foundation

Developing Security Materials for Label

Printers and Converters

Joe Pleshek, Segment Manager – Brand Protection, Appleton Security Products

Booking Ref: LE12

13.15 – 14.00 Stream 2

Narrow Web Opportunities Beyond Pressure Sensitive

- Press requirements and performance for extensible film
- Converting carton board profitably
- Opportunities in wrap-around and sleeve labels

Greg Palm, VP, Sales & Marketing, Mark Andy

Day Three (Friday 26th September) :

Booking Ref: LE13

What's New in Bottle Decoration & Branding

11.00 – 11.45 Bottle Decoration

Technologies & Solutions

- Key decoration technologies and their usage/wet glue / wrap-around film roll-on shrink-on / pressure-sensitive cut-and-stack film / heat transfer
- New and emerging decoration solutions
- Design & branding considerations
- Advances in application technology
- Combination solutions
- Where next in bottle decoration?

Klaus Holler, VP Sales West Europe, Kronos AG

Booking Ref: LE14

12.15 – 13.00 Stream 1

Key Trends in Wrap-Around & RoSo Labelling of Bottles & Cans

- Applications and market solutions using film
- Film developments for performance and quality
- Innovation for the future
- End-user case study

Eric Johnson, ExxonMobil

Booking Ref: LE15

12.15 – 13.00 Stream 2

New Opportunities in Beverage Decoration Using Pressure-Sensitive

- Trends & developments in the wine labelling sector

- Iced beers & beverages
 - Added value solutions for the spirits sector
 - Designer drinks: the opportunities
- Gero Hantel, Avery Dennison*

Booking Ref: LE16

12.30 – 13.00

Maximising Print Profitability and Margins

On-stand demonstration utilising the Gallus servo driven RCS 330. This session will take place on the Gallus Stand (Stand No. 5B50) in Hall 5.

- Optimising cost structures
 - Improving set-up times
 - Effect on the operation flow
 - Ensuring operational costs are minimised
- Klaus Aarestrup, Vice President, Sales & Marketing, Gallus Group*
- Vince DiTrollo, DiTrollo Flexographic Institute, Inc.*

Booking Ref: LE17

13.15 – 14.00 Stream 1

The Rise and Rise of Shrink Sleeves

- Shrink sleeve benefits
 - Market trends
 - Reasons for shrink sleeves' rapid growth
 - The inter-dependence between shrink film, sleeves, application
 - Machinery, and heat tunnels

Sia Memarnia, R&D Manager, Fuji Seal Europe

Booking Ref: LE18

13.15 – 14.00 Stream 2

Wet-Glue Labelling – Still a Key Technology

- Wet glue labels and market applications
 - Materials and technology developments
 - Web-fed printing and converting
 - The future of wet-glue labelling
- John Morton, Independent Packaging, Consultant*

Paul Jarvis, 4impression (Provisional)

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 No. 193

Labelexpo Europe 2003

This year's Labelexpo Europe show represents the biggest gathering yet of new technologies for the narrow web industry, as this dynamic sector diversifies its product offering into new applications formerly the terrain of sheetfed or wide web converters. **Andy Thomas** reports on an exciting line-up.

Presses

This year's Labelexpo 2003 in Brussels gives European converters a chance to see the range of new press technologies first seen at Labelexpo Americas last September, as well as the launch of completely new press systems and the full commercialisation of servo drive technology.

Interesting also is the range of difficult materials and applications being shown by press suppliers. One comment made to this writer by visitors to previous Labelexpo shows was that they needed to see difficult jobs being run, giving them practical ideas on how to add value to their own businesses. At this show visitors can see a fascinating range of leading edge applications from in-line in-mold labelling, to shrink sleeves, thin label films and complex VIP constructions – even cartons and flexible packaging are starting to make their mark.

As L&L went to press, Nilpeter announced no less than four new narrow-web presses, each featuring servo drives, which will be shown producing a wide variety of label and flexible packaging products.

Nilpeter says it will show a major breakthrough in gravure printing technology based on a completely new gravure ink system. At the same time, the company will introduce a new type of rotary screen unit for its FA-3300 UV-flexo press (see below).

GiDue will launch an exciting array of products at the show. First up is a new shaftless rotary press, the E-Combat (see Box 2), which will be converting in-mould labels in one pass.

GiDue also launches a second press line called Unipro, which is being kept under tight wraps until Labelexpo opens. We know it will be a 730mm wide machine utilising what joint md Federico d'Annunzio calls 'two revolutionary concepts'. The press is designed to convert the full range of packaging materials from labels to film, cartons and monofoils, with the freedom to add different print processes.

Both the Unipro and Combat presses can utilise GiDue's new carton converting cassette, which uses either pressure or crush cutting systems (Xynatech's male/female cylinders + shims are once again the favoured technology). The cassette – which includes a full stacking delivery system – will interchange with the IML-EDL cassette on the E-Combat press at the show, and the carton job will include application of twin holograms in-line.

Finally, GiDue enhances its Combat presses with dedicated Screen and Hot Foil units on multi-process wheelable trolleys (see pg 121).

MarkAndy Comco will introduce two presses to the European market and demonstrate a range of applications from labels and cartons to flexible packaging.

The show will see the first European exhibition of the LP3000 flexo press, capable of speeds up to 750 feet, or 230 metres/minute (see box 1) and the DT2200 inkjet/flexo press complete with laser die-cutting (see Digital section below). A ProGlide MSP will be converting jobs from high shrink PVC

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films to high-end luxury labels to roll-fed to laminated cut-n-stack, while a Scout press will be running on the Paragon Inks stand.

Gallus will give a European premier to its Flying Imprint station first seen at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago last September. Fitted to the RCS 330 servo driven press, the Flying Imprint allows copy changes to be made at full production speed. Visitors to the Gallus stand will see a job change from pressure sensitive material to a shrink sleeve monofoil label on 15 micron PVC.

The company says it has made significant improvements to its established EM 280 series. These include flexo printing units which allow the anilox roller to be changed without removing the printing cylinder, so that neither the print position nor the register is disturbed. An improved web path, a new compact UV-system from



Gallus RCS-330 press with Flying Imprinter stations

“The press is designed to convert the full range of packaging materials from labels to film, cartons and monofoils, with the freedom to add different print processes”

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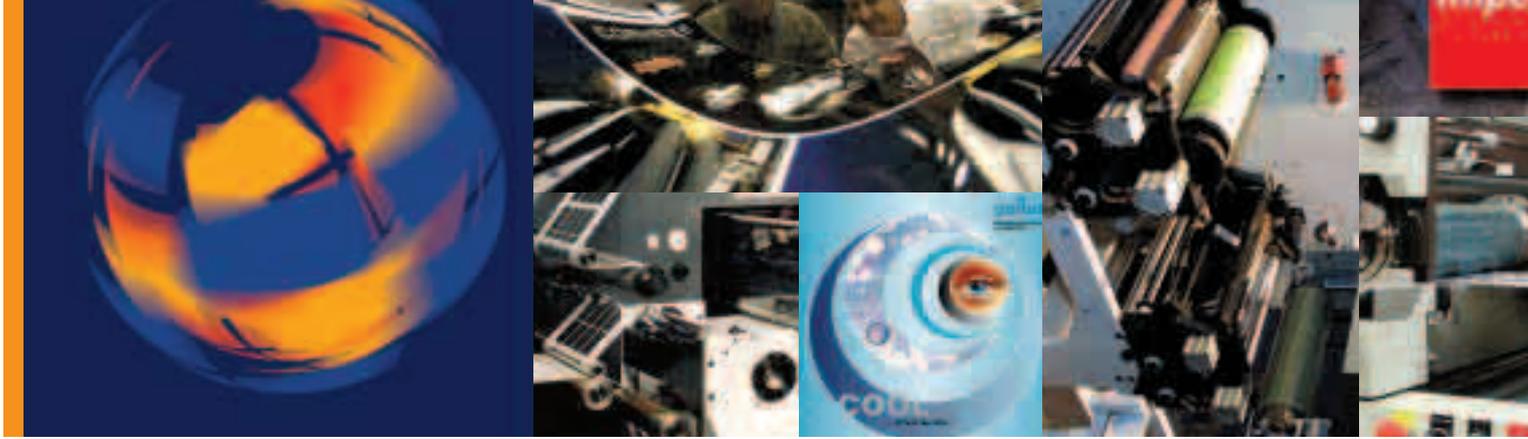
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e No. 112



Box (1) Mark Andy LP3000

The LP3000 flexo press is a highly operator-friendly machine with a compact footprint. The open profile of the press design results in a shorter web path, while the wide bodied, self-aligning frame is designed to make it easy to add print and conversion modules.

The LP3000 is built with a 24in (610mm) print and die repeat to give more flexibility to lay out jobs. All print cylinders feature hardened helical gear design driven directly by helical gearboxes.

Slide out print units provide access to all components during set-up. Quick Load plate loading technology uses pneumatic control to lower the plate roll onto impression, protecting the anilox roll from potential damage during changeover. No tools are required to change plate or anilox rolls, and the anilox can be removed without taking out the ink fountain, meter roll or plate roll. A constant turning CT anilox motor keeps ink, meter and anilox rolls fully engaged during changeovers – a big plus when working with water-based inks. To maximise ink circulation a 4.5in diameter, half speed meter roll has been positioned lower in a wider inkpan. Setting print impression is independent

from lineal to pacing adjustment, so tension is undisturbed during lineal adjustments.

To attain the top printing speed across different ink viscosities and laydown, the LP3000 has high capacity dryers with independent temperature control and adjustable air flow for each print unit, set from one master control panel. Air flow is designed to virtually eliminate air movement outside the print station, minimising the need to add water and clean the plate rolls through the production run.

The die stations incorporate 2.5in slots on the same wide body design. Entirely support roll driven, the configuration allows for underside diecutting. The die cut units feature Quick Release initial pressure setting, coupled with mid-press lateral web adjustment to improve setup speed.

The press comes with a 40in unwind roll with roll loader. At the outfeed is an oversize 4in diameter exit pacing roll to isolate the tension, followed by a 40in rewind with extra rewind spindle for different slitting combinations. Running controls on the press are controlled from a touch-sensitive panel.

IST, and hotfoil stamping with flexible dies can be seen.

Edale will showcase its new shaftless packaging press, the Sigma (see box 3), at this year's exhibition, demonstrating a UV flexo shrink sleeve application. Heat management of the substrate will be handled with a sophisticated water cooled UV drying system supplied by IST.

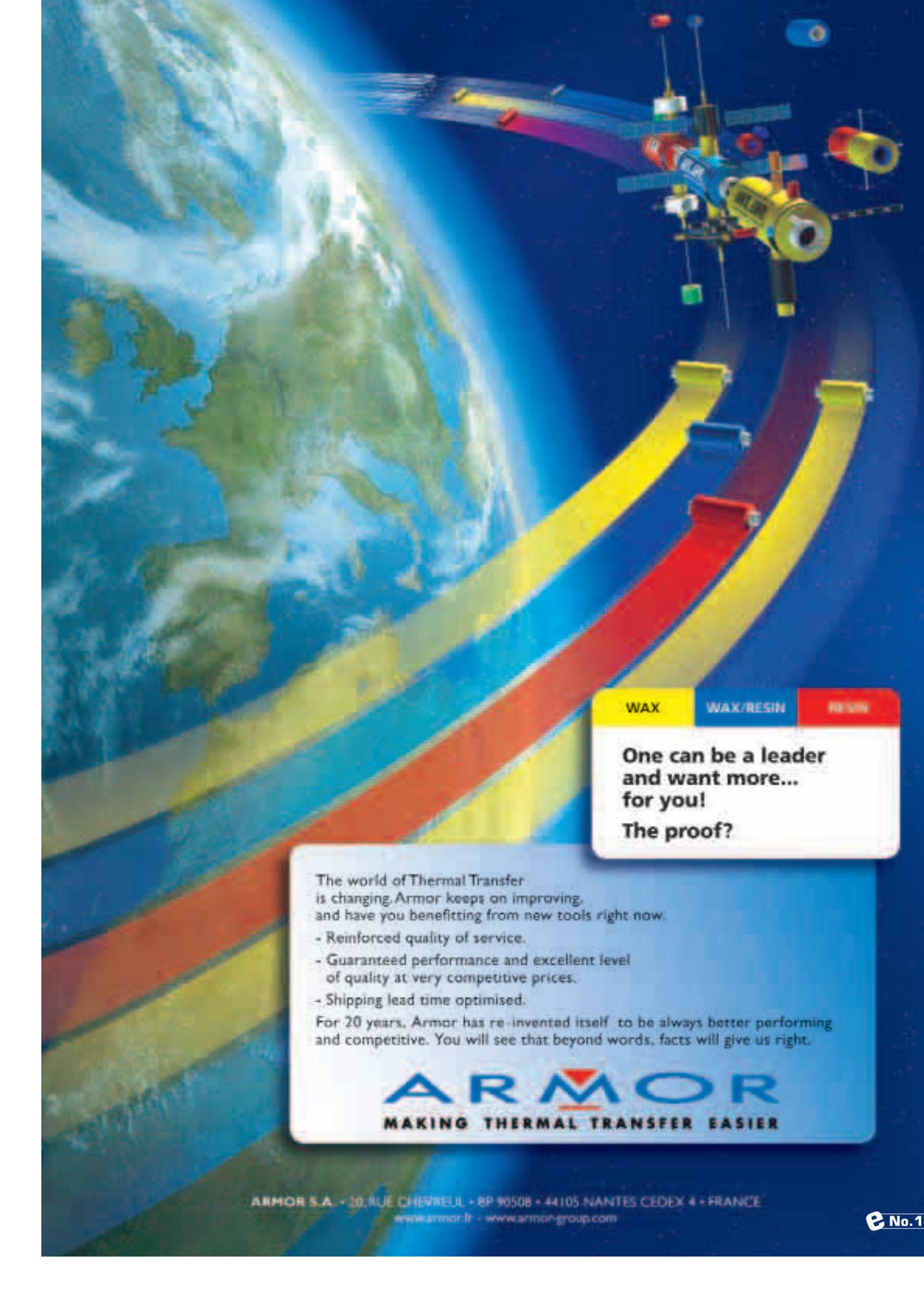
To complement the Sigma, Edale will also demonstrate a 4 colour UV flexo Alpha producing a high quality cosmetic label on self-adhesive PP. The press will be running in line with a Matho waste management system which chops and compacts the matrix.

MPS unveils its new Effective Flexo (EF) UV-flexo press, a servo driven machine claimed to print to the same quality as the established EP press, but at a much lower price point. Also launched is the EC (Effective Converting) servo-driven UV-flexopress.

In addition to its Webflex in-line multi-substrate press and the Centraflex compact central impression press on demo, Focus will launch a new in-line flexo press called 'Proflex' aimed specifically at the narrow web label and tag market. Further details were unavailable as we went to press.

Omet shows for the first time in Europe its Varyflex direct gearless drive press – one of the first narrow web press series to be built specifically to handle sleeves. Jobs can be changed over in around five minutes on this press, which is designed specifically for unsupported film and carton work (the latter using Xynatech rotary cut/crease system).

Omet points out that the absence of gears allows adjustment of printing pressures in a more consistent way, regardless of which operator performs the function, along with automatic pre-register. Also on display will be the Flexy narrow web system designed primarily for labels.



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Mark Andy Las-X laser die cut unit on DT2200 press (left). Mark Andy LP3000 Press (right)

“These are combined flexo/gravure machines with two inline flexo units and two gravure sections, for printing either labels or folding cartons”

CMR presents its new series of rotary label presses. These are combined flexo/gravure machines with two inline flexo units and two gravure sections, for printing either labels or folding cartons.

Kopack will demonstrate a Euroflex CID press printing on both sides a unique promotional wraparound label (patent applied) for PET bottles, with a second press converting film-on-film p.s. labels.

Fitted with twin chilled central impression drums and chiller system, the Euroflex can be configured for printing up to 6 colours on either side of a single web or on two separate webs. Up to 12-colours can be printed on flexible packaging films, labels or cartons. The Euroflex 400 at the show will be shown as

a combination press, demonstrating flexo/rotary screen printing.

Timsons shows its latest T-Flex 600 print unit incorporating shaftless drive and infinitely variable repeat length designed for the flexible packaging market. Quick plate changing and exchangeable colour cassette system coupled with a top speed of 260m/min, make the T-Flex 600 ideal for both short and long run markets, says the company. All print unit adjustments are servodriven. It can be equipped with IR dryers for water based inks or UV for free radical and cationic inks. Drent Goebel will once again show its revolutionary sleeve offset technology (VSOP), which gives to web-offset the ability to print in variable repeat lengths, with job changing is a matter of minutes. The press will be available in hybrid configurations for flexo, gravure, silk screen, hot foil stamping and laminating.

Working presses can also be seen on the Codimag (see section below), Imer, Rotatek and Labelmen stands.

Adding value – Screen and hot foil

Stork Prints has a major presence at the show, following the development of dedicated screen units for presses from Nilpeter, GiDue and Codimag.

Stork and Nilpeter have jointly developed a screen system dedicated to the FA-3300 press, which allows existing print stations to change between flexo and screen without the physical interchange of printing cassettes or overhead rails. Besides being fully interchangeable at all print stations, the

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Box (2) GiDue E-Combat runs IML

GiDue's E-Combat (Electronic Combat) shaftless press will be launched together with the new IML-EDL delivery system for in-mould labels. The press design features servo-driven controls for all press functions and is available in web widths of 280mm (11in) 370mm (14.5in) 430mm (17in) and 530mm (21in). It will print and convert substrates ranging from 15 micron film to 350 gsm carton board without changing the mechanical configuration of the press.

The tension control system automatically adjusts press controls according to the substrate being processed without the need for operator intervention. The concept is to enable even inexperienced operators to run the press even if software skills are limited.

'We designed our Full Remote Control (FRC) system in cooperation with Siemens,' states GiDue joint md Federico d'Annunzio. 'Because the E-Combat drive components are provided from a single source, all components speak the same 'language' and enable the user to easily access the electronics.' The digital system allows rapid diagnostics and the ability for remote servicing.

The press will be running in line with a dedicated IML converting section, called the Endless Delivery Line (EDL). The system has overcome problems previously caused on rotary systems by static build-up, thin substrates, label curling after varnishing, as well as variable and difficult shapes to be stacked.

The IML-EDL delivery system is equipped with a batch counting and final long buffer delivery table where the stacked piles of in-mould labels printed face up are collected. Optional top and bottom carton insertion can be added. GiDue confidently expects this system to allow narrow web converters to become more profitable than sheetfed offset IML converters, with higher productivity, shorter production cycle time and reduced manpower requirements.

Additional benefits come from the UV flexographic printing process which allows wider graphic capabilities than lithography, for example, metallic and pearlescent inks and higher ink lay down.

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GiDue 'Ready' hot foil unit (left) and silk screen unit (centre). Silk screen module on Codimag Viva 340 press (right)

unit costs roughly one third the price of conventional screen units, according to Nilpeter.

GiDue and Stork have meanwhile agreed a joint technical and commercial partnership on the development of the 'Ready-RSI' rotary screen head concept designed for the GiDue Combat series press. The screen head will utilise GiDue's Ready freestanding, moveable multi-process trolley, combined with Stork RSI screen technology.

GiDue will also extend its Ready concept to include rotary hot foil stamping. The Ready Hot Foiling head can likewise be positioned above any print unit and is immediately ready for printing. The hot stamping module is available with oil heating for all the Combat press widths or electrically heated in widths limited to 280mm and 370mm. The Ready HS head is engineered to use sleeve-type hot stamping cylinders.

The Codimag VIVA 340 letterpress and offset presses presented a quite different challenge for Stork – to develop a semi-rotary screen printing unit, designed to print on all image sizes between 50 mm and 305 mm. Stork's solution features a squeegee that applies minimal downward movement against the screen during the time when the screen comes off-contact with the web. This is different from semi-rotary solutions where a fixed squeegee position constantly overstretches the screen material in the non-printing area.

Other alternatives, involving lifting and repositioning the squeegee in the non-printing area at each rotation, slow down the press and result in non-stable print behaviour.

Accuracy is claimed better than 0.1mm and productivity – in most cases – of up to 50 metres per minute (12,000 prints per hour).

DE Rossi Vittoriano S.r.l. will introduce a hot foil unit with

temperature control inside and over the printing surface. This interesting company will also show flexographic printing units for machines with closed doctor blade or inking roller, with the option to mount a lamination system, and a flexo printing unit which can be inserted into offset machines with a paper width of 520 mm. Maximum printing speed is up to 200 mt/min and printing length 16-28in.

We are now seeing something of a resurgence in dedicated Screen printing presses for pressure sensitive labels, which are increasingly being used to complement rotary presses without screen options, to print very small runs in the absence of a digital press, or to achieve special effects such as heavy laydown of inks on short runs of specialist wine and cosmetics labels. At the show, Sam Meccanica will present a new silk screen printing press, the SAM Screen 250 with UV drying and register mark photocell for preprinted labels overprinting. The system will be seen with one die cutting station and a

“Stork’s solution features a squeegee that applies minimal downward movement against the screen during the time when the screen comes off-contact with the web”

Labelexpo Europe 2003

Show Preview



Cartes laser die cut unit (left) and Drent-Goebel VSOP variable sleeve offset press (centre)

rewinding unit.

SMAG meanwhile, shows a new format for its Galaxie Silkscreen press, with a printing and converting area of 350 mm x 800 mm, along with a non-stop Rewinder, while Cartes launches a silk-screen printing machine for specialist fabric labels. Prisma Srl will show its modular Seriprint 330 silk-screen machine consisting of two modular silk-screen printing groups, hot-foil, punching, and waste rewinding unit.

Still on the added value front, PowerForward will launch a machine which can feed and affix booklets on a label press, or be reconfigured to apply two lanes of products when pocket sealing is required. The TWIN feeder will dispense booklets or other items at 1,000 pieces per minute. Positioning accuracy is +/- 0.5mm. Applications include pharmaceutical, cosmetics, product samples, packaging and consumer products.

Newfoil Machines shows its range of hot foil stamping and embossing machines operating on carton manufacturing, hologram stamping, laminating for security tags and labels, converting digital print, and variable data product identification.

Digital

The new Mark Andy DT2200 Digital Printing and Converting System has officially been released for sale worldwide after its first showing at Labelexpo Americas last year and two beta installations in North America and Europe. The DT Series inkjet-printing module, developed exclusively with dotrix (formerly Barco Graphics) integrates directly into a 13in Mark Andy 2200 flexo press, which incorporates standard in-line, single pass flexo printing and converting operations. The four-colour UV inkjet system is capable of fully variable printing at 80 ft/min, with 300-dpi resolution and 8 levels of greyscale. The press at Labelexpo will run in-line with a DT laser finishing module, developed with LasX Industries.

Domino, meanwhile, exhibits a new solution for variable printing in-line on a conventional press, comprising estimating, prepress, proofing and printing modules. Using sixteen drop-on-demand Piezo inkjet print heads, Domino-ON-Demand permits multiple-ink printing on a wide range of substrates, using Pantone-matched inks. UV curing options are available.

“The TWIN feeder will dispense booklets or other items at 1,000 pieces per minute. Positioning accuracy is +/- 0.5mm. Applications include cosmetics samples”

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Omega Digicon digital print converting line (above)

Matan Digital Printers is to show the prototype of a new class of multi-colour thermal transfer solution designed specifically for the tag and label market.

The 'Spring' builds on the success of Matan's Spark 1612, offering enhanced resolution and speed and a more extensive colour gamut. The Spring offers a choice of four, five, or six-color one-pass printing at up to 1600x400 dpi at up to 270 metres/hour on a 12-inch web. Applications will include value-added capabilities for labels, tags and decals, such as spot colors, variable data, automatic numbering and bar coding. The Spring is claimed virtually maintenance-free and can be installed in any environment, from an office to a factory floor. Users can start with a four-color system and upgrade to five or six colors at any time.

The Spring system utilizes resin and wax/resin-based ribbons in CMYK process colours as well as a wide variety of spot colors, including opaque white, metallic gold and silver, and 'double-bump' black, and will print on a broad range of pressure-sensitive films, synthetic papers and specialty products. An in-line converting solution will also be shown.

The GRE Digital Converter is a complete short run tag and label digital converting system incorporating a VP2020 four colour print engine from VIPColor Technologies powered by inkjet technology. The standard configuration of the GRE Digital Converter consists of a VP 2020 inkjet printer, lamination, and the new DigiCut die-cutting unit,

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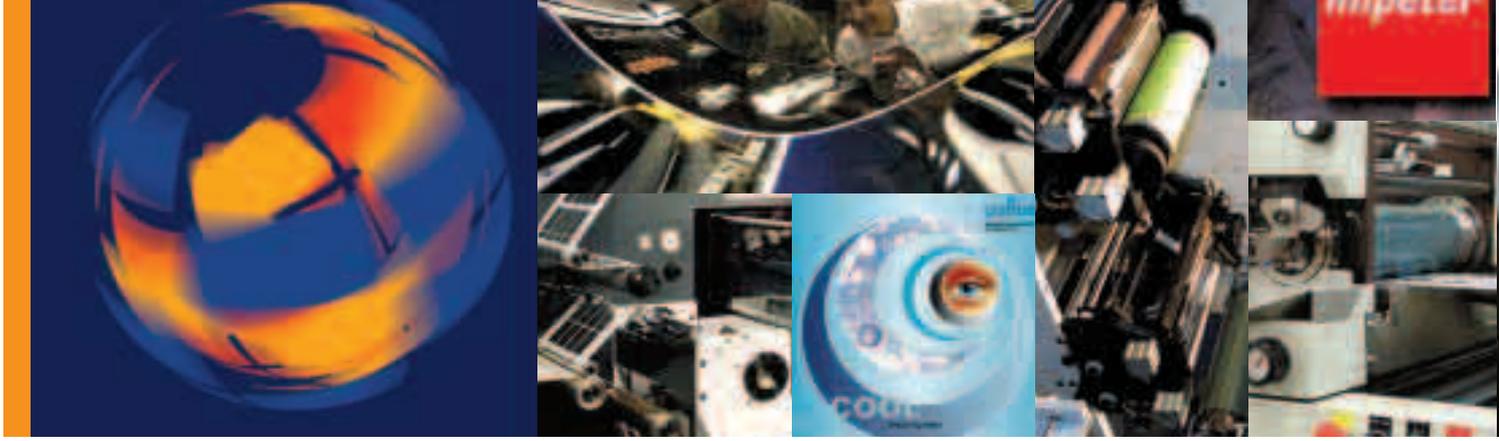
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“The focus on materials development continues to be to add value to the converter’s operation, either by specialist coatings, enhanced VIP properties or material downgauging”

which utilises a digital stylus module, matrix and finished reel rewinding. GRE will also feature the new VP8020 colour laser printer from VIPcolor running in pack-to-pack and roll-to-roll configurations. Options are available to tailor the system to meet specialised requirements for sheeting, foil stamping, UV coating and curing, hologram insertion and rotary die cutting with fixed solid or flexible magnetic dies.

HP Indigo will be demonstrating its ws4000 digital press – hailed at Labelexpo Americas last year as perhaps the first truly robust, industrial strength digital press on the market – along with converting solutions from Omega and Nilpeter, a laser die cutting system from Cartes, and technology from AVT, Mediasec, Raflatac, Avery Dennison and DIMs.

Xeikon’s new owner, Punch, will seek to re-establish Xeikon as a credible digital press brand at Labelexpo. On display will be a LabelSprint digital press – a CMYK+White Xeikon DCP 320 S with in-line finishing incorporating UV coating, rotary die-cutting, slitting, stripping and rewinding. The press is currently powered by Xeikon’s IntelliStream 3.6 digital front end, but watch out for information on Punch’s acquisition of Creo’s digital front end development team.

Laser die cutting also features heavily. As well as the Las-X laser on Mark Andy’s DT2200, Cartes will show a

Box (3) **Edale Sigma flexo press**

Available for 330-620mm webs, the Sigma is the new servo driven flagship of the Edale range and the successor to the E330/430/510i.

The Sigma is designed to convert the full range of packaging substrates, from pressure-sensitive labels to cartons and film.

Each print station is independently servo driven. As an upgrade, an additional axis can be added to give independent control of the print cylinder, providing infinitely variable print length control. Total digital control also enables automatic register control to be added economically.

The Sigma’s print head, based on Edale’s proven In-Line concept with all rollers arranged in a horizontal plane, does not rely on a pin running through the plate roll and side frames. The concept also eliminates the need for a centering control, thus reducing the number of required print head controls and hence the set-up time when changing material thickness.

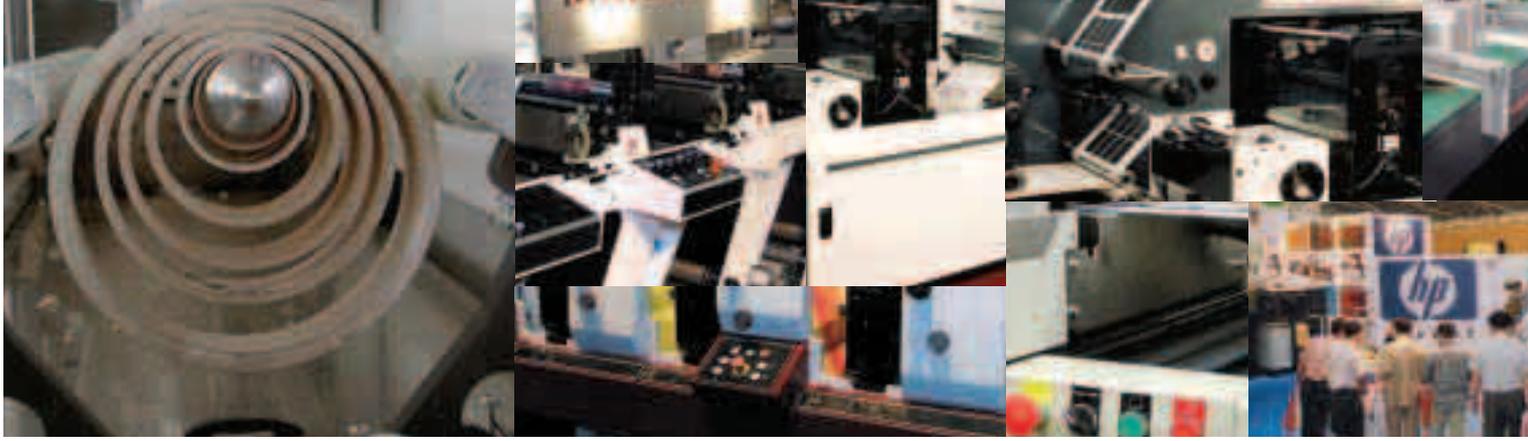
Changing jobs is quick and easy because both the print cylinder and anilox roller can be lifted out of the machine without the use of tools. Quick setup is further enhanced by the use of setting discs mounted on each of the plate roll spindles. These discs correspond exactly to the repeat length of the job and ensure that when a plate roll is dropped into the print head it is automatically positioned very close to the desired impression setting.

Because of the bespoke nature of the Sigma press, virtually any drying system - from basic IR or hot air through to UV and the latest chill roller techniques - may be specified.

This philosophy also applies to value adding options. These include digital and screen printing stations.

Web tension is managed by a closed loop multi-point system controlled by independent servo drives on the unwind, infeed pacing, mid pacing, outfeed pacing and rewind. Thus the press can have up to four separately managed tension zones, enabling the widest possible range of substrates to be processed.

The converting section operates on a fixed cassette based system, each cassette being independently servo driven. Two cassettes, machined from 30mm steel, can be mounted on a base and guarded in such a way that accessibility is enhanced for quick tooling changes.



complete digital printing and finishing line featuring an HP Indigo digital press, UV varnish, foil over-printing and laser die-cutting. New is a high-power 500W laser cutting unit.

Materials

The focus on materials development continues to be to add value to the converter's operation, either by specialist coatings, enhanced VIP properties or material downgauging. We also see an increased range of materials for non-pressure sensitive applications.

One of the biggest stories to hit the materials industry this year was the launch by Ciba of its Prime IT technology, which enhances adhesion of UV-curable inks, coatings and adhesives onto plastics such as OPP, PE, PET, PVC and PA. The company claims that for many applications, this eliminates the need for surface treatment or coatings.

Another first at the show will be ETI Converting's Cohesio machine, which gives label printers another option to convert and print any face stock into a pressure sensitive material. The company claims savings on purchase of raw materials averages 50 per cent (Visitors to the last Labelexpo will recall a similar concept launched by Printing Specialities). ETI also sells printing presses, the Metronome and the Albator.

Rafatac will be highlighting its mid-gloss, thermal, thermal transfer and filmic offerings for personal care and other end-use segments. A4 VIP will also be featured.

On the Avery Dennison stand, new Fasson products to be

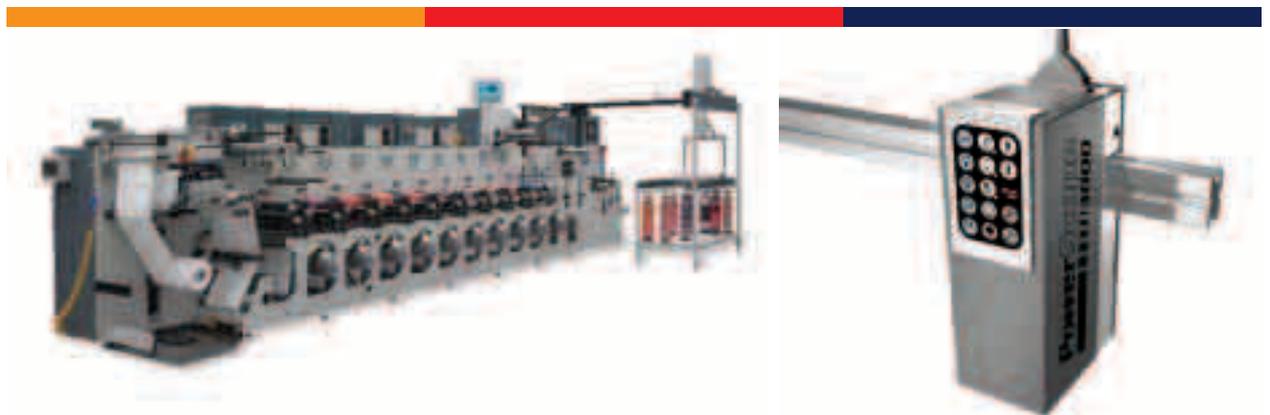
shown include flexible packaging films. Visitors can also experience enhancements to the e-business offering, an online technical advice platform giving recommendations on dies, ink and other key components, along with one-stop online ordering capabilities.

FLEXcon launches its LAZRfilm matte surface coated films designed for laser printing applications. The laser printable films are combined with FLEXcon's 60LF backside printable release liner and designed for A4 sheet conversion. Also in the VIP stable is THERMLfilm SATIN series, FLEXcon's line of Satin Silver, Satin White and Satin Clear polyester materials, designed for high resolution thermal transfer printing with resin based ribbons at maximum resolutions of 600 dpi. Other products on show include PHARMcal polyester and polypropylene films for ethical pharmaceutical labeling applications. Security solutions is another key area of interest.

Madico Graphic Films will be launching upgraded tamper-evident films and increases its range of high temperature films. These include a new 300 micron acrylic based film and a new extreme 800 micron material designed for labelling red-hot steel. New adhesives include ultra-removable micro-sphere systems, vulcanising adhesive and high performance adhesives for LSE textured plastics.

Ritrama shows new ranges of label papers and films designed especially for security, promotional and VIP products and also for Wine Labelling applications.

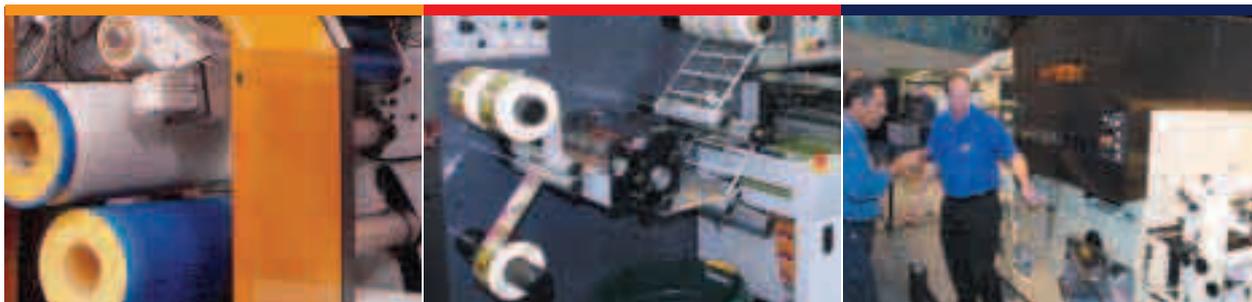
Papeteries du Pont de Claix will introduce TOP CC uncoated



GiDue E-Combat servo driven flexo press (left) and BST International Powerscope 3000 video web inspector (right)

Labelexpo Europe 2003

Show Preview



In detail, left to right: VSOP variable offset cylinder; Digicon rewind section; DT-2200 UV inkjet module

facestock for colour photocopier labels in weights from 100 to 160 gsm. Also pigmented paper for inkjet printers and plotters, and white and opaque vellum papers produced with neutral sizing. For food packaging, the most recent IRIPACK range of papers approved for direct food contact will be shown.

New to CPFilms' product line are multi-colored printed polyester liners.

The company also shows its Clearsil release film range, vacuum coated films (thermal aluminum and sputtered), deep dyed colored films, adhesive coated and laminated as well as toll coated films.

BOPP producer Radici Film will be showcasing its new 5-layer films Radil EGL and EGLZ, while the company is dedicating more efforts to expand its solutions for Cut & Stack, In mould and Self-Adhesive applications.

ExxonMobil Chemical will demonstrate the latest enhancements to its Label-Lyte BOPP brand, providing solutions for Pressure Sensitive, Wrap-Around, Shrink, Patch and In-Mould labels for different shaped of containers for food, beverages, household products, toiletries and cosmetics.

Polinas will introduce a 10 micron BOPP laminate film, now being field tested. Also speciality BOPP films for the food packaging and labelling industries including transparent, opaque white/pearlised and metallized films for applications such as roll-fed bottle labelling, in-mould labelling and pressure-sensitive labelling. The company recently commissioned its 7th BOPP line.

Kanzan Spezialpapiere will demonstrate a range of thermal and inkjet paper innovations with applications in the label, ticket and tag markets, while YUPO will show its new transparent 'no-label-look' materials for IML Blow Molding, utilising either conventional offset and gravure printing, or UV

printing methods. Applications include HDPE or PP bottles.

MActac Europe will introduce its new 15 micron clear BOPP lamination product along with a wide range of self-adhesive paper and films for applications including wet wipes, wine labelling and security applications.

Materials in-brief

- Sopal-Panova will launch a range of laminates for beverage labelling, together with products adding value to the on-pack promotion or direct mail area.
- Fad Fabriano Autoadhesivos, based in Spain, introduces wine labelling materials and expands its range of films.
- A new laminating machine at Diaures Spa will enable the company to show for the first time a range of self-adhesive materials on reels as well as cut sheets.
- 3M shows solutions for a wide range of industries including automotive, electronic, transportation,

“New at the show are transparent ‘no-label-look’ materials for IML Blow Molding, utilising either conventional offset and gravure printing, or UV printing methods”



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“Security devices for brand and product protection should now be a key selling point for narrow-web converters dealing with the major FMCG brands”

telecommunications, appliance and industrial. Also on display will be unique 3M products such as radiant films used for graphic enhancement of cosmet

- Color-Dec introduces its Ecodomes technology, which permits the manufacture of domed labels with different metallic effects
- Sihl will introduce new thermal films, and a new program of laser printable PET films in various thicknesses.

Security

Security devices for brand and product protection should now be a key selling point for narrow/mid-web converters dealing with the major FMCG brands. At the exhibition, API shows its new holographic connoisseur collection and focusses on the latest developments in through-cure dieLESS technology featuring vibrant colours and holographic patterns. Also special effects foils for use on both wet and self-adhesive labels for wines, spirits and toiletries markets

Exhibiting at a Labelexpo for the first time is Taiwan-based K Laser Technology Inc. (KLT), supplier of holographic cold and hot stamping foils as well as anti-counterfeiting products including a true color stereogram.

Optaglio is an international group of companies supplying labelling solutions for brand protection, including high-resolution Multimatrix holograms. The company also supplies holographic hot-stamping foils to label printers, and The launches the intriguingly named of ‘OVMelody Label’ at the show.

Inspection

With the increasing importance of quality control both during the press run and on the rewinder, this Labelexpo sees a wide range of new products which allow converters to establish process control regimes based on automated inspection/fault detection and verification systems.

A good example is the rewinder mounted PrintVision/Helios system launched by AVT. Once a fault is detected, the rewinder indexes defective labels to the operator position, where the fault can be inspected both by zooming on the system monitor and on the roll itself. On-line job/roll reports, with images of all faults, are generated, providing a record with defect analysis including character flaws detection, die cut registration and imperfect matrix removal. A colour camera and a reflective substrates inspection module are optional items.

The PrintVision/Jupiter Compact is an on-press inspection system incorporating a new software module with process control functionality.

E&L will show a newly developed web viewing system,



Bielomatik launches new RFID converting and verification system (left) and Stork shows Screen potential (right)



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“The new regulations require suppliers of ‘preparations’ to identify any environmentally hazardous effects and label them accordingly”



Guardian stroboscopic surface inspection light

Elscan Mini. The Mini is based around digital image capture using a Sony camera with motorized lens, 12-fold macro zoom and step motor for traversing speeds of 50-200 mm/sec. An automatic scan function checks the web permanently lengthwise and crosswise. The split screen can be quartered for a direct set/actual comparison with the current image in a full size display.

Unilux introduces a more powerful inspection light source dedicated to narrow-web presses, slitters and rewinders. The Guardian stroboscopic surface inspection light, which can be automatically synchronized to line speed, makes webs moving at up to 700m (2,000 ft) per minute appear motionless, making surface defects stand out for identification and correction. s.p.a. Controlli Industriali introduces its new web-inspection system, called Revision. It uses a high resolution C-MOS sensor instead of CCD, and a digital connection allows delivery of more precise detail and high image stability, according to

Box (4) Picon urges converters to visit Expo.

Each year, Picon approaches Trade Partners UK for funding to support British companies attending overseas exhibitions and missions and it is no coincidence that for three consecutive years, has successfully attracted funding for LabelExpo under the UK's SESA (Support for Exhibitions and Seminars Abroad) scheme.

'As we all agree, the labelling sector is an extremely dynamic and important part of the broader graphic arts industry with a rapid rate of technology and process development,' states John Brazier, Picon chief executive.

'As well as the need for enhanced branding on fmcg goods, environmental standards also influence the amount of labels printed and the complexity of those labels. For example, we have reached the deadline for the adoption of new labelling regulations as set out by the European Union's environmental legislators. The new regulations require suppliers of 'preparations' (ie, mixtures of chemicals) as well as single chemicals or 'substances' to identify any environmentally hazardous effects and label them accordingly. This has a significant impact on the number of labels required.'

Brazier says Picon views LabelExpo as a critical milestone: 'there is only one real choice if you are considering choosing new equipment or want to keep up with industry changes – visit LabelExpo!'

Interest among Picon members continues to be strong and this year, Picon is bringing its biggest ever group of 59 UK exhibitors to the show, one quarter of whom are Picon member companies. 'In fact, over the past three exhibitions (including LabelExpo, Singapore) the British group has grown consistently and the type of company attending has become more diverse. Included in the group for the first time this year are Picon members Kadant UK and Valmet, and previous attendees, API Foils and Focus Label Machinery,' says Brazier.

the company.

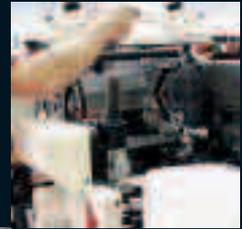
Visi-tech Systems will be exhibiting its new X Series range of video web inspection products, designed specifically for label and narrow web print machines. Fleytec shows its new fleyVision print machine.

TecScan Electronics is to show its Integrity & Identity

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System for food and other critical label requirements. The fully automatic system checks labels prior to despatch, preventing possible mix ups whereby a label is applied wrongly to a product.

The integrity system is designed to work on a single track or with a multi-track product, and can be integrated at the rewinder zone of either a slitter or a press. The system will stop the machine when an incorrect label is detected and also when the right label is being run but with the wrong bar code.

Inspection Systems, Inc. (I.S.I.) will be exhibiting the Compliance-Pro Sequence Management System (S.M.S.), a series of customizable modules that perform the arduous task of managing random or sequential number control of labels, forms or tags in a print or product production environment.

The product can be installed on any rewind system, printing press, production line or print/apply machine. It identifies duplicate/missing bar codes in a sequence, inspects to ISO 15416/ANSI X3.182 standards and prints roll, carton, shipping container and pallet labels with information such as date, job number, missing number and count. Operating speed is up to 1500 fpm.

Eurographie promises to show a concept for an inline colour control system.

Management Information Systems to unify production information will also be at the show, with Compass for example showing the latest version of its Management Information Systems (MIS) for label printers.

RFID

Since the last Labelexpo Europe, RFID has moved into the implementation phase, opening up major opportunities for narrow web converters.

A the show will be systems allowing converters to manufacture RFID labels, or to add value to pre-cut labels, with the critical step of verifying that the labels work before sending on to the end user.

Hunkeler will demonstrate its Sprinter and Variweb RFID transponder application lines, which can either take a pre-die-cut label on self-adhesive material or utilise hotmelt or cold glue to apply the transponder. When manufacturing integrated

Box (4) Creo's Network initiative

Creo is focussed on convincing narrow web converters that they can install and successfully run their own networked graphic production environment. Networked Graphic Production is a Creo initiative that links creative, production, delivery and billing processes for enhanced efficiency, communication and profitability. Some of the products involved in Networked Graphic Production will be demonstrated live, including the ThermoFlex Narrow CTP device, Prinergy Powerpack, and Brisque Pack packaging workflows, Pandora step-and-repeat software, the Synapse InSite internet portal into prepress and Synapse Link software.

Networked Graphic Production brings creative professionals, packaging print buyers, repro houses and converters together and enables each participant to communicate and collaborate in real time. By bringing print buyers closer to package production and reducing the manual steps in the process, converters will be able to reduce cycle times, minimise errors on press and deliver quality-printed products faster.

Networked Graphic Production also aims to integrate the business systems in a printing/converting plant with its prepress production systems, so information can be instantly exchanged between the package-production management system and Management Information Systems (MIS). This enables greater visibility into the business and helps printers/converter fine-tune their back-office functions such as estimating, billing, inventory management, and scheduling.

Two important new technologies on show are MaxTone, is a hybrid AM screening solution that allows printers and converters to print better highlights and shadows, and HyperFlex, which complements MaxTone by aiding in the exposure of small dots or graphic elements on a photopolymer plate. Both MaxTone and HyperFlex are available as options in the Prinergy Powerpack packaging workflow.

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RFID products, inline quality checks are achieved either by marking or ejecting faulty transponders. Melzer shows a smart ticket/tag converting system with the ability to print on the reverse as well as the front faces.

Bielomatik shows its new laminating system TTL-100V (Transponder Ticket and Label Laminating Machine) for smart labels and smart tickets, an entry level system which can be upgraded for the fast changing requirements of this industry. A great variety of RFID elements can be manufactured on

TTL-100V, including two-layer products (transponders with printed antennas as part of the cover web). Net output can be up to 75 million smart tickets per year.

Label applicators and printers

Sydney-based Reeltek Systems International Pty Ltd – a division of label converter Impresstik – will introduce to Europe its Protag roll-fed neck-tag application system, a cost-effective means of applying neck-tags to bottled products without any reduction in normal line-speeds. First seen in

Chicago Labelexpo last year, Protag has since been sold to customers such as Southcorp Wines, Beringer Blass, Brown Brothers Wines, together with P&N Beverages and Cerebos (two of the largest Australian Food & Soft-drink manufacturers) – both involving multi-million quantity ‘cashback’ coupon and recipe applications. Another important factor behind Protag’s success has been the significant environmental and cost benefit of its liner-less dispensing method.

Spanish label converter Sinel Systems will introduce its new line of Printer-Applicators for pallet or carton labelling.

There are several models in the range to print and apply labels of different widths to one or two sides. Optionally, a servomotor system can be incorporated to label cartons of different heights. The machines can be fitted with either the Zebra or the TEC print engines.

Arca Etichette will also be demonstrating its latest print/apply labelling systems (see pg 104).

On the VIP materials front, Sony Chemicals Europe will ▶

continued on pg 126

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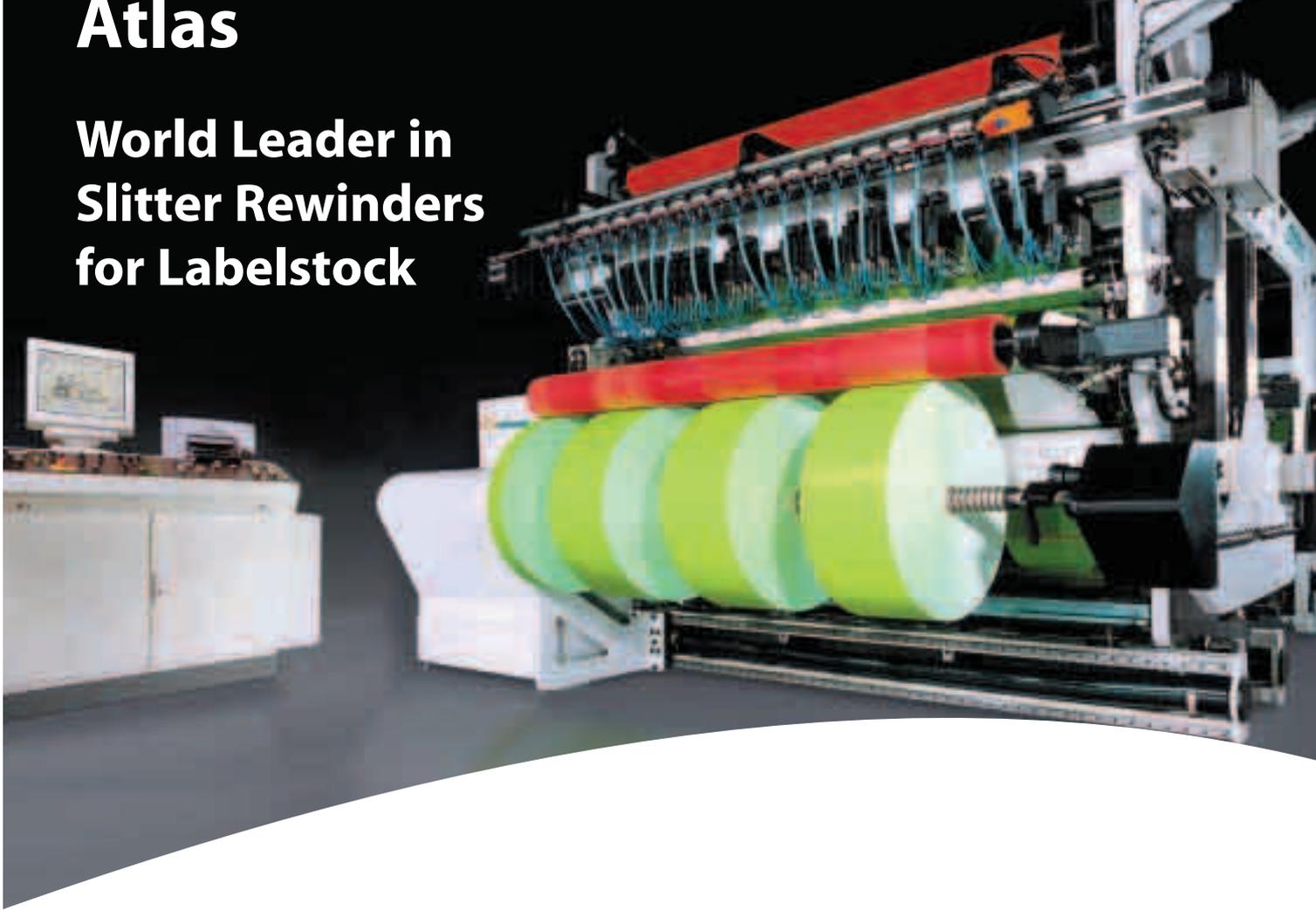
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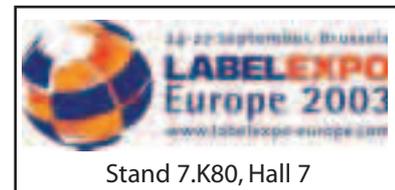
The Atlas OCW-2 slitter rewriter is the most technically advanced in its class for filmic/synthetic as well as conventional labelstock.

This 'centre surface' slitter minimises adhesive 'bleed' and provides better balance of rewind tension in finished reels, producing the highest quality rewind packages.

The latest Atlas technology also includes a new, unique rewinding technique for filmic/synthetic material as low as 60 micron, at speeds in excess of 600m/min (1970ft/min).

Automation systems also dramatically reduce machine down-time for change-overs.

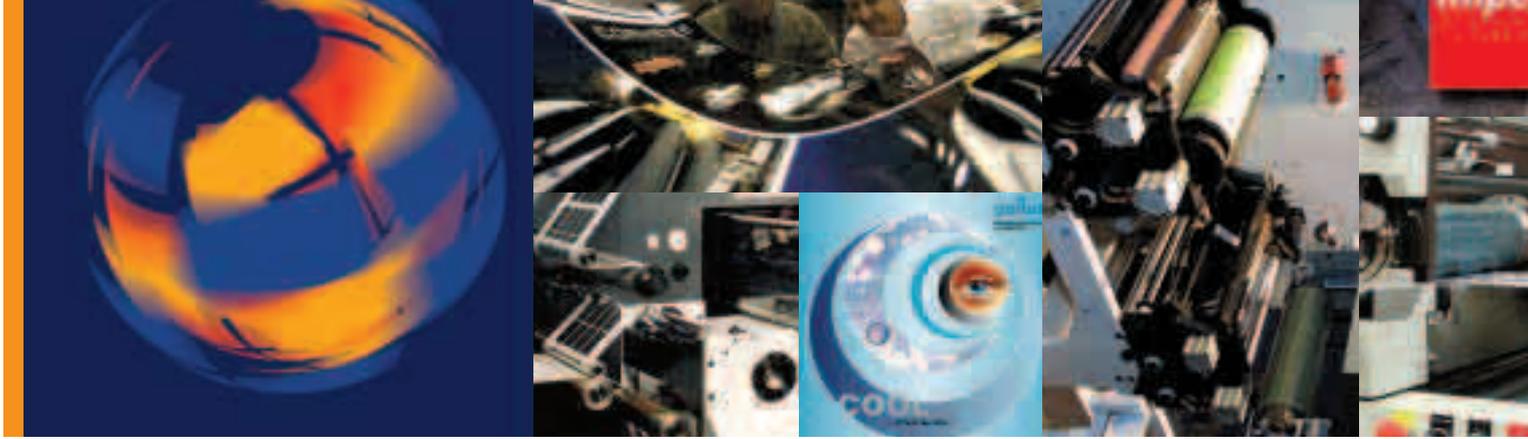
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UniFlex flexible copper die

major on its TR4085plus, a new ribbon generation claimed to combine the benefits of high performance and general purpose ribbons. Japan Pulp & Paper GmbH will introduce new inkjet and laser products, an improved Flat-Head economy wax, a new all-round wax-resin for Near-Edge as well as a new economy direct thermal facestock. Ricoh Industrie France launches an ultra chemical-resistant grade thermal paper

Dies

New to Rotometrics' product line are rotary hot stamping and embossing tools, exclusively distributed by the company and manufactured by UEI/FineCut. Of particular interest is the UniFlex flexible copper die, incorporating a steel backing which secures it firmly onto a heated magnetic cylinder.

Gerhardt International will show a new generation of flexible dies, called X'tra, as well as the DropSetter which adjusts the drop between tool and anvil. Also on display will be the 3*, 5* and 7* Rotary Dies and Flexible Dies.

Kocher & Beck will show its full range of dies, cylinders and the established GapMaster, while Wink promises to show new product developments on the Leomat machine on its stand. Xynatech builds on the success of its European carton converting applications utilising the male/female magnetic shims. Up to now Xynatech has not had a strong presence in Europe to match the success of its dies, but this may be about to change.

Slitter rewinders

A recent change in branding brings together the Burton Group of Companies under the corporate identity of AB Graphic International Ltd, and an interesting introduction is the first showing of an Omega 330 converting line with a new die cutting system utilising flat bed die tooling on a rotary web.

And in cooperation with HP Indigo, the company launches in Europe its Omega Digicon converting solution for digitally printed webs on the HP Indigo stand. Servo driven web tension control permits a wide range of substrates to be converted from self-adhesive labels to folding cartons, shrink films and inmould labels. Options include a UV flexo print station for varnishing, wet laminating or cold foiling; self-wound over-laminating and over-laminating with carrier; unwind for off-line use, daylight correction system, hot foil stamping and guillotine sheeter.

Prati meanwhile introduces a new rotary die cutting machine, the Vega FN330.

The machine runs 200 metres/min with one or two die cutting units, strips the matrix, slits either longitudinally or transversely, and will count and inspect clear labels. Rewinding can be carried out in different ways, including a fully automated mode. The company is also celebrating the installation at Avery Dennison Paris.

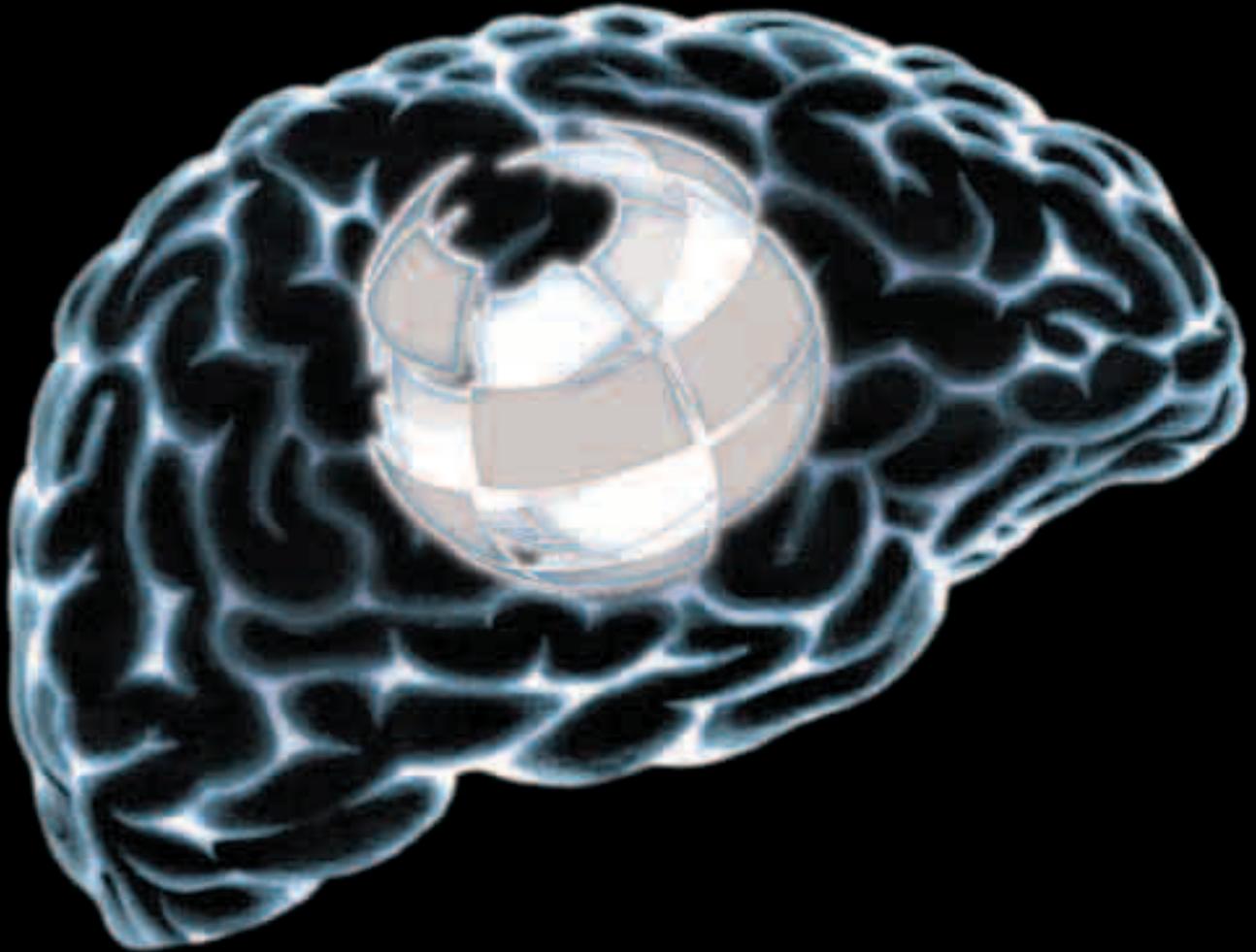
Rotatek will show a new inspection slitter rewriter, RTK 330, with die-cutting unit for blank label production and features including roll rewinding, missing label or matrix error detection, slitting, label or meter counting. The RTK 330 is equipped with an electronic web guide, two splicing tables, and an inspection table with six missing label detectors.

SMAG will introduce an A4 sheet converting machine with UV flexo head and inline stacker, as well as an off-line converting machine for digital presses.

Proofing

An interesting development on the AVT stand is ProoFit, a file to press verification tool that can compare digital files to printed products and detect errors. Using an A3 flatbed

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Show Preview

scanner, ProoFit can be used to inspect screen-printed products and printing plates as well as packing and label materials. ProoFit is designed to support the demanding validation workflow process of pharmaceutical labels printing and provides an approved (CFR 21 part 11) automatic tool for these purposes.

For those with requirements for a UV flexo printed wet proof, RK Print Coat Instruments shows a new variant of the FlexiProof 100 equipped with an integrated UV system. The system can be used for determining wear resistance, scratch resistance, flexibility, gloss, etc, can also be used for computer colour matching. The FlexiProof eliminates the need for pilot runs to be undertaken on production presses.

Inks and varnishes

New from Zeller + Gmelin is Labelcure UF, a UV curing ink series optimised for letterpress and offset printing on both paper and plastic. Other new products include Opticscreen – a UV curing screen printing ink for rotary and flat bed screen printing – and Torarcur, a UV curing ink series for waterless offset printing.

'Universal' ink systems are the key feature of Akzo Nobel Inks' offering at Labelexpo, with the ability to print on a wide range of pressure-sensitive and filmic substrates without the converter needing to change to specialist inks. First up is Flexocure, a universal UV Flexo ink for self-adhesive labels and Flexocure Gemini for unsupported film substrates that require improved adhesion, increased cure speed, and low odour.

A new development from Sicpa is the UV series 456 offset ink, equally suited for UV sheet-fed offset and for UV offset printing on narrow-web label printing machines. The raw materials are selected to minimise odor, so the ink can be used for sensorially delicate applications, as well as for labels in the food sector. The series is ISEGA-certified. Substrates are PE, primed plastics, paper and carton. The prints can be overvarnished and also laminated.

Also from Sicpa is the UV



series 39-2 inks, which are silicone-free, so suitable for hot foil stamping as well as for thermo-transfer printing. The series is also designed for combination printing with UV screen and UV letterpress. It is well suited for overvarnishing or for lamination.

An important introduction for UV letterpress - still the largest installed base of narrow-web presses in Europe – is UvoNova, a 'universal' UV-curable letterpress ink series claimed to deliver excellent adhesion and print quality on a variety of substrates. UvoNova can be used on self adhesive labels, in-mould labels, wraparound labels and shrink sleeves.

The company will also showcase its re-engineered opaque white screen ink for combination printing, Uvoscreen II CombiWhite.

Coates Screen has added Vioroll SF-W70 Screen Opaque White to its line-up of flexo, screen and offset inks for narrow web printers for Labelexpo. Silicone-free technology makes it much more receptive to overprinting with any other type of unmodified ink. Vioroll inks suit most label substrates, particularly the high-speed decoration of top-coated/corona-discharge treated polyethylene and polypropylene.

Encre Dubuit also presents a new rotary screen UV ink, claimed resistant to alcohol and water without the need of an overprint varnish. It accepts hot stamping without the need of an additive and has high flexibility when die cut, according to the company, as well as showing good adhesion on the majority of top coated polyethylene or polypropylene even metallised, PVC, Paper, Polyester.

Pulse Roll Label Products will introduce RoughTEX, a textured effect UV varnish available in letterpress, flexo and



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Protag neck label and applicator (left and centre) and Tantec static neutraliser (right)

screen formulations and SilverFOIL a 'foil effect', high brilliance ink for solvent, water-based and UV processes. Also new will be SofTOUCH, a UV varnish that replicates a soft to the touch feel; CureFRESH low odour varnish; and TurboLAM UV laminating adhesive.

Mirage, an independent, UK based ink company producing solvent, water and UV inks for flexo and gravure applications, will introduce its Quartz products optimised for tamper proof security applications and linerless labels, while Phoenix Inks will demonstrate developments in waterbased flexo ink systems and the impact of manufacturing T&K Toka UV Flexo inks in Europe.

Sericol will showcase its latest UVivid Flexo FL ink set for the narrow web label market, which forms the heart of Sericol's UVivid brand of fully compatible UV curing flexo and screen inks.

GBC (Specialty Chemicals) Ltd is the European Marketing company for Nemoto, Japan, which will introduce its range of inorganic UV-activated fluorescent and phosphorescent (glow-in-the-dark) pigments, as well as special pigments for high security and brand protection applications. Also supplied are thermochromic (heat changing) and photochromic (light changing) formulated inks for most printing processes.

Pre-press

Artwork Systems will demonstrate the latest releases of ArtPro and Nexus, its high-end pre-press and workflow systems. Nexus' flexo modules FlexoCal, Hybrid Screening and PlateCell Patterning will be on demonstration along with a new Quality Assurance application called 'Dotspy' (Mac OS), which checks digital film or plate information down to dot level before output.

Creo focusses on getting label converters to take control of the entire production environment by setting up their own Networked Graphic Production environment. This initiative aims to bring creative professionals, packaging print buyers, repro houses and converters together and enables each participant to communicate and collaborate in real time. All the tools to achieve this will be demonstrated.

Other key players Esko Graphics and Agfa also promise products dedicated to the narrow web pre-press industry.

Plates and anilox

Flexolaser premieres its Flexolaser FL piccolo/hybrid flexo CTP system, capable of handling sleeves and plates within the single machine at up to 800mm width. The system is equipped with Flexolaser's patented Quicksleeve mounting system. Dantex will demonstrate the latest developments in rotary letterpress plates with Torelief CTP, and in Direct Laser Engraving with Torelaser Direct Digital plate materials. The company will also exhibit digital system integration, workflow and proofing solutions. OHKA Europe will show a new water washable UV Flexo plate and a Digital Flexo plate, while DuPont Imaging Technologies demonstrates its thermal Cyrel Fast platemaking technology.

TechCell claims an innovation in CO2 laser-engraved anilox technology. Its Diamond rollers offer a smoother cell wall cavity aiding ink release and reducing the plugging effect. The new process acts with chrome-oxide coating to melt the ceramic to reduce thermal cracking, giving a smooth interior cell cavity. Cheshire Engraving Services will be displaying a wide range of laser engraved ceramic Anilox rollers and sleeves including a new range of lightweight bases and specialised cleaners.

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- **1989 Ansonia EM220 8 Colour Flexo**
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GEW's VCP-film UV unit for temperature sensitive films

“VCP-FILM enables label printers to process a wide range of substrates on presses not equipped with chill rolls”

Labelexpo Europe will also see the launch of a new ultrasonic cleaning system. De Rossi Vittoriano S.r.l. will show a new plate mounting machine

UV systems

GEW (EC) will launch its new VCP-FILM UV curing system for heat sensitive and unsupported films. By integrating a dedicated chill roll within the lamp design, VCP-FILM enables label printers to process a wide range of substrates on presses not equipped with chill rolls. Depending on the register control system on press, films down to 15 microns can be processed, according to GEW. Supplied with a small, efficient refrigerator to provide water-cooling, typical temperature increase is reported to average 2-4degC per lamp.

GEW will also launch its NUVaplus UV curing system optimised for curing heavy lay-downs of both traditional and cationic inks and coatings on thermo-sensitive substrates at high press speeds.

Uviterno's new development is the UVG Electronic UV lamp power control unit, while the aptly-named Ultimate Cold UV light DPL Industri A/S introduces a 250 W/cm focused UV curing system with water cooling and electronic stepless power supply.

Araytech introduces what it calls a 'self-regulation system' for UV lamps, allowing control of the power according to her life and the cleanliness of the reflectors.'

Ancillary briefs..

- Vetaphone A/S, will introduce a new corona treater and generator series for narrow-web converters. The 'Double-

Function-Treater' design allows narrow-web converters to run faster than 250 m/min with any substrate, conductive or non-conductive. The complete system can be mounted directly in-line on narrow web presses. A further update of the TOU4 corona treater uses oxidized idle rollers with a stainless steel backing roller. Tanteq will show new advanced charging generators and high efficiency AC and DC powered industrial static neutralising systems.

- New from E&L is a sensor roller incorporating a fully integrated load sensor, with one load cell per roller end. Strain gauges determine the web force continuously and with high linearity. The sensor roller can be used for a multitude of applications given its broad measuring range of 1:25 and its overload factor of 10.
- AP Maschinen AG shows its latest Ink duct Systems and segmented blades for letter- and offset printing. The Ink Duct, Lever or Digit is built on a modular basis, which enables an upgrade to computerised Ink Control.
- Martin Automatic introduces a new non-stop unwinder, the STS Automatic Splicer for narrow webs. This compact splicer makes butt-to-butt, overlap or heatseal splices, and is claimed ideal for non-stop production.
- Wandres will exhibit its recently launched Sword Brush BI 46 and Micro-Moistened linear brushing system (the surface of the subject material remains dry).
- Valmet Group presents a wide range of systems of interest to label converters, including from Atlas a new rewinding technique for filmic/synthetic material as low as 60 micron, at speeds in excess of 600m/min (1970ft/min). Enhanced automation systems also dramatically reduce

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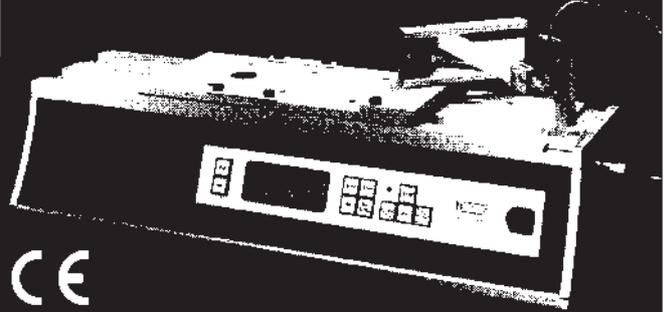
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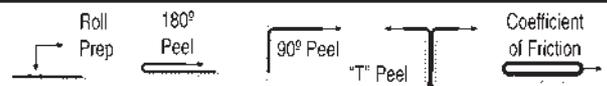
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Show Preview

machine down-time for change-overs. And to meet the requirements of small batch size and high value production, typical of the security hologram and small converter market, Valmet's General division has developed the Holosec vacuum web coater. Another recent Valmet innovation enables close tolerance, off-line cut-to-register sheeting of labels in both paper and filmic substrates. Details of this feature will be available on the stand.

- New from Schober is a Cut + Place system, which transfers pre-cut sheets or blanks at high speed and accuracy onto a web. This joins a range of offline rotary web converting machines for the processing/finishing of products such as in-mould labels and 'easy assembly' multilayer components.
- The DCM Group will focus on its shrink sleeve forming and seaming machines.

Late additions

Rotatek demonstrates its Combi hybrid offset/flexo press, a roll to roll, 400 mm web width machine equipped with five offset and one flexo printing unit, silkscreen printing, cold foil stamping and rotary die-cutting. It will be a shown printing value added wine labels. Also on display is an Ecoflex 6-colour flexo press with removable print cassettes.

S+E Release, made up of Schleipen & Erkens AG based in Jülich, Germany and Silicart S.p.A based in Bologna, will announce machinery investments worth around five million Euro at Labelexpo.

BST International will launch its Powerscope 3000 video web inspection system, which includes features such as Dynamic Image Update and Quick Zoom with memorized positions, allowing operators to perform basic functions more efficiently.

Available in both manual and motorized versions, the Powerscope comes standard with a large 104mm by 76mm field of view, 32x magnification, 17" monitor and horizontal and vertical split screen, making it ideal for use on label presses.

Teknek shows for the first time in Europe its NW Series Narrow Web cleaner which incorporates a list of new features including: larger diameter elastomer rollers - for higher running speeds; Quick Release Adhesive Roll Holder - for faster adhesive roll change over; increased width - up to 762mm (30"); choice of two or four elastomer roller - for heavily contaminated stock; adhesive roll purge indicator - to highlight when adhesive roll needs purged.

And new to the market is an entry level cleaning head suitable for installation on most narrow web presses. Teknek's 'Tag & Label Cleaner' is available in either single or double sided units.

Lintec launches its LPM-300 iTP semi-rotary press to the European market, a letterpress machine incorporating a computerized ink pre-set system. This system enables the press to be made ready much faster than conventional letterpress machines. On the first setting of the press for a new job, the AR system will calculate the settings from the scanned data or image data (tiff data). For repeat jobs, the ink feed and color balance data can be saved to allow for a job to be re-run, reducing setup time and material waste. This machine is also fully servomotor driven achieving production speeds of up to 220 impressions per minute.

Lintec will be exhibiting special film-based labelstocks that are used for high temperature resistant, security, automotive, pharmaceutical. These include a new acrylic based film tested up to 300degC, and a new extreme 600degC material designed for hot steel application.



Edale's Sigma press

“Innovations include an acrylic based film tested up to 300degC and a new extreme 600degC material designed for hot steel application”

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More Flexible than Flexo

Labelexpo will give the opportunity to view a new generation of laser finishing/die cutting technologies which can build into fully variable, short run digital converting systems. **Ken Daming** (Mark Andy), **John Dillon** (LasX Industries) and **David Clark** (Coherent Inc) explain.

For the past ten years, the trend in the label printing industry has been towards shorter production runs and customized labels. This trend is a reflection of how business operates in the modern world. Because label designs frequently change to keep up with the faster pace of product improvement and new product development programs, customers prefer to buy labels in smaller quantities, rather than larger quantities that may go unused and have to be discarded once obsolete. High-end labels, such as those used by wineries, are also made in small volume because each customer wants a distinctive label that communicates a unique brand identity.

This trend poses a problem for label printers that only

have traditional flexographic printing and rotary die converting systems. Due to longer make-ready times and significant hard-tooling costs, these systems lack the flexibility to make very short runs (typically less than 3000 ft) economical.

However, new all-digital systems that combine digital printing with carbon-dioxide (CO₂) laser digital converting technology can complement traditional flexo systems by providing the flexibility required to efficiently accommodate short production runs.

Challenges of Short Production Runs

Historically, very short production runs, which require

Fig. 1: All-digital label printing and converting system, the Mark Andy DT 2200, requires no plates, no dies and no make-ready time, because it incorporates four-color process digital ink-jet technology, as well as digital CO₂ laser converting technology.



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frequent printing- and cutting-pattern changes, have been uneconomical for label printers because traditional flexographic printing systems and rotary-die kiss-cutting systems are best suited to medium-to large-volume applications. Switching from one job to another on these machines is time-consuming, wastes material and requires new hard tooling. Typically, 10 to 15 minutes of make-ready time is required for the printing press, which involves changing printing plates, and 15 to 20 minutes of changeover time is required for the rotary die setup. Furthermore, unless already available, the new die must be purchased and manufactured (which involves delays), then inventoried and maintained for each new size and shape of label.

All-Digital Workflow

The integration of microprocessor control, ink-jet printing and sealed CO₂ laser technology has been a significant advance for the label printing industry. This integration has led to an all-digital workflow environment and the advent of all-digital label printing and converting systems such as the Mark Andy DT2200 (Figure 1). In these systems, advanced software-driven microprocessor-control provides accurate control of a four-color process digital ink-jet system, as well as a digital laser converting system.

In a digital workflow environment, processing a job is simply a matter of transferring an electronic file, which is subsequently processed for printing and laser kiss-cutting by an on-board microprocessor. Software control can prepare multiple jobs for both printing and converting without a break and in quick

“This flexibility also opens up a world of possibilities in label personalization. For example, each label within a run can be customized with a different name, text language, barcode, color and/or shape.”

Fig. 2: In all-digital workflow environments, switching from one job to another is instantaneous, even when the size, shape and number of labels vary from job to job. This flexibility opens up a world of possibilities in label personalization.



succession. Because plates and rotary dies are replaced by software control, there is no make-ready time and no material waste between jobs. Switching from one job to another is instantaneous, even when the size, shape and number of labels vary from job to job (Figure 2). This flexibility also opens up a world of possibilities in label personalization. For example, each label within a run can be customized with a different name, text language, barcode, color and/or shape.

The flexibility inherent in this “soft-tooling” approach is ideal for short runs requiring rapid turnaround. Because there is no waiting for hard tooling and no tool-die expense, it is now possible for a customer to send a job to a label printer in the morning, and have it ready by the afternoon.

Converting to Digital

Like conventional flexo and die-cutting systems, all-digital systems consist of two stages: a printing stage and a converting stage. The printing stage consists of piezo-electric drop-on-demand ink jet heads. These systems can provide a physical resolution of 300 dpi and eight levels of grey scale. Grey-scale refers to the ability to change the ink drop-size from 6 to 42 picoliters in eight incremental steps, thereby providing an apparent resolution of 1000 dpi. Although

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Fig. 3: A laser digital converting module, such as the LasX Industries LaserSharp, includes a sealed CO₂ laser, a high-speed motion system, and process control software.

there are no plates involved, digital printing systems use pigmented UV curable inks that have the same density, drying, light-fastness, scratch and thermal properties of industry-standard flexo inks.

The laser digital-converting stage of the system consists of a laser processing module (such as the LasX Industries Inc. module incorporating LaserSharp Digital Converting technology) that includes a sealed CO₂ laser, a high-speed motion system and process control software. Lasers are capable of delivering enormous amounts of energy to a specific location, and unlike hard tooling, they never wear out because they are non-contact tools. And, although many types of lasers are available, CO₂ lasers are ideal for converting applications because the wavelength of light (10.6 microns) they emit is absorbed extremely well by most plastics, papers, and adhesives. They are also available in a wide range of power levels that allow high-speed processing.

Advances in laser technology have led to the development of new sealed CO₂ lasers that offer the benefits of simple, no-maintenance operation, compact design, robust construction and low operating costs. In fact, leading manufacturers like Coherent, Inc. have demonstrated that these sealed lasers (Figure 4) need no scheduled maintenance to the laser head for up to 25,000 hours of operation. This translates to over 2-3 years of continuous operation.

Laser digital converting requires that the focused laser beam trace the complete die line for each label. Therefore, the beam must be rapidly moved in a pre-defined and controllable pattern across the web. This is accomplished using mirrors mounted on high-speed, software-controlled, 3-axis scanners. Because no tooling forces are present, laser converting permits the design of labels with complex shapes that are difficult to cut using other methods. With a focused spot size as small as 0.012 inches

(0.3 mm), these systems allow labels with intricate detail and sharp corners to be produced quickly and accurately. Because of the non-contact nature of the laser process, cuts are highly consistent and free from the problems associated with die wear. The variable power output of this CO₂ laser allows kiss-cutting, as well as burning completely through the label substrate for sheeting, perforating, or computer data sheet line holes. Technology and software are currently being developed that will allow the laser to be used in anti-counterfeiting and other security applications for labels.

In all-digital systems, a single software control system manages both the printing and the CO₂ laser converting processes. This makes the system easy to use and requires no technical laser skills. Since the software accurately and automatically controls both the amount of energy delivered by the laser, and the location to which it is delivered, the sealed laser is virtually transparent to the operator.

Economics of All-Digital

All-digital systems can open up new profitable business opportunities for label printers. A typical all-digital system operates at approximately 80 ft/min (24.4 meters/min.), which allows label printers to offer customers quick turnaround service on short production runs. All-digital systems will not replace flexo and rotary die systems, but they can complement flexo systems, by giving label printers the ability to quote on short run jobs while using their flexo machines for high-volume jobs.

Depending on the volume of short-run business that a printer enjoys, the capital cost of an all-digital system will be offset by both tangible and intangible benefits and savings. These include the elimination of set-up time and change-over time, the elimination of new and replacement die costs, the elimination of tooling-maintenance and storage, a reduction in material waste, the ability to perform prototype, and production runs on the same system, and the ability to perform fast turnaround on small-volume jobs.

Conclusion

The trend in label printing is towards larger numbers of short production runs. Although new all-digital label printing and CO₂ laser digital converting systems will not completely replace flexo and rotary die systems, they offer major advantages for very short runs. These advantages will allow label printers to keep up with market trends, as well as become more responsive to customer demands for on-time, customized and highly accurate labels.

“Advances in laser technology have led to the development of new sealed CO₂ lasers that offer the benefits of simple, no-maintenance operation, compact design, robust construction and low operating costs.”

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Ditrolio

Vince Ditrolio is a man with a mission: to increase the knowledge and productivity of converters. **Natalie Martin** reports

Introducing Vince Ditrolio, an American/Italian, who could tell you the difference from a butt splicer to a rewinder, and everything in between. Anyone who knows Vince Ditrolio will be familiar with his love of family, friends, food, and with it, his hospitality. If you've ever visited one of his open houses at the Ditrolio Flexographic Institute Inc (DFI), located in Broadview, IL, you'll know what I'm talking about. Servings of abundant foods are dished out; pizzas, pasta, spaghetti bolognese. Ok, enough of the Italian clichés. While he's definitely not your mafia type – I assure you he's anything but – he's certainly more along the lines of a consigliere: 'the trusted advisor' to your flexo training needs.

DFI provides consultancy work and customized training on-site or in-house at its training facility, and also runs a series of dedicated seminars for customer service, sales, and press operators throughout the year. So when Mark Wallace, operations manager for RSI, a converter based in California, happened to witness Ditrolio's training first-hand while doing his own installation work for a mutual customer, he was impressed.

“RSI has already managed to reduce its shifts down from two and a half shifts to just one and a half”

RSI was founded in 1991. The company started out as a hardware and software plus integration services business; providing and supporting process optimization and automation solutions, ranging from warehouse management, inventory control and management, to product identification, eventually moving into RFID and tracking systems, labeling, scanning and thermal printing. The labeling side grew out of a necessity to

better serve its customers as Wolf Bielas, company CEO explains, 'It's one of those 'lunchtime history' moments. I could take up a whole afternoon telling you how I developed the labeling side of the business,' laughs Bielas. 'My background is in computer engineering and we were entering the barcoding market in a big way,' continues Bielas. 'Only a pack of players existed at that time and we were quite successful.' RSI relied on suppliers to deliver big volumes of printed barcodes for its goods. 'The large suppliers left us hanging and there were lots of inconsistencies.' So Bielas decided to take matters in hand and print labels in-house. Not knowing the first thing about how to do any of this, Bielas rang up all the press manufacturers saying he would buy a press on condition that the manufacturer he brought from, had to be willing to teach him how to use the press and even how to print the labels. A Mark Andy 830 press was purchased and a whole pre-press department set up. 'I constantly think what improvements can be made. I was outsourcing work that took a week, if I can bring it in-house and turn it around in a day, I can then provide even greater customer satisfaction. I've never heard of "I can't do that", we didn't know what we were doing, but we've learnt a lot on the way.' Now, six Mark Andy presses are running on the plant floor as well as utilizing Rotoflex and Aztech machinery.

Trusted advisor Ditrolio was brought in to help streamline production workflow on the shop floor. 'The key thing is that RSI is a successful company – but it had reached a point where they needed to be stepped up a level to meet new demands, and this means applying more efficiency,' says Ditrolio.

With a company staff of 51, Ditrolio was brought in to present basic flexo training to sales staff to bring them up-to-speed. As Ditrolio says, 'This helps sales staff get better equipped to deal with clients, identify customer needs, problem solve, and offer solutions.' Then, a separate 'operational' three-day seminar was presented to a staff of 15 followed by further ongoing training.



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Bernardo Gomez inspects the web (l), and (r) uses the jacket system to minimize job returns



'When I conduct the evaluation, the initial process begins through conversations. By sitting back watching production and a couple of shifts, I then identify places that can be improved upon,' explains Ditrolio.

In this instance, Ditrolio laid out a year long program breaking it up into eight sessions. Having completed the fifth

“By changing configurations on a couple of jobs, the downtime on set-up has now decreased from three hours to 45 minutes”

one, RSI has already managed to reduce its shifts down from two and a half shifts to just one and a half with the same production output. Ditrolio spent time watching job flow: set up, process and looked at the product lines. He then found out the company's goals and expectations. This involved shortening set-up times, decreasing waste, and increasing production. 'Some things, we did have to prove to the production/operational staff that we were right: technique and procedures; why it was better to do it this way,' says Ditrolio. For example, by changing configurations on a couple of jobs, the downtime on set-up has now decreased from three hours to 45 minutes.

What RSI liked about Ditrolio was his approach. 'He comes

from a production background and is not just a teacher. He works to short-term as well as long terms goals at the same time,' says Mark Wallace. 'It's all about return on investment. We needed to build a foundation to work from.'

Ditrolio has helped to develop procedures and skill-sets. 'Each company has a twist – its own habits.' By dividing up the year into sessions, he feels assists the staff in retaining new information. He also adds that by going away and returning is a way of checking on operators to see that they aren't digressing, 'spacing out our visits –helps ensure that the production staff are retaining the new skill sets.'

Ditrolio will run thru new procedures dividing up operational and production staff into groups with possible one-on-one training, depending on a person's level of understanding. Then he reviews each employee. When he's finished his session, Ditrolio leaves tips with the group to keep them on track and in between sessions will hold several conversations with Wallace, (the lead man), foreman, Bernardo Gomez and production manager, Simon Bielaz.

What impressed Wallace the most was how well Ditrolio was able to integrate new practices onto the floor, and how his staff were willing to learn, accept and apply them. By creating a procedures manual, staff can then easily follow and check off against this list. He also leaves hints for Wallace when he's not there, so he knows what to look out for.

RSI as a whole, wanted to make the company leaner. Admitting that there's lots of work involved in bringing training in-house: time; commitment etc. the pay back, although not immediate, shows exceptional results. 'We've been able to cut back on staff as we're going through the training. We're just entering the busy season now and realising that we don't need

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as many people as we did previously with the same amount of work output. Across the board DFI has met all expectations, and in some, has exceeded.

“What impressed Wallace the most was how well Ditrolio was able to integrate new practices onto the floor, and how his staff were willing to learn, accept and apply them”

‘It’s the small changes that has really increased the number of press-run hours during the day thru basic workflow improvements, mostly trouble-shooting, prior to the jobs getting to press.’ With new procedures and systems in place, Wallace feels he can start fresh with new personnel off the bat. It’s easy to train them. He says, ‘Coming from a converting background, I’ve learnt the nitty gritty details of flexo. We now have industry standard information. Our staff has become more creative and innovative since working with a new set of tools. Ditrolio has introduced us to new vendors as well as other industry resources, so we now know who to go to for answers. Our well-trained employee is much more confident, more efficient, and is asking more questions. Any new tools we use can demonstrate any new knowledge to employees, has a positive impact on performance and the professional goals of our employees.’



L to R: Simon Bielaz, Bernardo Gomez, Mark Wallace

Vince Ditrolio will be presenting a flexo training session at Labelexpo Europe in September 2003 and will be available on the L&L stand to answer all your technical queries



Measured performance

Part of how RSI was able to measure DFI’s training success was through Flexolution Flexo Management software ‘FMS’, a data collection software program developed by Bielaz.

Flexolution

RSI started out as a small shop, and they prepared a few quotes manually per day, which they said was manageable, until they kept coming.

As Bielaz’s background is in computers, he created an excel spreadsheet, but the more the orders came through the more he felt it was time to develop his own software applications. He says, ‘Every week, I think what will take me away from selling – if something takes two hours, how

can I get it down to five minutes, then how do I get it down from an hour to one minute.’

As RSI was doing a lot of work with Avery Dennison, Bielaz built an interface into Avery so they could order through the network. ‘When I proposed the idea to Avery they were excited. A contact at Avery suggested that I should sell the software package. Eighteen months later, I received my first referral.

‘I’m in my home office right now, but I can see what’s running on every press if I want to. It’s a very unique application.’ Vince Ditrolio describes, ‘It does an excellent job of tracking – you can check set up times. This made it easy for me when I was doing the evaluation;

where we needed to focus our time, and where we needed to make these improvements and track.’ In a given month RSI can tell the amount of paper that has come off a press, from which operator etc. and you can review data over lengths of time. ‘Therefore we could tell that specific items had gone from half the time and that some operators had doubled their productivity,’ said Mark Wallace.

He added, ‘There is a definite trend in the increase of press speed. Since Ditrolio introduced the ‘jacket system’ we can tell we’ve had fewer returns.’ Through Flexolution, RSI estimates that Ditrolio has helped to increase productivity on the shop floor by 20 to approximately 30 per cent.

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Shrink

Shrink sleeve applications are rapidly growing. Here, **Ron Ryback**, R&R Consulting, talks about machinery while **John Kilbo** (pg 56) from Zeller+Gmelin discusses ink development

With more than 35 years of flexible packaging industry experience, I have found a philosophy which has been common with all successful narrow web converters. This has been 'unless they try something beyond what they have already mastered, their business has not prospered.' By becoming visionary and constantly improving and growing their organizations, these entrepreneurial companies are aggressive to enter new markets by utilizing existing equipment and manpower with the realization that you must keep your organization stable but be willing to evaluate new markets to remain on the leading edge of their industry.

An excellent example is the shrink sleeve label market. Although shrink sleeve labels have been around for over 30 years they have shown exceptionally strong growth during the last five years. The good news is that the shrink sleeve label market is expecting continued positive growth for at least the next 5 to 7 years with an anticipated annual growth rate of 4.5 per cent to 7 per cent depending on the forecast model published.

Since the pioneers of this industry developed the technology in-house, the early years of the shrink sleeve label industry were somewhat shrouded in secrecy with regard to the printing and converting process. Most narrow web converter companies seemed reluctant to venture into the market perhaps unwilling to spend the time or money to develop the technology. One of the more successful shrink sleeve label manufacturers is a narrow web converter. During those early years resources were limited, most raw materials were imported and the majority of water and UV ink systems did not contain the required physical characteristics. Shrink sleeve label manufacturing needed secondary converting machinery, which was slow by today's standards. The early converters who were willing to take the risk have been rewarded with a prosperous market and a limited amount of competitors.

Today with this new market opportunity some narrow web

"If you are a narrow web 'film' converter using water, solvent or a UV ink system you are almost 80 per cent there"



companies are still reluctant to move into this area due to lack of market knowledge or an incomplete understanding the manufacturing process. The focal point of this article is: if you are a narrow web 'film' converter using water, solvent or a UV ink system you are almost 80 per cent there. Most of the narrow web presses currently printing on film are capable of printing shrink label material. Now keep in mind that while the newer presses will definitely provide you with greater speed and drying capacity, most narrow web film presses are capable of printing shrinkable substrates at slightly reduced press speeds. If you are producing product daily with 800 to 1000 line anilox rollers using 150 line Photopolymer plates, this is the same set up used for shrink labels. You need to be aware, printing of shrink labels would require a different ink system than you are presently using and press conditions must be modified to accommodate these changes.

Those with knowledge of shrink sleeve labels understand that rotogravure printing is the dominate method of printing. This has been historically true, but with new ink systems, high definition plates, and improved flexographic printing quality, along with the demands of the market for shorter runs, lower prepress costs, and quicker turn around times, look for Flexo to acquire more and more of the market.

So now you're telling yourself, 'hey this doesn't sound too difficult'. If you choose to enter into this expanding arena then the first step is to initiate a strategic business plan. This can be accomplished by the use of consultants and vendors currently supplying the raw materials and equipment to manufacture shrink labels. It is very important that you plan how and where your organization will fit into the shrink label market. Decide if you will specialize in one specific area, such as tamper evident neck bands, full body shrink sleeve labels, twin packs or any combination thereof. But remember, you are a narrow web printer and it will be very difficult to compete with the high volume wide web printers in multi-million piece plus order quantities, so be certain when designing your strategic business plan to take into

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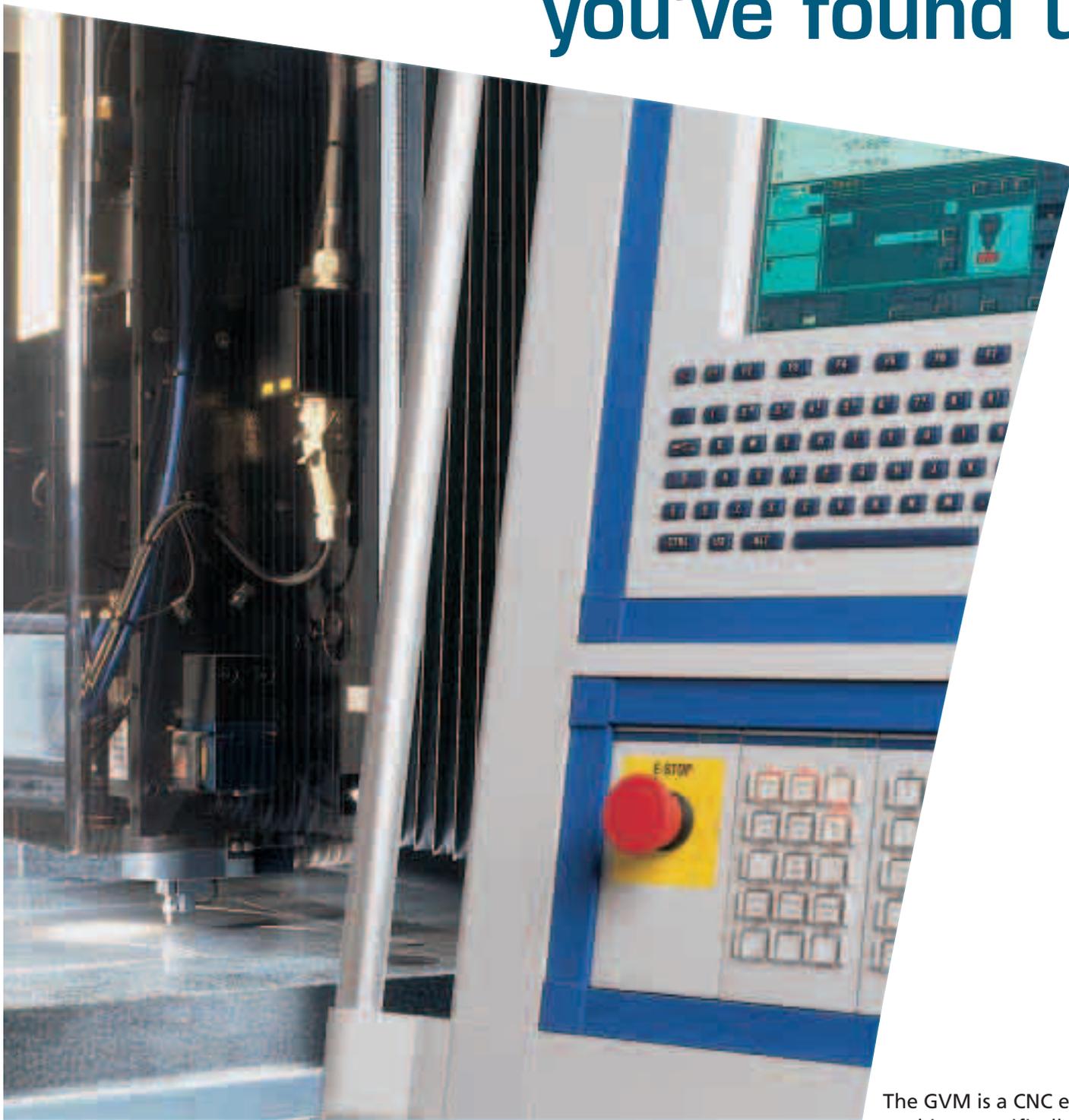
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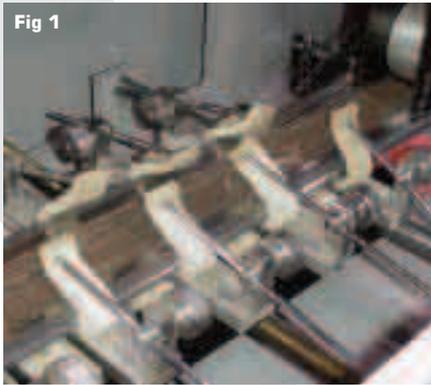
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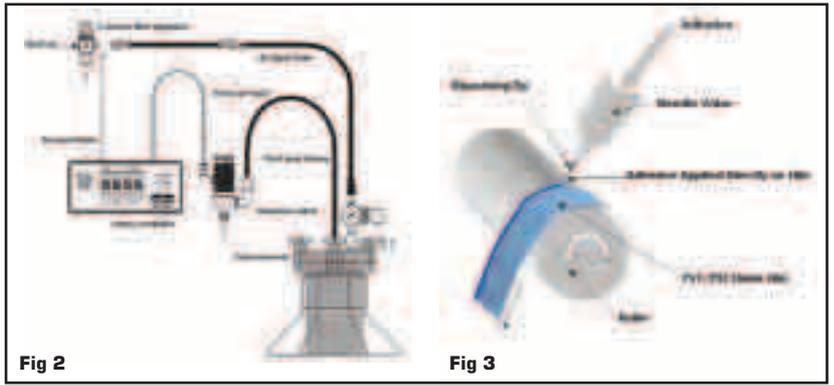
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Forming plate section: This shows how material wraps around the forming plate



Complete injection system: View of solvent application using an injection needle (above)

Injection needle: Close up (above)

consideration equipment capability and capacity.

The secondary converting equipment for the manufacturing of shrink labels consists of two or three primary pieces of equipment. The first machine is the Solvent Seamer. On this machine you utilize printed shrink material in roll stock form and shape this into a tube. There are a variety of methods to form the shrink sleeve tube, but the most common way is to fold the SWS around a forming plate. (See Fig 1).

As the material is formed around the plate, a solvent is applied to one edge of the film and the edge is forced down onto the opposite layer of film at the nip roll section. The chemical action of the solvent on the film welds the two film edges together and forms the SWS into a finished tube. The width of the forming plate is what will determine the finished layflat size of the finished tube. There are several styles of forming plates, but the two most commonly used are fixed plates (one specific size) and adjustable forming plates (adjustable within a range of sizes). The finished tube is then wound into a roll at the rewind section of machine.

There are a variety of solvent seamers available in today's market ranging in speed from 100 to 300 meters per minute. There are several methods of solvent application that have proven reliable

throughout the years. Most converters still use some type of wick or wheel system for solvent

application. The wheel does work, but at times it is difficult to control metering exact quantities of solvent.

The newest solvent application method is the injection system. Converters attempted years ago to use injection systems, but the results were mixed and the consistency of application was not acceptable. Today's redesigned injection systems have proven easy to operate and do an excellent job of metering a precise amount of solvent to an exact location on the edge of the web. New technology for solvent seamers includes:

The installation of turrets on unwind and rewind Oscillation of unwind stand to spread out seam area Segmented or tapered nip roll section to reduce hard folds Proportional speed control solvent application. (See Fig 2 & 3).

Solvent seamers range in price from about \$25,000 to \$95,000 depending on manufacturer and options.

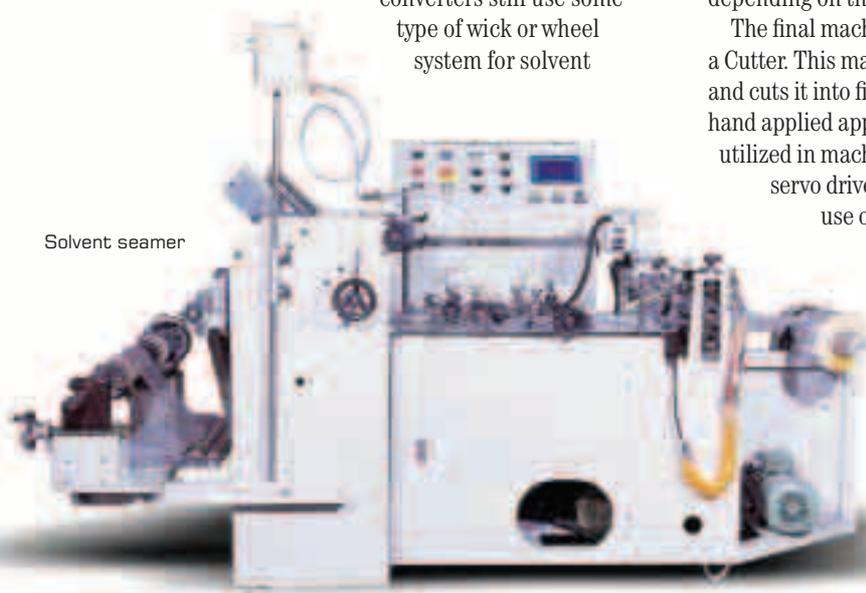
The next machine required for the secondary converting of shrink labels is the Doctor/Rewinder or Inspection machine. The purpose of this machine is to take the seamed tubing from the Solvent Seamer and inspect the integrity of the seam. This is accomplished by inflating the tube with air and then inspecting the tube for open or stuck seams. The inspected tube is then wound onto a core and can be shipped to the customer. New Doctor/Rewinder technology incorporates rewind oscillation to spread out the seam area and keep the finished roll from building a hard center, and also features forward/backward winding. Doctor/Rewinder speeds range from 100 to 300 meters per minute and the machines range in price from \$25,000 to \$50,000 depending on the manufacturer and options.

The final machine that may be needed to complete the process is a Cutter. This machine utilizes the tubing from the doctor/rewinder and cuts it into finished cut and stack labels. Cut labels are used for hand applied applications. Tubing from the doctor/rewinder is utilized in machine applications. The newer cutting machines are servo driven and have the ability to make exact cuts by the use of an electronic eye, plus place various styles of perforations to any location on the finished label.

The cutters run at speeds of 35 meters per minute with cutting speeds of 400 ppm depending on cut length. Cutters are priced from \$30,000 to \$40,000 depending on manufacturer and options.

These technological advancements to the secondary converting machinery are one of the major reasons the shrink label market

Solvent seamer



has experienced recent rapid growth. Machines now have speeds to 300 meters per minute, excellent unwind and rewind tension controls, adjustable forming plates and new solvent application devices. Karlville Development is a supplier of secondary converting equipment for the manufacturing of shrink sleeve labels. John Price, president of Karlville Development, explains how his organization assists narrow web converters who are preparing to compete in this market. 'Karlville Development offers the narrow web converter a complete turn-key package. This includes providing customers with a qualified professional who is available to answer marketing, sales and manufacturing questions, and who will work closely with our customer to develop a strategy for effective market penetration.' A Karlville consultant visits each new site prior to machine installation to evaluate the entire facility from receipt of raw material to final shipment of product. The results of this audit are then utilized to make customer recommendations for the storage and handling of raw materials, specific employee training in key departments, converting equipment layouts and the preparation of packing and shipping finished product. Karlville will also assist the converter by supplying them with vendor contact information for inks, raw materials and seaming solvents.

There have been significant strides with new grades of PVC and PETG films plus an added assortment of new shrinkable substrates such as OPS, PET and OPP. Jim Mullen, shrink material product manager of Klockner Pentaplast, evaluates today's shrink label market and future developments. Mullen stated, 'Today we find the full body shrink sleeve label becoming a preferred method of gaining market share on the store shelves particularly in the food, household products, health & beauty aids, dairy, water, and ready-to-drink industries.

Initial product launches are proving so successful, leading companies are changing their entire marketing programs to incorporate shrink sleeve labels. The economics are not as significant as once perceived because the full body sleeve replaces multiple PS labels on contoured containers.

The growing interest in shrink sleeves is driving Klockner Pentaplast, one of the leading film suppliers in this sector to invest in additional capacity. Industry product development programs today incorporate:

- Optical brighteners for automatic detection of applied labels on high speed filling lines
- Antistat coatings to enhance high-speed printing performance
- Incorporation of products which meet the various food and pharmaceutical regulatory guidelines

Since labels today can use up to eight or more colors for achieving the graphics desired, we are very driven to make sure our films have the surface consistency and excellent gauge uniformity to meet the requirements for high-speed rotogravure and flexographic printing of the rolls, says Mullen.

In North America the market continues to prefer the use of PVC due to its cost effectiveness and ease of fabrication on the printing, slitting, seaming, and inspection equipment. Vinyl also cuts more easily than alternatives and ink systems are readily available from various sources which are compatible for its use. Klockner Pentaplast manufactures vinyl films which include shrinkage levels ranging from 42 per cent for low shrink, to 56 per cent for regular shrink, and up to 64 per cent for high shrink. The majority of film supplied is for regular shrink needs; however, high shrink is rapidly becoming more and more required. Recently, Klockner Pentaplast made a major improvement in the overall clarity of its high shrink vinyl.

A unique co-polyester resin has been available the past few years from Eastman which allows manufacturers such as Klockner Pentaplast to also make different shrinkage levels. Presently a regular shrink 56 per cent is utilized for simple contour containers along with a 78 per cent ultra-high shrink for very narrow neck bottles. This has opened up additional applications including highly decorated labels for energy drinks using polyester bottles and glass bottles for liquor drinks.

Recently highly modified polystyrenes have been successful in Japan, Korea and, more recently in Europe. Klockner Pentaplast is in the process of developing polystyrene as an offering and expects to have a commercial product later this year for the marketplace. Polystyrene has a yield advantage but is much more sensitive in its use than either vinyl or polyester to date.

Another opportunity is beginning to surface which may have the potential to be every bit as large as today's shrink sleeve label market. The roll-fed label has been around for years and it does provide a limited amount of shrink (+/-18 per cent). Even with the new ROSO



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 No. 107



(+/-24 per cent) materials the shrink factor is still not close to the levels enjoyed by conventional shrink label substrates. The development of higher shrink machine direction oriented substrates (PVC, OPS and PET) will mean new opportunities for high speed roll fed shrink label applications. This MD material will have a shrink factor that will allow the beverage and aerosol industry to consider exploring container shapes to improve shelf appeal and consumer awareness. This will run on narrow web presses utilizing the same or similar ink systems now used on TD shrinkable substrates. After product is printed, slit and sent out the door there is no additional secondary converting process.

One last word of advice. If you decide to enter into this market seek help. We are not in the dark ages any more and help is all around you. Use your film and ink vendors to supply you with proven products. Contact press manufacturers and secondary equipment suppliers to assist you with the shrink label converting process. There are also persons available in the industry who have years of experience that are willing to assist your organization with this new endeavor. All you have to do is ask!



Shrink away your fears

**John Kilbo, UV
flexography chemist with
Zeller+Gmelin Printing Inks,**

talks in-depth about UV free radical inks with accelerated physical properties for Shrink Sleeve applications and other heat sensitive substrates

UV flexography inks chosen for printing on shrink sleeves has seen accelerated growth. However UV cationic inks traditionally chosen for shrink sleeves due to their low ink shrinkage traits lack other qualities of runability, pigment loading, and speed traits vs. free radical inks. New technology development into UV free radical inks, which encompass low ink

shrinkage and high flexibility parameters is now allowing for usage onto shrink applications. This development has led to a generation of higher performance UV inks for shrink sleeve applications. Definition, speed, cost, and usage alongside water based flexo inks have all been enhanced over Cationic systems.

Chemistry choice

The two main types of Chemistries available in UV curing today are free radical acrylate chemistry and cationic chemistry. Cationic inks are presently the current standard for UV shrink sleeve applications while UV free radical inks remain dominant on substrates and applications that are less sensitive to shrinkage.

UV cationic mechanism

The cationic mechanism utilizes a photoinitiator that when irradiated with UV light generates a superacid, which then catalyzes the reaction. In figure 1 (see pg 58) you'll see a demonstration of the cationic reaction. This reaction will then kick over and carry on with another epoxy group until quenched or the growing polymer is vitrified, restricting chain movement so the reactive sites can no longer reach one another to continue the reaction. The reaction is slower vs. free radical chemistry but contains a high degree of postcure. IR heat emitted from UV lamps also plays a critical role on the speed of the reaction. The thinking behind cationics is if you can get enough film formation early on to avoid ink tracking, the ink will then continue to post cure until full properties are achieved.

Benefits of cationic inks

Cationic Inks typically exhibit a very low amount of ink shrinkage upon cure due to the ring opening mechanism of the epoxide groups. Because the cationic reaction is slower in comparison to the photo-initiated free radical mechanism, it also allows the ink film more time to relax upon the substrate while cross-linking further reduces stress upon the substrate. Shrinkage of cationic compositions is typically around 5 per cent or less.

Cationics typically have improved extractability and odor over free radical inks. However substantial gains have been made in the recent past with the development of lower odor components and better formulations leading to lower odor free radical inks.

Drawbacks of cationic inks

Cationics does have its limitations though. The first of which is speed. The cationic reaction is not to the level of free radicals in terms of speed and may require additional lamp wattage to achieve proper cure. Low ink film shrinkage but higher wattage on press, consequently generating more IR heat, is a double-edged sword for the operator without chilled rollers wanting to move into the shrink film market.

Another drawback is the quenching of the cationic reaction via atmospheric moisture. On some high humidity days or more humid areas of the country, running parameters of these inks can vary one day to the next. Usage of a climate-controlled environment may prove a necessity.

Component choice can also be a difficult parameter in cationic inks. Cationic components themselves are typically more expensive over free radical based components. Alkaline

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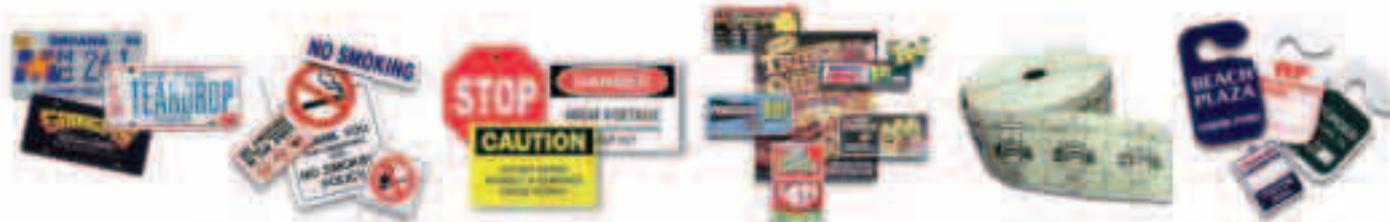
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components cannot be utilized heavily as they can retard or neutralize the reaction from taking place. This is also seen when running cationic inks over free radical or water based inks that contain amines or other alkaline components. Acidic components cannot be heavily utilized in cationic inks as they can initiate over the reaction and give a viscosity rise that can eventually gel the ink.

The types of pigments and their surface treatments are more restrictive to the formulator trying to obtain PH neutral pigments. This eliminates many of the options from an already short list of pigments that contain good flow and density requirements for a given UV system. Dispersant additives for those pigments are also highly restrictive, as some contain amine functionality which has been reported to quench the cure of cationic inks, further limiting the pigment loadings capabilities. All this essentially translates into lower pigmented products.

Certain cationic photo-initiators can contain heavy metals and also release very small amounts of extractable benzene into the pressroom environment via a cleavage bi-product of the photo-initiator upon irradiation. New development has led to initiators that are non-benzene emitting and heavy metal free.

Free radical mechanism

The free radical mechanism is initiated by radical generation from an irradiated photo-initiator. The excited photo-initiator will then react with acrylate groups, which then initiate subsequent reactions with neighboring acrylates. (see figure 2.) The radicals will continue polymerizing acrylate groups very quickly until the radical becomes quenched by pigment, oxygen, additives, another free radical or vitrification takes place, restricting polymer chain movement. Polymerization occurs while UV energy is penetrating the inks and a few split seconds after. Post cure is very minimal. However properties such as adhesion and scratch will build as the ink cools and relaxes on the substrate. IR from UV lamps will also increase cure speed but is much less of a factor in free radical over cationic, and adequate cure can still take place with the removal of IR heat from UV lamp sources.

Benefits of free radical inks

The mechanism is extremely fast. Less lamp wattage can be used to obtain cure while subjecting substrates to less heat, which is critical for shrink sleeve applications. Component choice is not as restricted by the acidity or basicity of the pigments. The sheer number of free radical components from which to choose is also greatly enhanced over cationic components. Consequently, highly pigmented systems with great press rheology have recently been generated which can reach Pantone Process Color densities around 1.2-1.8BCM.

Free radical inks being less restricted by the characteristics of the surface it's printed on can be effectively utilized on more alkaline substrates and amine-carrying water based inks.

Drawbacks of free radical inks

All cure properties necessary, need to take place within a window of a few split seconds. Free radical inks react quickly pulling all the components together upon cure. This puts a high

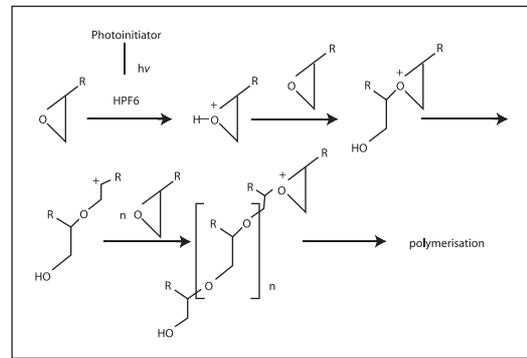


Figure 1: Cationic Cure Mechanism

degree of stress on shrink films, and can crumple the film when coupled with low amounts of IR heat from UV lamps. The high shrink also tends to leave inks less flexible, so they won't shrink as well with the substrate when heat-sealed. Due to the shear speed and nature of the mechanism, 15 per cent shrinkage can be seen in some traditional free radical inks.

The free radical mechanism is also oxygen sensitive. This can be easily overcome by utilizing higher power lamps, highly efficient components and/or initiators that absorb and utilize oxygen in the reaction (eg tertiary amines). The benefit here is that oxygen content is not in a high degree of fluctuation in the environment it's tested in. If it works one day, it should work the next.

New free radical technology

Zeller-Gmelin has encountered a new method in which high definition UV free radical inks can be utilized on high shrink film applications. This method encompasses free radical inks capable of low ink shrinkage and high flexibility gradients. Along with this method, very strong adhesion bonds are developed to each substrate without the usage of slip additives. Slip additives such as silicones and waxes, which mask adhesion testing, can also migrate to the ink-substrate bond interface layer, posing a problem on bond generation of more challenging surfaces. Poor natural adhesion, coupled with lower flexibilities, can lead to the cracking and flaking of the inks upon heat sealing or more aggressive weatherability testing.

The method, which encompasses fast free radical cure speeds and high adhesion traits, allows you to just kiss the ink adhesion to the stock while using as little lamp wattage as possible, while removing excess heat from the material when chilled drums are not in use (see figure 3). Being a free radical mechanism, the inks can be used in combination with water based flexo inks that contain amines and residual water.

Substrate choice

Types of substrates for shrink film applications include PVC (polyvinyl chloride), PET (polyester), PETG (glycol-modified polyester), OPS (orientated polystyrene), polypropylene, and K Resin (modified polystyrene resin with high shrink ranges from Chevron Phillips).

A substrate's chemical makeup, additives, thickness and shrink structure determine which exact inks will be chosen for printing. PVC from one supplier can be quite different to the next. In which case the series of free radical inks receive a customization approach to the substrate and end application. Being that the method is built with high bond strengths, it is highly critical to maximize on true bond strength while balancing out flexibility and shrink parameters needed. For the most part,

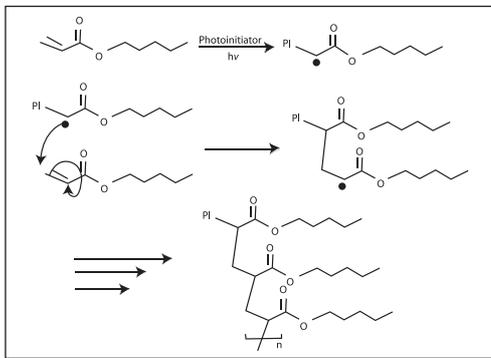


Figure 2: Free Radical Cure Mechanism

all inks chosen for these stocks have fallen under a certain category of component choice and ratios. Inks chosen for a high shrink OPS will also run on PVC and PET quite successfully.

Minimizing UV lamp heat for non-chilled roller presses

The real trick, outside of ink performance on shrink applications, is keeping the IR heat coming off UV lamps away from the stock while curing to avoid shrinking the material. This is the same for both cationic and free radical systems alike. Remember, although there is much lower ink film shrinkage in this method, the ink is still exhibiting pull on the stock as it cures. Upon heating the stock, the pull becomes substantially easier for the ink to crumple the material, along with heat itself that can simply crumple the stock. This is easily overcome with chilled rollers and should be utilized if available. However not every press has chilled rollers, in which case there are other methods available to minimize heat. These same concepts can be applied and carried over to unsupported thin film applications where press heat is also critical.

Low lamp wattage

Basically all we are trying to achieve is to establish a true bond and desired performance features, while not overcuring the ink beyond that point. Not every pigment screens light at the same levels. In which case lighter colors should be run with less lamp wattage than darker colors. Certain pigments such as carbon black also absorb much more heat from UV lamps. Density levels should be kept at reasonable levels in conjunction with the light source and substrate type when printing carbon blacks.

Doped lamps

Iron doped lamps can develop stronger thru cure energy translating into lower lamp wattage necessary to obtain adhesion.

Slower Press Ramp Down

Instead of stopping the web completely with the hot lamps next to the substrate, consider lowering cure wattage and speed over a longer period of time allowing your lamps to cool adequately before shutting down. For this scenario, consider installing a temperature gauge next to the surface of the web which can tell you a safe stopping point

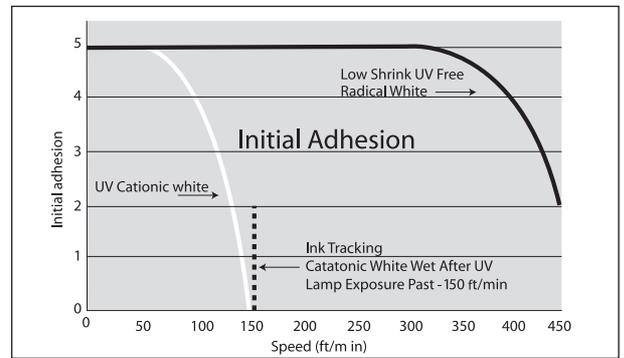


Figure 3: Speed of Cure

Cold and Cool UV

Usage of dichroic reflectors, cold mirrors, and IR filters such as shutters with dichroic coatings can prove a necessity in removing substrate-destroying heat from the press.

Shrink Sleeve applications can be a very challenging yet profitable endeavor for UV capable presses. Technology continues to change while ink and coating systems become more advanced and specialized. UV free radical systems are now available for shrink sleeve applications with excellent results, showing low shrinkage, print compatibility with water based inks, flexibility, speed, higher definition, and lower costs. Utilization of new UV free radical inks also greatly outperforms cationic inks in the removal of substrate destroying lamp heat from presses without chilled rollers, seen as a major restricting factor to companies seeking to move into shrink sleeve applications.

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Comco pouch seminar

Major opportunities are opening up for narrow web converting of pre-made pouches. **Natalie Martin** reports on an educational seminar held by MarkAndy/Comco in Cincinnati, Ohio, which took a practical look at the issues involved

As part of MarkAndy/Comco's continuing flexo focus seminars, attendees to the recent Pre-Made Pouch seminar were able to learn about pouches from concept to end-user; pouch structures, trends and applications; substrates for pouches; converting to finished pouches; inks – the pros and cons of UV, water based and other inks on pouch substrates; coatings and their place in pouch applications as well as laminating adhesives.

Narrow web packaging is defined up to 26-30 inches, is generally considered short run and typically has short lead times. Candidate products for the narrow web market include sample pouches, tea and coffee packs, pet food packets, specialty pouches, promotional pouches and short run flexible packaging. Most of the time it is surface printed and then either over laminated or coated on a pre-made substrate. It can be reversed printed on a clear film and then laminated to a flexible packaging substrate.

The total US market was estimated at 4.9 to 5.2 billion pouches for the year 2002, compared to 4.1 billion in 2000 – you can see the growth rate. These included ready to drink beverages, retorted pet food, pet treats, dry pet foods, cookies, salty snacks, confectionary, other snacks, other food products and non food products. In the ready to drink beverages, Cadbury-Schweppes launched a pouch for Motts & Hawaiian Punch products and Nestle is introducing a pouch product for its Juicy Juice line. Moist pet food (retorted) totalled 560-600 million units in 2002 for the US market. Consumer convenience has been a major selling point, since it's easier to dispense from than a can – especially for older or younger age groups. This sector is expected to grow at 50 per cent over the next two years.

Within confectionery, more private label/regional brands are expected, and increasingly more products expected in reclosable stand-up pouches than in cartons, with the zipper becoming more popular. In snack food, a number of line extensions of existing and new snack food products are expected in stand-up pouches. One popular area that really stands out in this sector is soup. The stand-up pouch is becoming the industry standard. This consisted of 260-290 million units in 2002 (US).

The FPA 2002 State of the Industry Survey identified the top 10 growth markets: Pharmaceuticals was number one, followed by pet food, refrigerated meats, beverages, medical devices, dinner products, produce, diagnostics, lawn and garden supplies, coffee and tea.

When choosing the right inks, coatings and adhesives, there are a number of variables you will have to consider when converting pouches. Think, what are you printing/converting, where will the product be used, what ingredients are needed in your ink to achieve performance requirements, how will you apply the coating? Was the substrate formulated to accept water based, solvent or UV inks and coatings? What type of ink or coating did the manufacturer use during the development work of the stock face to determine ink or coating adhesion? What is the exact application: juice pouch, hand cream pouch, dry roasted peanuts, pharmaceuticals, dry or liquid contents? Where will the product be sold and stored, utilized (end use environment): heated or refrigerated, outdoors or indoors: home, industrial, hospital/medical, agricultural/garden?

Endure the questions from your suppliers, be precise, do not speculate or guess, beware of suppliers who ask too few questions. In terms of adhesives what are the finished package requirements: bond strength, seal strength, optical clarity, coefficient of friction stability, aggressive product resistance, heat resistance, MVTR and OTR properties? Be prepared to discuss.



Nabisco launched an sku, Teddy Grahams' children's mini cookie snacks, using both a traditional box and a flexible pouch (see picture above), sold in 150 stores in the Midwest to test the market place for flexible packaging. Using identical branding, the flexible pouch sold at a rate of 4.1 over the box, even though it was 10 cents more (U.S.D), showing that the consumer is willing to spend more money on a resealable package. The pouch and box are now found country wide in both packages and Nabisco has added flavors and other cracker and cookie products in both a box and in flexible packaging.

Presenters:

Barry Goldberg – Tappa Group International

Gary Gates – flexible packaging consultant

Gary Bobko – Glenroy

John Price – Karville Development Group

Walter Stewart – Klockner

Ken Daming – Mark Andy

Mike Buystedt – Akzo Nobel Inks

Kurt Hudson – Water Ink Technologies

Jay Hansley – Ashland Chemical

Denny McGee – Mark Andy/Comco

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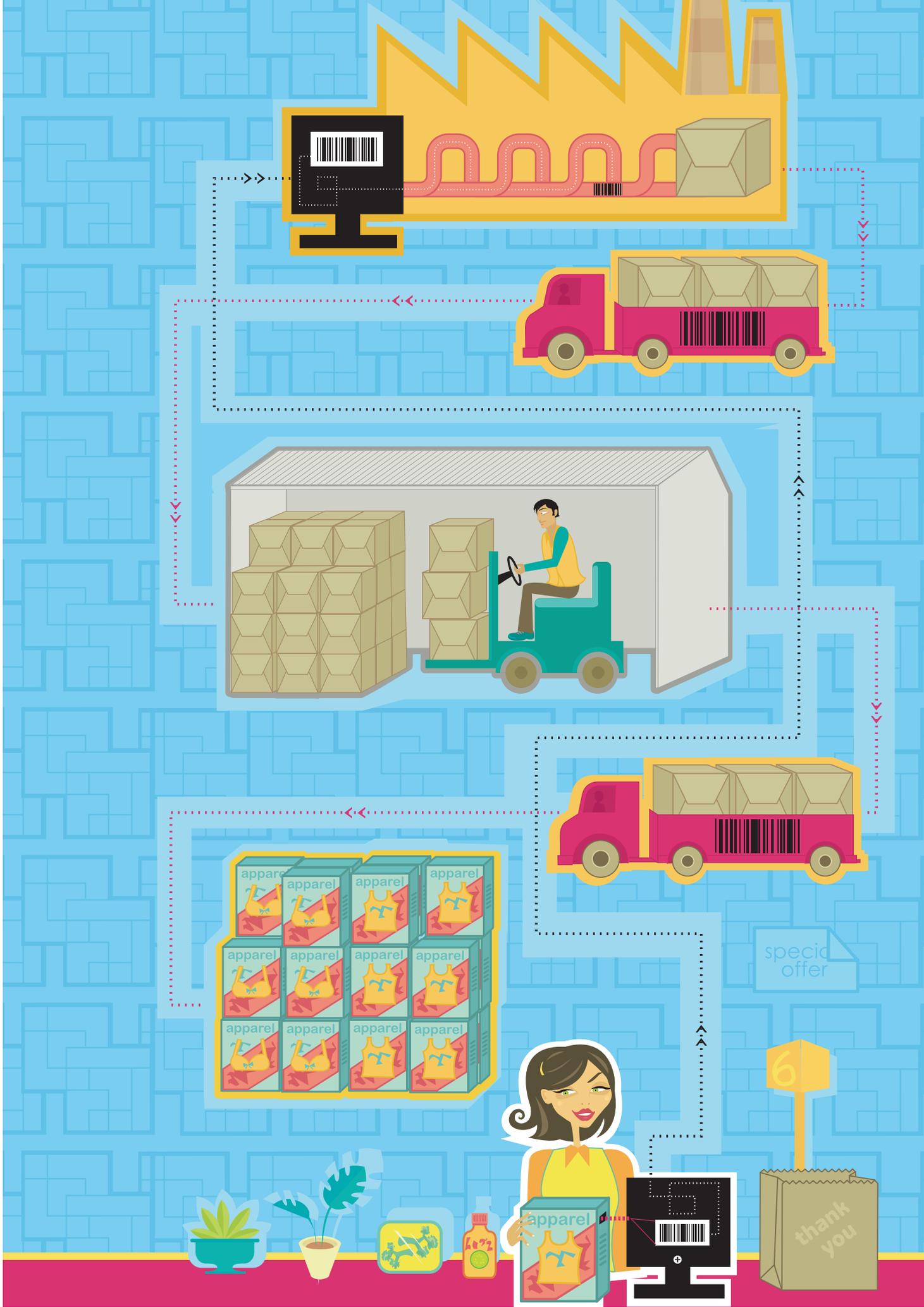
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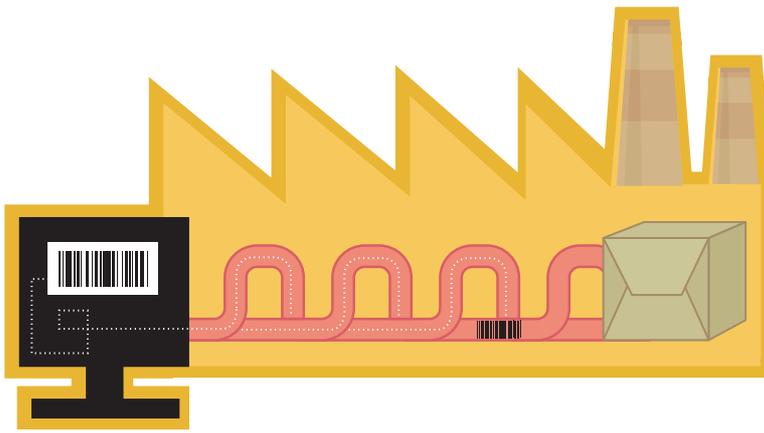


Chain

Reaction

One of the biggest growth areas in the global labelling industry is facilitating the movement of goods thru the logistics chain from factory to warehouse to store. This involves on-demand print solutions, high quality barcoding systems and close collaboration between supply chain partners. In this extended feature we look at:

- **new technologies bringing on-demand colour to product marking throughout the supply chain from pallet marking to point-of-sale**
- **one of the world's biggest retail groups is moving to 2-D barcoding to streamline its supply chain. Also important advice on how to produce readable barcodes from an acknowledged expert**
- **a case study of supply chain collaboration in the apparel sector**



On demand colour

'On-demand colour' systems showcased at Labelexpo Europe will open up new opportunities for label printers in sectors now dominated by black and white printing. **Andy Thomas** reports on a conference in Amsterdam which focused on opportunities in the secondary labelling sector

Markets

Despite the slowdown of overall pressure sensitive growth in the mature markets of Europe and the US, there remains plenty of potential to add value within key end use sectors. Industrial labelling and product identification is a sector currently dominated by black and white print systems, overwhelmingly desktop thermal transfer.

Of particular interest here is a new generation of colour Variable Information Printing (VIP) and Print-on-Demand (POD) systems which could revolutionise the secondary labelling market.

These developments were examined at the Digital Label & Tag workshop held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, organised by the Giga Information Group and sponsored by Labels & Labelling, Canon and Matan.

Kicking off, Sean Marske, president of VIPColor Technologies, looked at the potential for bringing colour into the supply chain. 'Barcodes are not enough,' said Marske. 'Colour coding and picture coding, when combined with traditional barcoding, create a comprehensive defence against costly mistakes through the supply chain.'

The emerging market for 'Colour-on-demand' sits between the black & white thermal transfer printer, and conventional flexo/offset press technology, where costs are inversely proportional to volume (ie the shorter the run, the higher the cost).

On-demand Colour means putting labels into the supply chain when and where they are required and in the exact quantities. Good examples would include end users with multi-site production, multi-language markets, contract manufacturing and packaging, make-to-ship manufacturing and real-time order fulfilment.

On-demand colour helps product locating and reduces shipping errors, but also makes it easier to keep track of work-in-progress and quality control at the manufacturing end.

In the retail environment, the secondary label moves from being a simple logistics information carrier, to a 'brochure on the shelf'. Coloured graphics allow store assistants and customers to instantly identify a product.

Picture coding and brand graphics work best where there is a high mix of different products in relatively small amounts – think of electrical components, plumbing parts, telecom and computer components, automotive/machinery spare parts, sporting goods, office suppliers and fashion accessories as examples.

Within the logistics chain, colour coding is a powerful tool to complement barcode systems. Colour coding can be used for sell-by date, product expiration date codes, to check destination, and for easier identification in a crowded warehouse.

Although scanning systems work well, companies still ship items to the wrong locations, and colour coded labels allow employees in the despatch bays to act as a last line of defence against errors. Colour can also be used to show which items get shipped first – for example by colour highlighting sell-by-dates.

Label converters have traditionally operated a Print and Distribute model, where a label moves from a blank roll, through conversion on a press to over-printing, transportation and into pre-printed inventory. This system works well for high run lengths, but has relatively long lead times and increases the costs of inventory management and wastage through product obsolescence or incorrect estimation of demand.

The opportunity is to complement this traditional model with Distribute and Print, where short runs of multi-coloured secondary labels are printed from blank stock on-demand, reducing lead times, rationalising inventory and reducing waste. This can lead to a new business in managing the end user's secondary labelling business from digital asset management to proofing, output and delivery. At the same time, it allows converters to offer package customisation, short run marketing and sales campaigns and even product prototyping.

Jules Farkas, president of MNF Consultants, is a longtime advocate of innovative print and converting techniques, so his paper looking on how label converters might integrate digital printing into their conventional operations was eagerly anticipated.

Farkas conceded that takeup of digital presses by label converters has been painfully slow despite the fact that label converters 'need' digital printing.

'Not only are production runs getting shorter, and product variations larger with quicker turnarounds, but there are requirements for conventional and variable information printing in one pass. Who will need color-on-demand? Fortune 1000 manufacturers, small and medium manufacturers and retailers and other service providers.'

As well as the logistics chain and product identification opportunities outlined by Sean





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Marske, Farkas said there would be significant emerging applications for 'light prime' labels where high-mix, low-volume producers desire a 'professional' look. Examples might include nutraceuticals (vitamins, health supplements etc), organic foods, produce, specialty health store products and boutique/hotel/B&B items such as soaps and shampoos.

Farkas also foresees a much more radical development: networked, distributed colour-on-demand label printing. 'This means real-time control of label content, availability and authorised usage in local or multi-national operations. The advantages are reduced risk of outdated labels, reduced risk of product recalls due to mislabelling, instant content or format changes in the supply chain, instant reaction to new promotional initiatives. Centrally managed yet remotely executed product localisation.'

Thermal technology

Monochrome thermal printing currently dominates digital printing in industrial environments, accounting for 80 per cent + of on-demand labelling globally. This amounts to over two million thermal printers in service worldwide printing barcodes in plants, warehouses and shipping docks.

An important development in multi-colour thermal transfer printing for the Colour-on-demand sector was presented at the seminar, in the form of the Spark 1612 desktop label converting system developed by Israeli company Matan. The system consists of a multi-colour thermal transfer printing engine (see box) and the DFS converting section, which houses a laminator, contour cutter, weeder, slitter and rewinder.

Keren Leshem, marketing manager for Matan, explained that the system was designed to perform at high speeds in harsh environments with high durability, media flexibility, little or no maintenance and with 'little or no' impact on the environment.

The system is aimed at label converters looking to target the Colour-on-demand market, but Leshem saw an important opportunity for sales people developing new business with samples and trial orders without expensive tooling charges.

'Converters can say "yes we can" rather than "we don't do short orders" and can offer instant quotes from fixed price lists. This can become another source of new business development.'

Answering the question, 'When to go Digital?', Leshem offered the following advice: 'Always when printing variable data; when digital production costs are less than prep plus set-up costs; and when the press room can make more money doing something else. It should be considered if an order requires a special die that will never be used again.'

Nick Mandrycky, senior vice-president, marketing at IIMAK, discussed some exciting technology developments which will extend the functionality of thermal technology and its ability to add value. Mandrycky looked at R&D and patent activity in resin-based ribbon applications in the following key areas:

- Apparel printing with heat resistance to 200degC
- Ultra-high end heat and chemical resistance to 150degC +
- UV-curable ribbons with heat resistance greater than 700degF
- Security applications

At the same time, RFID/Smart label programming systems are being incorporated into thermal transfer printers, and

trials are underway to thermal transfer print RFID circuitry with conductive inks.

Mandrycky drew attention to important developments on the media side. Sato, for example, has developed self-contained thermal transfer labels which eliminate the need to purchase separate rolls of labels and ribbons. In operation, a thermal transfer or direct thermal printer is loaded with the SC-TTL (Self-Contained Thermal Transfer Label) media, which is then printed in the normal way. After imaging, the ribbon is removed from the label surface and the label applied.

The combination labels are claimed to have a high level of resistance to UV light, high temperatures, chemicals and scratching. They can be scanned with infra-red and near infra-red scanning. Sato offers a ribbon and label substrate matching service, including printed labels and coloured ribbons. Any format can be supported from handheld printers to large format printers for drum and case labels.

SC-TTL eliminates print head alignment and ribbon wrinkle issues while reducing the wastage which arises from using wide ribbons on narrow label rolls.

Another development flagged up by Nick Mandrycky is a thermal overlaminating film from Media Solutions International Inc. Known as TOF, the construction consists of a protective printhead coating, film, Leuco Dye layer and adhesive on top of a silicone release coated base paper. To create a customised direct thermal media, the laminate is simply taken off the paper carrier and attached to the new substrate.



Inkjet

Inkjet technology is now making claims to be taken seriously in the label conversion arena. Mark Andy launched at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago last year its DT press series, which integrates a multi-coloured UV inkjet module into a 2200 flexo press body, with an optional laser die cutting unit.

Mark Andy's director of product management, Ken Daming, considered how label converters might integrate this level of digital printing into their existing production environments.

Taking a press shop with an existing 13" 2200 flexo press, Daming put the crossover point where digital becomes the preferred process at around 13,500 labels for a 13" DT2200 digital inkjet press and 15,000 labels when the DT2200 press is fitted with laser die cutting.

'Laser die cutting eliminates the need to stop the press at all and is the most efficient and profitable method of converting,' said Daming. Converters should also have access to the normal range of finishing options found on flexo presses – slitting, sheeting, stacking/conveying, rewinding, laminating, varnish and adhesive coating and foil stamping.

Digital presses should not require specialist operators, said Daming: 'The digital press operator should be the normal production press operator. He already knows conventional press operation, ink handling and colour registration.'

For information on the Digital Label & Tag Printing Workshop 2004 contact organiser Giga Information Group on Tel: +44 (0) 1753 831731, www.gigaweb.com.





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Colour-on-demand – a case study

A fascinating case study on the use of 'on-demand colour' was presented by Eric Bonten, director of leading European label printer GraphicALL Systems bv.

GraphicALL has been using colour in secondary label applications for five years, beginning with thermal transfer ribbons in spot-colour and progressing to 'full-colour' printing with the use of CMYK ribbons in a TEC thermal transfer printer.

'These solutions typically served secondary labelling such as box labels, product identification labels with the use of colour codes, but did not provide for high quality labels as the physical limitations of the thermal transfer process caused the printout to be rather coarse, and limited in the number of colours achieved,' said Bonten. 'We had the feeling that if the quality was higher the success rate could be dramatically increased.'

GraphicALL found that there was a demand from customers for competitively priced, good quality full-colour labels which would include images – provided they could produce die-cut labels on the roll for further automatic label application. On-demand printing could cut down on preprinted labelstock and increase flexibility. For the converter, such a system would require fast printing speeds and an industrial-strength machine construction.

Bonten says he decided on VIPColor's VP2020 inkjet system which met all these goals. 'With the use of special label software, flexibility is maximised. Barcoding, serialisation and database merging are all possible at a fraction of the previous cost. The cost of the labels is fair, especially when you take into consideration the fact that the customer has no more stock, can increase his customer service and eliminates waiting time on his labels.'

Market sectors in which the company has been successful include food, pharmacy, print shops, label converting, retail supply and pet food.

'The one thing all these sectors have in common is the need for flexible colour labelling, on roll, in good quality,' says Bonten, who concluded with a case study to illustrate his point:

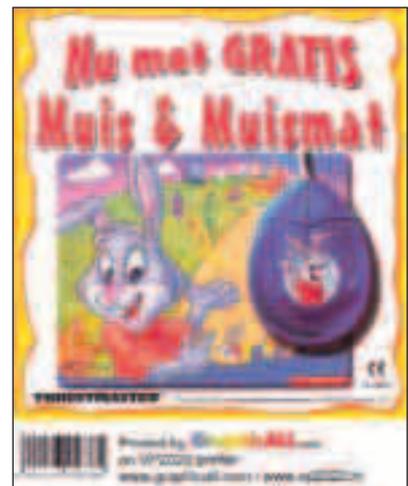
'We faced a challenge from a customer producing high quality, exclusive, meat-based snacks. In the past they used a product box with a fully pre-printed top side in full-colour with their company logo and a picture of the product. As time passed they increased the number of different products and subsequently increased the number of boxes with different pictures on. The cost of these boxes became too high and they contemplated going back to a pre-printed box in full-colour with just the logo and a label containing product information in black and white, printed by a thermal transfer printer.'

Black and white thermal printing was a widely accepted solution, but GraphicALL believed it would lead to a loss of exclusivity in the appearance of the product.

'With our new technology we suggested using blank boxes and printing large size, full-colour labels containing the company logo and the product image. Therefore there is no need for additional date stamping and the company can print that in the same run. They even lowered the cost per box.'



Labels printed by GraphicALL Systems bv on the VIPColor VP2020 system demonstrating the addition of colour to box end labels





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B&Q streamlines logistics

Global Home Improvements retailer B&Q is set to introduce new barcode symbologies into its logistics chain to take out costs and streamline the entire operation from supplier to store. **Andy Thomas** report

'At the moment a product is scanned, the most important thing about that product is the barcode'. When Harry Pennelli speaks these words, suppliers to the global home improvements group Kingfisher sit up and listen. Harry Pennelli, an acknowledged authority on barcode technology, is a key figure in developing a logistics strategy for the group's B&Q home improvements stores.

B&Q claims to be the number one home improvement retailer in Europe and the third largest in the world, with more than 65 stores opened internationally, including B&Q Yangpu, in Shanghai, China, now the largest B&Q store in the world. B&Q is part of the Kingfisher Group which includes Brico Dépôt, Castorama and Dubois Matériaux in France, Hornbach – Germany's leading home improvements warehouse retailer in which Kingfisher has a 21.2 per cent stake – Réno-Dépôt in Canada, KOÇTAS in Turkey and NOMI in Poland. Kingfisher also owns a global chain of electrical retailers.

Harry Pennelli first brought his formidable troubleshooting skills to bear at the Tesco retail group back in 1996, at a time when only 37 per cent of barcode scans were successful. Today the



scan rate is 99.5 per cent across a product range that has expanded by 250 per cent.

Harry Pennelli has a similar mission at B&Q. Initially he was engaged for six months to sort out the problems the company was having with its scan rate. This was the start of a remarkable partnership with UK-based label converter and barcode specialist, Wydata.

Wydata, acquired last year by Hovat Ltd, the UK's second largest stationery label manufacturer, is led by managing director Fred de Wykerslooth. de Wykerslooth played a major role in developing barcode technology in the 1980s when he worked alongside Tesco, pioneering point-of-sale barcoding. Later he assisted Safeway and British Telecom, amongst others, in their successful barcoding developments.

'I knew about Fred's expertise in this field and asked for his help,' states Harry Pennelli. Together, they visited B&Q's suppliers and advised them how to print barcodes to specification, what equipment to buy, and the importance of verification. Within two years, the problems with existing suppliers had been pretty much solved, and B&Q's new suppliers are routinely referred to Wydata for advice on how to make their barcodes compliant.

'Most suppliers to B&Q are not labelling specialists, but that's not a reason to print sub-standard barcodes,' says Harry Pennelli. New suppliers are given a handbook – also printed by Wydata – which is a Barcode 'basics' guide, 'so there are no excuses.'

Again and again Harry Pennelli returns to the importance of checking barcodes before the product leaves the manufacturing site. 'As a supplier you are the printer, so you must invest in a quality assurance tool like the HPPA 810 which should cost no more than £2,000. There is a minimum charge to the supplier of £500 for each item which fails to scan, so this type of system will soon pay for itself.'

Harry Pennelli recommends that barcodes are printed either with one of the conventional print processes – flexo, offset or letterpress – or with either thermal transfer or an approved high quality digital print system.

'We do not accept laser printing, direct thermal, dot matrix or inkjet. Inkjet cannot give you complete control over the droplets which would guarantee clean lines, particularly on porous substrates like paper. But flexo printers too, have to be careful because of the soft plates. The best combination is thermal transfer with polyester substrates, producing a barcode which is highly resistant and high quality. Even then it is essential to ensure the thermal transfer heads don't burn out, so regular maintenance and checking is again critical.'

Fred de Wykerslooth does not advocate on-line barcode verification. 'On-line barcode verification is no use. It can only tell you Pass or Fail. We need to know if a barcode is degrading, because by the time Pass turns to Fail, it's already too late to do anything about it. Also, if you stop a multi-colour flexo press to deal with a bad barcode it will affect 10 metres of barcode when you re-start the press. Much better to have inspection systems off-press.'

A part of the barcode specification often overlooked is the adhesive. Harry Pennelli recommends adhesive with a high enough tack to stop customers removing labels in-store. It is important to ensure there is no adhesive show through which can interfere with scanning.

B&Q is currently testing hotmelt adhesives for labels on reusable tote boxes, which have to withstand the temperature and chemicals involved in the washing process.



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“The contents of the mixed pallet are encoded in the PDF barcode, so can be easily verified at the RCC and at the store without having to unpack the pallet and scan individual item barcodes”

2-D barcoding at B&Q

Wydata recently secured a three-year contract with B&Q to supply barcode and logistics solutions and digitally printed point-of-sale literature (see pg.74). Wydata is one of a small number of companies pioneering logistics tools based on PDF 417 computer files, known as 2D open standard barcode, and these form a key part of Harry Pennelli's future logistics strategy. In essence, two-dimensional barcodes are more robust and can store more data than traditional barcodes.

Fred de Wykerslooth comments: 'It is sure to be adopted by the whole retail industry in the near future, and eventually by many other markets including the medical sector, because of the profound impact that this technique will have on supply chain, distribution and logistics, with potential to improve accuracy, turnaround times and cash flow.' Harry Pennelli agrees: 'People will wake up next year that PDF417 is the ideal vehicle for providing multiple-information.'



PDF417 is already proving itself in B&Q's recently introduced 'Drop and Drive' operation. Up to now, suppliers have delivered pallets of a single product – power tools for example – to one of B&Q's Regional Consolidation Centres (RCC), where the items are placed into stock, then picked onto mixed pallets according to the requirements of individual stores. With Drop & Drive, the supplier picks the products for individual B&Q stores, delivers the mixed pallet to the RCC and leaves it there. The pallet is picked up by B&Q drivers and delivered straight to the stores.

The contents of the mixed pallet are encoded in the PDF barcode, so can be easily verified at the RCC and at the store without having to unpack the pallet and scan individual item barcodes. The whole system relies on good faith, but is an excellent way to prevent double handling and take costs and time out of the supply chain.

For Harry Pennelli, PDF 417 is a better alternative to Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) labels: 'They are cheaper than RFID tags and more reliable, as well as supporting more data. A PDF 417 code can store 1850 kilobytes of information against 96k on RFID.'

Pennelli points out that RFID tags will not work if they are damaged, while PDF is far more robust – you can tear it down the middle and still scan both halves separately. 'I'm told by RFID suppliers that the failure rate for their tags is "only" 0.3 per cent. But that's not low for pallets – it would mean that across our 11 warehouses 1,800 pallets fail to scan! In trials we also found we were picking up tags beyond those we were actually scanning, sometimes activating and killing several tags at the same time.'

PDF 417 has the further advantage of being an international standard recognised by CEN in Europe and UCC in the US, while RFID is still dogged by multiple frequencies and standards, comments Fred de Wykerslooth. '13.56Mhz is often misunderstood. It is a common frequency but not a common standard, although UCC and EAN are working on one. UHF is promising, but as an example, the 940 Mhz tag cannot be used in the US because the police use that frequency.'

On the horizon, however, there are many opportunities associated with new RF labels and barcodes at B&Q. Security is a major problem, with customers trying to smuggle out everything from tools to bags of sand. 'For these applications RF tags are appropriate,' says Harry Pennelli, 'but barcodes are still printed on them. 5-6,000 product lines are already RF tagged, and the plan is to move that to 25,000 lines.'

Combined RF and Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) tags



opens up exciting possibilities, and Pennelli cites as an example Tyco's 13.56 Read/Write security tag based on a Philips chip. Pennelli also sees applications for RF in asset tracking of pallets and tote boxes, but on retail packs barcode labels will remain.

What is PDF 417?

PDF417 is a multi-row, two-dimensional, high-capacity, high-density barcode developed by Symbol Technologies, Inc. It essentially consists of a stacked set of smaller barcodes. The symbology is capable of encoding the entire (255 character) ASCII set. PDF stands for 'Portable Data File' because it can encode as many as 2725 data characters in a single barcode comprising 17 modules, each containing four bars and spaces (thus the number '417'). Each symbol has a start and stop bar group that extends the height of the symbol.

Different data compression algorithms allow different printed symbols to be created from the same input data, with nine security levels available. Using a higher level of security gives a better chance of decoding information in a damaged barcode. PDF417's error-correction capability uses built-in code words to reconstruct partially destroyed barcodes. It works by checking the value of columns and rows, and then calculating and rebuilding the data missing from any damaged cells.

Harry's hit list

B&Q's Harry Pennelli identifies the problems most commonly encountered with barcodes:

- dot gain on flexo presses
- the use of inferior lasers
- failure to respect the 'Quiet Zone'
- truncation of bar heights to as little as 5mm when the recommended minimum is 16mm
- vendors putting out products without getting them listed
- barcodes missing altogether
- use of low tack adhesives meaning the barcode label falls off (or is easily removed)
- Including internal production codes as significant numbers in the barcode

Wydata secure B&Q print contract

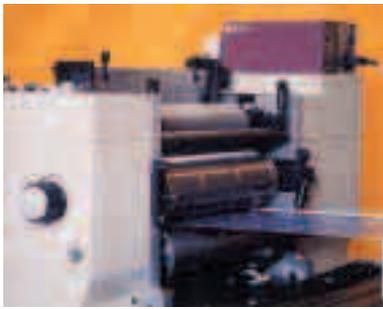
A label converter printing catalogues? Hardly a natural progression. But Wydata has taken to heart the concept of 'delighting' your customer by offering additional services. Before Wydata became involved in the point of sale catalogue, B&Q used an offset litho printer, who took over two weeks to turn the job around – unacceptable in the busy world of retail.

'Initially because of our barcoding experience, B&Q approached us, to see if we could do a better job,' says Fred de Wykerslooth. 'We invested heavily into the new digital print technology that was evolving, and by using the Indigo press we have cut costs and turnaround while still keeping the quality requirements needed for product identification and scanning. B&Q have been so happy with the way things have turned out, that we have also gained the direct mailing of the catalogue to stores throughout the country.'

The point-of-sale catalogues contain photographs of products like bricks and wires, which don't have barcode labels. The checkout operator locates the product and scans the barcode to register a sale. Before Wydata took over the printing, the first time scan rate was just 27 per cent. Now the pages are printed with full colour illustrations with a 100 per cent scan rate. Wydata manages all the digital photography and image handling for new and existing products, updating stores' catalogues as new products come on line.

'The digital press has been a boon for B&Q,' says Harry Pennelli. 'Wydata prints different regional catalogues which take account of the different types of brick and stone we sell.' Wydata also prints B&Q's training manuals in multiple languages for distribution to its European stores and suppliers. 'No other label printer I know would take on the management, collation and dispatch,' enthuses Pennelli. 'It is an excellent example of how smaller converters can get more business from big groups like B&Q by going that bit further. It's not a service I would get from a big printer.'





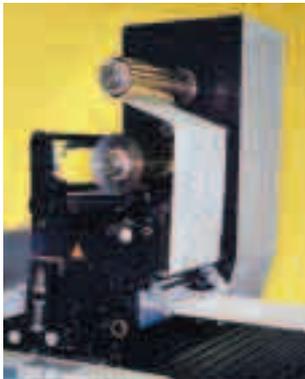
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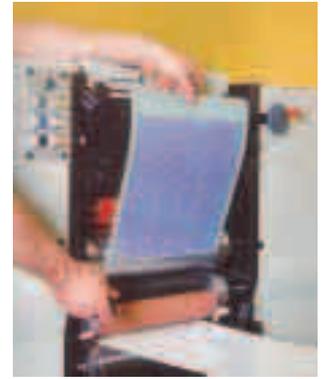
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Instant response

Apparel Maker Notations has worked closely with its labeling suppliers to accommodate rapidly changing supply chain requirements. **Natalie Martin reports**

It's telling that what Notations once considered a stopgap emergency measure for last-minute changes in tickets and tags has become a way of doing business. With the entire consumer goods industry moving toward faster cycle times, shorter seasons and automated replenishment in smaller quantities, apparel makers like Notations as well as many others must be far more nimble and flexible than even a few years ago.

'Cycle times are constantly decreasing,' says Ric Lazarus, vice president of Operations for Notations Clothing Company, a maker of women's clothing based in Huntingdon Valley, Pa. 'Approximately ten per cent of our volume is now quick response or replenishment, refilling model stocks based on automated reviews of POS statistics,' up from two per cent five years ago. 'That requires us to analyze our business in order to have the flexibility to produce in as short a time as possible without increasing cost. There is no one solution that will always meet both requirements optimally.' Notations sells apparel to customers including Filene's, Hecht's and Sears.

To respond to these market forces, Notations has deployed sophisticated technology to monitor its customers' plans and projections and balance them with its own production planning and costing. Every cut is reviewed and updated during the production cycle to ensure compliance with the latest data and forecasts. Retailers are finalizing orders later, often well after production is underway, forcing their suppliers to make constant alterations in procurement, manufacturing and transportation.

And for every alteration in order and production comes a complementary change in tag and ticket requirements, which have themselves become more exacting over the last few years.

Starting with UPC

Until about ten years ago, upscale apparel often lacked bar code labels, which some considered unsightly. But with the UPC becoming ubiquitous and accepted by consumers, some retailers purchasing Notations' apparel began requiring

manufacturers to place UPC-coded tickets on garments.

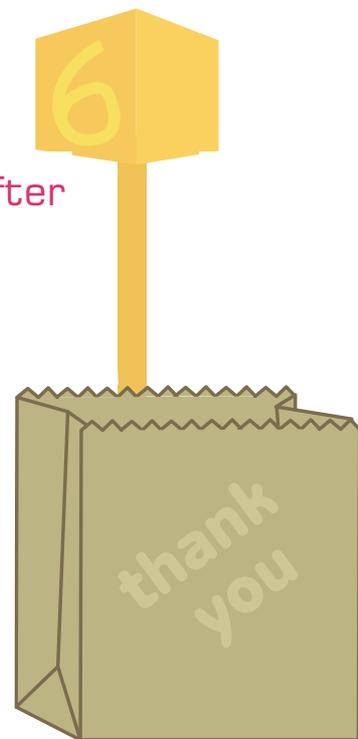
Notations turned to Avery Dennison Retail Information Services, which maintains more than 40 tag and ticket printing service bureaus throughout the world. Notations would fax ticket orders to a U.S.-based service bureau, where staff would input the requirements and execute the order.

'By being a US brand-owner, Notations' challenge is to be able to get all the components to the point of manufacture,' says Michael Shabet, account executive for Avery Dennison Retail Information Services. 'One option was to take advantage of the resources here and then ship tickets to the factory or use one of Avery Dennison's 40 in country Ticket Express Centers to produce the tickets locally at the point of manufacture.'

Later, that process was upgraded, using FTP files to electronically submit the orders directly to Avery Dennison's system via the Internet. Printed tickets would then be shipped to the Far East faster, with more accuracy and with less administrative overhead.

But as cycle times began to decrease and retail customers began making more last-minute alterations to orders, Notations found, 'we had a lot of last minute emergency needs for tickets, and with the faster order cycles we felt we would be better served by adding the ability to print tickets on site,' Lazarus recalls. Notations'

"Retailers are finalizing orders later, often well after production is underway, forcing their suppliers to make constant alterations in procurement, manufacturing and transportation"



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purchase of one Avery Dennison TTX-450 ticket printer and high-speed cutter/stacker led to two more as these demands increased. Notations uses approximately 20 contract manufacturers worldwide, with ten to 20 per cent of its production in North America, where it also operates two warehouses.

Today, tickets in US and Mexican factories are produced in-house while Far East production continues at service bureaus. 'It made sense from a cost and flexibility perspective,' Shabet notes. 'Despite the control of in-house equipment, the Ticket Express Centers can produce printed tickets in-country, which eliminates some of the customs and duties limitations and provides for local delivery with last minute changes.'

No Haggles Over Tag/Label Combo

In their efforts to respond more quickly to customer demand, retailers also began requesting that merchandise arrive floor-ready, to remove the delays and costs associated with preparing merchandise on the sales floor.

Like other makers of better apparel, Notations ships its fine garments on hangars covered with polybags to prevent wear and tear in transit. Often a paper doughnut-shaped ticket was slipped around the top of the hangar identifying the style, size and color, to help warehouse workers identify and select garments correctly.

'After a while, the retail industry found these doughnuts to be an unnecessary material that had to be discarded at their individual stores and effectively prohibited their use,' Lazarus explains. 'But the warehouse missed them.' Without the doughnut tag, warehouse workers would have to reach up under the plastic to find identifying information on the ticket or sewn-in label, or attempt to read them through the plastic.

'We had to find a way to put more information on the

“The combination tag and label ensures ticket data is consistent inside and outside the polybag. It's better than any verification system, because accuracy is embedded in the process”

garment package without diminishing the floor-ready condition of the product,' Lazarus notes.

Notations turned to its ticket provider for help. The manufacturer was among Avery Dennison's pilot participants in the development of a combination tag and label product, which consists of a detachable tag coupled with a pressure sensitive label. The tag and the label are each printed with identical barcode and human readable identification data. As the garment moves through the line, the ticket is applied to the garment, the polybag placed over it, and the label is affixed to the outside of the polybag. The polybag and label are later discarded by the retailer without any additional steps.

The combination tag and label ensures ticket data is consistent inside and outside the polybag. 'It's better than any verification system, because accuracy is embedded in the process,' Lazarus says. 'It allows us much more efficiency in





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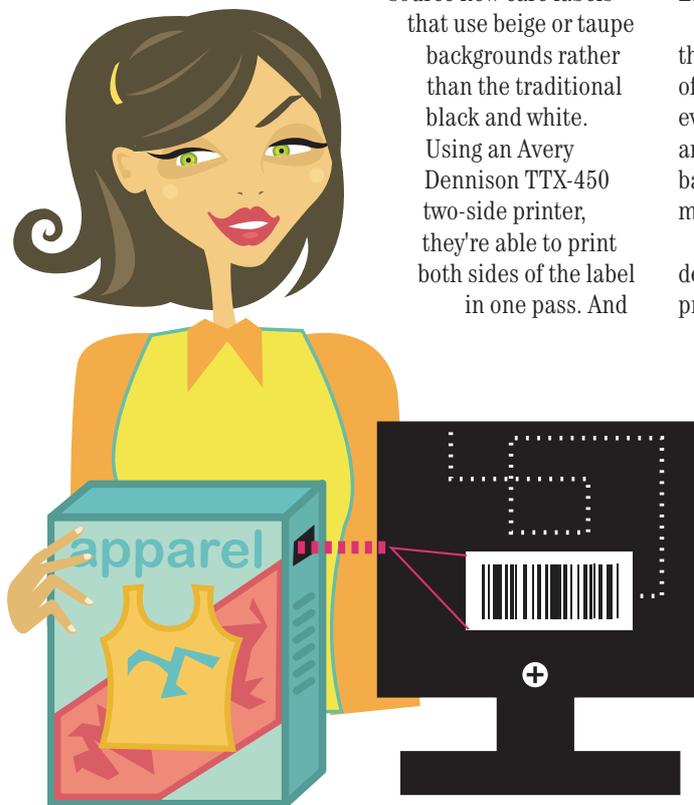
the handling of goods in the warehouse.'

Challenges continue

Most recently, Lazarus has observed increasingly stringent requirements for barcode quality. 'It's not mainstream, but large customers are beginning to do systematic tests, not only of the scannability, but of the grading of the barcode.' Many retailers require barcodes that rate an ANSI level of A or B, both on garment tickets and on the UCC-128 shipping label, and will charge back a manufacturer with substandard barcode quality.

That means not only confirming that barcodes will scan, but using verifier technology to ensure print quality and stopping to make adjustments if barcodes fall out of compliance. Notations is also considering investment in accompanying software that keeps a database of every printed label and its ANSI measurements, in order to ensure retailers that labels were in compliance when they left Notations' possession.

Notations is also working with Avery Dennison Retail information Services to source new care labels that use beige or taupe backgrounds rather than the traditional black and white. Using an Avery Dennison TTX-450 two-side printer, they're able to print both sides of the label in one pass. And



“Notations is considering software that keeps a database of every printed label and its ANSI measurements, to assure retailers that labels were in compliance when they left Notations' possession”

Lazarus is keeping a close eye on developments in RFID, which he expects will eventually become a requirement.

Seasonal factors, model stock alterations, cost-conscious retailers and a fickle fashion-buying public all put garment production planning in constant flux. Small mistakes that once were easily overcome can now cause irreparable delays in the cycle time, making the stakes higher than ever, Lazarus says.

But Notations has been able to weather the changes thanks to experience, non-stop vigilance and the assistance of technology. Staff reviews all replenishment programs every two weeks and strives to maintain availability of two and a half months' of replenishment merchandise, while balancing demand with resources required for fashion merchandise.

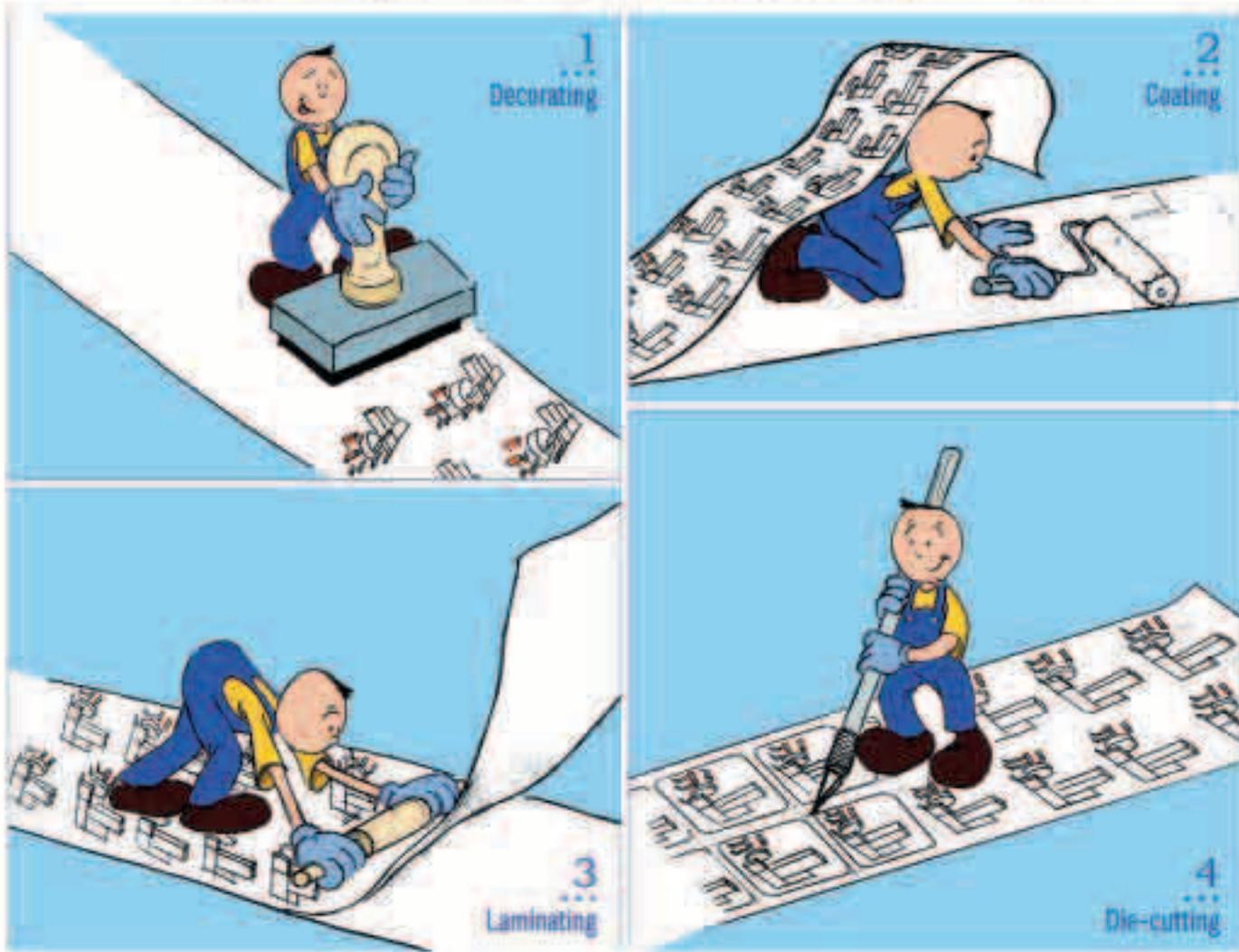
'If you can manage inventory and successfully project demand or replenishment, you have more flexibility to produce in foreign countries with longer lead times and still be able to accommodate customer needs,' Lazarus says. 'Planning gives you more time to produce goods, and you can produce them at a lower cost.'

Having the capability to accommodate both expected production and last-minute changes, in everything from procuring fabric to producing tickets and tags that comply with retailer requirements, has made Notations a capable competitor.



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Globalisation presents threats & opportunities

The first joint FINAT/TLMI conference focussed on the threats and opportunities presented by globalisation. Can supply chain members collaborate to cut costs and deliver added value to the end user in an intensely competitive environment? **Andy Thomas** reports from Vienna, Austria

Globalisation, consolidation, fragmentation

Pentti Kallio, president of the Raflatac Group, delivered the keynote speech with an analysis of the pressures and tensions in the PSA supply chain. 'Branding synergies and supply chain synergies are driving globalisation,' said Kallio. 'Converters now have to deal with a globally standardised product offering and centrally co-ordinated purchasing while offering a local service and collaborating in the supply chain.'

Unilever, for example, has cut the number of its brands from 1,600 to 400. At the same time, pan-continental buying has frustrated converters' attempts to raise prices in different regions. Kallio pointed out that converters have to manage these changes under constant downward price pressure, while costs of running a print business – excluding direct material costs and outwork – have risen continuously over the last 15 years.

Laminate manufacturers have to contend with a continued downward price trend – laminate prices last year were 87 per cent 1996 values – while their production costs have fallen at a much lower rate. The need to cut costs further while meeting the vast R&D and investment costs in coating technology are likely to drive continued consolidation. This trend has already hit raw materials suppliers with full force, with just a handful of companies devoting vast resources to develop new products for the PS market.

While consolidation continues at each end of the value chain, the European and US label converting industries remain as fragmented as ever. In Europe, just 20 per cent of label printers account for 80 per cent of output. Smaller converters lack the power and the scale to compete with other groups in cost reduction.

Figures compiled by the TLMI demonstrate the crisis faced by smaller converters. A survey of 81 companies, representing one third of the \$5.02 billion US tag and label industry, showed small converters' (under \$6M) profit margins shrink by 1.2 per cent, while medium and large converters averaged 9 per cent growth and mid-range (\$6-14.9M) converters managed 5.8 per cent.

While bigger converters' direct costs are higher than smaller companies, they are spread over a higher sales base. 'Last year you did

not want to be a small converter making labels in the US,' commented Mike Dowling, outgoing president of TLMI. 'The big are getting bigger and consolidation will continue, despite the lower margins and profitability suffered by the industry over the last few years. Large and medium companies are making money because of higher productivity and a very different cost structure.'

Gross margins remained fairly stable among US converters, but as Mike Dowling pointed out, 'We've held onto our gross margins because materials costs have been falling. We just have to increase productivity.'

Cory Reardon of consultancy group AWA raised an even more fundamental threat to the PS converter: that flexible packaging could replace labels across a wide range of applications. 'Flexible packaging is on a path of convergence with labels. Effectively, the container is direct printed, providing information, decoration and protection all in one environmentally friendly package.'

And although half the PS market is for Variable Information Printing, direct inkjet will replace many of these applications, including address labels, Reardon warned. 'Total applied cost is the most important factor, and this is a complex equation taking into account overall waste levels, energy usage and so on.'



Co-operate_{or} die?

Contained within these threats is a major opportunity: collaboration within the pressure-sensitive value chain to cut out costs and bring innovative products to market faster and more cost-effectively.

In the words of Pentti Kallio, 'we must move from a transactional to a collaborative relationship taking in all areas from R&D to product marketing and production.'

Converters must start working with key suppliers to develop new products, setting up a systematic process for screening, managing and commercialising innovations.

Rafatac US' Mark Pollard claimed that as much as three per cent could be taken out of supply chain costs simply by sharing production and planning information up and down the chain. Once trust has been established, supply chain partners could share sales plans, inventory levels and cost drivers, and eventually produce joint sales and order forecasts which they could use to plan their businesses.

None of this would initially be easy, as Pollard describes: 'In a collaborative relationship trust must be earned. You have to trust that your partner will play fair.'

Once uncertainty decreases, buffer stock can be removed. By holding stock as far back up the chain as possible, obsolescence is avoided, transport costs decreased, and deliveries are more consistent and reliable.

'We are aiming to synchronise manufacturing lifecycles,' said Pollard. 'But this always starts from what adds value to the end user and works backwards.'

A collaborative approach results in a re-engineered company, where performance indicators measure performance across the value chain and not just at the individual business.

There are good standard IT tools available to achieve collaboration once trust and a collaborative structure are achieved. EPSMA chairman Noel Mitchell told delegates that an XML-based system should be available by the end of this year to enable communication across the PS value chain.

Collaboration: A converter's view

The theme of collaboration between converters and suppliers was taken up by David Harrison, pan-European sales director of one of Europe's biggest label converters, Skanem. Harrison summed up how the demands of end users outlined above translate into priorities for Skanem:

- Reduce complexity and shorten lead times in the extended supply chain for labels
- Allow the customer to go to market with innovation at the lowest cost
- Eradicate price differentials in geographical areas

'In a collaborative relationship trust must be earned. You have to trust that your partner will play fair'

- Implement a supply chain asset management system
- Evaluate new technology which gives a competitive advantage
- Generate quantifiable and visible cost savings

Quality in printing and service are now taken for granted by end users, said Harrison, so we must work on end users' perception of value: 'Value is in the customer's mind. It is important to understand what the customer believes gives value in order to offer value. Value is based around esteem, use, cost and alternatives.'

Perception of value can be increased by proactive selling in areas like artwork management, just-in-time delivery, holding consignment stock and improving the end user's line efficiency by consulting and problem solving.

Increasing the customer's perception of value also involves eliminating the negative values – costs, downtime, waste. Harrison estimates that 25 per cent of what the end user pays for a label is eaten up by 'non-added value areas' like negotiation, labour, administration and quality control.

The converter should get involved as early as possible in the design of a new job to identify areas where costs can be taken out. Possible areas to consider:

- A common design to reduce the number of die cutters and make a label better fit a press width
- Reduction in the number of spot colours and replacement with 4-colour or hexachrome-type alternatives
- More generic reproduction – eg reducing logo changes and fixed barcode positioning
- Reducing product variants. Can a template plus-late-addition approach be considered? Can a Peel'n'Read or multiple page label reduce the number of variants?

'Quantify the impact of these changes on all areas including stock holding and distribution and how it reduces the Total Applied Label cost,' Harrison advised.

Internally, converters should harness new technologies to drive out costs and increase innovation. 'Look at areas like combination printing, variable angle shades,

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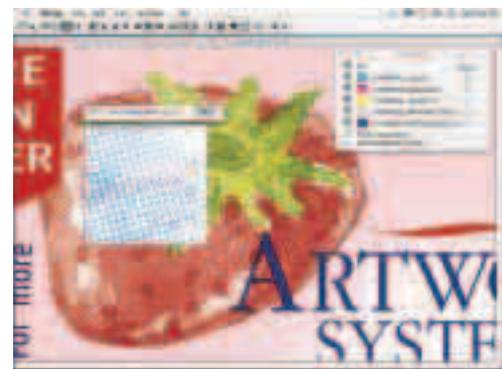
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e No. 1

security/promotional inks, die cutting which incorporates tamper evidence and laser cutting. Thin films can dramatically reduce cost, by allowing more labels on the roll, so more time between roll changeovers on the application machine and printing press.'

Collaboration across the supply chain allows the converter to rationalise production and so drive out cost:

- Jobs can be grouped by colour/cylinder/plates/volume
- Standardised winding specifications can be set
- Use core label and ink systems such as ready-to-use, low-cost 4-process colour sets, hexachrome and metallics
- More standard products can be ordered from suppliers

Harrison picked out Eckart's MetalFX silver and gold inks and BASF's Novaspac expanded gamut 4-colour system as examples of new technologies which reduce cost: 'MetalFX is not good enough to replace hot foil – cold foil perhaps – but it can create a special effect at less price'.

Collaboration: an End User perspective

Mike Fairley and Andy Thomas look at successful end user experiences with collaboration through the PS value chain.

A BP (Castrol)

'Labels are used to communicate our brand and image, to protect the brand, and to aid supply chain efficiency,' said Judith Cormack of BP (Castrol). 'The brand is key to everything we do, with the key components of the brand being the brand name, the colours and the super-graphics.'

With around 1,600 different labels for small packs, 50 labels for large packs, and some 40 changes of artwork a month, the challenge for Castrol is to reduce complexity. All artwork is outsourced, with the artwork management company liaising between Castrol and the various label suppliers.

Brand protection – both tamper and counterfeit – is provided on caps and includes tamper-evident and micro-text solutions, while the back label is used for communication of product information, health and safety information, barcodes, test information, and to meet multiple language requirements.

For large packs, drums and industrial packs, self-adhesive communication labels are printed on-line. For all production it is essential to have labels available when needed, and the necessary labelling equipment.

'We like the label supplier to be innovative,' added Cormack, 'and we are always willing to look at new developments and solutions.'

B L'Oreal

Like Castrol, l'Oreal, also needs to promote and protect its brands – using attractive shapes, colours, tactile feel, etc – using bottles and other containers, as well as to communicate legal information and add address and packer details. Again, cost reduction, pack optimisation and environmental protection are important.

'We use labels because they offer an economic solution, an aesthetic solution, and provide a good carrier of information,' explained Alain Bethune of l'Oreal France. 'Labels provide a better result than direct printing, enable flexible application and management, give last minute capabilities, and a means of applying labels in controlled, clean-room conditions. Fifty per cent of the labels we use are self-adhesive.'

In terms of usage, Bethune went on to highlight some of the problem areas they had encountered with self-adhesive labels. These include: heavy rolls, roll breaks, costly waste, under utilisation of printing presses, and the high cost of self-adhesive materials as part of the total pack cost – label cost is the second highest cost in shampoo production, for example.

'Our solution to these problems has been to work closely with our key suppliers – JPL as the label producer, Jac for materials, Gallus as a press supplier, and Krones for applicators – to develop a new labelling solution using a lighter, thinner labelstock.' Labels sizes better adapted to press widths, with less adhesive and, most importantly, to print both front and back labels at the same time, on the same roll, using only one (joint) backing paper. That is, the front and back label are printed in one press pass on the same laminate material incorporating a double-sided liner.

'The advantages for l'Oreal of this new approach to our labelling needs has been to achieve reduced label costs, reduced labelstock costs, reduced handling costs – some 30 – 35 per cent lower – simultaneous label application to the front and back of the bottle in one go, and only one roll of liner waste per product line, rather than two as before. Press time has also been saved by printing both front and back labels on opposite sides of the same web in one pass.'



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C Codi International (NL)

Codi International produces packs of 'wet wipes' with a reclosable hinge label. The product has been hugely successful and is available in a wide range of variants. The reclosable label is a multi-layer laminate, printed flexo or letterpress then over-laminated and/or varnished. This label has an exceedingly tough specification: it must open and close 80 times; it must have chemical resistance to a cocktail of different chemicals found in the wipes while withstanding sunlight and temperature changes. Potential problems include inconsistent label release; curling of the label after release; nicks or damage caused by the die cut break system.

'So there are a lot of risk factors which require close relationships with our suppliers,' says Codi's Paul Achterberg. 'We agree quality parameters and liabilities down the supply chain to define each company's responsibility, from the die maker to the converter and adhesive manufacturer. We lay down quality assurance tests based around FINAT and ISO and write out the testing plans.'

Codi's future plans focus on continued price reduction and increased differentiation. Cost cutting strategies could include material downgauging, using fewer colours, using a transparent label, use of permanent (remove once) adhesives instead of removables for some applications.

'At the same time branded customers are looking for novelties using decorative techniques such as holograms, special inks, embossing, gloss or tactile finishes, foil blocking. All these solutions would need to focus on cost effectiveness and quality,' says Achterberg.

Briefs

Smart labels

Sjaak J. Elmendorp looked at 'functional' or 'smart' labels. The first generation gives information about the product: time temperature indicators, for example. But the next generation will interact with the product, as in the case of food freshness preservers or mould inhibitors which directly measure bacteria emissions. 'These work quite accurately.' Avery has also looked at labels which actively preserve food by emitting chlorine dioxide. This is now FDA approved. Other types of label could 'smell' by 'fingerprinting' certain aromas.

At the same time reclosure labels, micro-replicated films and anti-fog films provide fascinating areas to develop new applications. Elmendorp also discussed the latest developments in low cost RFID using Alien Technology's light deposition process, with a target cost of just 5 Euro Cents – significantly below today's costs.

Letterpress CTP

BASF's Michael Zeller presented a paper on the company's Nyloprint D letterpress CTP plate, which can be produced on existing flexo CTP systems. Nyloprint D incorporates a water soluble black ablation layer which is imaged by the laser in exactly the same way as with a digital flexo plate.

BASF says the process delivers decreased dot gain and better control over dot formation. The oxygen inhibition process at the plate surface reduces the size of the highlight dots (although it is impossible to predict by exactly how much), so a 2 per cent dot shrinks to around 1.2 per cent. Digital letterpress plates are 15-20 per cent more expensive than standard plates.

Waste issues

Jacques van Leeuwen looked at the European Union's packaging waste legislation as it affects label converters. The key points:

- In Germany and Italy from 2005 combustible materials can no longer be buried in landfills. 'We need a system to offer our materials for incineration,' said van Leeuwen
- The UK has 'over-reacted' to its late implementation of the EU packaging directive and broken ranks with its European partners by classifying release liner as packaging waste which has to be recovered. This needs to be addressed
- A revision to the EC packaging waste directive is in progress. An earlier proposal to treat liner as packaging waste has now been removed, and it will be treated as process waste. However, landfill costs will continue to increase, so a long term solution has to be found. The only current recycling capacity in Europe is operated by Ahlstrom in Germany, which has demonstrated de-siliconisation as a viable process

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The pressure sensitive market

Several sets of figures were presented for the current state of the pressure sensitive market in Europe and the US. Figures from the TLMI's latest converter survey showed overall sales went into decline (-0.1 per cent) for the first time in the industry's history in 2002, following a growth of only 0.6 per cent in 2001. 'The last two years have been very tough and it's no longer the growth industry it was in the mid-'90s,' said Mike Dowling.

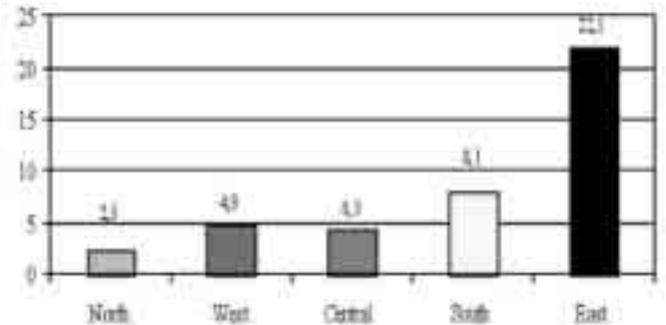
Noel Mitchell, president of the European Pressure Sensitive Manufacturer's Association (EPSMA), presented figures which show overall growth of 6.9 per cent in pressure sensitive materials in Europe last year, up from 5.5 per cent in 2001. However, these figures disguise a much lower growth of 2.3 per cent in Northern Europe while Eastern Europe is booming with double digit growth (21 per cent) and Southern Europe catching up fast with 8.1 per cent. Average growth in the 'mature' markets of North, West and Central Europe is below 5 per cent.

In materials terms, European growth is driven by non-paper rolls, with consumption growing by a staggering 33 per cent in Eastern Europe and around 13 per cent across the rest of the continent. Overall non-paper volume increased from 17.8 per cent to 19.2 per cent between 2001 and 2002, while all other segments decreased as a percentage in overall terms.

EPSMA's outlook for 2003 is for continued growth – particularly in non-paper rolls – although it is hard to predict the effect of SARS and the Iraq war, as well as major increases in polymer and pulp prices.

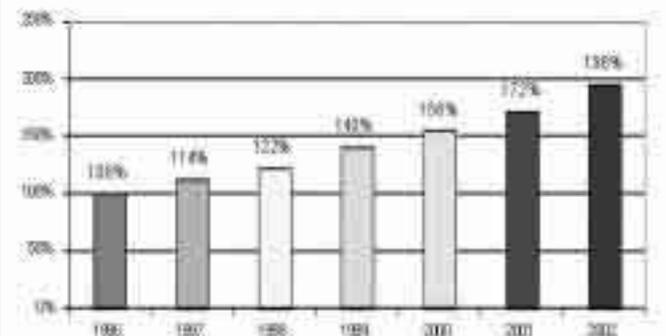
Raflatac's Pentti Kallio also noted that there was still good growth potential in selected end-use sectors like beverage, logistics and office labels, which are all showing double digit growth. Latin America and Asia-Pacific are also growing fast.

Percentage growth by European region in 2002



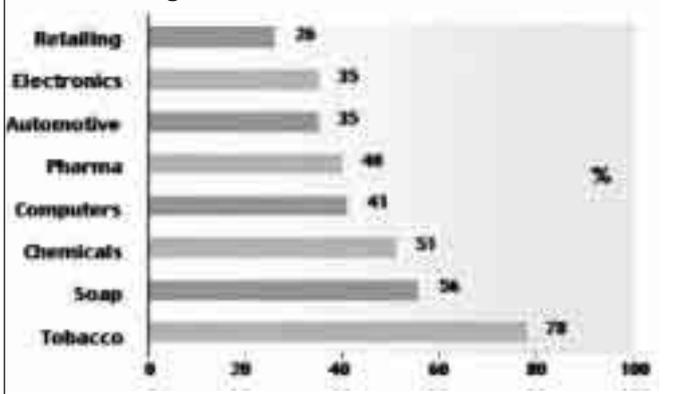
Source: EPSMA

Relative Growth Non-Paper Rolls – Europe



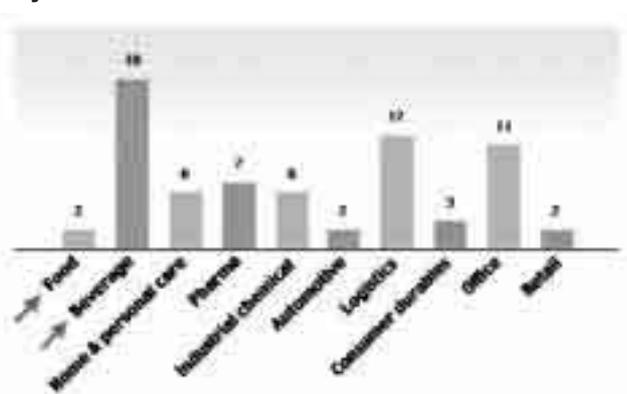
Source: EPSMA

Level of Globalization by industry. Foreign assets against total assets



Source: Raflatac

Self-adhesive Labels % growth estimate by end-uses



Source: Raflatac

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Both rewind and unwind tensions are fully and independently adjustable. The unwind also has a programmable end of roll function via the HMI, which allows the operator to select the end of roll diameter.

An electronic web guide ensures that the finished rolls are perfectly wound and an inspection table with adjustable splicing facility (with pneumatic clamps) is fitted as standard, enabling splices to be made both neatly and easily.

Pneumatic shafts for both the unwind and rewind means that changing rolls could not be simpler, and a web advance system makes it easy to attach the web to the core when starting a new roll.

- Web width 330mm (13") or 410mm (16")



Daco DT 250

Bench Top Slitter Rewinder

Daco Solutions prides itself in providing practical and reliable machines, which are easy to use.

The Daco DT 250 Bench Top Slitter Rewinder was introduced to the product range, because customers were asking on a regular basis for a cost effective, simple to use slitter rewinder.

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- Maximum web width 254mm (10")



Daco 3

Combi Turret Rewinder

The Daco 3 Combi Turret Rewinder offers the most flexible converting machine available today. Its unique design allows both inline and offline operation without modification. The 3 spindle turret offers quick change over times, which coupled with a HMI operator interface makes the machine both interactive and user friendly.

When used inline the machine can be simply positioned on the end of any rotary printing press, (no inter-linking is required), and with just an electrical and pneumatic supply it is ready for production.

Inline only version also available.

- Web width 330mm (13") or 410mm (16")



Daco DTD 250

Bench Top Rotary Diecutter

After consulting clients, Daco Solutions identified a need for a bench top rotary die cutter. Clients indicated that they were either producing on old label presses which did not have sufficient speed or they were producing on new multi colour presses. Neither situation is ideal, as the cost of the label is very high, due to machine speeds or the high cost of using a multi colour press.

Daco Solutions have built the Daco DTD, a high-speed bench top machine capable of 150 metres a minute, which is available with one or two die stations. We firmly believe that the machine is more efficient than producing blanks on an old label press and definitely more cost effective than using a higher speed multi colour press.

Daco now have a total solution to blank label production. For the small to medium runs, the Daco DTD is ideal. For the longer run and high volume production the Daco DSI and with run-stop full automation we have the Daco TD - a Daco turret rewinder with a 1 metre unwind and either one or two rotary die stations, tail gluing and automatic roll ejection.



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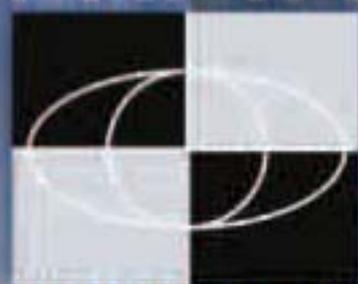
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Developments in **label** and **security printing**



Mike Fairley reports from Barcelona on the recent DPP2003 Conference

A comprehensive assessment of the technology and applications of digital printing in packaging labels and security printing was a key part of this year's DPP2003 International Conference on Digital Production Printing and Industrial Applications.

Held at the Hilton Barcelona Hotel in Spain, the conference attracted a wide range of delegates to hear over 100 presentations on topics as diverse as the digital production of books to grand format printing, as well as to see poster displays and visit a technology fair.

As one of the initial papers in the packaging labels and security printing sessions, an overview of security topics in the printing industry was provided by Annette Jaffe, a consultant. Jaffe commented that 'it was always interesting to talk about security printing – but you can't actually say anything, otherwise it is no longer secure.'

Nevertheless, she still managed to provide a very interesting paper in which she highlighted the fact that digital technology had made counterfeiting easier, that the forensic aspects of digital printing were more difficult to assess than with conventional printing, and that the legal systems for prosecution of digital counterfeiting lag behind those in conventional printing technology.

'Today,' she explained, 'it has become more and more difficult to control counterfeiting. In the past it was mainly carried out by offset printing, now there are a wide variety of digital printing and colour copier technologies available – and it is easy to buy such equipment. The quality of digital print is good, and you don't even need to know how to print to produce counterfeit documents or labels, just how to use a scanner, computer and printer. And continuing improvements in low-cost digital printing systems makes it ever easier to counterfeit today.'

'Traditionally, counterfeiting was mainly linked with currency; now it's increasingly moving to packaging and labels, with counterfeits produced by ink jet printing systems experiencing the most rapid growth. The goal for the industry was therefore to make it economically unfeasible to produce counterfeits by ink jet by building in multiple security features – in layers – into the print.'

Certainly, the possibility of being able to produce label and packaging print digitally, and in the same production pass, being able to include security and anti-counterfeiting features, leads to new considerations and business models that can make digital printing a worthwhile investment, explained Jan Van Laethem, manager security systems, dotrix nv.

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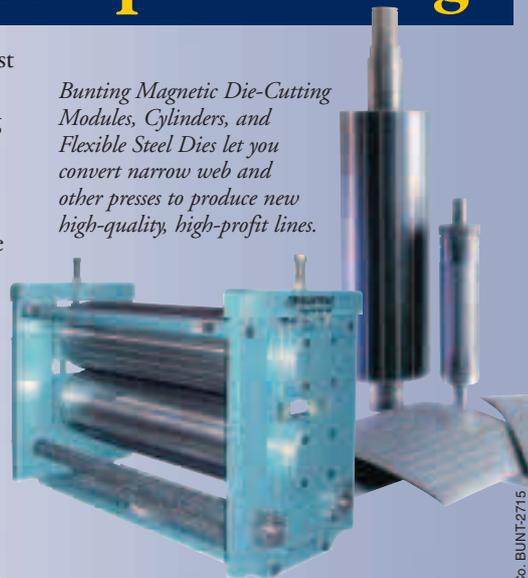
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goods, as well as to prove their authenticity, the ability to digitally print anti-counterfeiting and/or brand protection measures, along with the label or pack design itself, is becoming an increasingly important feature. A feature which has enormous advantages in terms of production costs, as the security features are printed without any extra print or conversion stages.'

To provide this security and brand protection element into labels and packaging, dotrix has introduced a special digital watermark feature, as provided by dotrix partner Alpvision. This watermark does not require the presence of a photograph or any other kind of bitmap picture to conceal the digital image. Rather, the digital



“For the future, dotrix is building a new breed of digital ink jet colour printing devices that will be able to print labels and packaging in quantity, to a good quality, with digital anti-counterfeiting features”

watermark (a series of small yellow dots) is integrated almost invisibly into the existing label design.

‘When ‘the.factory’ is printing the design, the security information contained in the digital watermark is printed at the same time – which makes it quite cost-effective to produce a protected label or package – and there are no extra production stages required,’ said Mr Laethem. ‘Additionally, it doesn’t interfere in any way with the brand image.’

‘The Cryptoglyph we use is a covert feature,’ he added, ‘and it cannot be seen by the naked eye. It needs to be read by a special scanning device and then de-ciphered by dedicated software. What’s more, the dots are in a different position on every label, which makes it impossible for the counterfeiter to detect them on each and every print.’

For the future, dotrix is building a new breed of digital ink jet colour printing devices that will be able to print labels and packaging in quantity, to a good quality, with the digital anti-counterfeiting features built into the software package.

The topic of using digital printing to build in security and brand protection features to labels was also discussed by Mike Fairley of the Tarsus Group, who highlighted the results of a recent survey of label printers with digital presses, and of end users, into the use and requirements of digital security printing.

‘Without exception,’ he explained, ‘every digital label printer surveyed believed

there was a key opportunity for digital printing in security and brand protection applications, particularly for the printing of unique codes, for anti-counterfeiting solutions, for random numbering, the combining of digital print with holograms and for custom and variable imaging.

‘However, what almost all of the digital label printers’ needed from suppliers, before these opportunities could be exploited, was for more security software and technology development, for assistance and guidance with improving security procedures, systems and audits, and for the technology suppliers to make it easier and more effective to undertake security features on digital label presses. Brand owners too, when surveyed, expressed a perceived need for digital brand protection colour solutions.’

Outside of the security printing side of digital printing for packaging and labels at the conference, there were a number of papers that reviewed digital technology or looked at the types of applications that are successful in these markets, as well as at some of the innovative business concepts and market approaches that make this possible.

Frank Jacobs of Xeikon International for example, explained that producing labels digitally implied more than just putting an image on a substrate from a file. Digital workflow, die-cutting, coating and other finishing aspects, could not be underestimated. It was for this reason that digital press suppliers provided consulting and integration services that help and support customers in integrating a digital press into their workflow and production facility.

‘For the end customer (print buyer) it is not relevant how his labels are produced,’ he said. ‘Digital printing is only viable if it can add value for the end customer. This is the key: the digital label printer should focus on added value and services he can deliver to his customer with the integration of a digital press into his business.’

‘Typical advantages of digital presses are: virtually no job related set-up time of a press, low cost short run capability, short job preparation time, variable data printing ability.’ He explained, ‘Successful digital printers don’t sell digital print. They sell a service that outperforms their traditional competitors, originating from the complement of a traditional label press and a digital label press, or originating from an application built upon a specific advantage of a digital press.’

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Frank Jacobs illustrated his presentation with a number of case history examples of the successful use of digital label printing for a hotel group and examples from the packaging and end-user sectors.

Similarly, Kristel Moncarey of dotrix N.V. highlighted that flexible packaging and labels are by far the most profitable and dynamic packaging sectors, accounting for a total converted value of \$72.35 billion per year worldwide. 'It goes without saying,' she said, 'that the players in these markets can profit highly from industrial digital colour printing as the consumer goods, label and packaging manufacturers experience the growing need for short-run printing, as variable items becoming stronger in the printing industry.'

'The number of one-reel jobs is growing each year. To stay competitive, consumer producer companies will have to embrace digital printing and, with the current Drop-on-Demand full colour inkjet technology, new areas are open for industrial digital printing. Size, production and cost are approaching the market requirements for short run,' says Moncarey.

'Characteristic for the flexible packaging and label market are the numerous finishing processes and the print material used. Here, discussions are endless when it comes to in-line versus off-line finishing. On-line finishing is often said to be the ultimate goal. However, while the digital press can print various short run jobs one after the other, the finishing equipment requires changing for every format or design change. Optimising the press and finishing time is therefore to the advantage of off-line systems where the maximum benefit of speed and modularity of both systems can be used.'

She also added that the thickness of substrate too, is irrelevant in non-contact inkjet printing as the distance between the print unit and the substrate can be tuned. Substrate settings are set once, saved and re-loaded when the substrate is ready to run again. Flexibility is the key. Non-contact printing also allows good waste management of the substrate.

In terms of run length, Kristal Moncarey explained that dotrix had compared cost factors for a specific job printed on a conventional UV-flexo press with those of an industrial digital inkjet press. 'The crossing point in run length, at which conventional printing becomes more profitable than digital, enables digital to meet the current demand for one or two reel orders, with digital inkjet systems offering economic advantages at various levels:

- Minimal set-up times and minimal set-up waste
- Up to the mark packages
- Rapid changeover times
- Only one variable/consumable cost; ink
- High speed printing of variable images using the fastest grey scale heads available
- No inventory or plates/sleeves
- No proofs
- No inventory of pre-printed stock

'We believe that inkjet, with its increased productivity and performance capabilities, will increasingly drive the economics for short-run and digital printing in the packaging and labels markets.'

On a more specific technical basis, UV curing of ink jet printing for applications in product labels, barcode and date code printing, sequential numbering, addressing and other markets was reviewed by Dick Stowe of Fusion UV Systems who said that, 'A UV curing system for ink jet printing should be thought of as consisting of three components, all integrally related. These components were: the application, and particularly the end product it produces, which determines the physical properties of the cured photochemistry; the photochemistry itself, which is designed to achieve the target properties on exposure to the appropriate radiation, and the UV lamp system, which has a number of key variables.'

'Essentially the effectiveness of a UV curing system for inkjet printing is the practical result of a process design that combines the method of application of the ink, the photochemistry of the UV-curable inks, and the lamp design into a successful integrated system with wide operating limits.'

Other papers presented in the field of digital printing of packaging included, 'Packaging and Corrugated Displays', by Ronen Zioni of Aprion Digital, 'Tribological Examination of Digital Packaging Prints', by Branka Lozo of the University of Zagreb, and 'Dry Toner Based Electrographic Printing of Extrusion Coated Packaging Boards', by Johanna Lahti of the Institute of Paper Converting at Tampere University in Finland.

Copies of the full proceedings of the DPP2003 Conference can be obtained from The Society for Imaging Science and Technology.

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Metallic breakthrough



A group of industry suppliers has developed a technique for overprinting CMYK onto a silver base, opening up the possibility to print hundreds of metallic colours with just one extra ink.

Andy Thomas reports.

MetalFX Technology has developed a method of printing hundreds of metallic colours by adding only one spot silver base to the usual CMYK printing mix.

Leading European brands such as Marks and Spencer and Safeway are now lining up to use the process on their packaging, labels and other printed media.

Prior to MetalFX, if a print specifier required more than one metallic colour, printers would have to add a separate ink for each one - one for a gold colour, then one for a silver, another for a metallic blue and so on.

Andrew Ainge, managing director of MetalFX Technology Ltd, comments: 'The idea of over-printing CMYK onto a silver base has always been there. We could see that potentially millions of metallic colours could be printed by adding only one ink, so we set about developing a system to achieve this.'

Ainge worked closely with leading names in the print industry to overcome the formidable technical challenges involved. Creo, Gretag Macbeth, M-Real, Kodak, Komori, Eckart and Wolstenholme International and Huber Group's Stehlin Hostag UK are all now billed as MetalFX's strategic partners.

Eckart and Wolstenholme International were commissioned to create the MFX range of silver base inks for multiple printing platforms, including litho and flexo, with an increased tack level. The tack level of the CMYK ink set was reduced to bring it in line with the silver ink, so that the desired trapping would be effective. This prevented rub off. The semi-transparency of the CMYK placed on top then allowed the silver to show through and thus create a range of vibrant metallic colours.

To combat screen clash/moiré when printing in MetalFX, Creo UK Ltd were approached to trial FM staccato screening,

which avoids all screen angles. The results were successful, ensuring that the majority of printers throughout the world can utilise the technology and have an industry standard approval.

Stehlin Hostag UK was commissioned to create an improved sealer that will not diminish the brilliance and lustre of the metallic, as can currently be a problem with spot metallic inks. CMYK, however, when placed on top of the silver was acting as a sealer, preventing rub off on the silver, and thus MetalFX was able to use a watered down sealer, that would not kill the metallic effect.

GretagMacbeth, the colour management specialist, successfully tested the colour consistency and accuracy of MetalFX. So, provided the press is calibrated and using the correct densities, colour should match consistently.

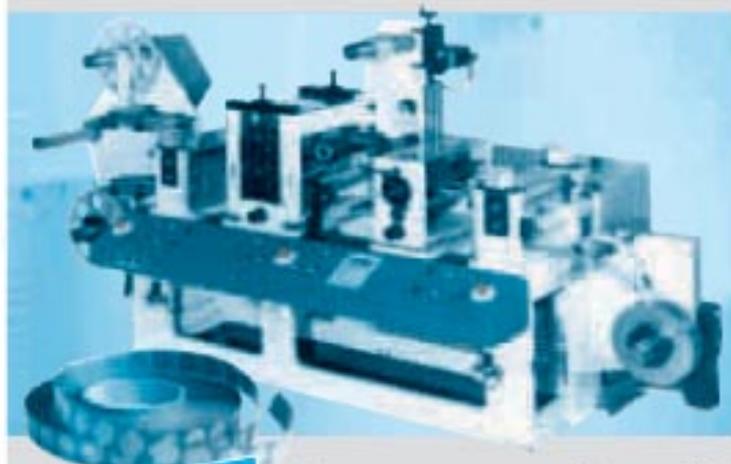
Prior to MetalFX, the proofing of metallic colours was rarely accurate. MFX approached Kodak Polychrome Graphics for a proofing solution, and was able to utilise Kodak proofing devices to create all 615 metallic colours in the present MFX range.

Metallic Markets

'We see three connected markets for MetalFX,' says Ainge, 'Firstly, of course, there are the printers. In order for us to control the quality of MetalFX wherever it is printed, printers must first apply for the MFX License. We then run print trials and, if successful, the printer pays a one-off fee. The printer can then sell MetalFX to his clients, adding value to his offering.'

The company now has over two hundred and thirty printers on its web-site list. MFX has just signed up its first European printer - W Gassman in Switzerland - and is looking for printers worldwide to pioneer the process.

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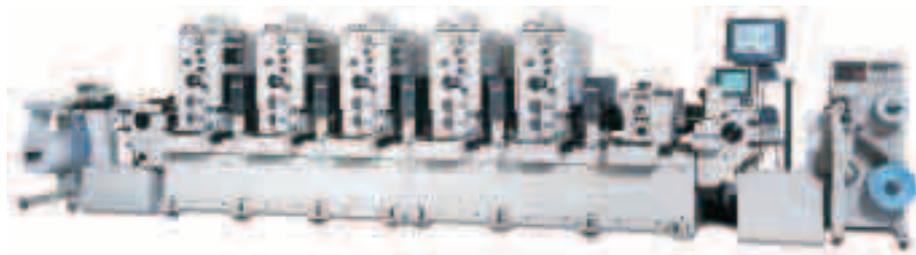


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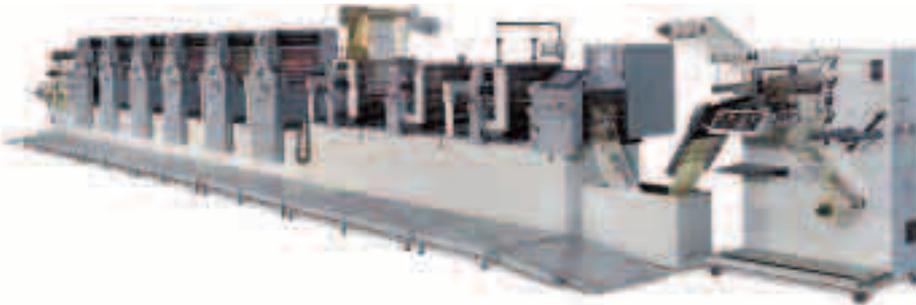
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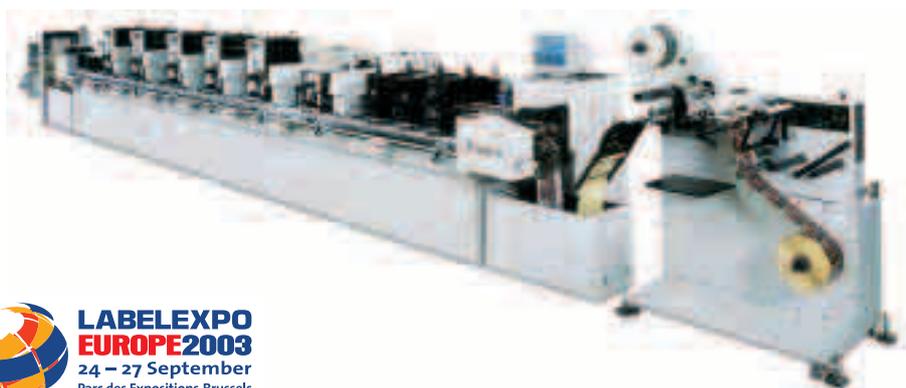
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A designer pack is now available with full swatches of metallic effects



The second market for MetalFX, says Ainge, is designers; 'The creative possibilities with MetalFX and the effects it can create are inspiring to designers. Our metallics can be used to produce some amazing effects.

'We've got LiteFX, for example. This can make text reappear as the light hits it, ideal for attracting the attention of consumers passing a product on supermarket shelves. Designers can create things that have never been seen before, and their clients need only pay out for the one base ink, so it's very cost effective.'

The company's web-site, www.metal-fx.com, acts as an e-commerce centre for the MetalFX Designers' Kits – a package containing the MFX User Guide, colour recipe book and software that is compatible with all the major platforms such as Illustrator and Quark.

The third market, says Ainge, is brand owners:

'These are the end users, and therefore the people we want to be aware of the technology, what it can achieve, and how economical it is to use. We have been overwhelmed by the amount of interest the technology is gathering. We have run trials for the most of the top band names in the world.'

Stuart Lendrum, buying manager-procurement packaging at leading UK retailer Safeway Stores plc agrees:

'We are very excited by the design and print opportunities offered by MetalFX Technology, and we eagerly anticipate

developing their use within our own branded packaging. We are currently planning to lead the way by introducing MetalFX on both our Luxury Christmas and Best Christmas ranges.'

Other companies such as Marks & Spencer and Proctor and Gamble have also undergone MetalFX trials on new and existing packaging ranges.

Another area where MetalFX is likely to be of interest is the security printing sector. Security text and images can be achieved by using varying percentages of metallic to create multiple effects. HoloFX, for example, makes subliminal patterns, text and logos appear and disappear as the product is moved. The results here are not only visually stunning, but impossible to forge or copy.

MetalFX has launched its own on-site training facility, the MetalFX Print Academy. Supported by the Leeds College of Print in the UK, the Academy acts as a centre where printers, designers and brand owners from

throughout Europe come to learn more about the technology, the processes involved and the effects that MetalFX can achieve. With the help of its strategic partners, MetalFX hopes to open more of these Academies at key locations around the world.

The UK Academy is soon to have its first visit from beyond Europe, with Man Roland eager to pioneer the technology in Australia via their company 'Print and Pack'. Heidelberg is another strategic partner.

“Security text and images can be achieved by using varying percentages of metallic to create multiple effects”

Hot stamp revolution



A key innovation which can be seen at this year's Labelexpo Europe is the UniFlex hot stamp rotary die, which looks set to revolutionise the economics of hot stamping on narrow web presses.

Andy Thomas reports.

RotoMetrics has been named as one of two winners of the Flexographic Technical Association 2003 Technical Innovation Award. It serves as the exclusive distributor of UniFlex Hot Stamp Rotary Dies, developed by UEI Group, Overland Park, KS, for which Rotometrics designed and manufactured a magnetic cylinder to serve as the die's base.

Steve Lee, vice president, RotoMetrics and Larry Hutchison, president of UEI Group, reported that the intention behind UniFlex was to develop a die that would be less costly to manufacture or tool and that would allow flexographic printers to compete by adding more value-enhanced processes, such as foil stamping, to their offerings. They further observed: 'The die had to have a ferrous surface that would mount to a magnetic base and a non-ferrous/ferromagnetic surface that you could engrave into.' Copper and steel were bonded in a special combination in order to provide the right level of etchability and magnetic attraction. 'We used a molecular bond of very high temperature and very high pressure that actually melds the two materials together.'

For UniFlex dies, Hutchison estimated a requisite temperature of 1,900 degrees F. to melt the bonded metals. 'Obviously, no hot-stamping application is running near the heat that would be required to do that,' he said.

Commenting on RotoMetrics' involvement, Lee stated, 'We developed a cylinder that could be used successfully with the plate. It has a combination of high-strength magnets and regular-strength magnets.' The magnets in this special combination are precision and accurately ground with proprietary technology that ensures the cylinder will work when they get on the press.'

Hutchinson stressed, 'With UniFlex, the benefits are many. The cost of the rotary hot-stamping die is greatly reduced, and turnaround time is greatly decreased.' According to UEI, UniFlex dies take only one to five minutes to install.

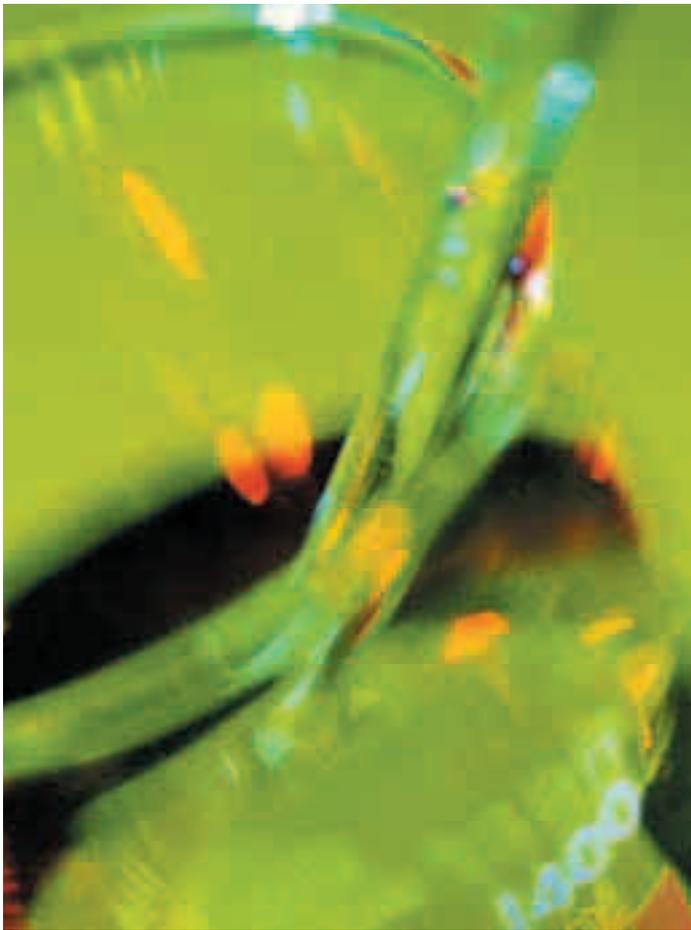
'UniFlex dies are only 30 to 40 percent of the cost of solid rotary cylinders,' confirmed Adrian Brown, managing director for Olympus Labels in the UK, which pioneered using the new system. 'UniFlex dies are lightweight and are .028 inches thick. This makes UniFlex dies safer to handle and easier to store. It also reduces the cost of shipping and makes handling and changeover easier and faster. In addition, the dies are interchangeable and can even be mounted while the cylinder is hot, provided the individual is using proper safety equipment.'

According to material submitted to FTA, the estimated return on investment associated with UniFlex dies increases substantially with each die purchased. Repeat jobs increase the ROI even further. Turnaround time for UniFlex dies approximate one to two days, as compared to four to five days for a solid cylinder.

Fine Details

'As we've introduced this product to the marketplace, one question that has continued to come up is how it handles as far as cleanliness of foil stamping,' comments Steve Lee. 'The criteria for good foil stamping are the brilliance of the print/foil transfer, the speed at which it can be achieved and the cleanliness of the transfer. With UniFlex, there is no deterioration of quality in any one of those categories. As far as brilliance goes, there's no reason, from a tooling standpoint, that the foil, when stamped, should not stay as brilliant as it is on the roll.'

'And if you are concerned about multiple repeat lengths, that, too, is no longer an issue from a cost perspective. With the addition of gearless or servo-driven presses, theoretically, you should only need one hot-stamp magnetic cylinder to mount dies to. With one magnetic cylinder, all you have after the capital investment is the individual die costs.'



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e No.151



Mauro Fadiga, marketing director at leading pressure sensitive Italian convertor Arca, explains how labelling equipment fits into the marketing strategy of a label producer.



As everyone knows, the standard of quality in the modern self-adhesive market has increased dramatically in recent years. Good quality and innovative inks, raw materials, dies and plates are shown at many international exhibitions and, for those without time to travel, the internet is a good way to find solutions which ten years ago were known exclusively to leading companies with money and time to invest in research and development.

Nowadays it is possible for everyone to buy very good printing equipment for a reasonable price and, with a single modular modern press, to print wonderful labels using many different processes (offset, flexo, silk-screen etc).

This situation results in a highly competitive market, in which competitive systems (like 'sleeves') are growing and every label producer, even the biggest, has a number of competitors able to print exactly the same pressure sensitive label, with the same quality result! Of course, there will always be a market for 'special' labels but, for large scale production, being 'innovative' is becoming harder and harder and the fight is moving from 'product' to 'service'.

Obviously it is important to be quick, flexible and punctual. But this is not all: customers look for 'consultations'; i.e. good ideas (preferably free of charge) and, above all, customers want to reduce the number of their suppliers and appreciate those able to guarantee a 'process', rather than a product!

Know about labellers to help your customers

For a label producer, providing 'added value' consultations for customers is not easy. Regarding the graphic solution, customers are in the hands of advertising agencies and packaging designers who have learned that, nowadays, a good label producer can realize almost everything - different printing systems, mixed techniques, no-label look, leaflet labels, etc.). Only a few solutions, in this area, can still prove 'innovative' for the customer.

Regarding raw materials, the label producer can do a little, by being very well informed about new self-adhesive products available on the market. But major suppliers such as Avery Dennison, Raflatac, Ritrama or 3M, are increasingly active in getting in touch directly with major final customers to propose their novelties.

So, looking to the future, how will a label producer be able to give 'added value ideas' to his customers?

One solution could be knowing about labellers and the labelling process!

What the tricks of the "labelling" trade can be worth for customers

Just one example:

The majority of self-adhesive labels consumers buy labels in reels with a diameter of between 250 and 280 mm. Now, if a label producer suggests buying 380 mm diameter reels, he will obtain a double success.

During the labelling operation, the customer will dramatically decrease the frequency with which the label reel on his equipment needs to be changed. This, with a consequent considerable saving of time. In fact, if we compare, for example, a 280 mm diameter reel, with a 380 mm one, we find that the number of labels contained in the latter is almost double!

For the majority of labellers on the market a larger reel holder is, normally, an inexpensive optional. So, why should a customer do without this advantage?

An advantage which is important also for the few customers equipped with "no-stop" labelling devices; because, even if the production line does not stop, the time the operators take to change the reels is, nevertheless, expensive (they could use their time for other operations).

Naturally some customers already buy big reels, but many do not and for them a label producer who knows about labellers could supply a very high 'added value consultation'.

The label producer will also obtain a saving himself. In fact, increasing the diameter of the reels, reduces the number of stoppages on the inspection, slitting and rewinding machine. Furthermore, the number of boxes for packing decreases. So a larger reel means lower costs for the label producer; an important saving, above all, for big orders.



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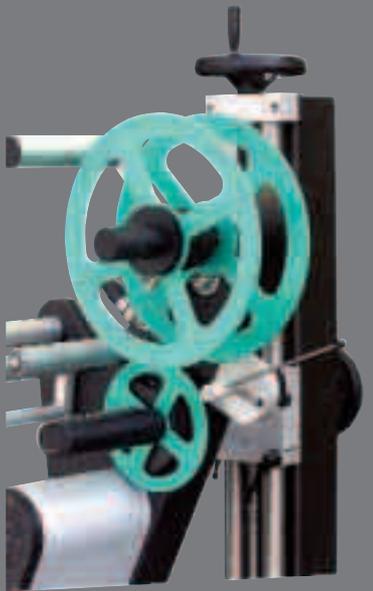
Reducing labels complaint costs, by knowing about labellers

Knowing the tricks of the “labelling” trade, a label producer can acquire the image of consultant for his customers. But another important advantage is the possibility of decreasing the cost of complaints made about his labels!

A typical example is the problem of excessive liner die-cutting.

Label producers know this complaint very well. In fact die-cutting can still be a critical operation in the production process. Cutting through the liner is of course a fault, but to a certain extent ‘marking’ the liner is normal. The problem, in some cases, is to establish to what degree marking is normal!

(Right) A ‘low label’ control equipped with acoustic luminous alarm, allows a well-timed operator intervention in order to replace the finished reel



(Above) A big reel holder with a 380 mm diameter

“Naturally some customers already buy big reels, but many do not and for them a label producer who knows about labellers could supply a very high ‘added value consultation”



“When the customer sees the liner break during the labelling operation he usually complains to the label producer. But sometimes, the problem is the labeller or, at least, it is part of the problem!”

Unfortunately, when the customer sees the liner break during the labelling operation he usually complains to the label producer. But sometimes, the problem is the labeller or, at least, it is part of the problem!

Above all for high-speed applications, the forces with which the label reel is unwound and the liner reel rewound, can be incorrect. In this case the wrong tension is produced and the liner breaks. It is, of course, a very complicated technical matter. Many different factors are involved: the global tension of the liner in the labeller, the acceleration ramp with which the unwind and rewinding forces are applied, the profile of the peeler and others.

So, what can a label producer do to check whether the problem is really in his labels or in the labeller? The only way is to know the technical side of the matter and have a good labeller to do tests on!

In any case it is not easy to approach the problem with the customer. But, if the label producer can show him the labels being dispensed properly on a good labeller set up correctly, maybe the customer will realize that the problem is in his labeller or in the way it is set up and used!

In the majority of cases, where the customers have dispensing problems, both components of the system are not perfect. But, even when labels are clearly defective, often, by adjusting the labeller, the labels can still be used by the customer.

Obviously, the label producer has to aim for high quality. But, sometimes, finding the way to use a batch of “imperfect labels” means saving a lot of money and enabling the customer to continue his production without stopping.

How to control the process

Some label producers cooperate occasionally with a labeller manufacturer. But this is not easy!

The labeller manufacturer, basically, asks the label producer to introduce him to the customer. It is hard for him to share his technical knowledge with a label producer who deals with the matter only occasionally. Furthermore, the labeller manufacturer is obliged by the market to cooperate with many label producers (in competition amongst themselves) and this does not simplify relations with him.

Let's look at the problem from the label producer's point of view: When a

customer has a problem with our labels, we have to react immediately. In that situation it is hard enough to coordinate the intervention of our own company, let alone trying to coordinate joint intervention with a labeller manufacturer .

So, the only effective solution for the label producer who needs to control the entire process, is to sell labellers too!

There are many labeller manufacturers looking for distributors. So, for the label producer who wants to enter this business, it is not necessary to become a ‘manufacturer’. Distributing labellers produced by a third party, cuts out all the heavy R & D costs and the need to reach a minimum production volume. Nevertheless, many label producers are still reluctant because it requires a technical structure (at least one technician) to install and maintain the equipment and this means that a minimum sales volume is necessary, to cover expenses andmake a profit. Yes, because, in addition to supporting the traditional label business, reselling labellers can be very profitable!

Making money with a complementary business

The last aspect of the matter is the marketing one. Without doubt everyone knows how expensive and difficult it is to acquire a customer. Consequently it is logical to maximise our good relations with those we have. That is why many companies improve their product mix: to sell more to the customer who has tried, tested and accepted them as a supplier. In fact, increasing the product mix is useful, above all when you already “have the customer” for the product you intend to add.

On the other hand, to be credible and efficient, every company has to remain focused on one specific technology, or several complementary ones.

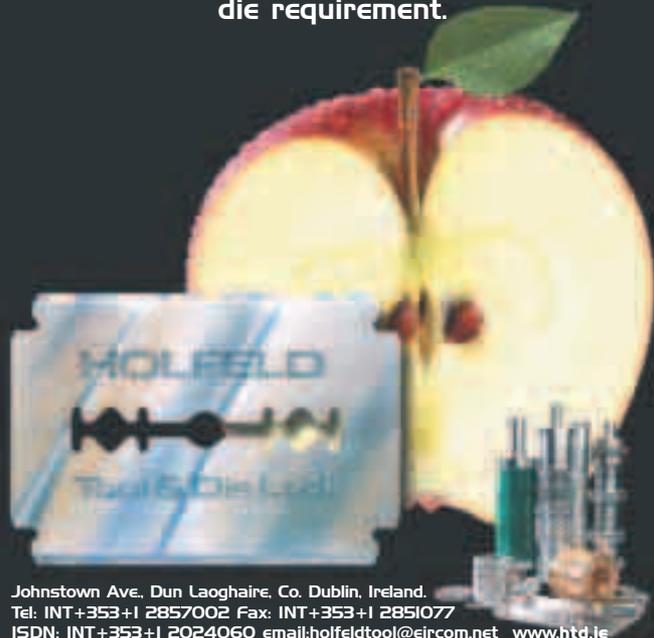
Now, every label consumer also uses a labeller! What is more complementary than “labels and labelling”?

For more than 20 years, Arca has successfully based its development strategy on two synergic divisions: labels and labelling systems. It will be exhibiting at Labelexpo Europe 2003.

If you are a label convertor and you have something to say in this column, contact the editor at athomas@tarsus.co.uk

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e No.149



BASF has commissioned a sophisticated pilot plant at its newly modernized centre for pressure sensitive adhesives in Ludwigshafen, Germany.

Andy Thomas reports



BASF commissions pilot coating centre

BASF is looking to work more closely with laminate producers to develop innovative pressure sensitive products with the opening of a new pilot at the company's Verbund site in Ludwigshafen. The centre houses lines: a new coating plant for aqueous pressure sensitive adhesives – running at speeds up to 1,500 meters per minute – and a UV hot melt adhesive plant operating at a speed of up to 700 meters per minute.

The development and modernization costs of the coating centre, which was designed and built in cooperation with Pagendarm BTT GmbH, totaled €5 million.

Dr Martin Brudermüller, head of BASF's functional polymers division, commented, 'From today, we can design the joint trials we carry out with our customers even more flexibly and efficiently.'

'We can vary the interaction between coating technology, machine speeds, carriers and pressure sensitive adhesives to an extent never previously achieved. This makes us the ideal partner for customers wishing to optimize their production processes for the manufacture of self-adhesive products such as adhesive tapes or labels.'

Dr Brudermüller stressed that the potential for innovation in the aqueous pressure-sensitive segment has 'not at all been fully exploited.'

The acrylate hot melt and aqueous coaters were built over one another in a configuration known as the 'Kangeroo'. UV crosslinking means that the length of the UV plant's drying chamber can be substantially reduced, along with the investment. The water-based adhesive plant on the other hand, allows far higher speeds. Customers will be able to run applications using both technologies to decide which is the more appropriate in any given case, since the two-in-one design means both

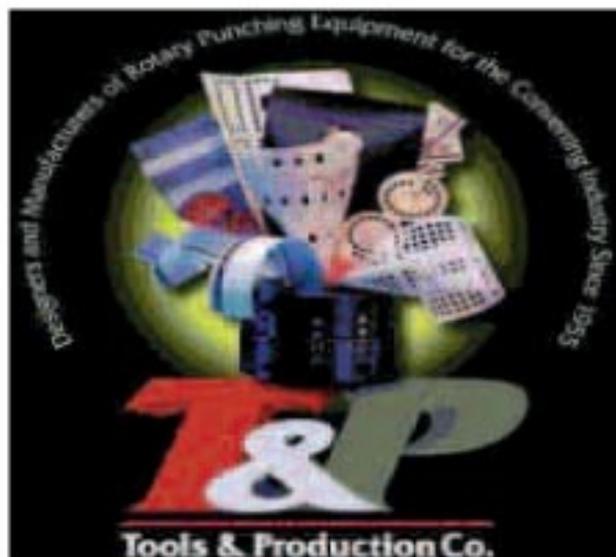
systems can be operated at the same time.

'This line will also enable us to test new product developments under real conditions much earlier, allowing us to set market trends in the future too, and not just in terms of production speed,' commented Ralph Schweens, head of BASF's Regional Business Unit Adhesives and Construction Industry Europe.

Schweens was upbeat about the prospects for the global pressure sensitive adhesive market. BASF estimates the sector to be worth around €1.2 billion worldwide, and expects that to rise to €1.4 billion over the next two years.

BASF also faces the challenge presented by fluctuating raw material prices: 'This year has seen a particularly dramatic rise in raw material prices and it is difficult to pass on these price rises,' said Dr Brudermüller. 'We exist in an environment marked by excess capacity in acrylic monomers and in several dispersions segments.'





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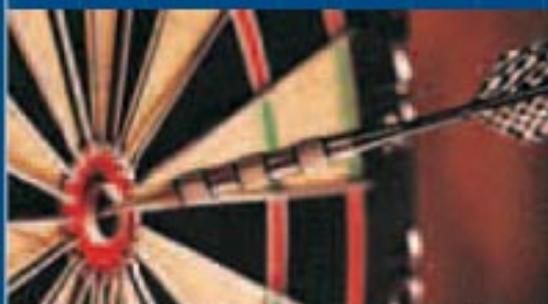
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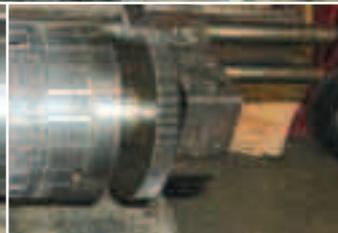
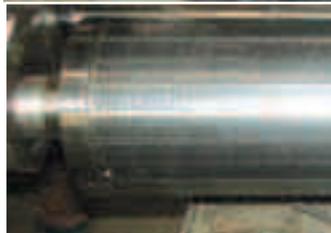
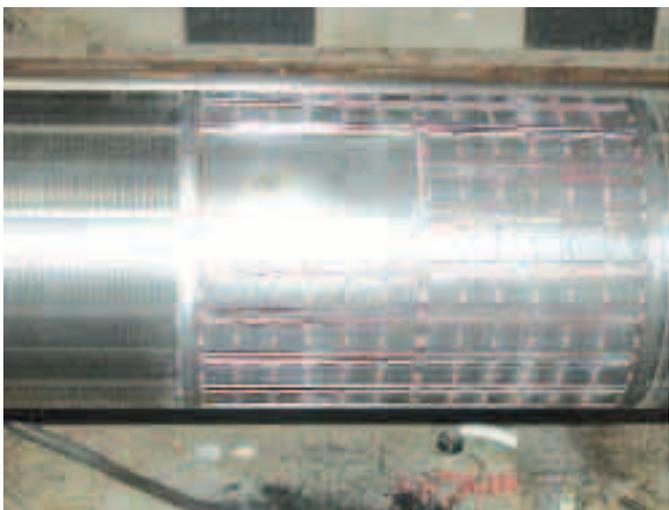
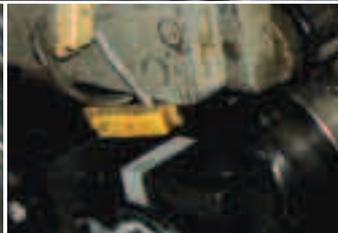


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Die cut your costs

Printer/converters having to bow constantly to end user demands need to take a hard look at the service provided by their own suppliers. **Natalie Martin** reports

Converters rely on vendors to provide quality products to work with. But, if they're not coming up with the goods, it may be time to rethink these relationships. And that's exactly what Ward/Kraft did when their die-manufacturer failed to meet the company's expectations time and time again.

Founded by Jude Ward and Harold Kraft back in 1972, Ward/Kraft operates out of locations in both Kansas and Ohio. The company was formed to bring product development and distributor support to the forms and labels industry. Ward/Kraft has grown each year with new products, selling 100 per cent through independent distributors, without any acquisitions.

Ward/Kraft, like any other converter, feels the pinch from customers demanding jobs to be turned around, 'yesterday'. As a service provider it is vital that Ward/Kraft delivers finished product on time.

Its label division houses eight presses; 4 x 20" Zigzag, 24" Zigzag, 2 x 750 Webtrons, and a 10" Aquaflex. Its mission, 'To be the ultimate provider of innovative business and document solutions', means there is a continuous in-house R&D drive while custom-engineering its existing presses and machinery to output maximum performance.

'Speedy Solutions', a fast turnaround service on fanfold and roll labels, with a promise to deliver within two/three days, shows Ward/Kraft's commitment to service. Within that commitment, is the pressure to consistently deliver. Jeff



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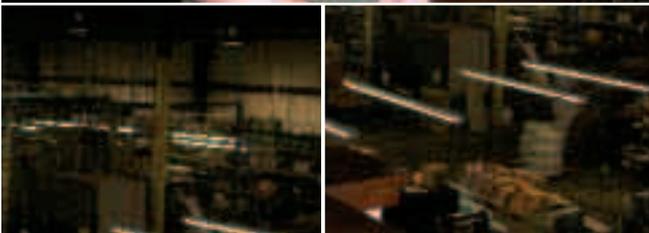
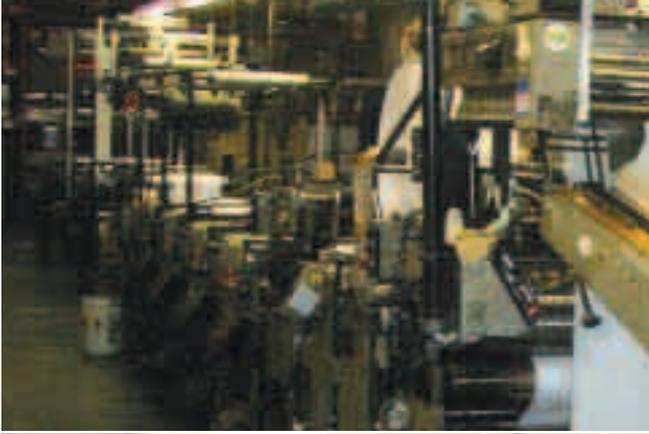
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Inside Kocher + Beck's manufacturing plant

Fennern, Ward/Kraft's die & tooling manager, is a firm believer that a close relationship between converter and vendor is absolutely necessary to match its own internal R&D efforts. Complicated die-cuts and perms are all a part of the daily job.

'We've thrown out a lot of weird projects to die manufacturers and in the past we were turned away, no-one wanted to take on the jobs,' says Fennern. He shudders at the memory of poor service, poor quality dies and poor die-life expectancy from his previous supplier. At breaking point, Ward/Kraft decided to trial Kocher + Beck dies when it opened a new facility in 2000, in Shawnee, Kansas.

Although there was original concern over the price of the dies being higher, the difference in price was worth it. 'We were tired of playing games with our previous supplier, and decided enough was enough, so after testing out Kocher + Beck's dies, not only were we happy with the results but their service was excellent.' Last year Ward/Kraft shifted all of its flexible die orders to Kocher + Beck and they became its sole supplier of flexible dies and magnetic cylinders.

'Kocher + Beck have brought us new capabilities and technologies which has allowed us to expand, enthuses Fennern. 'Also, they have an open door policy where they go out of their way to help educate me so I can get the most out of my dies on press.' Admitting that his previous supplier was reluctant to release information on its dies, now if he needs to figure out how to die-cut a specific job, Kocher + Beck will kick ideas around the table until they come up with a design solution thru to a production spec.

Ward/Kraft has the added advantage of being in close proximity to Kocher + Beck's plant. The cost of shipping dies has been greatly reduced, as well as saving on downtime. Whereas before Ward/Kraft would have to adjust the dies, now, dies are placed into position on press and left to run without any tweaking. Not only has Ward/Kraft saved downtime by changing die-manufacturers but die-life is much higher.

One example Fennern gives is the use of a multi-high die with perms. With the 3L laser die, the footage has increased approximately from 700,000 ft to 3 million ft. Another figure reveals the difference in dies needed to cut through an opaque white coated substrate (very abrasive) from roughly 400,000 ft to 600,000/700,000 ft.

All these calculations demonstrate very significant cost savings. So next time you're facing supplier/vendor problems, consider: are they going out of their way to help you meet your goals, solve problems or even find new solutions as well as showing creative flair to champion your latest innovation?

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Auto industry raises QA standard

TPL Labels in East Kilbride, Scotland, has become one of the first label converters to be awarded the latest – and toughest – automotive industry quality assurance standard

ISO/TS16949:2002 aligns existing US, German, French and Italian automotive quality system standards and specifies quality requirements for the complete life cycle of automotive components from design/development, through production, installation and servicing. TPL is a 'Tier 2' supplier to companies which manufacture components for later assembly.

It might be thought that yet another standard is bad news for hard-pressed label printers. In fact, TS16949 takes a radical approach to quality, putting the emphasis firmly on satisfying the end user and using process control tools to re-engineer the supply chain. This makes it potentially an excellent alternative to standards regimes which focus simply on documenting internal work processes.

The ISO/TS16949 standard was developed by automotive industry end users as they lost confidence in what was perceived as a fragmented and ineffective quality control framework. In response, they formed the International Automotive Task Force (IATF), an international group of vehicle manufacturers including BMW Group, DaimlerChrysler, Fiat Auto, Ford Motor Company, General Motors Corporation, PSA Peugeot-Citroen, Renault SA and Volkswagen, plus national trade associations, AIAG (America), VDA (Germany), SMMT (UK), ANFIA (Italy) and FIEV (France). The Japanese vehicle manufacturers association, JAMA, was also closely involved.

The cause of the IATF's discontent was the QS-9000 quality control standard, first introduced in 1994 and which TPL attained two years ago. As the British Standards Institute put it: 'QS-9000 has failed either as a measure of overall supplier performance or as a tool to ensure that quality products are delivered.' Vehicle manufacturers were concerned that too many 'problem' suppliers were managing to retain QS-9000

registration, while the standard was felt to lag behind current business thinking which stresses a process approach to quality management.

The existing regime was also a bureaucratic nightmare for suppliers to the vehicle manufacturers, who needed multiple certifications in order to supply to American, European and Japanese marques.

The new regime is radically different. Critically, the IATF stressed that senior management must be involved in setting and communicating quality objectives, allocating resources and integrating these into business plans. In the case of a supplier like TPL, 'product realization' has to cover the whole process from planning and design of a label, through production, sales, processing, delivery and after sales service, using data collection to continually improve product quality and processes.

Suppliers have to set up a system to monitor customer perception as to whether requirements have been met, using criteria such as delivered part quality, on-time delivery and product performance. The regime should also be pushed down to their suppliers.

Vehicle manufacturers are now making ISO/TS 16949 a mandatory requirement – or encouraging their suppliers to upgrade to the new standard. Vehicle Manufacturers including Ford, General Motors, Peugeot-Citroen, Renault, Fiat, BMW, DaimlerChrysler and Volkswagen accept ISO/TS 16949 as an alternative to current automotive standards.

Indeed, TS16949 is proving such a powerful tool that it is already spreading beyond the automotive industry. Caterpillar, for example, has adopted 16949 as its supplier approval standard. '16949 is about quality, but also about how to run a business,' maintains Alastair MacTavish, managing director at TPL. 'Everybody has objectives which filter down from the



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e No.152

“TS16949 also insists companies develop a process for the measurement of employee satisfaction – truly a radical concept”

production floor to the sales force.'

TPL's production department, for example, is tasked with reducing wastage during set-up and running and increasing machine utilisation, while the Purchasing department is focussed on stock turns, traceability and dealing with key suppliers, all of which are constantly monitored and assessed.

16949 also insists companies develop a process for the measurement of employee satisfaction – truly a radical concept.

TPL: a history

Formed in 1969, TPL has developed from a packaging company – producing pressure-sensitive paper labels, wraps and trays for the food industry – to a focus on industrial labelling and identification products. This includes a broad range of variable information label/tag printing systems and barcode scanning equipment, as well as a maintenance and print management service for end users.

The key to survival in this sector of the labels market is developing added value products, which now include security and anti-fraud labels. TPL is developing a wide range of solutions including chemical topcoats and covert technologies as well as tamper evident and destructible labels.

TPL recently signed an agreement with Microdot Technology to supply microtext security threads for application to cell phone batteries. Currently these use simple 'void' labels, but this labelling material can often be obtained and reproduced by counterfeiters. Microdot Technology's security thread, by contrast, is a controlled material with a laser etched code, making it extremely difficult to counterfeit. The thread comes with a coat of hot melt adhesive for lamination to the label, which is subsequently thermal transfer printed.

In terms of geographical markets, TPL, like other Western European suppliers, has had to deal with end users moving assembly operations to lower labour cost areas. As an example, two of TPL's key end customers – automotive component supplier TRW and Epson – have moved to the Czech Republic and Hungary respectively.

This is not universally the case. For example, the UK is still an important base for high tech areas like air-bag sensors, which demand highly complex labels with tear-off components which allow the product to be tracked through production. Nonetheless,

TPL expects to do an increasing percentage of its business in Eastern Europe.



Liz Connelly of Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire presents TS16949 certificate to Alastair MacTavish, md TPL Labels

Globalisation is already a reality. Epson, for example, is asking TPL to supply labels into both its Mexico and Hungary assembly plants.

Equipment

TPL runs two Aquaflex presses – a 6-colour UV flexo Instaflex and a 2-colour Instaprep, 'both very good for quick changeovers,' and fitted out with turn bars, de- and re-lam units, slide in/out UV stations and four die cut stations for back and top cutting. The latest Teknek contact web cleaner with sticky rolls top and bottom has recently been added. TPL is now looking at buying a third press.

A Newfoil hot foil press handles short runs up to 2,000 pieces and Rotoflex and Omega rewinders finish the line. Rotometrics is the principal supplier of both flexible and solid dies.

TPL runs a variable information print service based around TEC and Zebra thermal transfer machines, with a multi-colour capability. A wide range of materials are supported on a 24 hour turnaround from key suppliers 3M, Madico, Fasson and Raflatac, who hold pre-cut stock.

An interesting VIP innovation is Twinfo, a pressure sensitive construction which delivers polyester and paper labels side by side on the same backing liner. This allows, for example, the printing of rating labels and product ID/shipping labels on the same printer.

Like most label printers in this sector, TPL is looking hard at RFID. But Alastair MacTavish sees problems both with the current cost of the technology and the fact that 13.56mhz does not work in the presence of metal.

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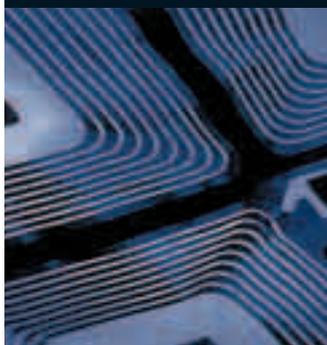


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e No.150



Keeping in Tune with RFID

RFID labels are increasingly being used in a wide range of applications and are viewed by many as the next big thing in retailing that will ultimately replace product barcodes. Robert Shimmin, of Shimmin Associates examines some of the emerging technologies and explores the implications for the label sector

With the recent confirmation that The Gillette Company has placed an order with Alien Technology for as many as 500 million radio frequency identification (RFID) tags for use in its supply chain, it is perhaps timely that a technology that has the potential to impact on every consumer product manufactured is further explored.

Although at this stage it is unclear which of the many overlapping technologies will prevail, it is inevitable that the label will play an important role in its application.

To capitalise on this exciting opportunity converters must first understand the basic technology, identify where it is going and consider how it could be integrated into their businesses.

What is RFID?

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is a term used for any device that can be sensed at a distance by radio frequencies. Not to be confused with the familiar EAS (Electronic Article Surveillance) tags found on many high value items such as CD's and home improvement products, radio frequency identification permits electronic detection of identification numbers and other data held on the tag.

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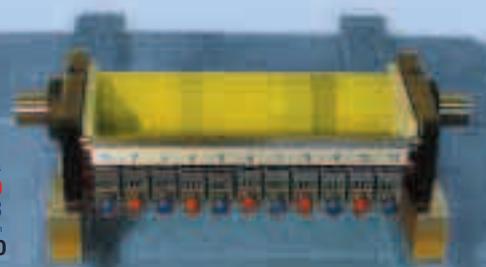
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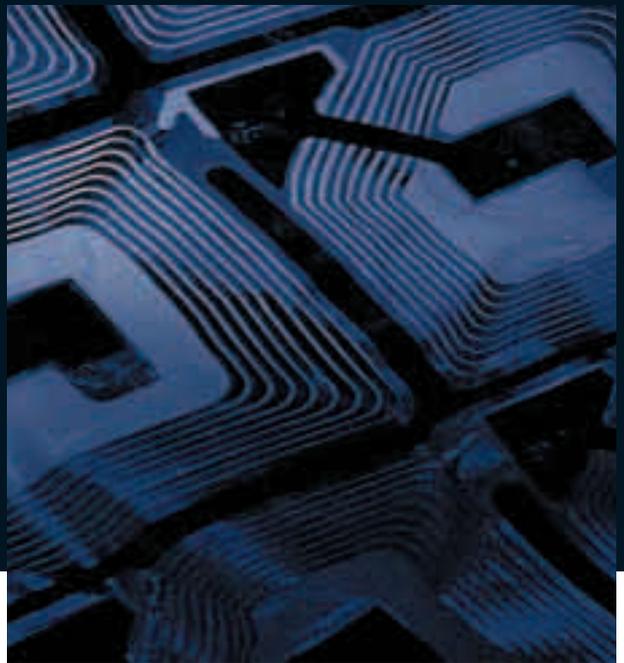


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“Supply chain management will be the principal future use for RFID”



Where will it be used?

It is clear that supply chain management will be the principal future use for RFID with applications in inventory management, warehouse management, theft, out of stocks and transport and logistics.

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Now we can understand why company's such as The Gillette Company, Marks & Spencer and Procter & Gamble are getting so excited about RFID.

* Founded in 1999, the Auto-ID Center is a unique partnership between almost 100 global companies and five of the world's leading research universities; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US, the University of Cambridge in the UK, the University of Adelaide in Australia, Keio University in Japan, and the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland.

Setting standards

Trying to standardise the frequencies on which RFID tags operate represents a significant challenge but Steve Hodges, acting associate director, Europe, Auto-ID Center is confident that a solution can be found.

'The Auto ID Center is promoting the use of two frequencies 13.56MHz (High Frequency) and 900 MHz (Ultra High Frequency). Although Europe (868MHz) and USA (900MHz) use slightly different frequencies, it is expected that a single tag could be created that could cope with both. The problem of operating at two frequencies could then be solved by using RFID readers that could handle both.'

Forum for converters

The Auto ID Center represents the opportunity for printers and converters to interface with technology providers to find RFID solutions. The Center currently has 90 sponsors comprising end users, technology vendors and approximately fifteen tag manufacturers with interest in the chips, the antennas or how to join the two together. It is clear that converters need to be part of this debate exploring the opportunities to integrate the process within their own operation.

However low cost RFID is achieved, the Auto ID Center is acting as a catalyst:

- For getting cost of tags down
- Increasing their performance
- To finding a universal standard for the technology

Indeed, reducing the cost of tags is perhaps the most crucial issue currently with the economics for mass usage requiring a five cents tag or less. Clearly there will be a continuum with initial use targeted perhaps at pallet/case levels and for high value applications, but usage will inevitably expand as the price per tag comes down.

Printed antenna

The antenna used on the Alien-Gillette application is based on a silver conductive ink printed by Flint Ink, whilst South African technology developer Trolley Scan is experimenting with inks ranging from carbon graphite to silver. It is here that a potential exists for label converters to add value and reduce cost.

There are many parameters that determine the reading distance of an RFID label, such as the ink quality, the 'quality' factor of the circuit board and chip (characterised by as low a resistance as possible) and the antenna design, to name but a few. Stork Prints has printed an antenna at its demo centre that was readable from a distance between 10 cm to 10 metres. Stork Prints has run a variety of tests at the demo centre, together with companies (mainly label



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e No.195

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RFID technology is currently being used in a variety of applications such as the identification of high-unit-value products moving through an assembly process, patient identification, asset tracking, and security and access control. Radio waves are used to interrogate the transponder, thus labels can be read without the

need for line of sight, through substances such as paint and non-metallic packaging. Multiple labels can also be tracked at one time, enabling faster identification in the supply chain. During the lifetime of the label, the information encoded on the transponder can be not only read but changed repeatedly, without having to re-label the article, increasing response times.

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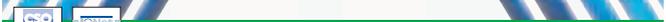


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e No.189

printers) and several ink manufacturers to develop these applications. The company also offers customer-made hot air drying systems for printers of these sorts of antenna.

The quality and performance of such systems is improving because of advances in ink conductivity and chip memory. A special solvent-based silver ink has been developed which offers much greater conductivity. This means that the label's antenna require much lower resistance, so that less ink is needed. In turn, this offers a great opportunity for the development of the low cost RFID labels market.

QinetiQ shows its metal

A new development in metal printing means that RFID antenna or indeed any device that requires a metallic pattern can be manufactured at lower cost.

The process which was harnessed from defence spin off technology by QinetiQ Metal Printing (QMP), part of QinetiQ allows metal to be 'grown' from a pre-printed image by passing a substrate through a series of chemical paths.

The technique lays down pure metals with exceptionally fine detail and line (or track) spacing whilst retaining their original electrical and RF properties.

“In the future it may
be necessary to look
towards chipless RFID
to reach the low unit
prices required”

'A typical RFID tag costs around \$0.60 to produce and the antenna and wire bond for the Integrated Circuit accounts for almost 70 per cent of the price but QinetiQ Metal Printing can significantly reduce this element in the overall cost,' explained Chris Coomber, director of QinetiQ Metal Printing. 'By using cobalt, with its magnetic properties as the base metal in the QinetiQ Metal Printing process, barcodes could also be produced that don't require a line-of-sight to be read. This, coupled with the significant cost savings, feasibly means that a shopping trolley could be pushed past a reader and all the contents simultaneously scanned. Not only could this improve till-point throughput and help reduce in-store wastage, but around 20 per cent of any store layout currently has to be set aside for checkouts and much of this space could be released for additional display purposes.'



RFID tag complete with antenna

Virtually any water-resistant material is suitable as a QinetiQ Metal Printing substrate, including synthetic paper, polyester, polypropylene, ceramic or glass. QinetiQ has already perfected processes for using copper, nickel, cobalt, iron, tin, silver, gold and alloys of these, as single and multiple layers.

No chips

Developments in low cost RFID split into tags that have microchips and those that don't.

The more versatile chip tags comprise an antenna and a silicon chip mounted onto a substrate, but in the future it may be necessary to look towards chipless RFID to reach the low unit prices required.

Flying Null's low-cost, chipless smart tagging system (known as Electro Magnetic Identification, or EMID) is now available in a hot foil stamping material, as well as self adhesive labels.

The hot foil stamping process has been developed with Opendate Equipment and enables the EMID tags to be transferred directly onto products and packaging.

This technology would be of particular interest to industries which use product labels and exterior product packaging, such as the Cosmetics, Perfumes, Spirits and Pharmaceutical industries, as the tags could be applied to the rear side of a brand label to

provide a unique serialisation number for each bottle for Track and Trace functionality. As the tags are hidden and extremely thin, they would not have an impact on the branding and could only be removed by damaging the label.

Chips

But to achieve the Auto-ID Center's goal of incorporating a unique product code onto each item, RFID tags with microchips are the likely answer.

In many cases the silicone chips are the size of a grain of sand – so how would the converter integrate the chip with a printed antenna? Alien Technology has used a process called fluidic self assembly which mounts the chip onto an intermediate carrier and thus makes the assembly easier to handle and connect with the antenna.

Another solution may not be to connect chip to the

Reading and writing

Once we have achieved the ultimate goal of low cost universal RFID there is still another issue to be resolved. Who puts the data or electronic product code onto the tag? Will it be done by the chip manufacturer, the converter or the filler? One thing is for certain, investment in RFID writing capability would be required.

Conclusion

With the unit price per tag dropping and significant global players investing in RFID technology it is clear that low cost RFID is here to stay. Whilst new technologies continue to evolve, the role of the label converter remains unclear, but there appears to be significant opportunities for innovative players to use printing technology to reduce the cost of antenna. Evaluation of insertion techniques to integrate chips or finished inlays into label structures also looks like a

“With the unit price per tag dropping and significant global players investing in RFID technology, it is clear that low cost RFID is here to stay”

antenna directly, but to place it in close proximity to allow signals to pass between them. The potential of 'capacitive coupling' could allow the converter to get involved in the processes of joining the chip to the antenna thus producing the finished RFID device.

Inlays

Another route to integrating RFID into labels and packaging is to insert the complete device into the label structure itself.

US based Nanopierce Technologies subsidiary Exypnotech is producing and marketing smart inlays for high volume low cost RFID applications. The 13.56MHz transponder inlay is an ultra thin flexible structure ready for converting into smart labels and tickets.

For low volume applications the company has also launched an interesting format distributed under its pending trademark, SmartPaper. The Smart Paper RFID labels are printed on a new type of special paper using a customised ink jet printer developed by Exypnotech, which is able to simultaneously read and personalise RFID devices.

fruitful avenue for further investigation.

Looking further ahead, microchips themselves may well be replaced by low cost flexible electronics with circuits contained within plastic films but that's another story!

Whatever the outcome, the Auto ID Center looks like an excellent forum for keeping in touch with developments as well as networking with technology providers and end users.

For further information, contact:

Auto ID Center – www.autoidcenter.org

Exypnotech GmbH – www.exypnotech.com

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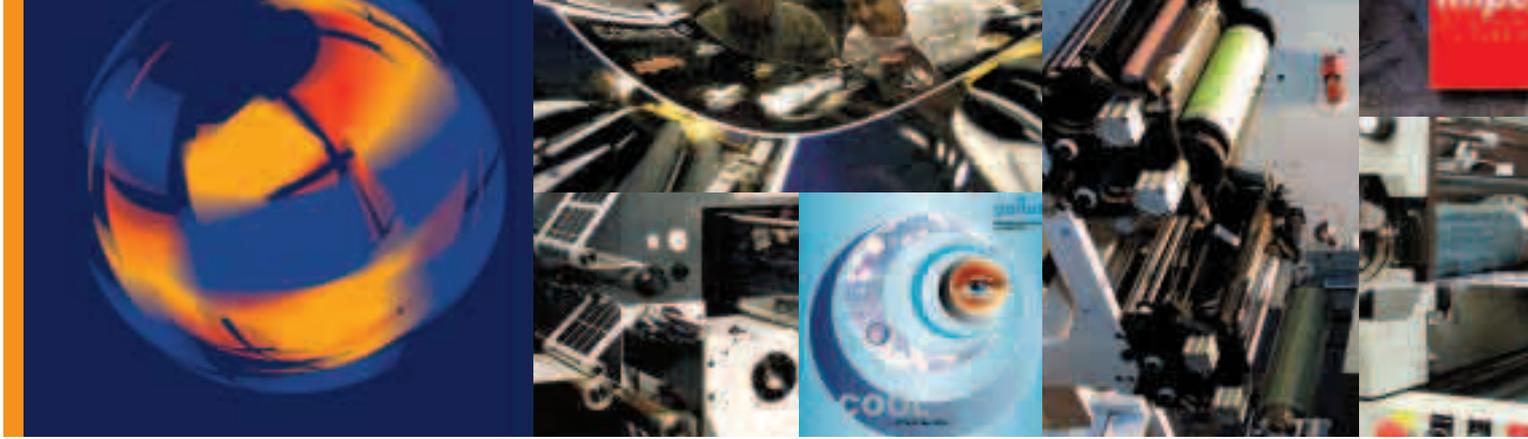
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e No.203



UniFlex flexible copper die

major on its TR4085plus, a new ribbon generation claimed to combine the benefits of high performance and general purpose ribbons. Japan Pulp & Paper GmbH will introduce new inkjet and laser products, an improved Flat-Head economy wax, a new all-round wax-resin for Near-Edge as well as a new economy direct thermal facestock. Ricoh Industrie France launches an ultra chemical-resistant grade thermal paper

Dies

New to Rotometrics' product line are rotary hot stamping and embossing tools, exclusively distributed by the company and manufactured by UEI/FineCut. Of particular interest is the UniFlex flexible copper die, incorporating a steel backing which secures it firmly onto a heated magnetic cylinder.

Gerhardt International will show a new generation of flexible dies, called X'tra, as well as the DropSetter which adjusts the drop between tool and anvil. Also on display will be the 3*, 5* and 7* Rotary Dies and Flexible Dies.

Kocher & Beck will show its full range of dies, cylinders and the established GapMaster, while Wink promises to show new product developments on the Leomat machine on its stand. Xynatech builds on the success of its European carton converting applications utilising the male/female magnetic shims. Up to now Xynatech has not had a strong presence in Europe to match the success of its dies, but this may be about to change.

Slitter rewinders

A recent change in branding brings together the Burton Group of Companies under the corporate identity of AB Graphic International Ltd, and an interesting introduction is the first showing of an Omega 330 converting line with a new die cutting system utilising flat bed die tooling on a rotary web.

And in cooperation with HP Indigo, the company launches in Europe its Omega Digicon converting solution for digitally printed webs on the HP Indigo stand. Servo driven web tension control permits a wide range of substrates to be converted from self-adhesive labels to folding cartons, shrink films and inmould labels. Options include a UV flexo print station for varnishing, wet laminating or cold foiling; self-wound over-laminating and over-laminating with carrier; unwind for off-line use, daylight correction system, hot foil stamping and guillotine sheeter.

Prati meanwhile introduces a new rotary die cutting machine, the Vega FN330.

The machine runs 200 metres/min with one or two die cutting units, strips the matrix, slits either longitudinally or transversely, and will count and inspect clear labels. Rewinding can be carried out in different ways, including a fully automated mode. The company is also celebrating the installation at Avery Dennison Paris.

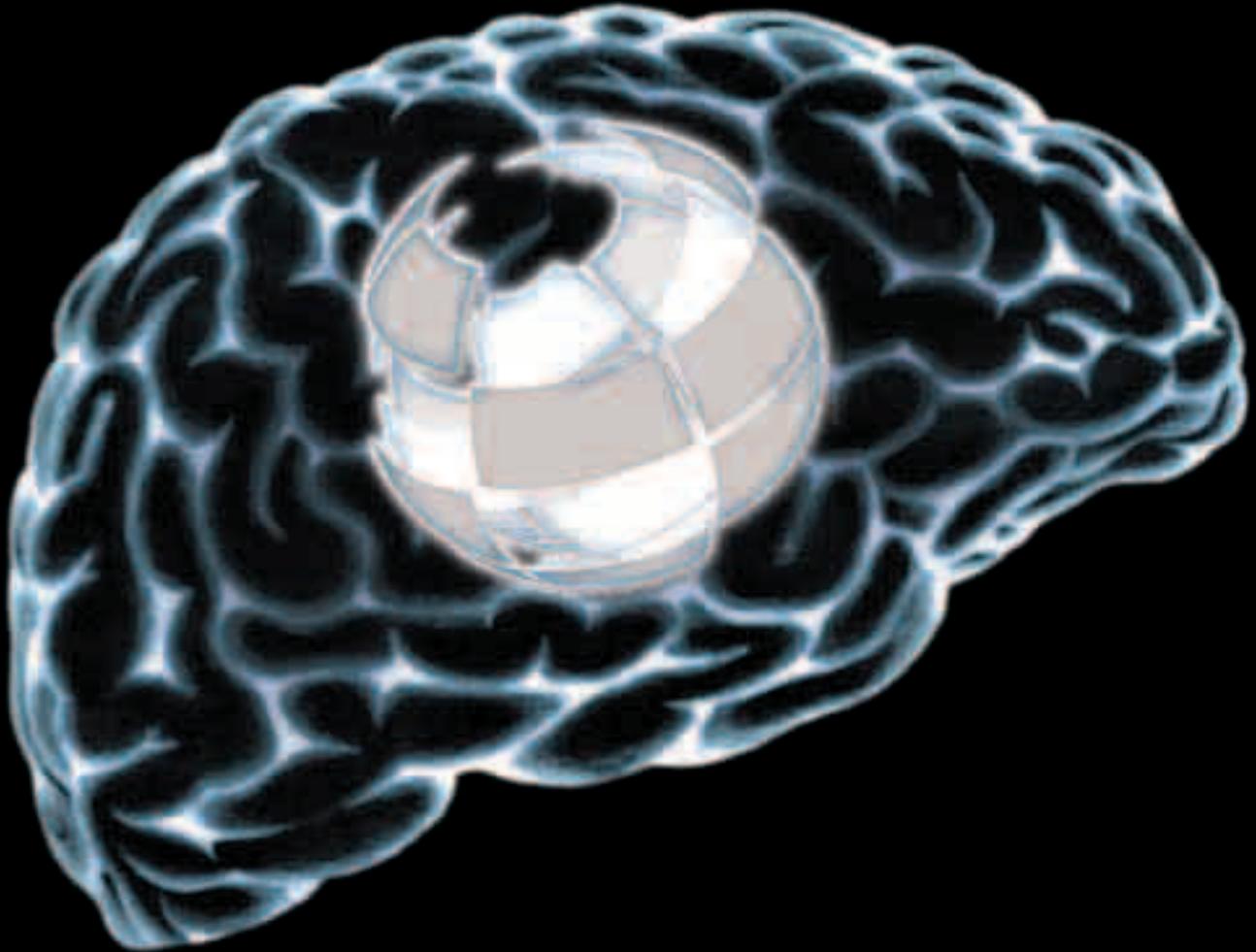
Rotatek will show a new inspection slitter rewinder, RTK 330, with die-cutting unit for blank label production and features including roll rewinding, missing label or matrix error detection, slitting, label or meter counting. The RTK 330 is equipped with an electronic web guide, two splicing tables, and an inspection table with six missing label detectors.

SMAG will introduce an A4 sheet converting machine with UV flexo head and inline stacker, as well as an off-line converting machine for digital presses.

Proofing

An interesting development on the AVT stand is ProoFit, a file to press verification tool that can compare digital files to printed products and detect errors. Using an A3 flatbed

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e No.210

Designer labels

Irreverent range

Flo Bayley produced the design, which Paragon Labels took through to the print stage. Labels are printed UV flexo in up to 6 spot colours.

An entry-level wine to appeal to the 18-25 age group was the requirement of Paul Miller, category buyer for Capper & Co – and the Irreverent range from Kingsland has proved ideal. The company, part of the Spar wholesale chain and a retailer, is now stocking the brand at its two regional distribution centres, and in some 500 stores throughout the south east of England and Wales.

Both The Hair of the Dingo, and Under the Table brands of the Irreverent range have been listed since Easter, and sales are going well. 'These quirkily named brands take the seriousness out of wine and as such encourage new drinkers to the wine category,' explains Paul Miller. 'Consumers wishing to move on from 'ready to drink' products are attracted by their fun and youthful image, and we have been impressed with sales so far.' Kingsland's Irreverent range features brightly coloured, humorous labels for added shelf appeal.



Boots new 'menu'

The Simply and Something Special ranges of Boots' lunchtime food snacks have been rebranded. Fifty-three products, covering sandwiches, salads and sushi, now carry the new menu brand. The brand has been colour-coded for meat, fish, vegetarian and multi-packs, and carries clear and concise information for improved consumer awareness.



Canandaigua: new label on updated carafe

Madera, CA, Paul Masson wines of California unveiled its new packaging for 2003. Offering consumers an updated version of its easily recognizable 1-liter carafe, the new look evokes the traditional Paul Masson feel with a modern twist.

Described as warm and refreshing, the new label suggests a sense of casual sophistication without changing recognizable elements for consumers. The one-piece paper label has soft flowing lines complementary to the contours of the sleek carafe. Outlined by gold leaf framing, the new label has the traditional California look and the design maintains the original Paul Masson winery illustration. Stylish gold, silver and burgundy writing contrasts elegantly against the cream background.

'The new label provides a sophisticated and attractive change for Paul Masson wines,' said Mark Feinberg, marketing director for the brand.



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Show Preview

scanner, ProoFit can be used to inspect screen-printed products and printing plates as well as packing and label materials. ProoFit is designed to support the demanding validation workflow process of pharmaceutical labels printing and provides an approved (CFR 21 part 11) automatic tool for these purposes.

For those with requirements for a UV flexo printed wet proof, RK Print Coat Instruments shows a new variant of the FlexiProof 100 equipped with an integrated UV system. The system can be used for determining wear resistance, scratch resistance, flexibility, gloss, etc, can also be used for computer colour matching. The FlexiProof eliminates the need for pilot runs to be undertaken on production presses.

Inks and varnishes

New from Zeller + Gmelin is Labelcure UF, a UV curing ink series optimised for letterpress and offset printing on both paper and plastic. Other new products include Opticscreen – a UV curing screen printing ink for rotary and flat bed screen printing – and Torarcure, a UV curing ink series for waterless offset printing.

'Universal' ink systems are the key feature of Akzo Nobel Inks' offering at Labelexpo, with the ability to print on a wide range of pressure-sensitive and filmic substrates without the converter needing to change to specialist inks. First up is Flexocure, a universal UV Flexo ink for self-adhesive labels and Flexocure Gemini for unsupported film substrates that require improved adhesion, increased cure speed, and low odour.

A new development from Sicpa is the UV series 456 offset ink, equally suited for UV sheet-fed offset and for UV offset printing on narrow-web label printing machines. The raw materials are selected to minimise odour, so the ink can be used for sensorially delicate applications, as well as for labels in the food sector. The series is ISEGA-certified. Substrates are PE, primed plastics, paper and carton. The prints can be overvarnished and also laminated.

Also from Sicpa is the UV



series 39-2 inks, which are silicone-free, so suitable for hot foil stamping as well as for thermo-transfer printing. The series is also designed for combination printing with UV screen and UV letterpress. It is well suited for overvarnishing or for lamination.

An important introduction for UV letterpress - still the largest installed base of narrow-web presses in Europe – is UvoNova, a 'universal' UV-curable letterpress ink series claimed to deliver excellent adhesion and print quality on a variety of substrates. UvoNova can be used on self adhesive labels, in-mould labels, wraparound labels and shrink sleeves.

The company will also showcase its re-engineered opaque white screen ink for combination printing, Uvoscreen II CombiWhite.

Coates Screen has added Vioroll SF-W70 Screen Opaque White to its line-up of flexo, screen and offset inks for narrow web printers for Labelexpo. Silicone-free technology makes it much more receptive to overprinting with any other type of unmodified ink. Vioroll inks suit most label substrates, particularly the high-speed decoration of top-coated/corona-discharge treated polyethylene and polypropylene.

Encre Dubuit also presents a new rotary screen UV ink, claimed resistant to alcohol and water without the need of an overprint varnish. It accepts hot stamping without the need of an additive and has high flexibility when die cut, according to the company, as well as showing good adhesion on the majority of top coated polyethylene or polypropylene even metallised, PVC, Paper, Polyester.

Pulse Roll Label Products will introduce RoughTEX, a textured effect UV varnish available in letterpress, flexo and



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Protag neck label and applicator (left and centre) and Tantec static neutraliser (right)

screen formulations and SilverFOIL a 'foil effect', high brilliance ink for solvent, water-based and UV processes. Also new will be SofTOUCH, a UV varnish that replicates a soft to the touch feel; CureFRESH low odour varnish; and TurboLAM UV laminating adhesive.

Mirage, an independent, UK based ink company producing solvent, water and UV inks for flexo and gravure applications, will introduce its Quartz products optimised for tamper proof security applications and linerless labels, while Phoenix Inks will demonstrate developments in waterbased flexo ink systems and the impact of manufacturing T&K Toka UV Flexo inks in Europe.

Sericol will showcase its latest UVivid Flexo FL ink set for the narrow web label market, which forms the heart of Sericol's UVivid brand of fully compatible UV curing flexo and screen inks.

GBC (Specialty Chemicals) Ltd is the European Marketing company for Nemoto, Japan, which will introduce its range of inorganic UV-activated fluorescent and phosphorescent (glow-in-the-dark) pigments, as well as special pigments for high security and brand protection applications. Also supplied are thermochromic (heat changing) and photochromic (light changing) formulated inks for most printing processes.

Pre-press

Artwork Systems will demonstrate the latest releases of ArtPro and Nexus, its high-end pre-press and workflow systems. Nexus' flexo modules FlexoCal, Hybrid Screening and PlateCell Patterning will be on demonstration along with a new Quality Assurance application called 'Dotspy' (Mac OS), which checks digital film or plate information down to dot level before output.

Creo focusses on getting label converters to take control of the entire production environment by setting up their own Networked Graphic Production environment. This initiative aims to bring creative professionals, packaging print buyers, repro houses and converters together and enables each participant to communicate and collaborate in real time. All the tools to achieve this will be demonstrated.

Other key players Esko Graphics and Agfa also promise products dedicated to the narrow web pre-press industry.

Plates and anilox

Flexolaser premieres its Flexolaser FL piccolo/hybrid flexo CTP system, capable of handling sleeves and plates within the single machine at up to 800mm width. The system is equipped with Flexolaser's patented Quicksleeve mounting system. Dantex will demonstrate the latest developments in rotary letterpress plates with Torelief CTP, and in Direct Laser Engraving with Torelaser Direct Digital plate materials. The company will also exhibit digital system integration, workflow and proofing solutions. OHKA Europe will show a new water washable UV Flexo plate and a Digital Flexo plate, while DuPont Imaging Technologies demonstrates its thermal Cyrel Fast platemaking technology.

TechCell claims an innovation in CO2 laser-engraved anilox technology. Its Diamond rollers offer a smoother cell wall cavity aiding ink release and reducing the plugging effect. The new process acts with chrome-oxide coating to melt the ceramic to reduce thermal cracking, giving a smooth interior cell cavity. Cheshire Engraving Services will be displaying a wide range of laser engraved ceramic Anilox rollers and sleeves including a new range of lightweight bases and specialised cleaners.

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e No.172



GEW's VCP-film UV unit for temperature sensitive films

Labelexpo Europe will also see the launch of a new ultrasonic cleaning system. De Rossi Vittoriano S.r.l. will show a new plate mounting machine

UV systems

GEW (EC) will launch its new VCP-FILM UV curing system for heat sensitive and unsupported films. By integrating a dedicated chill roll within the lamp design, VCP-FILM enables label printers to process a wide range of substrates on presses not equipped with chill rolls. Depending on the register control system on press, films down to 15 microns can be processed, according to GEW. Supplied with a small, efficient refrigerator to provide water-cooling, typical temperature increase is reported to average 2-4degC per lamp.

GEW will also launch its NUVaplus UV curing system optimised for curing heavy lay-downs of both traditional and cationic inks and coatings on thermo-sensitive substrates at high press speeds.

Uviterno's new development is the UVG Electronic UV lamp power control unit, while the aptly-named Ultimate Cold UV light DPL Industri A/S introduces a 250 W/cm focused UV curing system with water cooling and electronic stepless power supply.

Araytech introduces what it calls a 'self-regulation system' for UV lamps, allowing control of the power according to her life and the cleanliness of the reflectors.'

Ancillary briefs..

- Vetaphone A/S, will introduce a new corona treater and generator series for narrow-web converters. The 'Double-

“VCP-FILM enables label printers to process a wide range of substrates on presses not equipped with chill rolls”

Function-Treater' design allows narrow-web converters to run faster than 250 m/min with any substrate, conductive or non-conductive. The complete system can be mounted directly in-line on narrow web presses. A further update of the TOU4 corona treater uses oxidized idle rollers with a stainless steel backing roller. Tanteq will show new advanced charging generators and high efficiency AC and DC powered industrial static neutralising systems.

- New from E&L is a sensor roller incorporating a fully integrated load sensor, with one load cell per roller end. Strain gauges determine the web force continuously and with high linearity. The sensor roller can be used for a multitude of applications given its broad measuring range of 1:25 and its overload factor of 10.
- AP Maschinen AG shows its latest Ink duct Systems and segmented blades for letter- and offset printing. The Ink Duct, Lever or Digit is built on a modular basis, which enables an upgrade to computerised Ink Control.
- Martin Automatic introduces a new non-stop unwinder, the STS Automatic Splicer for narrow webs. This compact splicer makes butt-to-butt, overlap or heatseal splices, and is claimed ideal for non-stop production.
- Wandres will exhibit its recently launched Sword Brush BI 46 and Micro-Moistened linear brushing system (the surface of the subject material remains dry).
- Valmet Group presents a wide range of systems of interest to label converters, including from Atlas a new rewinding technique for filmic/synthetic material as low as 60 micron, at speeds in excess of 600m/min (1970ft/min). Enhanced automation systems also dramatically reduce

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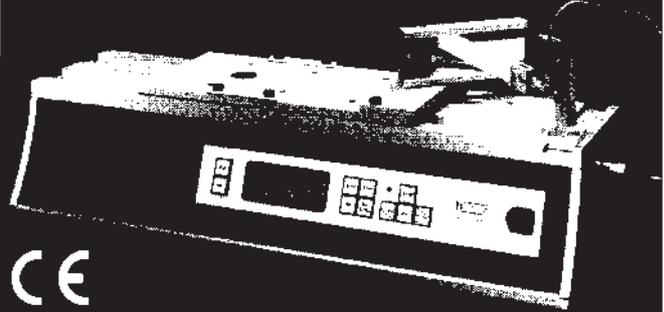
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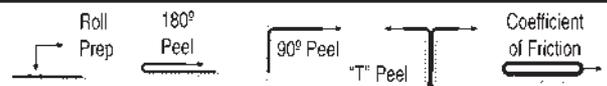
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Labelexpo Europe 2003

Show Preview

machine down-time for change-overs. And to meet the requirements of small batch size and high value production, typical of the security hologram and small converter market, Valmet's General division has developed the Holosec vacuum web coater. Another recent Valmet innovation enables close tolerance, off-line cut-to-register sheeting of labels in both paper and filmic substrates. Details of this feature will be available on the stand.

- New from Schober is a Cut + Place system, which transfers pre-cut sheets or blanks at high speed and accuracy onto a web. This joins a range of offline rotary web converting machines for the processing/finishing of products such as in-mould labels and 'easy assembly' multilayer components.
- The DCM Group will focus on its shrink sleeve forming and seaming machines.

Late additions

Rotatek demonstrates its Combi hybrid offset/flexo press, a roll to roll, 400 mm web width machine equipped with five offset and one flexo printing unit, silkscreen printing, cold foil stamping and rotary die-cutting. It will be a shown printing value added wine labels. Also on display is an Ecoflex 6-colour flexo press with removable print cassettes.

S+E Release, made up of Schleipen & Erkens AG based in Jülich, Germany and Silicart S.p.A based in Bologna, will announce machinery investments worth around five million Euro at Labelexpo.

BST International will launch its Powerscope 3000 video web inspection system, which includes features such as Dynamic Image Update and Quick Zoom with memorized positions, allowing operators to perform basic functions more efficiently.

Available in both manual and motorized versions, the Powerscope comes standard with a large 104mm by 76mm field of view, 32x magnification, 17" monitor and horizontal and vertical split screen, making it ideal for use on label presses.

Teknek shows for the first time in Europe its NW Series Narrow Web cleaner which incorporates a list of new features including: larger diameter elastomer rollers - for higher running speeds; Quick Release Adhesive Roll Holder - for faster adhesive roll change over; increased width - up to 762mm (30"); choice of two or four elastomer roller - for heavily contaminated stock; adhesive roll purge indicator - to highlight when adhesive roll needs purged.

And new to the market is an entry level cleaning head suitable for installation on most narrow web presses. Teknek's 'Tag & Label Cleaner' is available in either single or double sided units.

Lintec launches its LPM-300 iTP semi-rotary press to the European market, a letterpress machine incorporating a computerized ink pre-set system. This system enables the press to be made ready much faster than conventional letterpress machines. On the first setting of the press for a new job, the AR system will calculate the settings from the scanned data or image data (tiff data). For repeat jobs, the ink feed and color balance data can be saved to allow for a job to be re-run, reducing setup time and material waste. This machine is also fully servomotor driven achieving production speeds of up to 220 impressions per minute.

Lintec will be exhibiting special film-based labelstocks that are used for high temperature resistant, security, automotive, pharmaceutical. These include a new acrylic based film tested up to 300degC, and a new extreme 600degC material designed for hot steel application.



Edale's Sigma press

“Innovations include an acrylic based film tested up to 300degC and a new extreme 600degC material designed for hot steel application”

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: Annual Forum

Natalie Martin interviews Bud Gray, vice president-general manager of Cypress Multigraphics, Inc. and new FTA vice chair for the narrow web committee

Q. Describe how the Forum is supposed to benefit narrow web converters

A. Remember that our mission is to promote flexography. A representative of a narrow web converter member is part of the Planning Committee that meets months in advance of the next Forum. It's at this time that issues are raised by that person that are relevant to the narrow web membership. However, I have found that the issues affecting the wide web guys always affect the narrow web sector. We not only promote flexo as the dominant form of printing, but also educate our members in the art and science of flexography. All the segments of FTA membership, Wide Web, Narrow Web, Folding Cartons, Mid Web have a voice in the topics. By attending our seminars at the Forum, members will pick up an 'idea' that can be implemented the day that he/she gets back to the plant. The issue that all of us face, whether you are in the Trade Show Business, Publishing or Association, is what to present to the readership/membership that will give them a value added experience. We attempt to do this by having members of each printing division develop issues that they believe to be germane. Can an 'old dog' be taught new technology...yes...but each seminar may not be as illuminating as others.

“The FTA has been a great resource for Macaran. Whether we've needed help troubleshooting problems in our pressroom, or just wanted a better understanding of new technologies, the FTA has always been our source for the help or information we needed.”

Ed Wixted, Controller CFO

We promote the following goals for our membership:

- to promote, develop and advance flexographic printing technology
- to work cooperatively on problems of mutual interest within the industry
- to develop and maintain standards of quality for flexographic printing
- to work cooperatively for constant improvement of the flexographic printing process by fostering research, technical development and training
- to provide a forum for the free exchange of technical ideas and discussion of mutual problems among various segments of the industry
- to advance the art and science of flexographic printing
- to recommend and assist development to further flexography through education, training, research and scholarships
- to disseminate technical information through new and updated guidelines, materials and aids
- to provide people working in the flexographic industry with educational training meetings
- to assist institutions of higher learning in their course planning and development of those entering the field and others seeking to keep abreast of technological advancement

Q. How many narrow web converters attended the Forum

A. Of the 906 Forum attendees, approximately 250 were printers. To date, we do not track which segment are in attendance. They include Narrow Web, Wide Web, Mid Web and Folding Cartons. We will begin to track with the 2004 Forum.

Q. The myth surrounding the FTA is that it does not fully serve narrow web interests, why do they think this and how will you address the negative feedback

A. I don't believe that 'most' narrow web members felt let down, but that is just my opinion. I personally picked up an idea that saved us thousands and thousands of dollars two years ago and just this year I ran into several people that 'straightened' me out on a problem that I just couldn't solve. I also got additional information on flexo sleeves, which is priceless to both our employees myself. It's all about picking up 'information'.

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Q. Why should a narrow web converter/supplier/manufacturer join the FTA

A. A Narrow Web converter would want to be a member to take advantage of the Seminars held around the country such as: Color Process Printing, Presswork & Pressmanship, Technical Conference, FIRST (which is the FTA developed standards for reproducing color from run to run). Throughout the year, the FTA offers many seminars, workshops and conferences that allow a converter to stay up to date on the latest technologies. These instructional, and often hands-on meetings allow the converter to understand the needs of the narrow web sector. The conferences present the latest developments in focused technical Areas, such as plates, ink, prepress and issues dealing with environmental subjects. These conferences are specifically developed to assist supervisors and middle management in their daily jobs. An added benefit is that while attending, one gains personal access to top-notch educational and manufacturing resources. We also offer inexpensive, Business Insurance, Debt Collection Services, Office Products, Retirement Planning, Shop Towels and Uniforms, all of which are provided through third party vendors. The Forum is an excellent chance to not only network to take the pulse of the industry but to catch up on the latest technologies. The same applies for the Supplier side of membership. The Narrow Web converters can take advantage of the latest developments in flexography by purchasing complete in-house training modules, by using our Technical Training Manuals that help with everyday employee and operator training. The publication Flexography: Principles & Practices is the most comprehensive documentation of flexography in the world and you get it on CD when you become a member. You also get copies of The Beginner Flexographer, FTA quarterly membership letters, and the Environmental Newsletter is included as well. All of this for the least amount of money required by any printing trade association. It is just the best bargain in the business and we must increase our efforts in getting this message to the converters of the country.

Q. If someone is a member of TLMI, why would that same company want to join the FTA?

“Training programs offered by the FTA have helped Macaran improve the skill levels of our people while at the same time instilling a renewed enthusiasm about the challenges of their jobs.”

Nick Van Alstein, President

A. So that they could belong to two world-class associations! The audience for TLMI is for the CEOs and COOs. The FTA audience also appeals to this audience but you will find more plant managers, superintendents, prepress managers, plate makers, graphic artists, customer service managers, presspeople and assistants in attendance at an FTA function. The real issue here is that to get the best marketing and technology information in the narrow web marketplace, one should belong to both associations. I know many who do. The issue continues to be what topics will be best received to the Membership.

Q. What's the total number of members you have, can you provide a breakdown in numbers or percentages

A. Membership numbers

- FTA has 1550 total members
- There are 872 Supplier, Tradeshops, Educational, Publishing, Retired members and they are highly regarded
- There are 678 Printers
- 304 designated as narrow web 45%
- 246 designated as wide web 36%
- 58 designated as mid web 9%
- 42 designated as folding carton 6%

Q. As new vice-president for the narrow web sub-committee, what do you intend to do to raise the profile of the FTA within the narrow web sector

A. I plan to hold more sessions of the Narrow Web Committee during the year and to get feedback from them as to what they are personally experiencing in terms of advancing technologies and how we get this information to the members of the FTA. Also, I have found that the issues affecting wide web flexo are for the most part, issues for the narrow web sector, as well. It is flexo that we are promoting, Natalie, and I am going to bring all of my 35 years experience to help promote the advancement and development of the most dynamic printing system in the world: FLEXOGRAPHY. We plan on raising our profile through periodicals that our membership reads and explaining just what it is that we can do for the flexographer! I never miss a chance to talk to or try to help out a fellow label converter and there is just not a better place to do this than an FTA Forum.

Q. What membership growth do you hope to achieve in your vice-presidency

A. I plan on inviting members from all the narrow web companies to join in and address the issues affecting our business and to offer their names for consideration to serve on our Board. We have in the planning stages a mailing to all the Narrow Web members soliciting their opinions on how we can help them grow their business through timely and intelligent seminars/meetings.

The next Forum will be exciting for all flexographers in terms of developing technology and trends, but it will also offer more for the Narrow Web converters.

Sun Rising

While SunChemical targets the narrow-web market at Labelexpo with a range of inks and varnishes formulated for self-adhesive labels, flexible film, in-mould labels, rotary cartons and sleeving, SunChemical in the UK has formed a dedicated narrow web division. **Andy Thomas** reports.

Sun Chemical in the UK is pioneering a dedicated narrow web ink portfolio, which could in future be rolled out through the European group. The move to set up a narrow web division in the UK is a bold one, cutting across semi-autonomous operations within Sun Chemical. However, it is a recognition by the world's largest ink manufacturer of the importance of the narrow web market, and provides a welcome clarification for narrow web label and packaging printers looking to deal with just one contact for the company's full range of ink products and services.

The general management of the Narrow Web team will be led by Joe Smith, complemented by three sales people. Jeff Hulston oversees the business as operations director with Ian Hargreaves as technical director.

'Because of the complexity and diversity of today's Narrow Web industry, converters are looking increasingly for one supplier who will take ownership of the product,' states Thomas Kelly, business & marketing director, narrow web at SunChemical, and one of the driving forces behind the new strategy.

'This means selling ink as a managed system. We have the strength in depth to achieve this, as we have expertise supplying inks to converters in this sector and across the widest range of packaging applications as diverse as flexible packaging, cartons, shrink sleeves and tubes.'

Assisted by the expertise of the Coates and Gibbon divisions in screen inks, Kelly says the new Narrow Web division can offer a rock solid, compatible ink system to converters with combination presses using multiple ink technologies (screen + offset, Screen + flexo etc).

To understand Sun Chemical's extensive coverage of the European ink market segment, one needs to review the acquisitions made by the group. These include Hartmann, O&R, Dresse, Baglini, FISAT, Prisma, Copisa, C2E, Georget, France Couleur, Usher-Walker, Ault & Wiborg, Swale Process and Gibbon Ink & Coatings. In addition on the 1st January 2000, Sun Chemical acquired the worldwide printing inks and graphic arts supplies business of Coates Lorilleux from TotalFina. This resulted in the largest transaction in the history of the printing ink business.

'Sun also has divisions which specialise in coatings, security / brand protection, digital applications and pressroom chemicals, all of which have increasing relevance to the narrow web industry,' says Thomas Kelly.

Kelly has extensive experience in SunChemical's flexible packaging inks business, where the pressure on margins and the commoditisation of the business now impacting narrow web converters has already been experienced. The wide web business has been through the process of cutting out costs and increasing productivity:

'The solution is for everyone in the supply chain to sell value and not commodities, and that is as true for the ink suppliers as for the converter.'

Kelly sees increasing links between the flexible packaging and narrow web sectors. 'There is a clear trend for shorter runs and more promotional work, which is resulting in more work being sub-contracted to UV flexo narrow web converters.' The increasing prevalence of focused promotional decoration is giving rise to new opportunities and challenges for the narrow web printer, resulting in a requirement to print on a greater variety of substrates for more diverse end uses. Thomas Kelly believes that SunChemical's experience both inside and outside of the traditional pressure sensitive label sector will continue to have increasing importance.

Onyx brand

The dedicated narrow web ink range to be marketed by the Narrow Web division will be called Onyx. Formulations are dedicated to different narrow web tasks – sharponyx, for example, is a UV flexo ink, while onyxedge is for more demanding flexo applications, and h2onyx for general waterbase flexo applications. The concept is to take the best brands developed for narrow web printers from across the Sun Chemical divisions, and reformulate them into a dedicated portfolio, sold by one salesperson controlled by the narrow web team – clarifying the route to market for these products.

'Onyx is a concept as well as a brand,' says Tom Kelly. 'We have to show not that we're the Jack of all trades, but the master of all trades.' Kelly states, 'The Sun Chemical group believes that it already has market leading products for this sector, and we have the commitment to further develop these products.'



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Avery sells European label converting business

Avery Dennison Corporation has signed an agreement to sell its package label converting business in Europe to CCL Industries Inc., the label and packaging solutions company based in Toronto, Ontario.

Cash proceeds from the sale are expected to be approximately \$60 million. In addition, the deal includes a long-term, global supply agreement for Avery Dennison to provide pressure-sensitive base materials to CCL Industries. This supply contract is expected to generate revenue for the Company in 2004 that will partially offset the decrease in sales resulting from the divestiture. The transaction is expected to be finalized during the third quarter of 2003, subject to meeting customary closing conditions, including regulatory approvals.

'Divesting these package label converting operations in Europe is an important part of our strategy to focus on our key global businesses in pressure-sensitive adhesive materials, office products and retail information services,' said Philip M. Neal, chairman and chief executive officer of Avery Dennison. 'We will continue to invest in growing our existing operations in Europe, particularly in developing Eastern European markets.'

The transaction involves the sale of two Avery Dennison package label converting facilities in Denmark, located in the cities of Brøndby and Randers, as well as a package label converting plant in Chilly-Mazarin, France.

The business serves European customers in the pharmaceutical, health and beauty aids, food and industrial markets with customized, self-adhesive labels for product

packaging. The approximately 325 Avery Dennison employees at the three operations will become employees of CCL Industries.

At the same time, CCL Industries announced the completion of a 51 per cent controlled European joint venture deal with Pachem AG, a leading, privately held provider of pressure sensitive, shrink sleeve and in-mold labels. CCL Label will contribute its Avelin, France facility to the joint venture.

The new company will operate as CCL-Pachem and be headquartered at Pachem's existing facility in Hohenems, Austria. Its focus will be on providing global consumer companies with innovative package decorating solutions for their premium European brands in the food, beverage and battery categories.

CCL will continue to operate its 100 per cent owned, European label company that focuses on the personal care, pharmaceutical and chemical markets. Guenther Birkner, former CEO of Pachem and CEO of the new CCL-Pachem joint venture said, 'this new partnership with a strategic player like CCL gives us the financial strength and global customer reach to be a leader in these rapidly developing European markets.'

CCL-Pachem will operate from three converting plants in Hohenems, Austria, Rhyl, U.K. and the CCL Label Rotogravure operation in Avelin, near Lille in France. Technology from the European operations will also be transferred to CCL Label's wholly owned subsidiaries that serve the North and Latin American and Asian Markets.

EAN-UCC take charge of unique product codes

The future development of the Electronic Product Code (EPC) network will be overseen by EAN International and the Uniform Code Council, Inc. (UCC), allowing the development of unique global codes for every product. The EPC network unifies item identification numbering, radio frequency tags and networked product information into a powerful system for managing supply chains throughout the world.

The breakthrough, which came as a result of an agreement between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and standards bodies EAN International and the Uniform Code Council, will see EPC taken out of academia and implemented in the marketplace.

EPC technology will provide greater visibility of items in the supply chain. Having more detailed and accurate information about products will improve inventory management and replenishment practices, resulting in a reduction of lost sales due to out-of-stocks.

Identification and tracking of individual items will also reduce theft and counterfeiting.

Andrew Osborne, director of policy and research at UK supply chain standards trade body e.center, commented: 'EPC will bring a new world in which all products are individually identified with radio frequency tags and information about these products is available instantly from the internet.'

'Companies operating in global markets can rest assured that there will continue to be a single reliable standard for identifying and tracking products moving in trade.'

Sun Chemical forms alliance to develop brand protection inks

Sun Chemical Group and InkSure Technologies Inc., a developer of covert encoded-ink authentication solutions, have announced the launch of a strategic marketing alliance. The two companies will offer machine-readable ink-based brand and document authentication solutions under the SunSure brand name.

SunSure's underlying concept is the

use of 'encoded ink' – ink embedded with unique signature codes – in the printing of documents, product packaging, etc., and the ability to 'sense' the ink using low-cost optical readers.

InkSure's proprietary reader technology can be incorporated into a variety of devices, ranging from low-cost, hand-held readers, all the way to high-speed production-line devices.

Leading MIS supplier joins Creo JDF network production group

The Prism Group of Companies, a leading supplier of integrated MIS software, is the newest partner in Creo's Networked Graphic Production group. This strategic initiative delivers modular solutions through Creo, Prism and other leading vendors' products to create a JDF-based print production environment 'from idea to delivery'.

Prism connects to Networked Graphic Production through Prism WIN, its management information system (MIS) that is used for estimating, job costing, job planning, inventory, shop floor management, time tracking, ecommerce solutions, accounting and reporting. By using JDF (Job Definition Format), Prism WIN MIS accesses prepress

production data from Creo systems through Creo Synapse Link software. This MIS integration software provides automatic, immediate access to production data to allow printers to accurately record and communicate up-to-the-minute data, such as prepress workflow events, material usage, machine time, and content alterations, into the Prism WIN MIS.

Prism WIN MIS also connects with Creo systems through production planning software, Creo UpFront. This software streamlines and automates the planning stage of the print production process. UpFront extracts job description data directly from Prism WIN via JDF.

HP cuts delivery time for Indigo special colors

HP has launched a new Ink Mixing Service for HP Indigo digital presses that will cut the time required to mix and deliver special colours from six weeks to just five days.

The service has been introduced to support the increased demand for digitally printed jobs that require special colours or must comply with corporate colours and branding guidelines.

An ordering service will be available over the internet. The HP ElectroInk specially mixed colours are claimed to represent 97 per cent of the Pantone range. This service is available now in several European countries, including France, Germany, Italy, the UK and Benelux with expected availability in North America this summer and in the rest of world by the end of 2003.

The Ink Mixing Service's web ordering system includes a new Ink Coverage and Volume Calculator which estimates the number of cans required for each job based on the customer's ink coverage and print volume. This feature helps printers more accurately estimate prices for special colour jobs.

HP Indigo's series 2 colour engine can use up to seven colours, and an off-line mixing system is available.

New labels and packaging consultancy launches

A new Consultancy company – Vandagraf International Limited – has been set up to specialise in multi-client and single-client market studies for the packaging and labelling sectors. Established by James Bevan, who worked with Labels & Labelling Consultancy for several years, the consultancy draws together a number of

specialised consultants with strong experience in related markets, human resource and technology areas. The team provides strong emphasis on international aspects with a broad range of industry experiences and in-house language skills.

The first multi-client study, entitled 'The self-adhesive label market in

Western Europe', will be launched in September 2003.

A further report will examine Brand Protection markets for label and packaging manufacturers, while other studies are planned on digital printing trends and on central European and Asian Label Markets. For further details visit www.vandagraf.com

Labelling news



New reader enquiry service from Labels & Labelling magazine

A new system for submitting reader enquiries to L&L has been introduced to help speed up response times to your enquiries.

By far the simplest way to submit your reader enquiries is to visit us online at www.labelsandlabelling.com/re.htm and simply fill in the online reader enquiry card as indicated.

Alternatively you may e-mail us at readerenquiry@labelsandlabelling.com providing us with your name, company name and address, telephone/fax numbers, and e-mail address. Please state the magazine issue number that the advertisement or selected news item is featured in (found at the top right hand corner of the front cover) and the reader enquiry number positioned at the bottom of each selected news item and advertisement or in the advertisers index at the back of the magazine.

New group offers complete service from design to print

UK-based McGurk Group has acquired the Stephenson Design Group, now renamed Stephenson McGurk. Rick McGurk, founder and chairman of The McGurk Group commented, 'although clients will still be able to access the individual specialist skills of the individual companies, the formation of the group will enable us to offer a complete solution for digital design, reproduction and packaging with a single point of contact through the whole process.'

The new McGurk Group's first

corporate client is East Yorkshire based Sam Browne Foods. The company has tasked the group with re-developing its corporate identity and branding plus managing packaging for its own-brand products from concept to final print.

With its headquarters in Hull and offices in London, The McGurk Group is now made up of Stephenson McGurk (design and photography), McGurk Studios (reproduction and platemaking) and McGurk System Reel (labelling) with Thames McGurk, being the group's London based operation.

PakMarkas takes East Europe's first Cyrel FAST production line

The Lithuanian packaging company PakMarkas is the first in Eastern Europe to acquire a DuPont Cyrel FAST thermal flexo plate production line and a Spark XT laser engraver from Esko Graphics. The package includes a complete pre-press software suite from Esko.

'The new investments will allow PakMarkas to execute the orders much faster and completely solve the problems with utilization of solvent and cleaning of exhausted air,' says Ronaldas Vaitekūnas PakMarkas. 'Also, we will have an enormous competitive advantage – more executed jobs with less number of people. Whereas our competitors are working on a three shift schedule, one shift shall be enough for us to complete the tasks.'

The FAST line will reduce plate

processing time from two hours down to 45 minutes. 'This equipment is the most ecological solution in comparison with any other alternative technology of flexographic plate production in the world,' says Ronaldas Vaitekūnas. 'The ecology plays a very important role in this kind of business, because tightening environmental regulations requires more and more resources for handling of the chemical waste.'

The new DuPont and Esko-Graphics equipment will be installed at the company in September and the investment will be recouped within three years, says Vaitekūnas. Along with this investment PakMarkas plans to assign another €1,25 million for modernization and development of its manufacturing facilities.

Labelexpo conference set for Mexico

The Tarsus Group has announced the launch of a Labelexpo Latin America Conference in Mexico next year. The Conference, to be held between 8 – 9

June 2004 in Mexico City, will be sponsored by Labels & Labelling. A tabletop exhibition will run alongside the conference.

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Labelling news

Webmaster for pharma labels

Pharmaceutical Packaging Leeds (PPL), has installed a Webmaster laminate converting and printing line manufactured by Printing Specialities .

PPL manufactures high volume bespoke labels with added value elements, for blue chip companies in distribution, transport, pharmaceuticals and food retailing.

'A big issue for label manufacturers looking at investment at present, is long term usefulness from equipment. The industry is changing and we need a machine that can change with us,' says Paul McVicker, PPL managing director.

The PPL machine has 9 flexo printing stations, 11 UV lamps with one hot melt adhesive applicator, a laminating section and a variety of finishing options including in-line silicone coating, punching and folding equipment.

Storey 2200 prints ps & films

Storey Evans, the carton and label manufacturer, has installed a Mark Andy 2200 label press at its Bradford, UK HQ to complement an extensive carton investment programme and 'expand the range of labels offered as a single source supply to our customers,' according to Joint md, Dennis Marshall.

The new eight-colour Mark Andy has a 10" web width and is fitted with quick-change print units, turner bars for delam/relam operation, cold foil with a nip roller system, rotary die-cutting, a sheeter with shingle conveyor, and full UV curing. The 2200 handles both self-adhesive stocks and clear vinyls and films at Storey Evans.

In 1998 Storey Evans became the UK representative of Copapharm Europe, a strategic European partnership of leading independent packaging manufacturers dedicated to meeting the demands of the international pharmaceutical industry.

Omet Varyflex goes to Lithuania

Vilrike Sprustuvė in Vilnius, Lithuania is installing a 670mm wide Omet Varyflex press to add to its existing Multiflex.

The press is configured for solvent-based inks with eight flexo printing units - four with a double doctor blade and four with reverse print. It is provided with roll unwinder up to 1000 mm diameter, eight viscometers, hot-air lamination, and hot-air drying.

Third M3300 for Label Makers

The Label Makers Ltd. in Bradford , UK, has ordered its third Nilpeter M-3300 combination press.

The new UV-equipped M-3300 press will have seven offset units, rotary screen, hot foil and embossing and a flexo varnishing unit. Fully-interchangeable print units allow all the M-3300 combination presses to be configured to suit individual job requirements. Plates are made either conventionally or on a Nilpeter DI-3300 computer-to-plate direct imaging system, using Presstek's Pearl thermal-reactive plate material.

Semi-automatic cassette-based loading and unloading considerably reduces set-up and platemaking times to facilitate both short and long print runs.

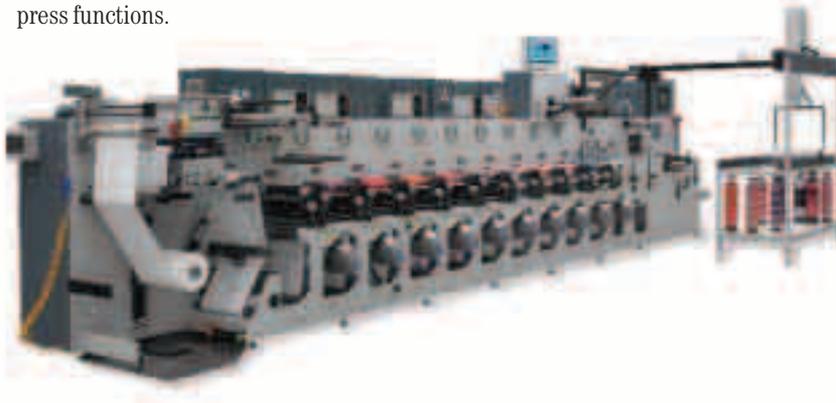
'The addition of a third combination press means we can offer our customers an increased level of flexibility, reduce our lead times and further improve our efficiency. In addition, the offset process offers the type of consistency that is vital for producing high quality work, such as wine labels', said David Webster, managing director. 'Combined with hot foiling, the process also allows us to use textured-surface paper laminates and produce labels sets with distinctive designs.'

GiDue sells three E- Combats

GiDue has confirmed three orders for the company's new shaftless E-Combat press before its official launch at Labelexpo Europe.

An E-Combat 430 with 10 print stations and full UV curing has been delivered to a German customer. An eight colour E-Combat 530 press has been sold to a Hungarian customer, and an eight colour E-Combat press with full UV curing has been ordered by a converter in Turkey and will be delivered in October.

The E-Combat (Electronic Combat) design features servo-driven controls for all press functions.



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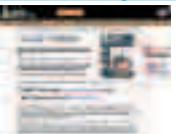

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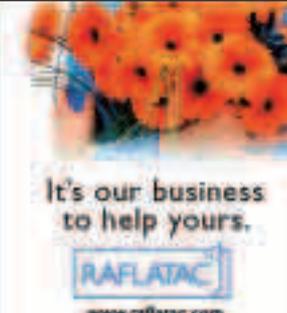
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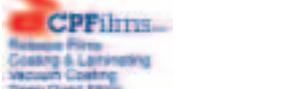
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