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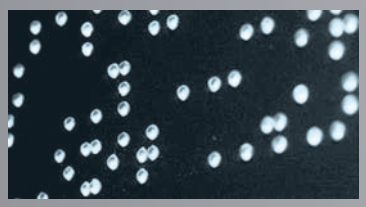
Dec/Jan 2007

Volume 23 Issue 9

Labelexpo review

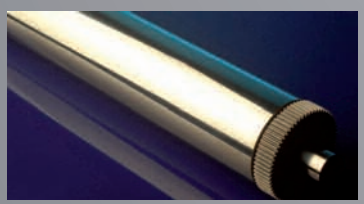
Part two of *L&L*'s comprehensive Labelexpo technology round-up

Analysis



How should converters respond to new Braille requirements?

Technology



Developments in solid and flexible dies are covered in this feature

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Leader

'A business that makes nothing but money is a poor kind of business,' said American industrialist Henry Ford. Whether you agree with this statement or not, there can be no doubt that the pressure on companies to be both socially and environmentally responsible is increasing – and rightly so.

Industrialization and globalization have benefited many – including in the labeling sector – but progress has not come without a cost, particularly to the environment.

Consumer attitudes are changing. A recent BBC poll of 22,000 people – equivalent to the readership of this magazine – revealed that 83 percent of the sample were prepared to change their lifestyle to address climate change. Respondents came from 21 countries across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, showing that this concern is not restricted to the 'developed' nations.

> "There can be no doubt that the pressure on companies to be both socially and environmentally responsible is increasing – and rightly so"

The lead needs to come from manufacturers and suppliers. For all the good intent of the individual consumer, s/he needs to be offered products that represent a viable alternative – with regards to cost and availability – to help change old bad habits.

A label paper which has been sustainablysourced, therefore, is likely to have an increased appeal. This represents an opportunity for companies throughout the supply chain to not only reduce their environmental impact, but also feel the financial benefits of tapping into the current climate of environmental concern. One such company, Scottish coatings and adhesives manufacturer Smith & McLaurin, will be covered in depth in the next issue.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not restricted to helping the environment. Improved benefits to staff, charity support and work in the local community are all ways of helping your company to make a positive impact. And while conventional wisdom might suggest that these initiatives will drain the corporate coffers, a survey of over 500 business executives conducted by a global accounting firm showed that three quarters of respondents believed corporate responsibility could enhance profitability.

The *Labels & Labeling* editorial team forms part of our parent company's new CSR committee. We will keep you up to date with the initiatives that we implement, and would welcome hearing about yours.

It seems that nowadays doing some good will not only benefit your conscience, but also your pocket. What's stopping you?

James Quirk
Deputy editor

The perfect style for every occasion

In the personal care industry, a stunning label is crucial to a product's success. But looks aren't everything. At UPM Raflatac, we have an extensive portfolio that combines glamour, innovation and functionality. If you need a clear label, a label with good squeezability, or a label that makes a product stand out from the crowd, we can help. In fact, we make sure we have the perfect style for you, whatever the occasion. **Passion for films.** www.upmraflatac.com

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Labeling news

First for battery assisted passive RFID label solution

Yedioth Information Technologies Ltd, a provider of IT solutions for the media industry, and PowerID Ltd, a provider of battery-assisted, passive (BAP) RFID technology, have announced a partnership to develop and market PaperVue. Enabling real-time tracking and visibility of paper reels, from mill to printer house, the PaperVue solution has been developed to reduce costs associated with newsprint purchasing, transport, inventory, production control, and complaints processing.

Utilizing PowerID's PowerR labels, the new solution is said to overcome the limitations of barcode technologies, the limited performance of standard passive RFID, and the high cost of active RFID. By combining Yedioth Information Technologies' specially-designed software with PowerR RFID labels, printer houses and their suppliers can now realize the benefits of the first integrated solution for tracking paper reels throughout the newsprint supply chain.

Assaf Avrahami, CEO of Yedioth Information Technologies, said: 'After exploring various RFID options, we chose to deploy PowerID hardware at our own print sites. By using PowerID labels and leveraging our knowledge of the print and media world, we can offer print houses and newsprint manufacturers real-time reel visibility and reduced supply chain costs.'

York Label acquires two converters

York Label has completed the acquisitions of Cameo Crafts and Package Service Company. York is a manufacturer of pressure sensitive labels with locations in California, Nebraska, North Carolina and Pennsylvania. With these acquisitions, York Label will become a multi-national company, doubling the number of associates and increasing in size from five to 11 facilities.

Cameo Crafts, based in Canada and the US, specializes in the pharmaceutical and wine and spirits markets, and has three facilities in Montreal, Canada, one facility in Toronto, and one in California. Cameo Crafts will operate as Cameo Crafts, a York Label Company. Package Service Company, located in Kansas City, Missouri, specializes in four core markets: personal care, beverages, household products, and food. PSC has one facility, which will become York Label, Kansas City. York Label has also purchased 50 percent of Chile-based Marinetti Packaging. The joint venture will operate under the name of Cameo Marinetti.

Multi-Color acquires Collotype

Multi-Color Corporation has signed a Letter of Intent to acquire Collotype International Holdings.

Headquartered in Adelaide, South Australia, Australia, Collotype is a pressure sensitive wine and spirits label manufacturer with market share in Australia, the United States and South Africa, and is a growing provider of labels in the fast-moving consumer goods marketplace.

Multi-Color, headquartered in the Cincinnati, Ohio area, is a supplier of a broad range of label solutions to the North American consumer products marketplace, including in-mold labels, heat transfer labels, cut-and-stack and pressure sensitive labels and shrink sleeves.

Upon completion of the transaction, Nigel Vinecombe will become president of Multi-Color's international business unit. Don Kneir will continue as president of Multi-Color's North American business unit.

Gerhardt announces DMS alliance

Gerhardt has teamed up with DMS to provide a range of tooling products, technical support, and customer service.

Gerhardt now adds the DMS product line to its existing line of rotary hot stamping and embossing products currently supplied by Falcontec Ltd, a Gerhardt subsidiary located in the UK. This gives Gerhardt the opportunity to offer the DMS drop in hot stamping systems and the company's complete range of tooling and equipment for all cutting, hot stamping and embossing requirements.

Sun Chemical joins with SA Labels

Sun Chemical has entered into an exclusive partnership with SA Labels to supply inks, adhesives and coatings for its Ultraflex press.

Ultraflex is a print system which can deliver multiple decorative enhancements, such as foils, tactile finishes and varnishes across a wide range of pressure sensitive substrates and flexible packaging materials.

Tony Coultard, operations director, SA Labels, said: 'Packaging designs are becoming increasingly complex, especially in markets such as premium beverages, food and personal care where brand owners seek to add value to products through print. However, these can often be compromised by printing restrictions. Ultraflex eliminates these by using all aspects of print technology, including screen, gravure, flexo or a combination of these, allowing brand owners to achieve their vision.

'The partnership with Sun Chemical is vital to the success of Ultraflex. The press' unique characteristics mean we had to choose an ink supplier at the forefront of ink innovation. Sun Chemical is the only company we feel has the portfolio of products which matched our requirements. Its R&D is extensive and it has a wide range of expertise across all printing processes to help Ultraflex push the boundaries of what is possible.'

Ultraflex will be available throughout Europe exclusively from SA Labels from June 2008.

Chesapeake opens plant in China

Chesapeake Corporation, an international supplier of specialty paperboard, plastic and pharmaceutical packaging, has opened its new pharmaceutical paperboard packaging plant in Kunshan, China.

The new plant joins Chesapeake's global network of plants supplying some of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. It offers design service and houses state-of-the-art equipment for digital plate making, digital label printing, high-gloss varnishing, foil stamping and laminating. This new 36,000 square foot facility complements Chesapeake's existing plant in Kunshan, which manufactures plastic bottles for the pharmaceutical market, by adding the production of paper-based packaging for domestic and multinational customers.

Emerson & Cuming adds Acheson's printable circuit assembly materials

Emerson & Cuming has added the series of polymer thick films, conductive inks and coatings of sister company Acheson Electronic Materials to its own circuit assembly materials offerings, allowing it to now offer printed, sprayable, jettable and dispensed materials for a wide array of electronic component assembly applications.

In addition to its adhesives, coatings, encapsulants and sealants for circuit assembly, Emerson & Cuming will market Acheson Electronic Materials' brands of Electrodag, Lumidag and Minico polymer thick films beginning in the fourth quarter of 2007. The product ranges include polymer thick films for printing via screen, rotogravure and flexographic methods. Acheson polymer thick film inks are used for the production of flexible circuits for membrane switches, flexible circuits for PC and notebook keyboards, heating elements, printed circuit boards, smart cards, RFID antenna, battery check labels, biosensors, EKG/ECG electrodes, EL-lamps, potentiometers, and touch screens. The product lines are well known in medical sensor, automotive sensors, RFID, display and lighting, and industrial and consumer membrane switch applications and complement Emerson & Cuming's pastes and encapsulants in these same markets and applications.

Acheson Electronic Materials' sales and applications experts in the product lines will join Emerson & Cuming. All research and new product development will be consolidated in Emerson & Cuming's facility in Billerica, Massachussetts, with personnel relocating from AEM's Port Huron, Michigan facility in 2008. Both Acheson and Emerson & Cuming are an integral part of National Starch and Chemical Company's Electronic Materials Division.

Electronic Materials' management anticipates that the addition of Acheson's polymer thick films, conductive inks and coatings to Emerson & Cuming's portfolio will bring critical mass to the development and commercialization of new products for the entire business.

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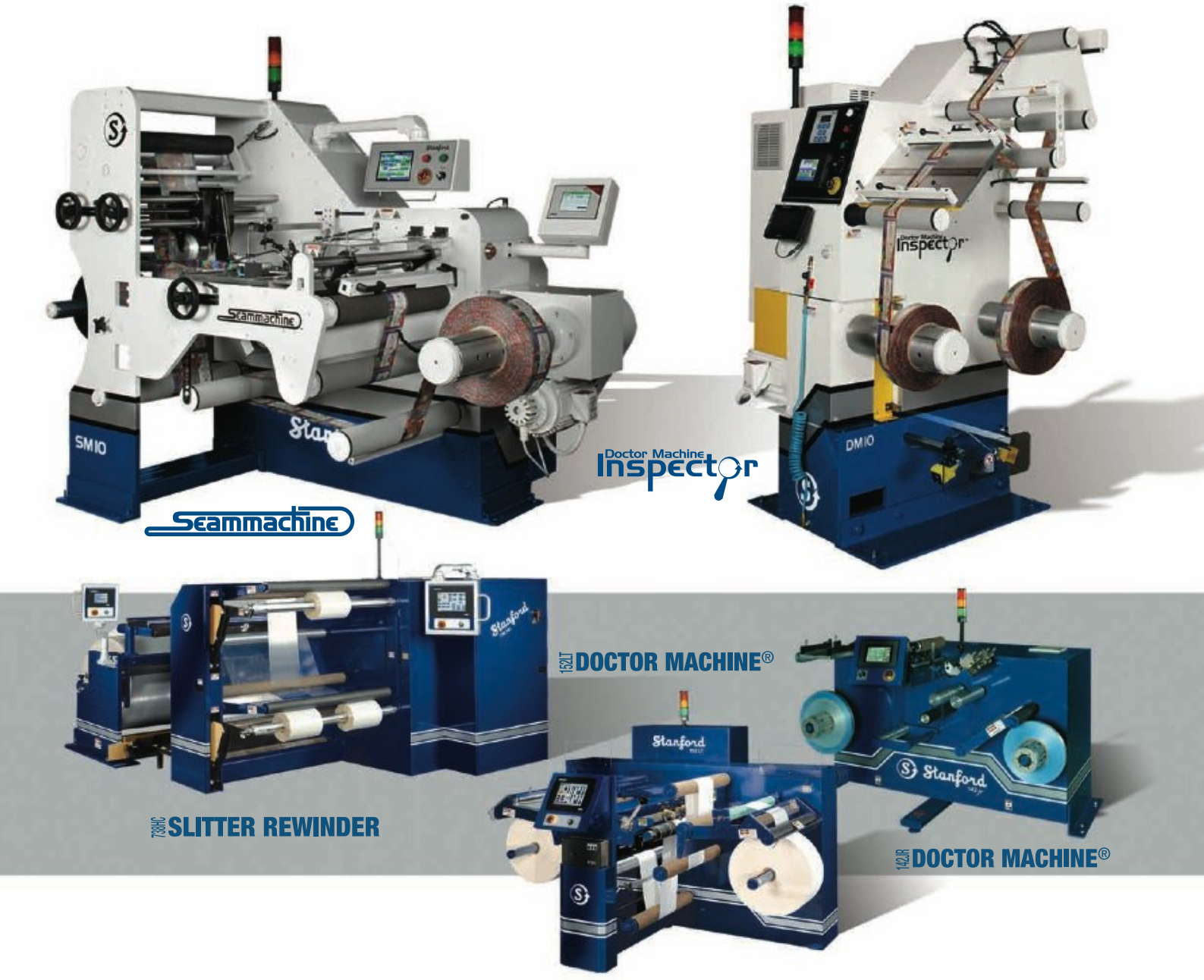

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Labeling news

DataLase/Domino's pharma solution

DataLase is working with Domino AmJet to print lot and expiration codes onto pharmaceutical cartons and labels. Domino is using DataLase Packmark, an imaging solution to mass customize information to primary packaging materials.

The pharmaceutical customer traditionally used a hot stamp printer to code its primary packaging. However, this method caused the label to 'crimp' thus preventing the label from running smoothly through the applicator, causing a jam. Using hot stamp printing also required the use of ribbons, therefore making the process costly and time consuming.

By incorporating the DataLase Packmark solution into the production line, the customer has reportedly been able to overcome many of the problems caused by traditional coding and marking techniques. For this application a DSL 25 watt Domino CO2 laser was used to produce a positive black image on a white background without ablation. The area to be marked is coated with DataLase Packmark, and the laser then creates a color change in the coating. This is claimed to be a simpler, more cost-effective and environmentally friendly technology than traditional coding and marking techniques such as hot stamp printing.

GMG donates color proofing system

The School of Graphic Communications Management at Ryerson University has received a donation from GMG for research in proofing and color management.

GMG has donated software that includes its flagship product, GMG ColorProof, which has produced consistent results at the IPA Color Proofing RoundUPs, events overseen by Dr Abhay Sharma of Ryerson University. The donation also includes GMG DotProof to generate contract quality halftone proofs and GMG FlexoProof, tailored to the specific needs of the packaging industry. The contribution enables Ryerson University to train and educate students and researchers, and to initiate industrial investigations and evaluations for the printing industry. Of particular significance is the ability to use GMG ColorProof to create GRACoL and SWOP proofing scenarios.

The Heidelberg School of Graphic Communications Management is housed in a new 30,000 sq ft press and pre-press facility in downtown Toronto. The school offers the only 4-year graphic arts degree program in Canada. The reputation of the school has meant 100 percent internship placement and 100 percent employment of students on graduation.

Green Bay enhances core-cutting

Green Bay Packaging will enhance core-cutting operations at five of its US production facilities with the purchase of six new automated core-cutting machines from Appleton Manufacturing Division (AMD). Green Bay Packaging, a diversified manufacturer of paperboard packaging and pressure sensitive label stock, will employ the new AMD A301 core cutters at operations in Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Orlando. These facilities slit and distribute pressure sensitive label material as part of GPC's one-day customer service program.

Hammer receives four global awards

Hammer Packaging has received four 2007 Premier Print Awards for outstanding achievement in the production of labels and flexographic printing.

Competing against more than 5,200 entries from printing and graphic arts firms around the world, Hammer Packaging received an Award of Recognition for Coca-Cola 'Walk The Red Carpet' Academy Awards in-mold label, and Certificates of Merit for Rose's Mojito/Cocktail Infusions, Dasani bottled water cut and stack labels and Tavern on the Green balsamic vinegar pressure sensitive label.

The PIA/GATF sponsors the Premier Print Awards. Now in its 58th year, the annual print competition promotes excellence in print communications and rewards companies and individuals who produce the best in printed media.

For more news and daily updated content, see **www.labelsandlabeling.com**

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The winner speaks

Andrew Jack of Dow Corning, winner of the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award at the Label Industry Global Awards held during Labelexpo Europe, speaks about his achievements and the future of the silicone industry. **James Quirk** reports

How does it feel to have won the R.Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award?

I'm still a bit stunned to be honest! It was a surprise to me when I leant that I had been nominated. All the other nominees were hugely well-known people – some CEO's of their own companies, who over many years have made enormous contributions to this industry.

As I commented during my acceptance speech simply to be considered amongst this group was a huge honor. To have been voted winner is still somewhat unbelievable and a great privilege.

A global award of this esteem, presented as it is from across the entire labeling industry, is immensely rewarding and a fantastic honor.

What have been the key developments in the silicone industry during your career – and what have been your and Dow Corning's roles in these developments?

There have been so many memorable milestones but the one that has really shaped the current industry is in my opinion the development of 100 percent silicone release products and the realization of their full potential. This has probably contributed more than anything else to the influence that silicones have made to the myriad of applications existing today for self-adhesive labels. Although taken for granted today it was at the time a most significant innovation. The development was pioneered by Dow Corning some thirty years ago and was way ahead of its time in respect of environmental awareness let alone technical performance.

My part in this has been in understanding the market and technical

L-r: Christian Simcic of award sponsor Avery Dennsion; Andrew Jack of Dow Corning; last year's winner Calvin Frost of Channeled Resources

needs of our customers and then helping to decide the direction of our developments and then making the products perform in application but that alone could not have become reality without the excellent colleagues I have in R&D, process engineering and manufacturing who develop, manufacture and deliver the product.

What is the achievement in your career of which you are most proud?

This is a challenging question since an achievement of which I can feel proud would have to be associated both with people and leave something permanent for the future benefit of the industry. In this respect my time as chairman of the FINAT Technical Committee and associated time on the Board would rank highest. Today both the committee and the Board are well represented and very successful and the organization is growing and setting new standards of performance as an association. In this respect the recognition from my colleagues in 2006 in awarding me an honorary life membership is highly valued.

How do you see the evolution of the silicone industry in the near future?

Silicones are an essential component of any pressure sensitive construction whether it be for tape or self-adhesive labels. During recent years there have been continuous improvements and some excellent technical advances in product performance. Much of this has come about through the need to match the release characteristics to some need in the down stream processing either in the converting properties or the application requirements at the point of use. Many of the features taken for granted today have only come about through such focused and innovative development. Of course all this comes at a cost since the components must be specifically engineered with special levels and designs of functionality to satisfy these needs.

Silicones, being purely synthetic materials, have to be made from basic raw materials through very complex and costly multi-stage processes. It still surprises me after thirty plus years in the industry the number of people who perceive that the silicones used in our industry are nothing more than by-products from some other general product line. Not so – these materials are specifically designed for this industry and these applications alone, and, with

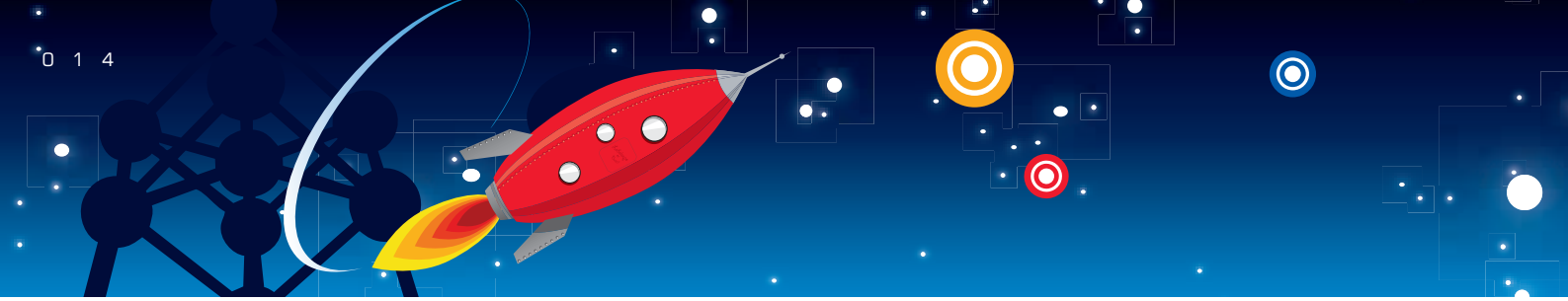
"A global award of this esteem, presented as it is from across the entire labeling industry, is immensely rewarding and a fantastic honor"

few exceptions, are not used elsewhere. To remain successful, a high level of specialization and continuous reinvestment in development is therefore needed.

In past years these have resulted in step changes – i.e. ultra fast line speeds, lower cure temperatures and improved stability with hexenyl chemistry. During recent years much development effort has focused towards reducing the applied cost and our current Dow Corning Syl-Off Advantage series is a good example of this. It is likely that this trend will certainly continue for the foreseeable future. Of course we are always working towards improved products and applications and the big question is can there be further step changes to match those of the past? I believe so, and I am pleased that we are not short of good ideas and believe that evolution through silicone innovations should remain as strong in the future as it has been is the past.

What do you see is the role of the FINAT Technical Committee in setting global standards?

The establishment of a set of global standards that define and tell us about the properties and hence projected performance of the self-adhesives materials is essential for the label converter. The development and revision of these standards remains one of the flagship objectives of the technical committee. The success of the industry in the developing world and globalization of supply means that without such standards there would be no common reference points around which to communicate. We will therefore be working hard to continue to make these standards as practical and meaningful as we can to those who need them. Since these form part of global communication our translations not only in the main European languages but especially into business Chinese are essential. It is possible today for our membership to reach these on line so access to the latest edition and revisions is improved. The recently announced proposal for a worldwide labeling industry education and training program by Mike Fairley will hopefully find these standards invaluable in the teaching and accreditation process for students. ■



Labelexpo – part two

Labelexpo Europe 2007 was the biggest label event in the history of the industry. Part two of our comprehensive review includes a focus on the increase in offset technology at the show, as well as ancillary equipment, web inspection, finishing, management information software, pre-press and UV curing. **Andy Thomas, Barry Hunt, James Quirk** and **Danielle Jerschefske** report

Offset: the new pretender?

The post-Labelexpo smoke has cleared, leaving us with a clearer picture of an emergent offset world, *writes Barry Hunt.*

The presence of a notable number of rotary and semi-rotary offset presses and the emergence of full-color inkjet label printing were significant highlights at Labelexpo Europe 2007. While the latter provides yet another digital technology with all to prove, the offset factor is particularly interesting. It reflects a widespread emphasis on print quality from all quarters. And, as everyone recognizes, offset with its internationally-recognized standards sets the quality benchmark. Yet, at the same time, flexo has closed the gap especially on the latest highly-specified UV flexo presses.

Of course, offset has been around in several guises in our industry for many years. Once it was identified solely with printing premium labels, such as those supplied for the toiletry/cosmetics, healthcare, wine and spirits sectors. The combination of centralized servo-driven control and improved web handling facilities have since

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opened up applications to include film-based products, such as shrink sleeves, wraparounds and tube laminates.

In turn, developments like lightweight sleeve/plate systems to obtain varying repeat lengths, remote inking and electronic controls have shortened make-ready times. That's why manufacturers now stress the flexibility of their presses in handling a wider range of run lengths. They also strongly assert that it is the major global brand owners who are indirectly driving the move towards offset. The implications of not taking such a step are, we are led to believe, patently obvious.

Ironically, a greater stress on multiprocess or 'hybrid' working recognizes the need to configure one or more UV flexo units in the press line. They usefully print opaque whites, solids or lay down end-of-line varnishes and laminate adhesives.

So far, the largely UV-flexo based manufacturers appear to be fairly sanguine about current press developments. Their share of the market remains high and there is no shortage of fairly advanced narrow and mid-web flexo presses, as Labelexpo showed. The output quality of these presses is considerably more then being merely sufficient. That's why most flexo diehards will confidently resist paying a heavy premium to gain a marginal increase in reproduction quality. A move into offset is an expensive business, especially when pre-press and other supportive factors are factored in. Its devotees maintain that offset is a more economic and productive process that benefits from far lower platemaking costs to give good payback ratios.

What manufacturers say

Our first look at manufacturers' opinions begins with Nilpeter. In 1994 it almost bet the farm by introducing the first true offset combination press for label printing. After selling almost 200 of them, the company feels the process has come of age. 'Offset is driven by the big brand owners who want standardized quality', says Jakob Landberg, sales director. 'It now accounts for 20 percent of our production and we can see this figure reaching around 30 percent in two years time. More converters are realizing the longer-term benefits of offset as a quality-driven, economical process.' Incidentally, Nilpeter introduced the fourth-generation and sleeve-based MO-4 at Labelexpo. It plans to increase its offset sales and development budget by 50 percent this year.

Gallus is another influential manufacturer that includes offset within its established program. At Labelexpo it introduced the RCS 440, a 17-inch version of the established RCS 330 platform press with full servo-driven capability. Having Heidelberg as a business partner has given the company access to some innovative technology, such as the Alcolor dampening system originally developed for sheet-fed presses. The fact that it offers automated start-up method with a low idling speed reflects a wider move to reduce material waste.

Gidue's president, Federico d'Annunzio, believes the pressures to move to offset will increase for printers with a packaging bias. 'Narrow web printers have definite advantages here because their converting skills make them natural partners for brand owners who are driving the offset trend,' he says. The servo-driven Xpannd offset/flexo series with 'intelligence' – a form of digitized automatic control over press variables – is seen as a major development here, especially as an alternative to sheet-fed offset for labels. Nevertheless, he maintains that the process is

L-r Omet's Marco Addui and Massimo Bellingardi

L-r Rotatek's Josep Maria Soler, Elvira Vidal, José Betés and Bibiana Rodriguez

not necessarily confined to the high end of the market.

It's a view that Eric Hoendervangers, cofounder of MPS, would agree with. Labelexpo saw the launch of the EO (Effective Offset) 330 and 410 offset series. As the company's first offset press it uses lightweight sleeves for the plate and blanket cylinders allowing fast changeovers of repeat lengths. He says the full-color printing and coating flexibility of UV flexo units integrated in an EO press create a hybrid platform that widen converters' options. MPS obtains its exchangeable EO series print units from Drent Goebel – also headquartered in the Netherlands – which has installed about 40 of its VSOP (Variable Sleeve Offset Printing) presses around the world.

Omet flagged a low-key move into offset by showing a single printing tower. It can integrate with the gearless VaryFlex F1 340, 430 and 520 platforms, along with a choice of gravure, screen, cold and hot-foil, as well as UV flexo. An independent drive allows very slow set-up speeds to minimize waste, which is essential when processing unsupported films.

Presses with web widths of 20.5 inches and above now represent a clear strand of offset press technology, with many reflecting their commercial printing origins. This category includes Muller Martini's Alprinta series, which now includes a new UV flexo printing and laminating tower. Edelmann Graphics with its Evo-Print V48 Label and Rotatek have straddled both camps for some years, offering several different types of combination presses. The latter's development of the 20.5-inch wide Universal mixed substrate press, with a new type of sleeve technology for both the offset and flexo units, indicates how the press market is changing.

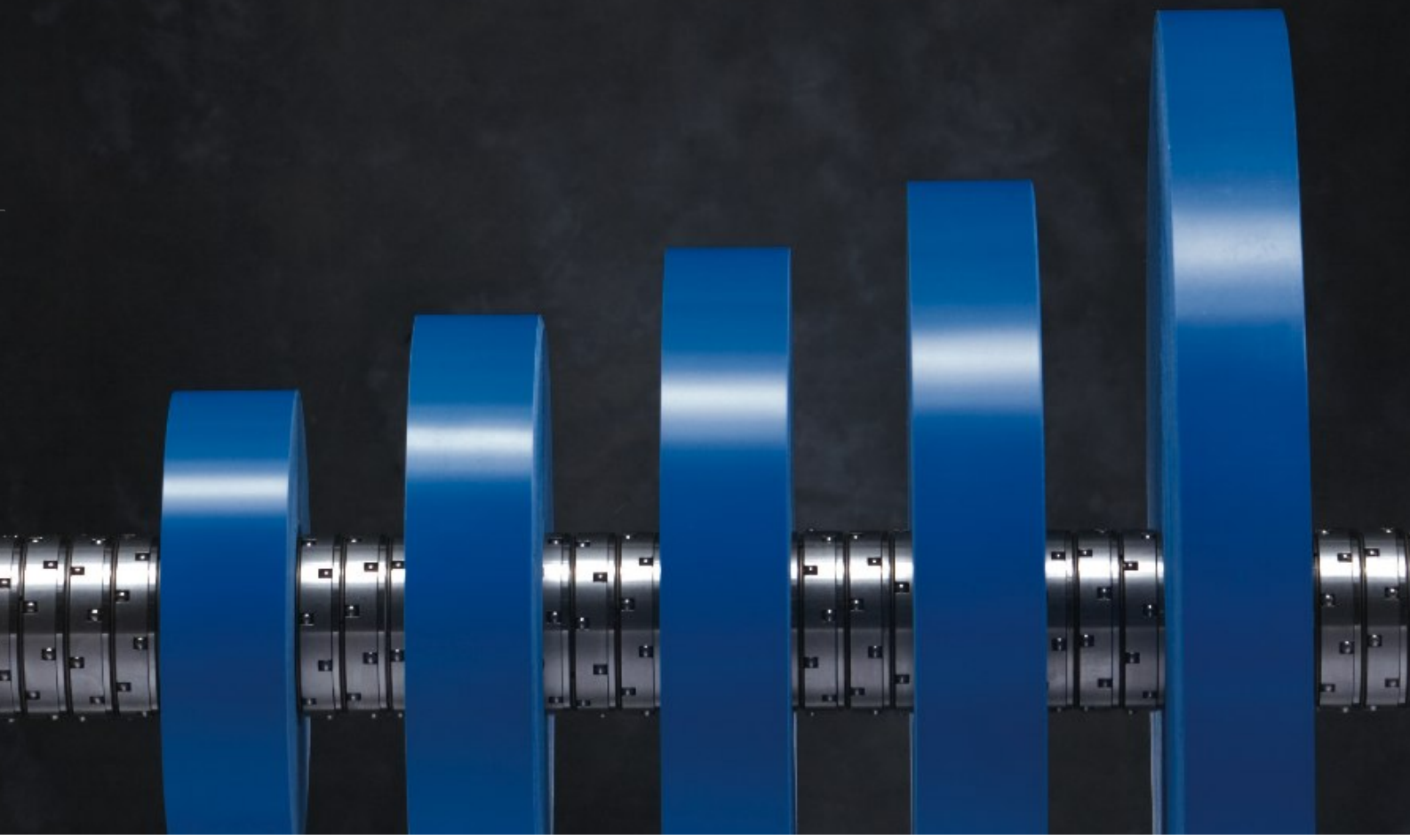
Semi-rotary offset presses with intermittent feed technology – and sometimes with a waterless offset option – widen converters' choice for short-run applications, especially wine and spirits labels. Some users see them as economical alternatives to digital presses. A new trend is to increase the web widths, say to 14-15 inches and ramp up speeds to around 180 feet/minute to improve productivity. Combined with short make-ready times, low wastage and high quality levels, this factor can feasibly allow semi-rotary offset to compete with middle-range flexo presses. Some of the latest examples include Codimag's Viva 420, with its innovative Aniflo inking system, Shiki's new FX-1512, Etipol's Combi 2000, Lintec's SOF-330, while Rotatek's Brava uniquely offers either semi or rotary printing modes.

Offset's growing share of the narrow web market coincides with a strong move towards consolidation in the industry. Several of the larger European and North American converters within integrated packaging groups already operate multiple offset operations. As a combination process, offset also benefits from the greater number of specialized converters producing high value-added labels and packaging. That leaves plenty of mainstream converters who are committed to remain loyal to flexo in all its variants. Nevertheless, competition among the press manufacturers who have invested heavily in furthering their offset ambitions is intensifying and will surely lead to a stronger profile for the process. All this plays out against an even greater unknown: what course will the emerging and existing digital techniques take? That's why the full-color inkjet developments mentioned earlier are worth watching. Improved piezoelectric printheads, flexible integration with converting processes and color management software are all in place. That leaves plenty of possibilities still to be explored. Imagine cloning this technology into a fast, yet versatile, web-fed machine such as the DocuColor or iGen from Xerox, or Kodak's VersaMark. It could even make discussions about the relative merits of offset and flexo seem rather academic. Who knows? ■

Kammann launches combination press

One of the more unusual presses at the show was Kammann's new K61-OS combination press. It combines a flatbed screen station with four semi-rotary waterless offset units, a flexo unit, rotary die cutter and hot-foil embossing. It is fitted with air-cooled UV curing with cooling rollers and optional hot air drying. The maximum print width is 350mm, with infinitely variable print lengths of 7-14 inches. Top speed is 30 m/minute (98 feet/minute) at maximum repeat length. All job data for small and medium-run jobs is input from a central console. Digital systems for exposing screen media (K26-S) and offset plates (K26-O HS) with direct plate mounting support the K61-OS.

The latest trend in differential winding.



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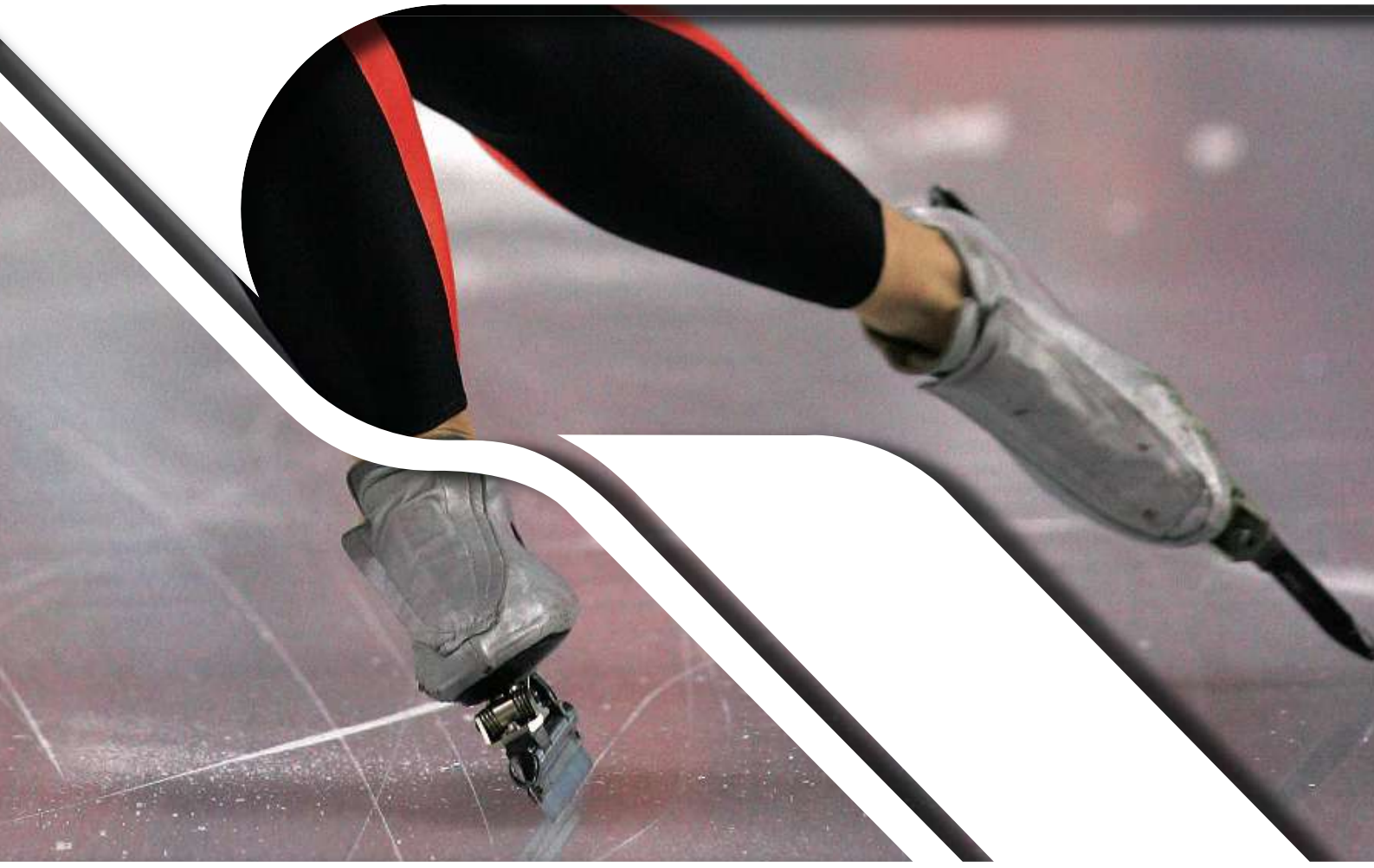

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Gallus launched its new Screeny S-line at the show

The water flows at the Kocher+Beck stand

Ancillary equipment

Convertech

Indian company Convertech promoted its range of doctor blades at the show. 'We already supply into Europe,' said director Ravi Sanon. 'We have had a great deal of interest in our products.' The company has a network of European distributors in the UK, Italy, Denmark, Austria and Bulgaria.

Graymills

Graymills launched its two-piece (pump and control box) remotely controlled peristaltic pump – the compact design of which makes it a fit for press builders and users with space considerations, says the company.

The standard PPS peristaltic pump head has been mounted to a splash-resistant motor enclosure, of reduced size, that allows it to be mounted within press frames or in restricted spaces.

The speed/direction controls are enclosed in a separate box, with connection to the pump via a cable. This design feature means the box can now be mounted in any operator friendly location away from the pump itself, grouped with other press controls or in a cabinet convenient to the operator.

The company also promoted its 'Quick Change' peristaltic pumps, which allow operators to change out pump heads and hose in seconds without tools.

Martin Automatic

Martin Automatic had its systems running on two press manufacturers' stands. Taiwanese press manufacturer Labelmen showcased a 6-color UV letterpress line equipped with a Martin Automatic splicer and rewinder, while on the Mark Andy stand a high-speed Martin Automatic LRD rewind provided continuous automatic roll changing on the Comco C2 press.

On Martin Automatic's own stand there were live demonstrations of an MBSF automatic butt splicer for label and film materials working in line with an LRD automatic transfer rewind. The splicer and rewind were sold to Austrian converter Ulikett GmbH for use on a new offset press.

RK Print

Sample preparation specialist RK Print displayed the Flexiproof 100 at the show, of which the company has sold more than 200 units around the world. The machine produces proofs using water, solvent or UV flexo inks, and is suitable for quality control, presentation samples, R&D and computer color matching data.

'The machine is all about saving money,' said managing director Tom Kerchiss. 'Not having to stop the press to check colors can save a lot of time and money.'

RK Print is a regular exhibitor at Labelexpos and Label Summits around the world. 'It is great to be able to meet customers and show our face in the industry, as well as source new business,' said Kerchiss.

Teknek

Contact web cleaning specialist Teknek introduced its Adhesive Roll Oscillation System, a patent-pending process that moves the roll from side to side, increasing the amount of contamination taken up, and thus the life of the rollers. 'Our systems can expand the life of consumables by 60 percent,' explained David Westwood, regional sales manager. 'With our new oscillation system, clients are reporting life expansion of up to four times.' Teknek also launched its Mini Web Cleaner designed for smaller web widths – and with a lower price point.

tesa

tesa showcased its UV-Strips, a new solution for the measurement and control of UV radiation when using UV varnishes and coatings.

tesa UV-Strips are claimed to offer the flexibility of a thin self-adhesive strip combined with the accuracy of measurement cells – the usually separate tools for the measurement of the UV dose. Additionally, all data can be digitally recorded for effective monitoring and quality control. The precise readings also allow quick identification of errors in the production process, thus reducing waste and maximizing the benefits of UV technology.

UV curing

Dr Honle

pureUV is a new UV dryer generation from Hönle which enhances the company's arccure technology – more efficient, smaller, with lower energy usage and cutting heat to the web by 50 percent thanks to a new geometry and dichroic reflector coating and a barrier that prevents the direct irradiation of the web. Tests with Hönle's EPS electronic power supplies reportedly show an increase in UV intensity by up to 50 percent.

Hönle also showed a new measuring strip system developed with tesa for the reliable monitoring of UV dose, even on complex surface geometries. It measures the state of the complete system, not only the lamp.

The tesa UV strip can be stuck directly on the object. After exposure, the measuring strip changes color according to the UV intensity. The measured values can be read and stored by Hönle's UV Scan reading device.

Dr Honle curing systems were also demonstrated at the Jetrion booth on the digital inkjet 4000 series printer.

GEW

GEW showed the latest version of its compact Nitrogen Inert Atmosphere (NIA) curing system and a touch screen on-line UV monitoring device, combined with the e-brick power supply system launched in Chicago.

The Compact N2 system enables the use of inks and coating chemistry with reduced levels of low molecular components that minimize the risk of taint and odor migration from the packaging.

GEW's SEEcure on-line monitoring system is a fully integrated measuring device that runs with the latest generation of the company's e-Brick controls and allows continuous monitoring of all lamps in a system simultaneously. An electronic sensor is built into the UV lamphead which receives a combined output of the UV light from the reflector and directly from the lamp, thus ensuring the UV incident on the web is monitored. An alarm function is incorporated to signal under performing UV lamps and reflectors.

GEW also launched QuantiCure, a chemical test kit that enables the user to measure cross-linking, configure UV power levels, monitor UV lamp and reflector operation, control energy consumption. QuantiCure is sensitive both to the UV intensity impinging on the web surface and variations in press speed so the operator can obtain a true analytical picture of the curing performance when matched against established standards such as rub and tape adhesion tests.

IST Metz

IST Metz featured the MBS-5 UV curing system with a 140 w/cm lamp. The emphasis is on saving energy costs while still delivering up to 40 per cent more UV energy onto the labelstock's surface. The new URS reflector has a surface coating that allows any desired geometry when using cold mirror reflectors. The MBS-5 is air cooled to further reduce operating costs. A new type of electronic control system ensures stable power output.

The MBS-5 UV curing system from IST Metz

The Digicon converting line from AB Graphic

Rotoflex won the Award for Continuous Innovation at the Label Industry Global Awards

Uviterno

Amongst a variety of new technologies promoted at the show, Uviterno displayed its compact UV dryer Cobra-HSK, whose narrow shape means it can be built into almost any printing machine.

The components for the unit such as the reflector, UV lamp and cooling system enable the Cobra-HSK to be operated with an output of up to 4 kW without restrictions.

In special areas of application such as letterpress printing, the Cobra-HSK can also be built into existing printing lines, where space is often limited.

Also new was the Coldstar-SRK, aimed at economizing the energy consumed for drying and cooling. The machine is claimed to meet current market demands, such as lower energy consumption and higher efficiency. It can be installed into almost any narrow web application system.

UV Ray

UV Ray unveiled the Maxwell 100 and Maxwell WA. The Maxwell 100, the 100 representing the outer casing size in millimeters, is engineered for ease of fitment into presses where space is at a premium, and on presses that require optimum UV curing performance. Incorporating energy efficient reflector geometry – UV Ray's 'floating' dichroic reflector concept, and 'cavity shoulder' structure, a feature of the Maxwell family, 'future proof' the system, enabling the narrow web printer to confidently bid for and obtain all types of work where effective heat management is critical.

The Maxwell WA is available in length of 1,500 mm. It is a 'water-cooled' UV curing system designed to respond to the needs of wide web flexo manufacturers – meeting the seemingly contradictory requirements of high UV curing power and energy efficiency. With the high tech design, power can be increased up to 400 W/cm, yet the company has reduced the chiller capacity to 1/3 of energy (power) output in order to regulate water temperature.

Finishing equipment

AB Graphic

AB Graphic International unveiled a number of new developments at Labelexpo Europe.

New models included the Omega FSR, 410mm wide film rewinder and Digilam laminating system developed for flexible packaging applications; the FleyeVision 100% inspection rewinder and the Vectra turret with on board inspection and automatic rejection of rolls containing errors. In addition a new semi-rotary screen printing option was demonstrated on a Digicon S converting line.

The company is acting as an agent for Swedish company Convertec AB's new Braillemaker One machine – which can digitally print Braille on labels, leaflets and booklets.

Braillemaker One can print Braille dots from a single text line up to five text lanes simultaneously, with an adjustable height from 0.2 to 0.4mm, depending on customers' requirements.

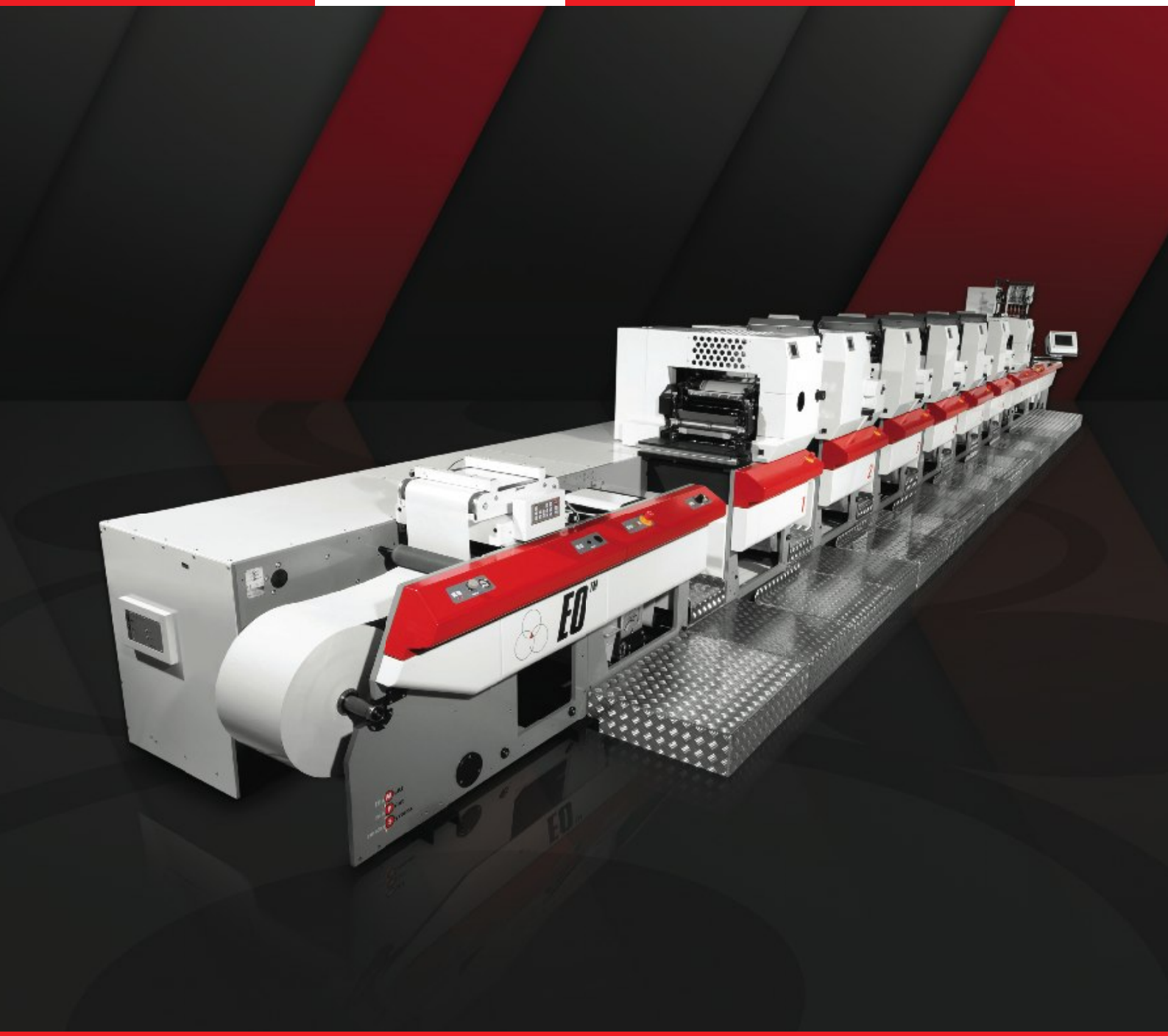
Braillemaker One complements or replaces conventional rotary or flat screen printing applications, and has software that converts regular text to Braille dots in the different 'languages' required. For high quality environments, a vision inspection system is available to detect and verify each Braille dot's position and size.

Convertec has appointed ABG International as agents for Braillemaker One in the UK, Ireland, Benelux, Germany, Spain, USA and Canada.

Blumer Maschinenbau

With more than 500 of its production lines in the marketplace, Swiss manufacturer Blumer showcased its label and card production units used predominantly in the wet glue beer and mineral water label market as well as in the aluminum bottle neck and in-mold label markets.

EXTRA NEWS BREAKING NEWS



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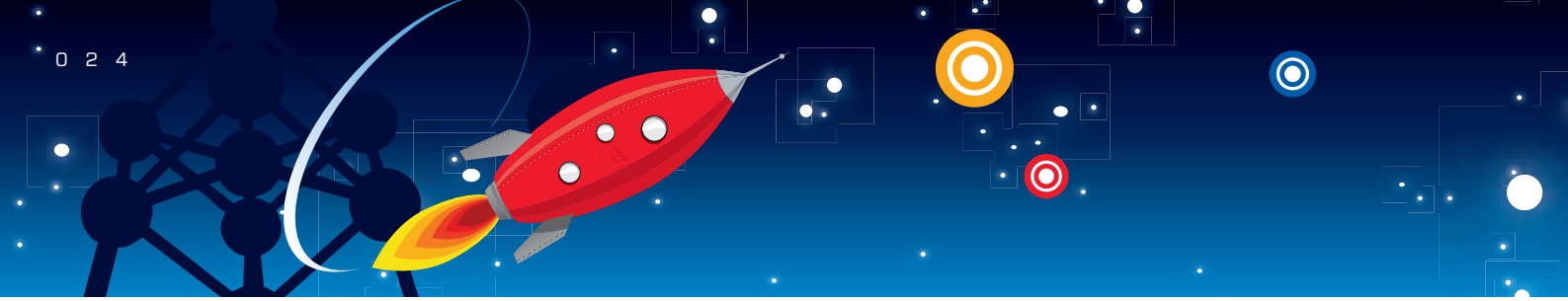

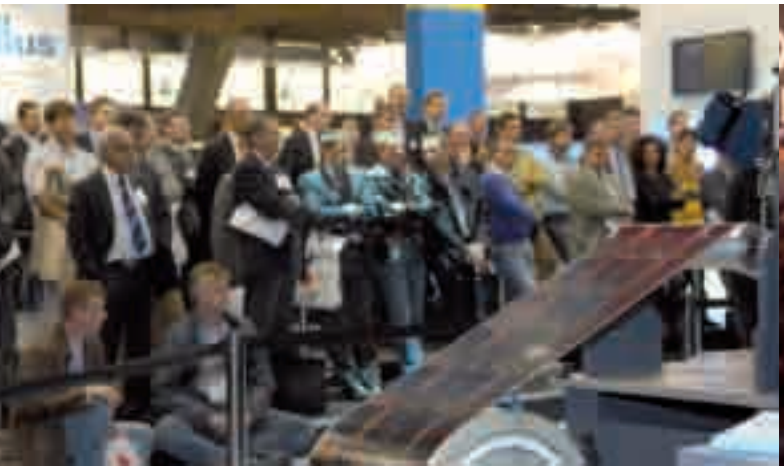

Hunkeler

Switzerland-headquartered Hunkeler – specialist in digital printing and web finishing solutions – attended Labelexpo Europe as part of a strategy to increase its presence in the narrow web label sector.

Area sales manager Martin Kubias revealed that the company is working on plans for a new matrix rewinder, which will enable the production of sheets of RFID labels. 'We want to give customers additional fields of use for our web finishing systems.'

Karville Development

US shrink sleeve converting and application company Karville Development brought its new, compact KSI slit-inspection machine to show – and sold a machine off the stand. Karville also sold a K4 compact seaming machine on display to Schaffer Etiketten prior to the show. The K4 ran with a BST layflat inspection system.

Karville was promoting its two training centers located in Lyon, France and Miami, Florida where customers and end-users can perform sampling runs, trials and tests.

Margraf

First-time Spanish exhibitor Margraf used the event for the international launch of its equipment; the company traditionally sells into its local market, with a factory in Valencia and distribution in Barcelona.

On display was the ToPack IR inspection, slitter and rewinder and the ToPack ITR dual die cutting inspection, slitter and rewinder. Both machines can rewind paper and plastic rolls, detect missing or damaged labels, and splice, while the ITR adds die cutting capabilities.

Newfoil

Newfoil's Model 3500 combines hot foil stamping with a VIP cold-fusion toner printer, which gives a print resolution up to 600 x 1,800 dpi for CMYK and spot colors. Top output speed on paper or film substrates is 17 feet/minute with web widths from four to 12 inches. It is intended for short to medium label runs, such as wine labels, and offers variable data capability and die cutting for single-pass production.

The company, which was celebrating its 25th anniversary, featured special effects created by micro-embossing and texturing of the label during the hot stamping operation. This combination process is said to ensure perfect foil-emboss registration every time, with low set-up and changeover times.

Polar Mohr

Polar Mohr brought its DC-C counter pressure die cut machine to the show for the first time. This machine has a size variation of just 0.2mm, is quick loading, extracts waste, and offers in-line banding. The company's 92cm (36in) Polar 92XT Gulliotine Cutter was slicing cut paper into reams and is designed for wet glue and cut and stack label producers.

Prati

Prati featured the roll-fed Vega Plus with a BST video web inspection unit, a flexo print head, two rotary die cutters and gluless rewinder. Aimed at pharmaceutical applications, handles webs up to 330mm (13 inches) wide at speeds up to 656 feet/minute (200 m/minute). Other equipment included the TC280 version of the Jupiter slitter/rewinder. Like all Prati post-press equipment it is fully servo driven.

RAantac

RAantac, a German manufacturer of specialty machines, demonstrated its modular Accuro label roll converting machine for the first time at the show. The machine glues, laminates and prints blank and plain labels on both paper and film substrates.

It incorporates color touch screen, speed regulator, meter and label counting features, automatic stop after reaching a pre-set number of meters or labels, adjustable slowing-down function, encased control box, optional remote maintenance via modem, order counter, automatic machine stop in the case of tape breakage, detection of tape end and misprints, with

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add-on control panels on clamping bar and unwinding unit. The line utilizes components from BST, Lenze and Spilker.

Rotoflex

Rotoflex was celebrating a win in the category of Continuous Innovation at the 2007 Label Industry Global Awards, and demonstrating a range of equipment including its VSI eDrive inspection slitter rewinder, VLI eDrive film inspection slitter rewinder, Vericut 2 digital web finishing, DPI Pharma security inspection and finishing system and eVision system integration technology.

Rotoflex has re-engineered both its 'single-pass' and 'multi-pass' security machine designs to meet today's increasingly stringent pharmaceutical compliance demands. These advanced security systems include the new Rotoflex single source universal controller recommended for counting and detecting clear labels with print, fault placement control, vision integration and barcode verification.

Vericut 2 includes the latest advancements in semi rotary die cutting, spot coating, cold foil, hot foil, embossing, rotary sheeting and stacking

Scantech Automation

Scantech introduced Printrack LR – equipped for effective, ergonomic and productive converting, inspection and finishing. This is the latest in Scantech's line of converting systems, designed with motor technology to answer today's need for larger, softer and more accurately wound rolls through repeatable tension profiling. Other configurations built on Scantech's 'Flexibleformat' include Securitrack for vision inspection and fault retrieval, and Printrack FHD with reregistered die-cutting.

Smag

Smag was demonstrating its Digital Galaxie screen combination digital finishing line. Developed on a Galaxie press base – with more than 200 units installed – this machine has been adapted to the HP Indigo digital press format. It is based around silkscreen technology, giving converters the ability to print added value matte inks, tactile effects and thermo-chromic effects. It can also be configured in-line with flexo, laminating, flat bed hot foil, embossing, semi-rotary hot and cold foil, flat bed and semi-rotary die cutting stations.

Bobst Group – BA Flexible Materials presented a range of technology and process solutions in slitting and rewinding, short-run gravure printing and coating and laminating.

Some of the latest Atlas technology on show included a rewinding technique for filmic/synthetic material as low as 60 micron, at speeds up to 750m/min (2460ft/min) with rewind diameters up to 1250mm.

Also displayed was the Titan SR8 cantilever slitter rewinder – particularly suitable for narrower width slitting of all types of labelstock with Quick Shaft differential rewinds, rapid job change-overs (for shorter production runs), up to 1800mm web width, 600-800mm rewind diameters and running speeds up to 700 m/min. A semi-automatic slit reel unloading system is available together with other handling and conveying systems, as options.

Rotomec displayed the MW/60 medium web sleeve press, which provides for in-line special applications like UV or EB curing, die-cutting, lamination, reel-to-reel or reel-to-sheet delivery and is particularly suited to label printing.

Sohn
Sohn showed its 1-4-color 4400 tabletop flexographic printing press and its auto-register units for die cutting and lamination. The company's rotary converting equipment was also on display. Harvey Beaudry, technical sales director said, 'This has been such a successful show for us. We have seen interested visitors from all over the world.'

Spartanics
Spartanics now supports the reel-to-reel Finecut laser cutting system with touch-screen, interactive 'video wizards'. They give operators a step-by-step guide to all job setup operations, as well as test shots, without relying on language. The inert gas atmosphere from the cutter's sealed CO2 system allows the sharpest cuts for the most intricate cutting and engraving subjects using a wide range of film and paper substrates. At Labelexpo, the Illinois-based company announced a partnership with EFI Jetronics to supply digital die cutting for the Jetrion 4000 color inkjet printer.

Stanford
Stanford exhibited the latest versions of its SM10 Seammachine and DM10 Doctor Machine Inspector systems. The SM10 incorporates a patent-pending solvent application system with a new approach to tension control and rewind roll oscillation.

Van den Bergh Engineering
Belgian finishing machinery manufacturer Van den Bergh demonstrated its modular Foil-Wizard for hot foil and holographic stamping, embossing and numbering at up 6,000iph. Another modular machine, the ILC 18S, demonstrated score cutting and die cutting on small to medium runs. A single size magnetic rotary cylinder allows a converter to work with flexible dies and be able to run different sizes without changing cylinder. Lastly Van den Bergh presented its Docufinish machinery for form-label combination print jobs.

Workflow management

Cerm
Cerm showed its LabelXpro Management Software – which the company claims can not only reduce mistakes, downtime and waste, but also make-ready time.

Customers follow up every paper roll with its own Epsma-code, from the electronic shipping note to the consumption on the press, and can use the company's B2B purchasing system for both Avery and Raflatac.

Cerm also demonstrated the links it supplies with Esko Backstage and Artwork System's Nexus.

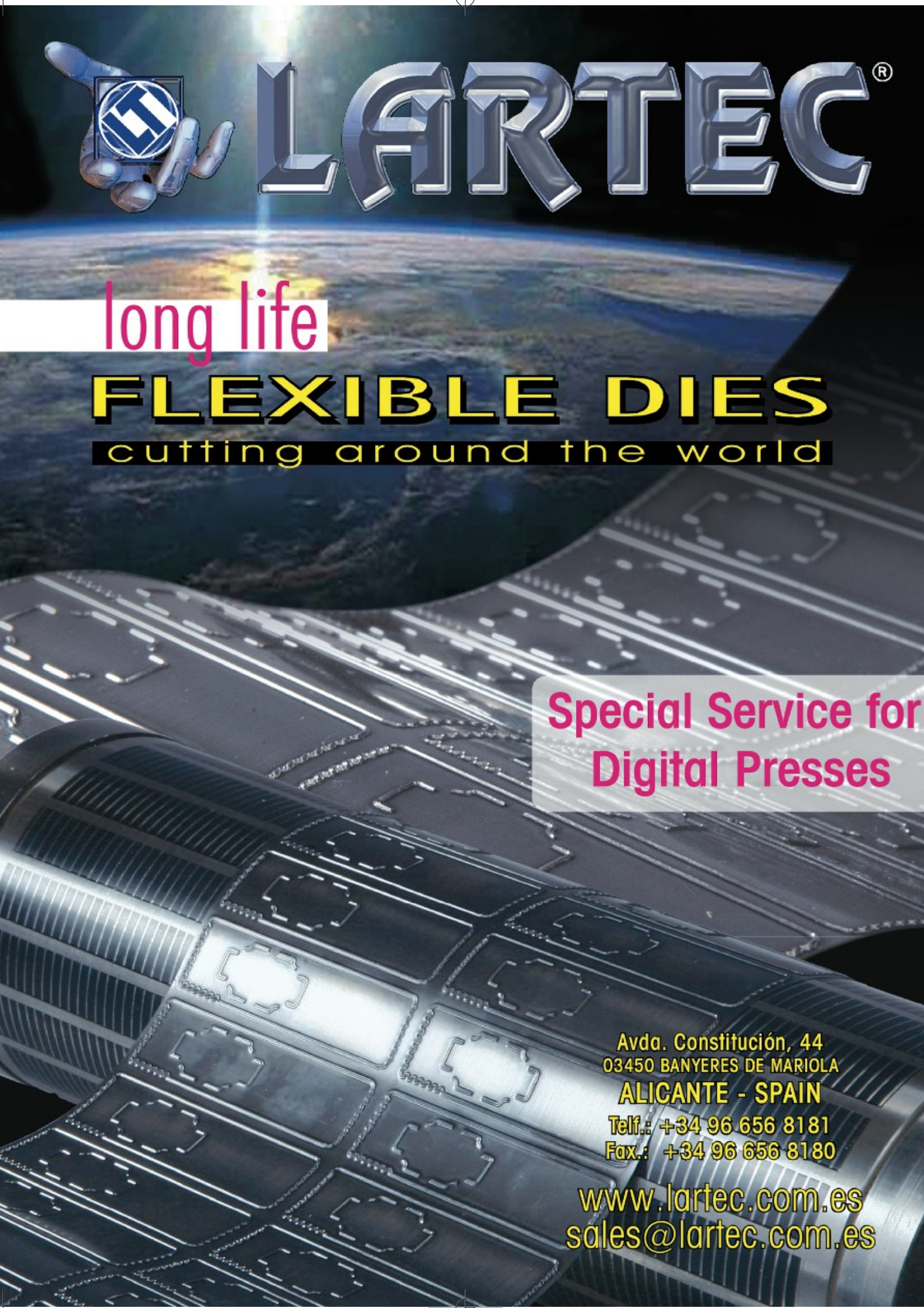
Shuttleworth
Enhancements to the Shuttleworth MIS software included the Data Flow module, which gathers and displays factory information and ensures shop floor employee can see all current job information, while all costing and scheduling changes can be updated in real time.

Shuttleworth's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) module has been expanded to manage the proofing process, control all the key job events and ensure that all extra charges are passed on to the client. This last function allows users to record customer changes or additional services, confirm via email and simultaneously set aside for future charging.

The Stock Control module now supports a radio frequency barcode reader system which enables customers to record all types of stock movement and location. With handheld PC's, the transactions are immediately updated so that job costing and stock valuation is precise and up-to-date.

Shuttleworth has plans to expand farther into South and East Africa, Dubai and Kuwait. The company has had a presence in India for three years, its main market focus after Europe.

Tailored Solutions
Tailored Solutions, developer of the Label Traxx print business management software for flexo printers, demonstrated new stock product features in Label Traxx version 5.1. at the show.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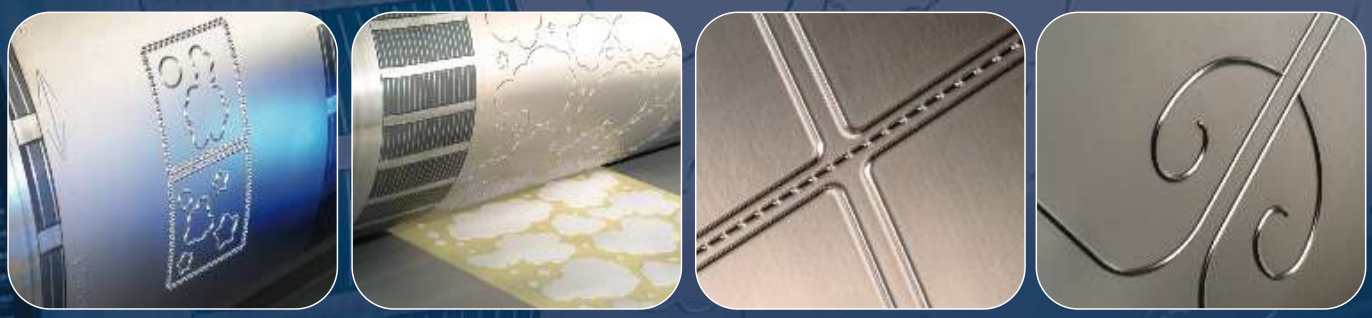

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LABELEXPO EUROPE REVIEW

Tailored Solutions showed the new features on Label Traxx version 5.1

The new software version can track the age of finished goods inventory and make individual cost and margin calculations for every stock product ticket. 'The inventory system increases the comfort level of the converter,' said president Ken Meihardt.

The company also used the event to announce that Label Traxx now connects its European users with UPM Raflatac. This feature allows European users to access the Raflatac order system directly from their software, making ordering Raflatac label stock easier and faster. Printers using Label Traxx can reduce order entry time by connecting directly to Raflatac Business Line, thus eliminating double entries and reducing the risk of errors. Raflatac systems also provide immediate order confirmation and advance shipment notice data. Using the software's barcode scanning feature, users can scan incoming and work-in-process Raflatac material to maintain an accurate inventory. Similar deals have already been set up in the US with Fasson, Mactac, Spinnaker, Accucoat, Technicote and Green Bay.

It is now just over one year since Tailored Solutions opened an operation in the UK in order to break into the European market. Since then, 11 companies have signed up to the software and are in various stages of implementation, according to European business development manager Katy Wight. 'We have a massive advantage because of our exclusivity to the narrow web label market,' said Wight. 'Most other systems providers come from the sheet-fed area. We have done a lot of work to bring the software to the UK market.' Expansion is set to continue, as the company recently employed a global business development manager to target the Asian and Indian markets. A distributor was also recently appointed in Australia.

Theurer

This show was Theurer.com's first Labelexpo since merging with former competitor Medata Mod.X. The business management software company offers the C3 MIS system for the label and flexible packaging industries, incorporating order processing, job costing and logistics. New specialized modules include die management and a customizable estimating feature.

Pre-press

Agfa

Agfa Graphics focused on its Dotrix modular UV-inkjet module and Secuseal security label design plug-in to Adobe Illustrator. Secuseal is the start of a new product line for Agfa, and gives label designers the ability to create complex backgrounds or convert images into complex linework patterns.

AV Flexologic

New on the AV Flexologic stand were the Aquasupreme XL plate processor, Cosmolight DS water-wash digital flexo plate (CTP), and Printight DF/DM water-wash digital letterpress plate (CTP).

Cosmolight and Printight were processed live on the Aquasuper MkII and – for the first time – on an Aquasupreme plate processor. The plates were mounted in register on the Mount-O-Matic Table Top MKII video mounter.

Compose System

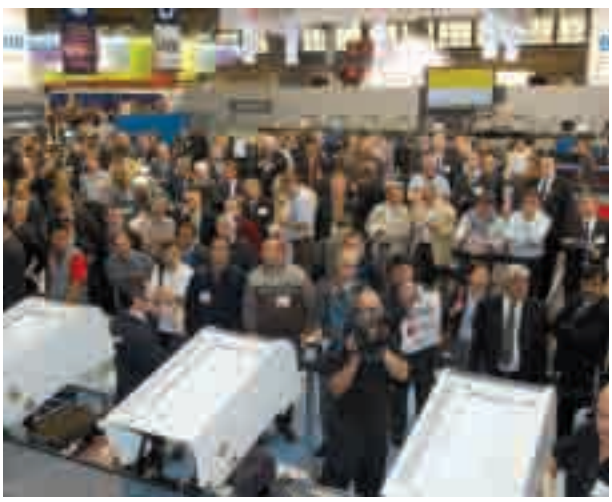
Compose System launched Visual Proof – an 'across the LAN' soft proofing solution designed to seamlessly integrate with modern production systems.

Visual Proof enables users to softproof the ripped 1 Bit TIFF, Harlequin PGB and Len File Formats – right down to the dot angle and shape, before they commit to exposing on film or plate.

The company also demonstrated its Star Proof true dot proofing solution, which can produce up to 200lpi contract proofs on inkjet printers. Also showcased was Compose System's Express WorkFlow solution. Express WorkFlow combines practical functionality with ease of use, says the company, ensuring tight integration and smooth data delivery between all processes in the customer's prepress workflow.

Degraf

Flexo plate production equipment manufacturer Degraf launched the Aqua Concept 860 WP.



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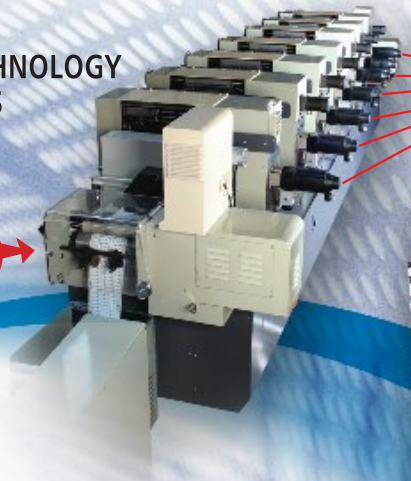
INTERMITTENT ROTARY LABEL PRINTING PRESS



SHAFTLESS TECHNOLOGY

PRINT AREA
300mmX220mm

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BREAK WORLD'S RECORDS

RFCN2850DL+DL

RFID Label Converting Machine

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SRN3030 SUPER SPEED

SILK SCREEN PRINTING MACHINE
FLAT BED, REEL TO REEL

CN2850DLP (CN2850/CN250/CN2033)

AUTO. OBLIQUE FLAT-BED LABEL PRINTING PRESS

EXCLUSIVE FEATURES

Year 2007
New Factory View

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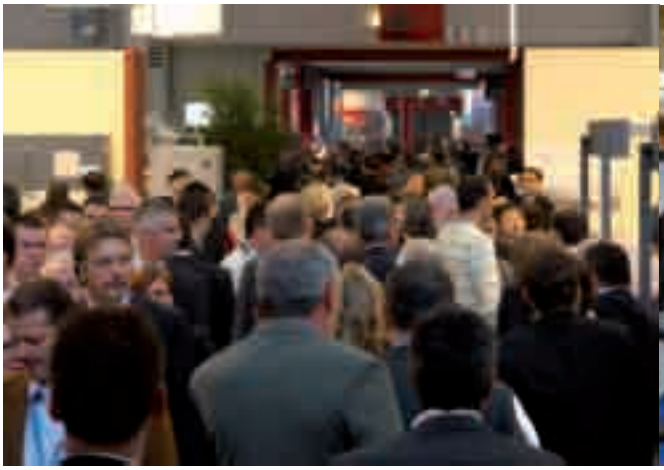

The unit, designed specifically for the label print market, produces photopolymeric water-based plates, of both letterpress and UV flexo. The unit is divided into two parts: the exposure section, with an easy access drawer on the right side of the equipment, and the inline washing/drying/post-exposure section, which is completely automated. The two sections work independently, so that during the processing of the first plate the following one can be exposed.

Aqua Concept 860 WP works with PVC or metal-based plates, both water washable. The maximum size of the plate is 66 x 86cm.

Also new at the show was the Concept 305 DW, designed for the production of mid-sized flexo digital plates and a smaller version of the company's existing 505 DW machine.

Degraf also displayed at its stand the Concept 305 EDLF, launched last year during Degraf's first International Open event, and 201 HTD – both developed for the production of flexo plates.

'It has been an excellent show for us,' said Jacques Dutard, key accounts sales manager. 'At Labelexpo, there is the potential that all the visitors will have an interest in your booth – it is much more focused than drupa, for example.'

EskoArtwork

Labelexpo Brussels provided a platform for EskoArtwork – formed recently from the acquisition by Esko of Artwork Systems – to explain the reasons behind the merger and the joint company's future strategy.

The new group is expected to have a total revenue of over 180 million euros and a global staff of 1,000. As well as consolidating its position as a global supplier, a key rationale for Esko was the ability to develop Artwork Systems' Enfocus PDF tools, which have become a standard in the packaging and labels industry.

CEO Carsten Knudsen and Artwork Systems founder Guido Van der Schueren stressed that the new company will protect customers' previous investment in pre-press systems, including both job archives and operator skills as it develops a new, integrated software environment.

Both Esko and Artwork Systems were well known for their industry partnerships, and two key extensions to these programs were announced.

First, EskoArtwork announced an extension of its partnership with HP Indigo to a full OEM relationship, with the company demonstrating a new variable data printing (VDP) option specifically developed for the HP Indigo ws4500 as well as a digital color matching system developed with ExxonMobil.

Designed to work in Adobe Illustrator environments and within Esko's own workflow systems, the VDP solution is focused on industrial applications including barcodes, sequential numbering and graphical codes. Using XML and CSV (comma delimited data file) input, Esko's SmartMarks technology is used to tag and position variable elements within packaging and labels artwork in absolute and relative positions.

EskoArtwork customers Schreiner Group, Baker Labels, Eshuis and Vox have successfully tested the VDP module in conjunction with their HP industrial presses.

The second major announcement was an off-press proofing system for HP Indigo presses using the Indichrome color engine developed in alliance with the Films Business of ExxonMobil Chemical. The system demonstrated comprised ExxonMobil's PacVantage technology – built into Esko's Kaleidoscope and FlexProof modules – ExxonMobil's Digilyte film and a 12-color Epson inkjet printer. The Indigo-printed label is emulated on the inkjet printer and the job is guaranteed to match on the digital press with 'little or no adjustment' providing the label is printed on Digilyte film.

The calibrated inkjet printer can be installed – with a suitable light box – in pre-press, or remotely at the end user, forming a remote contract proofing system which can confirm a multi-color job before printing and without tying up the press. The system should be commercially available in Q1 2008.

ExxonMobil and EskoArtwork plan to extend the PacVantage technology to cover flexible packaging substrates.

Both PacVantage and the Variable Data options for the HP Indigo presses are available as part of Esko's updated Software Suite 7. This integrated workflow system now offers improved JDF integration with management information systems, allowing automated step & repeat workflows and reporting of job status.

Other partners demonstrating EskoArtwork equipment included

Xeikon, CERM demonstrating MIS integration with graphics management systems and Dantex, which was imaging digital letterpress plates on a CDI 2530.

Jet Europe

Jet Europe unveiled several new digital solutions for flexo and UV flexo, letterpress and dry-offset printing applications.

The company launched its water-washable digital JET-plates for letterpress, UV-flexo and dry-offset, along with the digital Ohkaflex plates – claimed to offer a wide exposure latitude and high ozone resistance.

The new Jet Line 700 CTP is a compact letterpress plate processor that integrates all post-exposure plate processing steps required after exposure, into a modern in-line format. A significant feature of the processor is its in-line pre-rinsing station that removes the black CTP-layer before the actual washing of the plate. Jet Line 700 CTP is compatible with plates up to 700mm width. Also new on the stand was the Jet Line 500, which processes plates up to 500mm.

JM Heaford

JM Heaford introduced its new plate mounting system dedicated to the presses of Italian manufacturer Gidue, which features a new through-the-lens LED illumination system. Also on display was the company's new combination sleeve and cylinder machine.

JM Heaford also represented the 3DQC Microscope from MicroDynamics at the show, which managing director Mike Heaford reported received 'lots of interest'.

Kodak

Kodak's Graphic Communications Group announced its alliance with MacDermid Printing Solutions and promoted Digital Must, Digital Rave and a capped version Digital Epic. Also displayed were Kodak's Flexcel analog flexo plates, plus the European debut of digital Flexel NX. It was included in a CTP workflow package with Approval NX proofing. The package includes the Flexcel NX 830 thermal imaging layer, the choice between using a Kodak Trendsetter NX Narrow or the Mid Imager version, a Flexcel NX laminator and Prinergy workflow system for packaging. Kodak also showed the Thermoflex Mid Hybrid platesetter, which can image offset, flexo and letterpress plates, as well as film. The maximum flexo plate size is 1,016 x 1,200 mm (40 x 47.24 inches) and slightly smaller for offset.

Luescher

Luescher launched its FlexPose! hybrid CTP thermal imagesetter, which can process varying sizes of flexo, letterpress and offset printing plates on the same machine. The company also demonstrated its own water-washable plate materials for imaging on the FlexPose! under the brand names FlexPlate!, LetterPlate! and SteelPlate!

Plates do not require accurate positioning on Lutcher's internal/external drum and therefore can be easily and quickly placed in the imaging unit. There are no centrifugal forces caused by different plate thicknesses and sizes.

Printing plates for flexo and letterpress are imaged, washed, dried and ready for use in five steps, and both the water and the plate remain free of solvents during the entire washout process. Offset plates are made in the usual way.

The system is modular in design, and configured to the customer's individual specifications. Luescher's partner OFS demonstrated its FlexDot! UV exposure unit and FlexWash! washing unit at the show.

Sun Chemical

Sun Chemical launched a color management system which predicts how corporate spot colors will reproduce on a wide variety of substrates.

'SmartColour reduces the need for lengthy, error-prone color matching and management processes,' commented Patrice Aurenty, business leader, color management, Sun Chemical Europe. In research reported by Sun Chemical, 77 percent of brand-owners surveyed indicated key color identities had not been maintained in the production process on two or more jobs in the past year.

SmartColour tools allow the creation of a digital database of brand-specific colors, digitally printed color references and provide the ability to print hard copies from digital references in the correct brand colors.

The final element is a Photoshop plug-in, iVue, which matches the spot color with the substrate on a computer monitor. iVue relies upon Sun Chemical's extensive database of real ink colors on common packaging substrates printed by relevant printing processes. This allows users to consider multiple alternatives to deliver a specified brand color on one or more packaging materials.

MacDermid Printing Solutions

MacDermid presented a new analogue uncapped flexographic printing plate, codenamed MAC, claimed to show good chemical resistance to solvents, inks and environmental constraints such as ozone and high temperatures. The MAC allows the use of all types of ink, from UV to water- and solvent-based inks.

Other new plates included Digital Rave, designed for CTP

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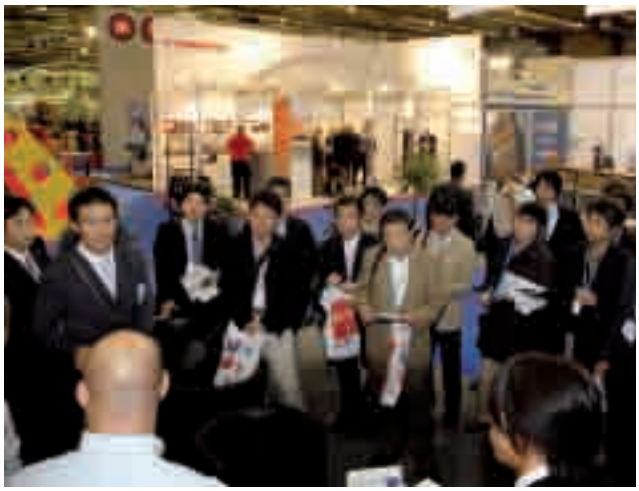


There were more Asian exhibitors and visitors than at any previous Labelexpo Europe

technology; ROK, an analogue hard plate; and Digital CST, a digital capped plate that can be thermally or solvent processed.

MacDermid also highlighted some specialty products for the offset printing label market: VS–UV, a 1.95mm self-adhesive blanket which was displayed on a Drent Goebel VSOP press; Resil, a 0.94mm/1.04mm blanket; and a special stripping blanket for Codimag presses.

'For MacDermid, a unique supplier exhibiting offset blankets at Labelexpo, the blanket range is an excellent complement to our flexo plates and Axcyl sleeve solutions,' said Mathieu Litzler, product manager offset.

Alongside the plates, MacDermid also exhibited Axcyl sleeves mounted on Gallus, Gidue and Omet flexo presses. 'Our sleeves are totally adapted to the label printing market. Their faces are sealed with protections and the built in cutting guide is patented. As a consequence, our products are now recommended by leading OEMs,' said Vincent Pognon, Axcyl sleeves manager.

Stork Prints

Stork Prints debuted the complete RotaPlate mesh program, including meshes for applications ranging from fine linework to tactile and Braille effects. RotaPlate is also suited to non-Stork rotary screen systems. It has a pure nickel, non-woven hexagonal-hole formation, claimed to withstand the toughest printing and handling, conditions. RotaPlate accommodates up to 40 percent more holes than mesh alternatives. Stork's affiliate company, AKL Flexotechnik, showed a range of flexo consumable products including conventional sleeves for plate mounting, seamless-endless photopolymer printing formes and Opitiflex thin sleeve and adapter technology.

Toray-Dantex

New from Toray-Dantex was the AquaFlex AQF 660 water-wash plate processor featuring a patented plate transportation system: plates placed in the processor after exposure receive brush action wash out, rinsing, post exposure and de-tack treatment. Working in conjunction with the new RapidoFlex hybrid UV flexo water wash plate, the system will deliver a dry-to-dry press ready plate in less than 20 minutes.

The RapidoFlex plate can also be processed in existing letterpress platemaking equipment and is available in digital format with a black mask layer.

Dantex was also demonstrating a dry film system which allows the production of low resolution films for applications like varnish plates and single color work without needing to buy an imagesetter.

Interestingly, letterpress remains a big seller for Dantex at a European Labelexpo because of the strong user base in Russia and East-Central Europe, with digital letterpress plates imaged on the (Dantex-badged) CDI on the stand creating a lot of interest.

First time in Europe

Family-owned Sonic Solutions, headquartered in Illinois, US, was exhibiting at its first Labelexpo Europe, *writes Danielle Jerschefske*. 'At least 30-40 percent of our visitors at Labelexpo Americas 2006 were from outside the US,' explains Joe Walzak, president. 'After realizing these statistics we thought 'well maybe there is a need out there that we have a solution for'. Our decision to attend Brussels this year was because we were pulled into the international marketplace – pulled, not pushed.'

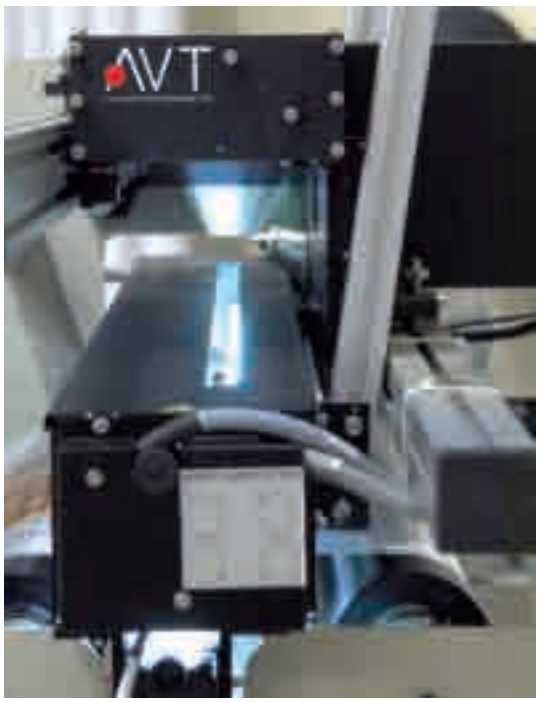
Sonic Solutions was absolutely right about the global marketplace – there is a need, and they have a solution. Specializing in laser-engraved anilox roll cleaning systems, the company sells over 100 systems each year in widths up to 38 inches and in most cases bearings and gears needn't be removed.

The first step to cleaning is to soak the roll on top of Sonic's tank filled with heated solution to soften the inks and resins left in the anilox cells. In the second step ultrasonic waves at 43 kHz are applied to the roll for a brief amount of time. Immediately the human eye can see the roll becoming clean.

Labelexpo Europe 2007 was an immense success for the company. 'We came to Brussels hoping to sell 10 pieces of machinery in total – both pre-show and post - to make us happy and the trip a worthwhile investment for our domestic company. Our show sales totaled 13 machines and we expect to sell an additional 12-17 by year's end for a total of 25-30,' Walzak said. Of the 13 machines sold at the show, three were sold into India, four into Eastern Europe, four into Western Europe and one to a converter in the United Arab Emirates.

Prior to the show, 95 percent of Sonic Solution's sales came from North and South America with only five percent support from international clientele. The company projects that by 2012, fifty percent of its sales will be in the Americas while fifty percent will be international. 'It's not that domestic sales will decrease,' Walzak explained, 'we will just continue to grow. Numerous visitors are keen to be our distributors both in mature and emerging markets. In order to achieve the growth we believe is possible, it is imperative that we select quality international representatives to distribute our products.'

In the future, Sonic Solutions intends to not only step fully into the international market, but will also look to expand into the wide web market with the possibility to quadruple its size and volume. Walzak concluded: 'Labelexpo Europe absolutely surpassed our expectations and we plan to attend every other Tarsus show from here on out.'



AVT won the Global Award for New Innovation at the Label Industry Global Awards

Inspection systems

AVT

AVT was the winner of the Global Award for New Innovation at the Label Industry Global Awards – awarded to a supplier who has been in the market for less than ten years.

AVT entered the label market four and a half years ago, and has since sold over 400 of its PrintVision/Helios inspection systems. Ten companies at Labelexpo Europe had AVT inspection solutions running on their machinery: including Gallus, Mark Andy, Omet and Gidue.

The company demonstrated its new enhanced version of PrintVision/Helios, a system that has label-specific capabilities that include the detection of missing labels, die-cut mis-register and incomplete matrix removal.

AVT also introduced a new add-on module named JobRef, which enables pre-production verification by comparing the job on-press to the pre-press digital PDF file. This comparison enables press operators to ensure that the job is correct in terms of content, including text, language and graphics, as well as detecting problems in the printing plates.

'The advantage of linking with the PDF file is that the job can be exactly replicated on other presses and on other sites,' said Gal Shamri, vice president, marketing.

BST International displayed its Shark 100% print defect detection system

Also displayed was the PrintFlow SQL Database Module, which archives job information including defects, defect location, master and defect images and job quality statistics.

AVT recently acquired press automation specialist Graphic Microsystems – a supplier of color control systems, color management and reporting software and remote digital ink fountain control systems.

'The acquisition is not about our separate expertise, but what we can achieve together,' said Shamri. 'We believe that together we can deliver a very powerful solution to the industry.

BST International

BST International displayed its Shark real-time 100% print defect detection system with the new PowerLink – tailored for applications on narrow web label printers and rewinders. The Shark system can now be linked with a video system and PDF inspection.

Also new was the ekr 500 controller, specially devised for standard applications. Its compact design, as well as a removable keyboard, ensure convenient handling and allow integration with any machine.

BST launched Premius digital LEX (which stands for Label Edition X-web) – which the company claims is the first digital print management system with digital 3Chip technology and integrated defect detection. This represents the first time that the company's Premius technology is available for narrow web applications.

Finally, the company introduced its CompactGuide web guiding system for applications such as labels, packaging and non-woven material.

General manager John Thome enthused: 'The show has been phenomenal – with great traffic and great quality.'

Erhardt+Leimer

Erhardt+Leimer launched its TubeLight lighting module at Labelexpo Europe. Using only indirect light, it is suited for lighting complex materials such as embossed metal foils or metal foils showing unevenly reflecting surfaces.

The company displayed two new models of its Elscan print image monitoring system – containing the new TubeLight software for color comparison and an expanded field of view.

For color comparison, a master product is taught to the system and

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EyeC's Proofiler offline inspection system

analyzed. During production, the inspection results are continuously compared to the master data. A message is displayed if there are deviations so the operator can take action.

'TubeLight solves a lot of the technical problems that have been around the industry for quite some time,' said Donald Lewis, international business development manager.

The new version with expanded field of view has a visual range of 200 x 156mm (8 x 6 inches), making it twice as big as the standard version.

Erhardt+Leimer also launched a graphical user prompting – meaning a job configuration requires just a few mouse clicks and changes in sensitivity can be made any time during production by simply pushing a slide control.

'It is a new message to the market,' said Donald Lewis, international business development manager. 'We are moving more into the label market to sell directly to the printer.'

EyeC

German company EyeC displayed offline and new inline web inspection systems. The company has doubled its revenue in each of its five years of existence, tripling it last year. With over 100 installations worldwide, 50 percent of its products are sold into Europe, while it also has a strong presence in the US and Asia – including Japan, a notoriously critical market.

In the label sector, EyeC specializes in offline inspection ¬– where its Proofiler system verifies against the customer proof. 'Offline inspection has the advantage of being more precise and not interfering with the production process,' said Dr Ansgar Kaupp, managing director.

The system carries out standard inspection as well as barcodes and – in a new development – Braille dots.

With the optional Braille inspection module, the Proofiler can inspect labels or cartons for the correct layout and

Erhardt + Leimer's Elscan print monitoring system

placement of Braille dots. The Braille writing is checked for correct embossing and printing; quality of the embossing; and correct placement. The module uses a PDF as a template that compiles with the ECMA standard for Braille embossing.

'As a small, flexible company, we work closely with our customers in development,' said sales manager Erik Hoving. 'We also differentiate ourselves by the stability of our inspection and the very user friendly interface.'

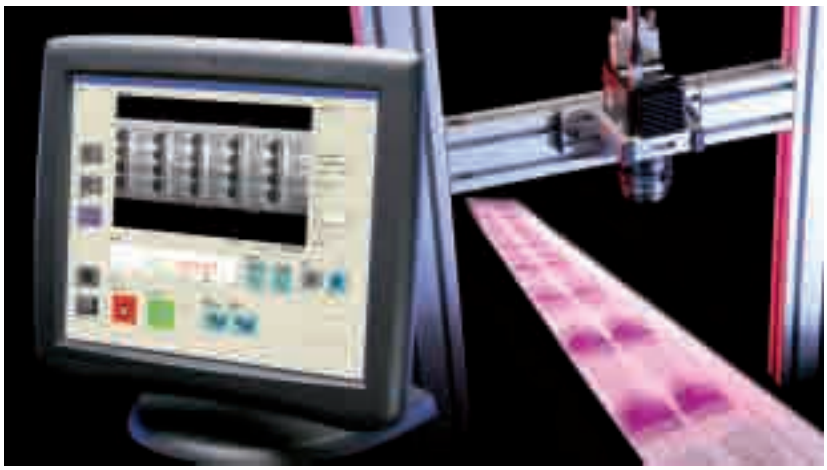
The company's ProofRunner inline inspection system made its European debut at Labelexpo. It uses a high-speed line scan camera to continuously acquire a high resolution image of the entire web. A computer system then identifies all printed items on the web and tracks them through the print run. The same computer also performs a comparison of each printed item against the customer proof. The system is capable of distinguishing between the different types of defects, so every significant deviation gets caught and displayed while permissible fluctuations – like minor registration errors or small squeeze marks around individual letters – can be automatically passed.

'We use the fastest camera in the world on our offline inspection system,' said Erik Hoving. 'Our goal is to have that same level on our inline system – but the cameras and equipment don't yet exist.'

Surfscan

Surfscan, the Cardiff, UK-based provider of true 100% web inspection, demonstrated its CHECKrewinder in a joint development with Ashe Converting at Labelexpo Europe. The Ashe 'Opal Inspection System' was developed in conjunction with Surfscan and provides inspection and control of printed labels or printed web in the pharmaceutical, food or flexible packaging industries.

The company has had a busy time since *L&L* last reported on it in issue 2. General manager Damian Harvey reports that enquiries have come in from South America, India and Australia, and that expansion is necessary to keep up with demand: 'Prior to the article, we had enough orders to keep us



Surfscan's CHECKpress and CHECKrewind system can work hand in hand or individually

busy. Now we have so many that we have to expand.'

'We are constantly updating the technology and listening to feedback,' he continues. 'The industry needs to learn: there is a lot of confusion about area scan and line scan.'

Surfscan's CHECKrewinder is designed for use at the final stage of a print process, providing the end user with 100% print inspection. On the Ashe inspector winder, a reel is placed on the rewinder and run at speed.

Each time a defect is detected the rewinder stops, positioning the defect on the splicing table. The integrated camera system developed with Surfscan then provides an image of the fault for the operator to check, so that it can either be accepted, or rejected by splicing out product, or by replacing labels.

Surfscan also provides the CHECKpress system, which utilizes many of the components of the CHECKrewinder. The two systems work hand in hand, but may also be used individually.

In addition, Surfscan's CHECKproof system – which the company says is particularly useful for the

LABELEXPO EUROPE REVIEW

pharmaceutical market – enables end users to check for printing errors to sizes below 0.1mm at speeds of less than 60 seconds for an A4 page at 600dpi.

Tectonic

Tectonic displayed its new K2 print inspection system with color monitoring, which UK sales manager Richard Kahl says 'offers printers something that no-one else can at the moment'.

K2 is a range of print inspection systems which incorporate a series of high-resolution digital cameras to provide excellent picture quality and a high level of system connectivity. Tectonic is positioning the product as the 'industry's first low cost "active" inspection system', and color monitoring is provided as standard.

Available as an option is the 'image transfer/store', which allows a nominated person to grab images from a live run using a PC. These 'live' images appear on the screen of the PC showing date and time transferred – and can then be shared with others for discussion or sent to a customer.

See you next year at Labelexpo Americas, September 8-11 2008, Chicago – **www.labelexpo-americas.com**

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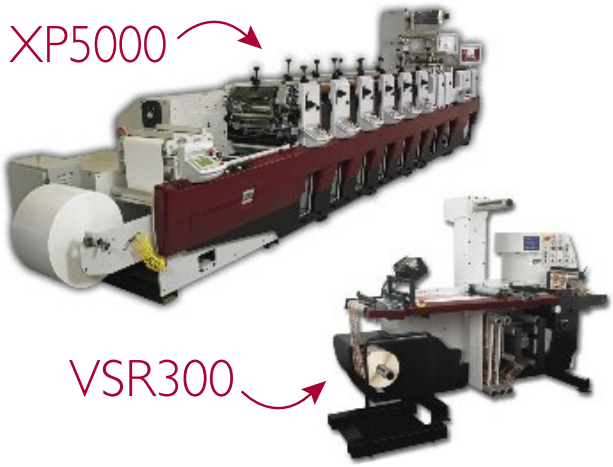

When you are a leading label converter, the only standards you can exceed are your own. Now, Mark Andy has linked its high-tech servo-driven XP5000 press with its VSR inspection/rewinder to demonstrate the concept of integrated workflow. By combining the power of the XP5000 and VSR, Mark Andy has created a secure environment in which 100% of the printed roll is inspected within one dynamic operation.

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Itasa's facility in Andoain, in Spain's Basque Country

Independent success

In a world of increased consolidation, Spanish release-coated paper specialist Itasa shows there is still a strong role for independent suppliers. **James Quirk** reports

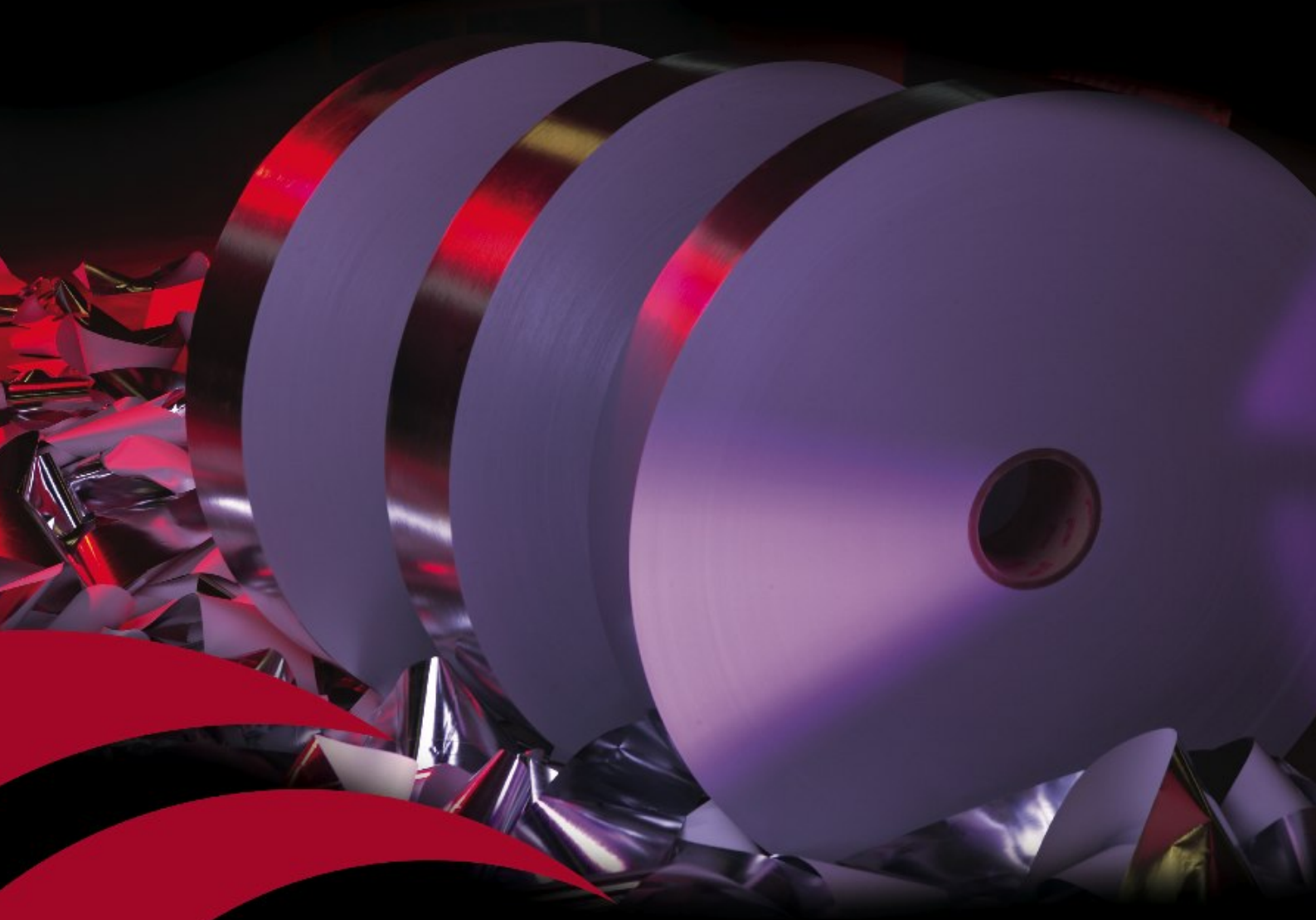
Situated in Andoain, in Spain's Basque country's 'paper valley', Itasa is an independent producer of release-coated papers and the country's main commercial converting siliconizer. The company's premium release liner bases are well-established in the self-adhesive label and specialty tapes industries, as well as in medical disposables. Demand created by this reputation has led Itasa to invest 16 million euros in new equipment – most importantly a new coater, now in its start-up phase, that will nearly double the company's capacity.

Itasa – Industrias de Transformación de Andoain – is a privately-owned company established by two local families in 1974. Its original vision was to meet the demands for siliconized paper in two specialist end-use segments: the personal hygiene business, and as a backing for Formica-brand surfacing products. Itasa's target market was simply its home region – poorly supported in this field at that time – and it commenced production with a home-made coating machine. However, when Spain joined the EU in the late 1980s, Itasa's management team saw major development opportunities in the 'common market' and decided to invest in technology and personnel. Today, 80 percent of Itasa's production is exported – 50 percent within Europe, and the remainder in the US, Latin America, Asia, and Oceania.

In this age of globalization, Itasa chooses to pursue a business strategy that enables it to maintain its ISO 9001-accredited production on the one site, while developing sales across selected key markets across the globe.

'Our location in north west Spain is logistically ideal,' says Itasa's managing director, Francisco Pagola. 'We are close to the ports of northern Spain and southern France, as well as to trans-continental air connections.'

Itasa installed its first reel-to-reel coater in 1989 – a 1.65m, 300m per minute, five-roll solvent-free or solvent-gravure Pagendarm machine with a roll curing tunnel, auto-splicing, and other features. 'This very compact and flexible machine – which is still in continuous use for short and trial runs, new product development, and pilot coating – allows us to make a variety of



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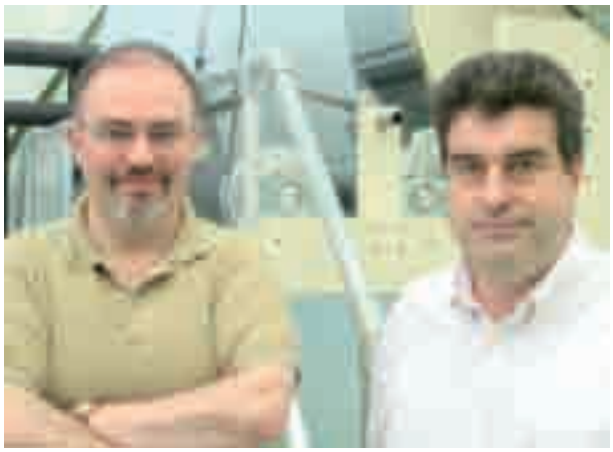

Emilio Arocena and Francisco Pagola

"specials" at a very high level of quality,' says quality manager Eduardo Arocena. 'As the business developed, however, we needed higher productivity and the ability to be more flexible in terms of web width, so it was time to look for a second coater – and our central coater today, the big BMB, was installed in 1997.'

This 1.65m-wide machine offers 500m/min production via a five-roll coating head and airfloatation drying, with web-cleaning facility, an electrostatic discharge facility, and in-line trimming. It can run papers, films, and thermal-sensitive webs, and optionally can offer UV curing and corona treatment, as well as the ability to print imprints in line. The machine was rebuilt in 2000 to optimize its capacity.

Even with this workhorse at the center of its production, capacity at Itasa has been at saturation point in the last two years. 'If we wanted to stay competitive and profitable, we had to invest to gain the cost-saving and productivity benefits of wider-web coating, without compromising our high quality standards,' CFO Emilio Arocena observes. 'That's why we ordered a new custom-built 2m wide BMB coater. Thanks to that investment, we are well positioned to meet that goal – and we have a big additional advantage in that the new machine also gives us the flexibility to meet our customers' increasingly demanding service requirements.'

The new, tailor-made BMB automatic reel-fed coater is 2.3m wide, and already capable of coating at 800m/min. It has many advanced features, including a Pesmel automatic roll feed which can handle five-ton rolls; a cleaning system for the paper web; active and passive static discharge; anti-misting; and in-line trimming and roll slitting. Its core capability is its five-roll coating head, convertible to six rolls, for thermal-cured solvent-free silicone coating. It has a 28m seven-section drying tunnel operating on an air floatation system, two remoisturizing steam boxes (with a regulated steam profile), and a battery of chilling rolls. It also has the flexibility to coat at different widths, from 1.1m upwards. The coater is supported by an advanced automatic silicone mixing plant.

High-speed coating of all types of paper release base is possible, from 30gsm up to 200gsm – krafts, PE coateds, clay coateds, C1S and C2S, with equal or differential release characteristics for a variety of tape, labelstock, industrial, and composite applications as well as envelopes and self-adhesive graphic arts.

With a January 2008 delivery date, a new state-of-the-art in-line slitter will support the new coater, and additional finishing equipment for the older main coater is also on order.

Installing a new wide-width coater had major space implications for Itasa. The new machine occupies much of what was previously raw materials warehouse space. To compensate, the company is currently leasing an outside warehouse, and is negotiating to obtain an additional 5,000 square meters of land around the present plant for a new purpose-built warehouse. The five-ton master rolls for the coater require forklift handling, so the company is evaluating the possibilities of a fully-automated warehousing system for this proposed new facility.

'The new coater gives us a real competitive edge through speed and productivity improvements,' says export sales manager José María Pagola. .With the additional finishing and warehousing already in the pipeline, we are positioned strongly – as independents – to take new business in the face of the current industry consolidation, which leaves buyers in need of alternative choices in suppliers.

'We see a continuing, healthy growth in the medium-term in the core markets we serve – particularly in labels. In the long term, there will undoubtedly be new end-use markets coming on stream, through innovation in laminates and liner technology. There is still plenty to say in favor of siliconized papers.

'But having the capacity is not enough: we need to get out there and sell our products. We don't want to expand any further geographically – we still have more than enough room for growth in the territories where we are established, and our strategic focus remains western Europe (particularly Germany, the driving engine of the European economy) and USA. We are actively strengthening our sales team with knowledgeable people on the ground who can promote not only the technicalities but also develop new business with end users. In terms of market segments, we are particularly keen to develop sales in specialty tapes and other emerging industrial applications.'

Itasa's management team is enthusiastic about the future possibilities inherent in its broad selection of coating and finishing equipment, effectively run by paper-industry-trained machine minders. The production facility, as befits a specialist producer of specialty release liners for demanding applications, is extremely clean and neat; and production continues 24 hours a day, six days a week, with four shifts per day. The laboratory staff work the same hours, to conduct the essential quality analyses and give feedback to the production team.

With an overall workforce of 70, it seems that Itasa is well-positioned to develop its potential in its chosen markets for the foreseeable future. ■

The new, tailor-made BMB automatic reel-fed coater

Frank Gerace, Art Yerecic, Sue Yerecic,

David Blatt, Seri Blatt, Daniel Arippol, Patricia Lahepelto

Heather Schulte, Steve Schulte, Greg Jackson, Joe Garza, Michelle Garza

Paul and Dinah Teachout and Jim and Kathy Imburgia

TLMI celebrates award winners

Fifty converters from around the globe submitted 260 entries for this year's TLMI Annual Awards Competition. Winners were acknowledged at the TLMI Annual Meeting held recently on the Big Island of Hawaii.

The Best of Show Award went to Lake Oswego, Oregon-based Taylor Made Labels for the company's prime Symbion Wine label, which also won First Place in the wine and spirits category. Printed UV flexo, the Symbion label was printed using four color process with two spot colors, embossing, and two spot

overprint varnishes.

Two Innovator Awards were presented for this year's competition. The first went to Plano, Texas-based McDowell Label and Screen Printing for the company's Back in Blaque tanning product label, which also won First Place in the Line and Screen/Tone Prime category. The application was a sleeve label that presented the unique challenge of printing a hot-foil silver and multidimensional effect that would maintain register upon shrinkage. The label was printed UV flexo, including foil stamping and

-sula Stollenwerk, lie Chavez and urtney Hasselberg

Shirley Gallagher, Molly Malster, Al Splendow, Nick VanAlstine, John Gallagher

Brian Hurst, Holly Falco, Mike Falco

Mike and Karin Hathaway from PCM/Image-Tek, Randy and Geri Wise from Century Label and Andrew Madden from Yupo

Daniel Arippol, Jeffery Arippol, Denny McGee, Elisha Tropper, Ken Hubel, Eric Hoendervangers

Thomas Dahbura, Alys Dahbura, Cheryl Caudill

screen doming. The other Innovator Award went to Oberschleissheim, Germany-based Schreiner Group GmbH & Company for their double-sided Plastoclear label with an integrated microchip, which also won First Place in the Industrial Tags and/or Systems category.

A total of 82 awards were presented in this year's competition including one Best of Show, 56 First Place awards, 23 Second Place and two Innovator Awards. More than 20 percent of this year's entries came from countries outside of North America.

Lance Shumaker, Sharon Shumaker, Bob Anderson, Kevin Gourlay

Andrea Vimercati, Jakob Landberg, and Jetta Landberg

Sandeep Lal, Juko Lahpelto, Jeffery Arippol, Danielle Jerschefske

Karin and Ferd Rueesch, Klaus and Theresia Bachstein of Gallus

Sjan Hoendervangers and other spouses networking after the Luau

Steve and Heather Schulte, Liz and Gary Gordon

Ray and Monica Webb, Toni and Greg Palm

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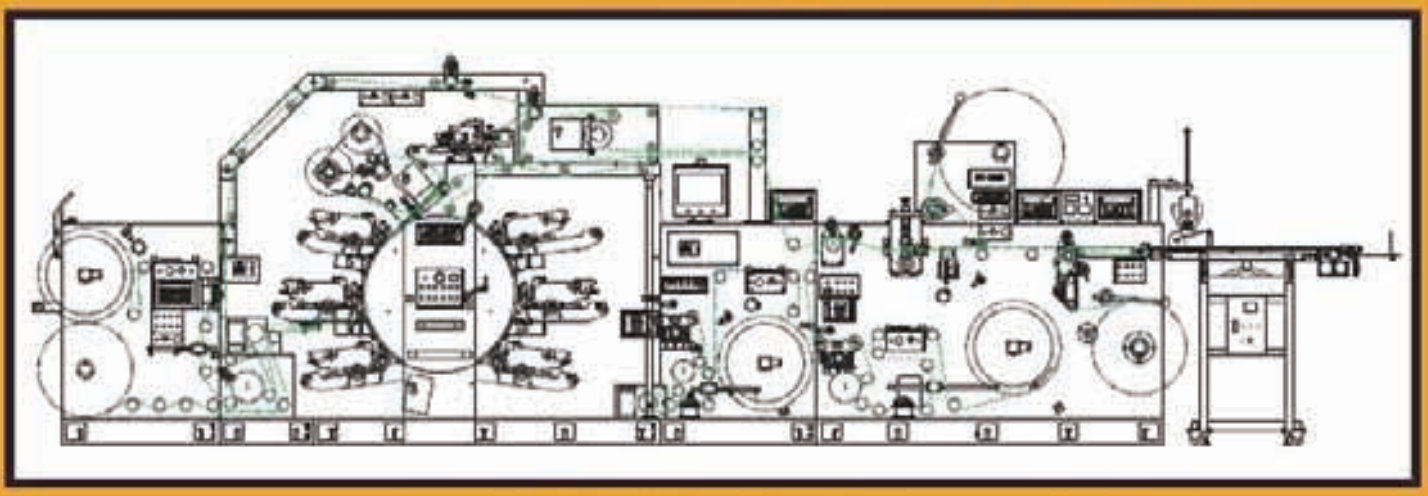

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Outlook saves costs by going 'Green'

The Wisconsin-based Outlook Group has developed a 'Green' liner technology which has cut its customers' costs and reduced the environmental footprint of its labeling operation. **Danielle Jerschefske** reports

One middle-Wisconsin company which has figured out how to leverage eco-friendly technology is Outlook Group Corporation (OGC). Outlook Group was founded in Neenah in 1977 by four high-school friends in their thirties to provide a local printer with a bulk mailing service. Today OGC offers its customers a complete supply chain solution for printing and packaging, helping eliminate the additional costs, liability issues, and time delays associated with working with multiple vendors in the supply chain.

OGC's label sales now total $35 million, well over one third of its annual turnover. Since 2006 sales have increased nine percent, earning OGC the number 55 spot in Graphic Arts Monthly's listing of North America's top 101 printers. It currently has about 450 associates, running three sites, totaling 600,000 square feet.

The concept of providing a turnkey solution began at OGC in the late 1980s when Proctor & Gamble, a current customer of the company, became dissatisfied with the drawn-out production process of its Bounce dryer sheets for laundromat vending machines. OGC earned a profitable contract with P&G when it developed the technology to automatically, and much more efficiently, stuff the dryer sheets directly into the printed cartons – all at its facility. It was 'the start of something fresh', and still today, OGC has the Bounce room with that wonderful fresh aroma.

With the success of the Bounce turnkey solution, OGC looked at the supply chain processes of its other highly valued customers to see if similar solutions could be offered. 'As much as our clients want to be earth friendly, decisions must still be cost effective,' explains Mike von Brendel, VP of sales. 'There is a point when we reach a "glass ceiling" in how we deliver savings to our customers. It was hard for us to be more efficient unless we expanded in supply chain management. We've found that it greatly benefits us, and our clients, to widen ourselves in the logistics network. It enables us to pass along substantial cost savings to our customers.'

> "Since 2006 sales have increased nine percent, earning OGC the number 55 spot in Graphic Arts Monthly's listing of North America's top 101 printers"

In 2005, while examining how to improve manufacturing efficiencies for one of its multi-national food company clients, OGC began to look at the weight and thickness of the release liner used on many of its flexographic labels. 'We figured out the margins and assets to see where we could reduce manufacturing losses and transform that flaw into savings,' continues von Brendel.

OGC engineers decided on a move from paper to film release liners and developed their own technology solution. 'We are reversing the traditional labeling process to create this product,' explained R&D engineer Pat Harveath.

Labels are pre-printed on a Mark Andy 2200 or 4150, or on a Nilpeter F-2400. The printed roll is then transferred to the

What can you do now?

- Make a plan
- Immediately look at ways to reduce energy consumption
- Appoint a corporate sustainability officer
- Try to source your materials locally

R&D engineer Pat Harveath with the OGC micro-liner laminator

"Less facestock is discarded because there is a smaller space between the labels, and less liner is going into landfill because there is only a small gutter on each side"

custom-made Microliner laminator where the labels are die cut before lamination to avoid die strikes. The tailor-made finishing system uses a beaverless die system and hotmelt adhesive station to coat/laminate the printed rolls rather than 'convert' them. 'Basically we are making pressure sensitive material in-line,' Harveath continued.

A Microliner roll contains 30 percent more labels than those converted traditionally, reducing the number of roll changes at the applicator. If there are usually three roll changes per shift, increasing roll size from 10,000 to 13,000 labels means just two changeovers per shift, lessening downtime and increasing productivity. The added durability of the film liner means the client is able to label products at higher than average speeds without having to be concerned about web breaks.

Fitting more labels onto a roll means there is less product waste to contend with. Less facestock is discarded because there is a smaller space between the labels, and less liner is going into landfill because there is only a small gutter on each side. In addition, smaller amounts of adhesive are used because only the label is coated. Other environmental benefits include less fuel consumption to ship more labels – cost savings which can be passed directly onto the customer.

OGC says its client is achieving a 15 percent saving in hard costs, combined with increased operational efficiency.

The Outlook Group's Microliner project has now been running since 2006. Long term goals include working to re-configure the Microliner laminator to run in-line with a printer, and to move still further down the supply chain by coating the polyester for the liner in-house. ■

Environmental news in brief

Alcan launches energy saving campaign

Alcan Packaging, Cumbria, has launched 'Batteries Not Included', a campaign designed to help reduce the carbon emissions the company produces.

The launch follows the successful completion of project 'Gridlock', which ran between September 2006 and September 2007, reducing energy consumption by 10 percent and removing over 1612.6 tonnes of carbon from the company's footprint – the equivalent of taking 4,341 lorry miles off the road.

As a plant-wide initiative, 'Batteries Not Included' will range in methods from encouraging employees to switch off lights and electrical devices when not in use, through to shutting down plant and factory equipment whenever possible. The scheme challenges all involved to reduce Alcan Packaging Cumbria's energy consumption by an additional 10 percent by September 2008.

HP improves ElectroInk manufacturing process

HP has improved its manufacturing process for HP ElectroInks – the liquid inks used in HP Indigo presses – a change that has yielded 'significant benefits in productivity and energy efficiency', says the company.

Earlier this year, two HP ElectroInk manufacturing facilities implemented a new particle grinding process that reduces the energy consumption by up to 40 percent in the manufacture of the inks.

The energy savings comes from newly designed custom equipment used in what had been one of the most energy-intensive manufacturing steps for HP ElectroInk.

'HP is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of its facilities across the globe,' said Alon Bar-Shany, vice president and general manger, Indigo division, HP. Through an initiative started with the World Wildlife Fund in 2006, HP has pledged to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from its operating facilities worldwide. Separately, HP has pledged to reduce its global energy use by 20 percent by 2010. The new HP ElectroInk manufacturing process supports both of these important HP goals.

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If you can't complete this crossword...

DOWN

1 The individual element in the halftone printing process (3).

2 The contact point between two driven rollers (3).

3 The image transferred from the printing plate or cylinder to the label substrate (10).

4 Occurs when the adhesive squeezes out from under the backing in a pressure-sensitive laminate (4).

5 The process of raising a design or image above the label surface using a set of matched male and female dies (9).

6 Estimated time of arrival (3).

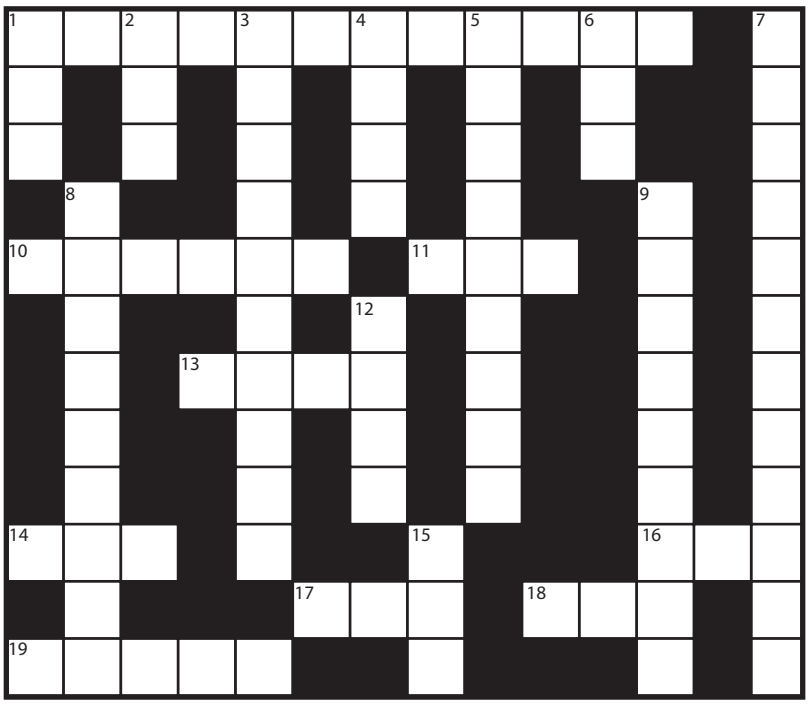
7 A set of characters or bars in a bar code which represents both alphabetic and numeric characters as well as symbols (12).

8 The areas of a printed image which are nearest to white (9).

9 Metal roller or drum that is cooled internally with water (5 and 4).

12 Abbreviation commonly used for capital letters (4).

15 Label placed inside the mold before a plastic bottle is blown (3).



ACROSS

1 A photoelectric instrument that measures reflected or transmitted light on colors or printed products (12).

10 A term used to describe various printing defects, such as spots or imperfections in the printing (6).

11 International Organisation for Standards (3).

13 The administration in the US Department of Labor that ensures a safe and healthy workplace (4).

14 The acronym or abbreviation used for primary colors of light (3).

16 A method of reading (scanning) printed text copy with software capable of recognizing and converting the scanned images into an electronic equivalent (3).

17 Original equipment manufacturer (3).

18 Thickness measurement of thin materials used in some countries (3).

19 Material to be printed or converted. Also referred to as the substrate (5)

(Left) Model Graphics' Steve Fleissner and Hubert's sourcing agent Tina Beccaccio, (right) Tina Weibel and Brenda Holger from Hubert

Vendor of Excellence

Top class customer service is the key to growth for label converters, and the Vendor Excellence award given to Model Graphics provides an excellent global benchmark. **Danielle Jerschefske** examines the citation from Hubert Company

West Chester, Ohio-based converter Model Graphics and Media Inc has been honored with an Award of Vendor Excellence by distribution giant Hubert Company for the sixth year running. The award was based on an extensive list of criteria including cost, delivery and service.

Hubert Company distributes an array of 33,000 products – everything from fixture systems and price tags, to tableware and labels and packaging. Each year it evaluates its suppliers to compile a list of top performers.

The citation of Model Graphics as a top performing supplier for 2006 noted the company's 'commitment in providing quality products, backed with exceptional service at fair prices. In addition, your observance of our operational requirements helps us process your merchandise efficiently and effectively.' Model Graphics 'continually support our efforts with excellent customer service and timely follow-through.'

Founded in 1984, Model Graphics is a 95 percent narrow web flexo house, printing mostly labels and flexible film on a variety of presses including an 8-color, 16.5in UV Nilpeter, a 6-color Mark Andy, 6- and 8-color Rotopress and two Allied presses. The remaining five percent of its production is digital, completed on an HP Indigo ws4050.

Hubert has been one of Model Graphics's top ten accounts since 1994. 'Hubert's business is extremely important to Model Graphics,' explains president Steve Fleissner. 'We understand their needs and are able to meet them. Quality and logistics issues are few and far between both because of our values, and because we have worked together for so long. Since Hubert is strictly distribution, it is imperative that they have their products in stock. Because we always do, or can have them ready in a timely fashion, we are able to fit into Hubert's success.'

In the past year, Hubert Company has experienced a 25 percent growth surge. It credits much of its success to stellar vendors such as Model Graphics, poised for 20 percent growth itself in the coming year, and which scored in the top two out of the 850 manufacturers evaluated. Note that less than five percent of Hubert Company's suppliers are recognized. 'Model is a local company that is easy to get a hold of,' says Brenda Holger, Hubert Company buyer. 'They are extremely knowledgeable about their printing business which is very helpful considering the scope of ours. We cannot be experts in everything that we supply, so we need our vendors to be well informed.'

Hubert says that the most important characteristic of Model Graphics is its great customer service. 'They are very helpful with answering questions to meet our needs,' continues Holger. 'And Model is very responsive and fast.'

Model Graphics supplies Hubert Company with over 235 parts, maintaining a 'make & hold' customer service policy where it stores and inventories a customer's products until the release order is sent to request shipment. Model Graphic's customer service manager, Tina Weibel, monitors job production and works to ensure an expedited shipment within a couple of days. She has been Hubert's go-to customer service agent for the last ten years, and in that time has developed and maintained a strong personal relationship with various personnel. 'With our customers, it is all about responsiveness,' she says. 'Internally, it is necessary to have a good rapport with co-workers. We respect each other's time and work together to get the job done as efficiently as possible.' ■

Model Graphics joined the Association for Quality and Participation in 1996 which has since merged with the American Society for Quality (ASQ) in 2003. ASQ is a not-for-profit organization that works to improve the workplace through quality advocacy. The quality group traces its origins back to medieval Europe when workers began forming guilds to ensure superior craftsmanship and service.

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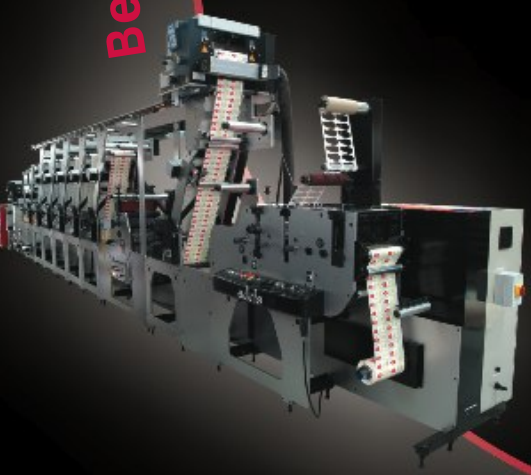

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Indian growth

Harveer Sahni, managing director, Weldon Celloplast, looks at the astonishing growth in narrow web press installations in India over the last two years – led by a new generation of flexo and fully rotary combination machines

'Inhi kee kripa se saj'e hum hain'. These are the famous words of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, attributing his success to the constituents of his martial force. It means, 'If I am decorated, it is because of their blessing'. Our Indian label industry is today shining and is decorated because of the sincere hard work put in by our label printers.

Indian printers today, in terms of skills, capabilities and capital investments, are capable of producing labels comparable to the best in the world, as evidenced by the number of printing awards they are now winning.

The turnout of Indian printers for the Finat-organized Euro Labeling Exchange demonstrated their confidence and intention to expand globally with their European counterparts.

At Labelexpo 2005, I presented figures which highlighted the growth in India's economy. Today those figures have been surpassed substantially.

The population in the last two years has grown by 45 million and the foreign exchange reserves swelled by 53 percent to reach 229 billion USD. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), merely $3.3 billion in 2004-2005, grew to $5.5 billion in the following year and to $16 billion in 2006-7 (4.8 times the figure in 2005). GDP is now growing at 9.2 percent and the manufacturing sector at 11 percent. The number of cell phone users has almost doubled from less then 100 million two years ago to 193 million users today.

> "The turnout of Indian printers for the Finat-organized Euro Labeling Exchange demonstrated their intention to expand globally with their European counterparts"

A booming economy, an expanding organized retail infrastructure – now spreading to smaller towns – and a healthy growth in the manufacturing sector are all leading to consistent growth in usage of labels.

At the first India Label Summit in Mumbai, I chronicled the history of self-adhesive label printing in India. I mentioned Jeetubhai in Mumbai as a legend who brought to India the first narrow web label press in 1969-70. This was a flatbed Iwasaki press. We have come a long way since then. An industry that initially grew around Mumbai, the port city and commercial

Scenes from last year's Label Summit India. In 2008 the India Label Show, recently acquired by Labelexpo Global Series, will take place in Delhi, December 3-6

Harveer Sahni, MD Weldon Celloplast

capital of India, has totally transformed in the last three and a half decades.

Almost every successful international brand in the world of narrow web label presses is reporting installations across the length and breadth of India, allowing technically equipped Indian label printers to project themselves as outsourcing partners to customers around the globe.

Three years ago one could count about 250 label presses installed across India. I have tried to assess the changes in the last two years through discussions with the authorized agents of all the major international press manufacturers and with Indian label press manufacturers.

Surprising as it may sound, the industry seems to have doubled in terms of number of presses installed in the last 2-3 years. My figures include machines that are on the way or have been ordered.

If we add together sales by Mark Andy, Focus, Orthotec, Nilpeter, KDO, Gallus, Aquaflex, Rotatek, Lintec, Iwasaki, Taiyo, Etirama, Bangsung, MPS, Gidue, Omet, Zonden (Chinese), Dong Haei and HP Indigo, we find a total of 122 narrow web machines.

When I started to study the number of Indian presses sold, even more startling figures rolled out. Adding together presses sold by Jandu, Webtech, Apex Rototech, Multitec, Autoprint, RK Ahmebad, Keen and others, we have another 235 press installations.

While Jandu led the way in rotary flexo machines with 26 presses, followed by Webtech, Apex Rototech is fast catching up, followed by Autoprint and Multitec. In the flatbed segment R K Machine Tools of Ahmedabad reports a whopping 152 installations. Then we have Keen with eight presses.

When you add international press sales to Indian narrow web press sales the total is 357 presses. I have not taken into account the other Chinese machines that have come in, nor the whole lot of used machines that come in every year.

I have also tried to separate the converting processes employed in the above presses – and it is really interesting. Out of the 122 branded international presses imported, 88 were fully rotary flexo or combination presses. That is to say, 72 percent of the machines were fully rotary, 6 percent were intermittent and the balance were flat bed machines.

"Almost every successful international brand in the world of narrow web label presses is reporting installations across the length and breadth of India"

Out of the Indian manufacturers, R K Machine sales alone have changed the ratios. If you do not consider the 152 machines sold by R K, then out of the remaining 83 machines, 60 are rotary flexo. This again is a very surprising 72 percent. If you take account of R K installations, this figure drops to 26 percent rotary flexo machines.

The Indian label market is growing. No wonder our international labelstock suppliers are making further investments into the country. Avery has a new manufacturing facility near Mumbai and recently Raflatac also set up a slitting facility. Obviously it is a preliminary startup operation to eventually become a fully fledged manufacturing facility.

The market size of labelstocks or labels has steadily grown at 25 percent a year – from 200 million square meters in 2003 to 350 million square meters in 2005 and over half a billion square meters now. On the other side Indian labelstock manufacturers are not only aggressively marketing in India but also entering into export markets. We at Weldon have always initiated ventures into new markets and export to 22 countries.

Indian printers have been prominent visitors to major Labelexpos in the past, and the number has grown steadily. At the last Labelexpo in Europe Weldon led the transformation of Indians being simply visitors. We were the only Indian exhibitor in Brussels two years ago – and see what we have now! Five Indian exhibitors this time. We are now showing up, exhibiting our products and entering the global label market.

As the world looks at us because of the size of the market, we are getting more ambitious and dynamic. While we are servicing our own market we are expanding our horizons. For us…the whole world is the market. ■

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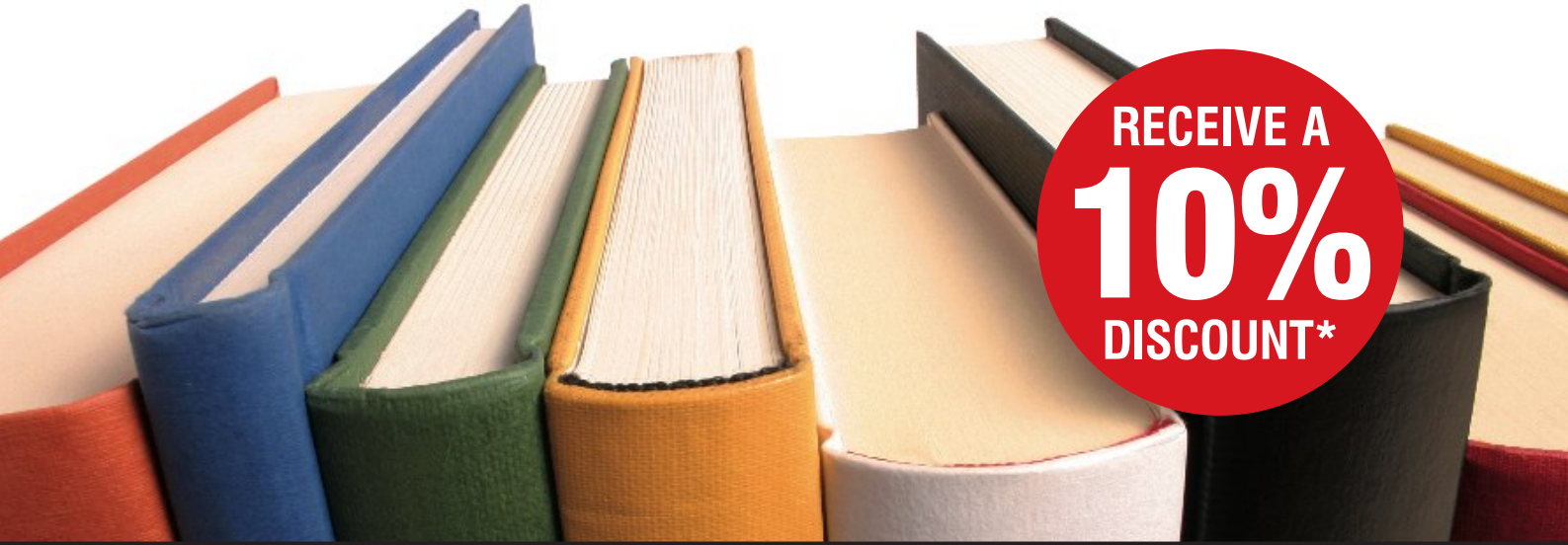

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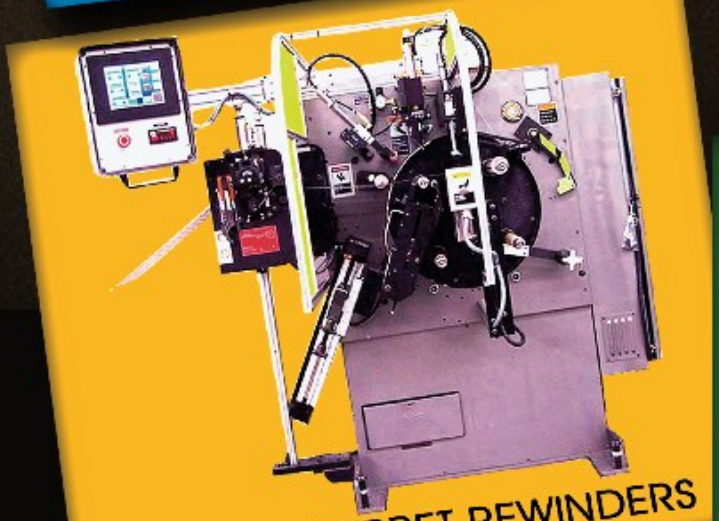

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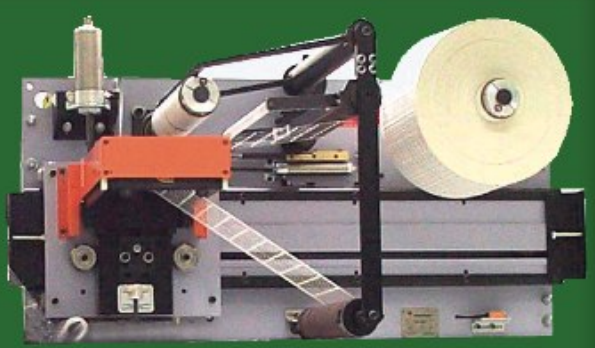

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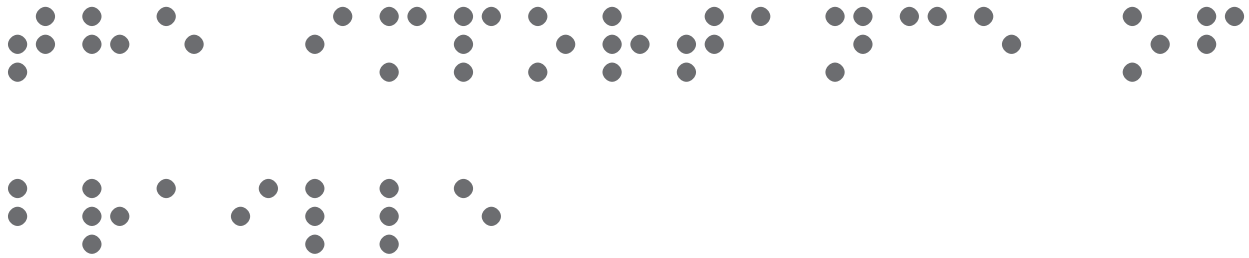

(Above) **The importance of Braille**

A recent seminar organized by UK converter Ditone Labels highlighted the importance of Braille and detailed the requirements relating to its incorporation. **James Quirk** reports

The floor in front of me is suddenly blurred. I step forward with caution, white cane outstretched to feel my way, until a table comes into view. I concentrate hard to pour a glass of water from a jug, but feel the cool liquid trickle down my hand. Navigating passage through a doorway to descend just a couple of steps is harder still, and I feel a concerned, steadying arm on mine which helps me complete my tiny journey.

The arm belongs to Steve Conlon, part of the management team of the Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind People. During a break in the Braille seminar organized by UK converter Ditone Labels, Conlon equipped me with a cane and specially obscured glasses that rendered me, albeit very briefly, partially sighted.

It was a humbling experience. While those of us blessed with good vision cannot appreciate the day to day difficulties with which the partially sighted are faced, Conlon's presentation highlighted the social obligation – while others at the seminar detailed the practical solutions – of Braille labeling.

'When people don't have sight, they rely on other senses,' said Conlon. 'Braille allows people to access information and services; to identify products; to understand dosage information. The application of Braille on packaging can save lives.'

"Incorporating Braille into pharmaceutical labels and packaging can make a tangible difference to the lives of the partially-sighted"

Different pharmaceutical products are often packaged in the same sized and shaped cartons or bottles – potentially dangerous if people are unable to distinguish between them. Conlon cited the example of a 56-year-old cancer patient who had been blind since her twenties. Her regular medication involved different doses of different drugs at different times of the day. Because of the risk of her accidentally taking too much or little of a particular medication, nurses were sent to the patient's home at regular intervals during the day – a costly and inflexible process which, as Conlon pointed out, could be solved simply by Braille. 'People without sight have to rely on others, so when they can be independent it is a real bonus for them,' said Conlon.

History of Braille

The Braille system, devised in 1821 by Frenchman Louis Braille, is a method that is widely used by blind people to read and write. Each Braille character or cell is made up of six dot positions, arranged in a rectangle containing two columns of three dots each.

The Braille system was based on a method of communication originally developed by Charles Barbier in response to Napoleon's demand for a code that soldiers could use to communicate silently and without light at night called night writing. Barbier's system was too complex for soldiers to learn, and was rejected by the military. In 1821 he visited the National Institute for the Blind in Paris, France, where he met Louis Braille. Braille identified the major failing of the code, which was that the human finger could not encompass the whole symbol without moving, and so could not move rapidly from one symbol to another. His modification was to use a 6 dot cell – the Braille system – which revolutionized written communication for the blind.

'Legislation is vitally important,' he continued. 'But organizations should also have a social responsibility to consider the needs of all their customers.'

Legislation and standards

Legislation – in the form of an updated European directive – came into place in October 2005. It requires the name of medicines produced from that date to be placed in Braille on the packaging or label, while all existing licensed pharmaceutical products must follow suit by November 2010.

Braille, therefore, is set to become an increasingly important aspect of pharmaceutical label printing. But issues regarding standards remain: there are 50 different character sets for Braille in Europe alone, though there are some commonalities. Crucially, however, quantitative symbols vary.

As chairman of the British Standards Institute's Braille Panel, Tony Harper is leading the development of legislation and standards for pharmaceutical packaging. 'This seminar is an invaluable opportunity to meet directly with producers of pharmaceutical products, discuss what we are working on and to hear their challenges and concerns,' he said.

The British Standards Institute has published a UK Draft for Development, which has been used to spearhead the development of a European standard. It is anticipated that a draft European standard for Braille on pharmaceutical packaging will be circulated for comment in 2008 and a finalized version published in 2009.

'The first golden rule is to treat Braille as a quality-critical text,' said Harper. 'We want practical legislation with a sensible standard to back it up.'

Printing Braille

Cambridgeshire-based Ditone Labels has been printing Braille labels since 1999, and its sales manager John Haworth is a member of the British Standards Institute's Braille Advisory Committee. The company is part of the specialist packaging materials supplier Clondalkin Group, which boasts 4,000 employees and 40 manufacturing sites worldwide.

Of the two main methods of printing Braille, embossing and screen, Ditone uses the latter. The company prints standard Braille labels on a Gallus R200B letterpress, while Braille on Extensia leaflet labels is handled by a Mark Andy 4300 letterpress that has been fitted with an onserts unit and a Gallus screen unit.

'The Gallus screen head is a proven system,' says operations

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Tony Harper, chairman of the British Standards Institute's Braille Panel

director Raymond Young. 'Fitting it to the onserts machine ensures continuity of the quality of the Braille dot. Having the screen on the Mark Andy 4300 also allows for the printing of both the Extensia and the Braille on it to be completed in a single pass, which is preferred by the pharmaceutical industry. Having the same system on both presses allows for flexibility when running standard Braille jobs.'

Braille repro can be done in-house using ArtPro from EskoArtwork, while screen cylinders are also made on-site. All Braille and Extensia labels are finished in-house.

Ditone is currently working with a company to achieve 100% Braille dot inspection – not easy given that both the presence and the profile of the Braille dot must be checked. Five percent of the company's jobs require Braille, but this figure is increasing every month.

Ditone's 19,000 square foot production floor also houses two 7-color Aquaflex presses, which are mainly used for scratch-off labels. An 8-color Gallus R160 letterpress handles multi-page work, while a Gallus RCS 330 is pulling work into the company from the gravure market. The RCS was the first of its kind in the UK when installed four years ago, since when Young reports the company's focus has been on upgrading existing machinery.

Other equipment includes an Agfa image setter, Dupont Cyrel Fast for platemaking and an MIS system from Prisym. Ditone Labels employees 58 people and looks to grow its business by 10 percent each year.

As well as the pharmaceutical market, the company serves the health and beauty and toiletries industries, while also producing specialist promotional labels for many products in the fast-moving consumer goods sector.

"Legislation is vitally important, but organizations should also have a social responsibility to consider the needs of all their customers"

With legislation and standards driving the incorporation of Braille into pharmaceutical packaging, business opportunities undoubtedly exist. But aside from the business case, there is also a social responsibility that all customers are catered for equally. Whole words in Braille dots may not even be necessary – a different letter on various products will, in some cases, suffice. Incorporating Braille into pharmaceutical labels and packaging can make a tangible difference to the lives of the partially-sighted – and how often do we get the chance to do that?

Having the screen also allows for the printing of both the Extensia and the Braille on it to be completed in a single pass, which is preferred by the pharmaceutical industry. ■

How is Braille added to packaging?

There are a number of ways to incorporate Braille into packaging, dependent on the type of material used, according to John Haworth, Ditone's sales manager and a member of the British Standards Institute's Braille Advisory Committee.

In the case of cartons, the usual way is to emboss the carton by punching the back with a specially designed tool during the production process. There can, however, be issues regarding cracking material which may affect the flow of cartons on automatic filling lines and can jeopardize the integrity of printed copy.

For labels, the employment of specially designed ink and varnishes provides the most straight forward method. Screen printing is an established technology and proven method of laying down thicker layers of ink to achieve the required dimensions of the Braille dots and is the proven route to realizing the required dot height.

For small volumes of labels there are alternatives available in the form of specially designed computer printers. Other techniques are being developed using specialty inks and glues.

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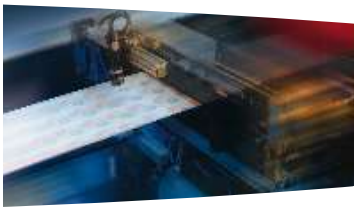

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Innovation from Germany

In the run up to Labelexpo Europe, *L&L's* North American correspondent **Danielle Jerschefske** visited some German manufacturers in the Baden Wurttemberg and Bavarian regions

Novamelt

Novamelt GmbH, headquartered in Wehr, Germany, has been in the hotmelt business for 18 years, focusing on the manufacture of hotmelt adhesives and tape products. It has experienced double-digit growth in Europe and, with the help of its US operations, expects to produce 4,000 tons of label adhesive this year.

'When we entered the hotmelt business', market leaders viewed this area as a niche sector,' says Harald Braun, chairman and managing director of Novamelt. 'But not anymore.'

About 35 percent of Novamelt's European production stays in Germany. Its North American facility manufactures half its products for the US, with the rest exported to South America, Canada and Mexico.

The decision to move into the US was taken in 2005, with the building of a plant in High Pointe, North Carolina. The risk was shared with privately owned Jowat, a German manufacturer of woodwork and packaging adhesives. The first batch of Hotmelt was completed and available for sale by March 1, 2006. By the end of that year, Novemelt was running two full-time shifts and anticipates running three shifts by the end of 2007.

'We have truly become a global company because of this location,' says Tapio Martti, North American sales manager. 'From here we have been able to service Asia and Latin America. Not to mention, it really helps that we can bid on business separately in euros or dollars.'

At the US facility one manufacturing line produces rubber-based hot melt PS adhesives. In Germany, the company currently runs several lines, one of which is specifically designed for producing UV-curable acrylic based hot melt pressure sensitive adhesives.

Both sites use essentially the same equipment, and the software for the machinery can be switched between German and English with the simple push of a button. Raw materials for the two plants are automatically ordered via a networked computer system linked with suppliers.

Both plants have a dual-purpose coating and R&D lab, a mixing lab and a climate control lab which is kept at 50 percent humidity and 25 degrees Celsius. The R&D lab at each facility has a pilot coater that is available for customer use under Novamelt supervision. 'It is an opportunity for them to test new or current face stock with our product,' says Harald Braun, chairman and managing director. 'Prototypes can also be sent back to their facilities to complete in-house testing.'

The pilot coater has the capability to run materials from 14-300gsm. All products and samples are stored on file in the climate lab for at least two years.

'One of the major market trends in the label industry is the no label look,' says Braun. 'Clear filmic labels are today increasingly used in many different and diverse areas, but most

L-r - Barrel of Novalmelt adhesive; Training Center Printing Presses Division; Alprinta 74V at Training Center; 5-Offset plus flexo concepta with operator

"Small printers are getting to the point where they want to be able to coat their products in-house. By becoming fully integrated, a printer can expand its presence in the supply chain, which gives them a better chance to develop their business"

especially on cosmetic products and in the beverage sectors. Many label printers use the possibility to produce such labels in house, for example with a printing machine for reverse printing and inline hot melt coating. With this type of approach it is possible to save up to 20 percent material cost because the need for protective film in the overall construction is eliminated. It is important to us that our products can be applied directly to film.'

Tapio Martti agrees: 'Small printers are getting to the point where they want to be able to coat their products in-house. By becoming fully integrated, a printer can expand its presence in the supply chain, which gives them a better chance to develop their business.'

The same point is also made by Helmut Schreiner, president and CEO of Schreiner Etiketten, 2007 winner of the European Converter of the Year Award at the Global Label Industry Awards held during Labelexpo Europe, and the president of the VskE, the German label association. 'In-line coating could change the business,' Schreiner told *L&L*, and converters will need to pay attention to the process in the next few years.'

Delivery of finished products is another important concern for Novamelt. Its customers can receive their products in a variety of ways: boxed, in drums, reusable IBC containers, or via road tankers. The latter option is proprietary: Novamelt developed it for its high useage customers – usually a customer converting more than 2,500 drums each year. The road tanker was designed with a double wall for insulation that ensures the molten melt is kept at a constant temperature while en route to the customer. About 110 drums fit comfortably into the tanker, which allows the converter to use the hotmelt directly upon delivery. It drains through a hose into the machinery reservoirs and thus can be used immediately.

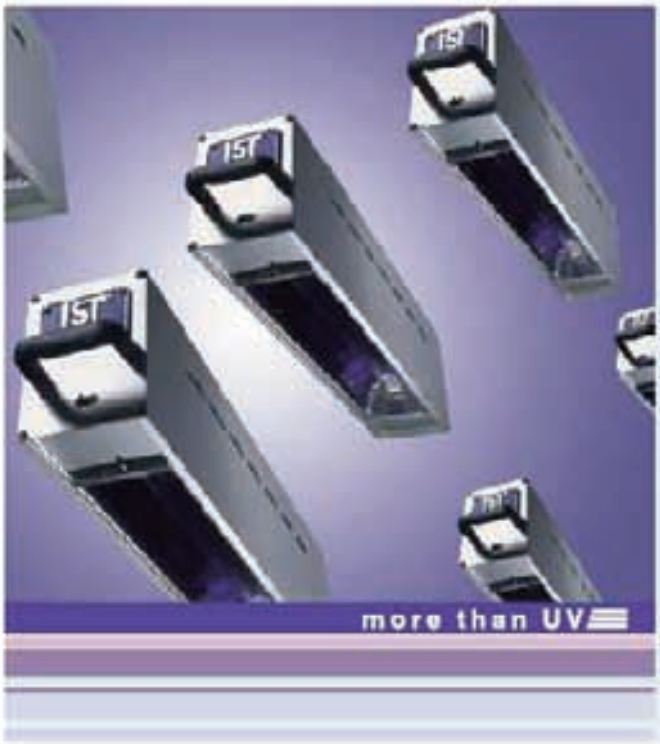
Novamelt expanded its market presence significantly in 2007 with a sales representation network in Eastern Europe, Russia and the Baltic States. In 2008 there are plans to further develop that network into the Southeast Asian and Australasian markets where there is already significant interest in the Novamelt line of products.

Muller Martini

Muller Martini Druckmaschinen GmbH was originally founded in the town of Fahrnau in 1964. Manufacturing has since moved to Maulburg, a small German village in the Schwarzwald, just north of the Swiss border. A long-time producer of presses for direct mail and business forms, Muller Martini is now focusing on variable sleeve offset technology for the roll-fed label and packaging sector.

'We see the opportunity for growth in that area,'

Danielle Jerschefske in front of Wacker Chemie's silicon art



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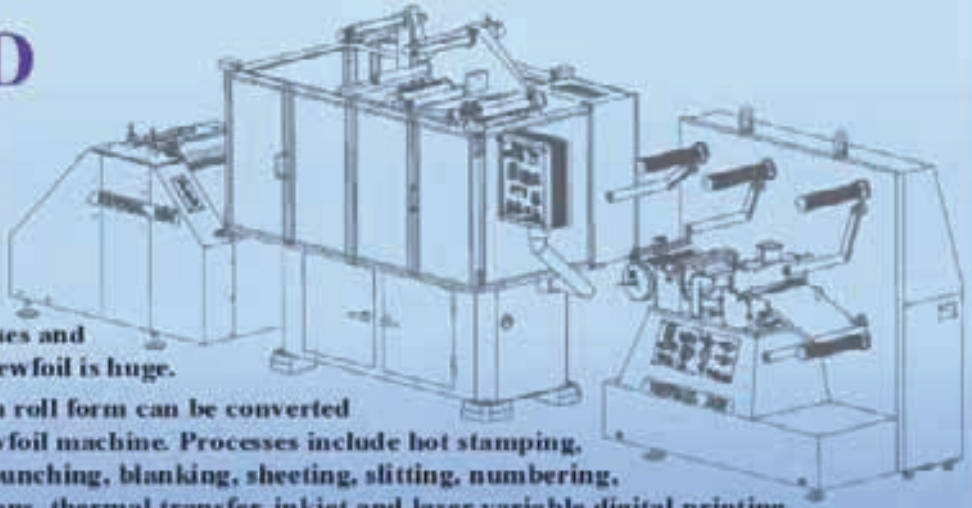

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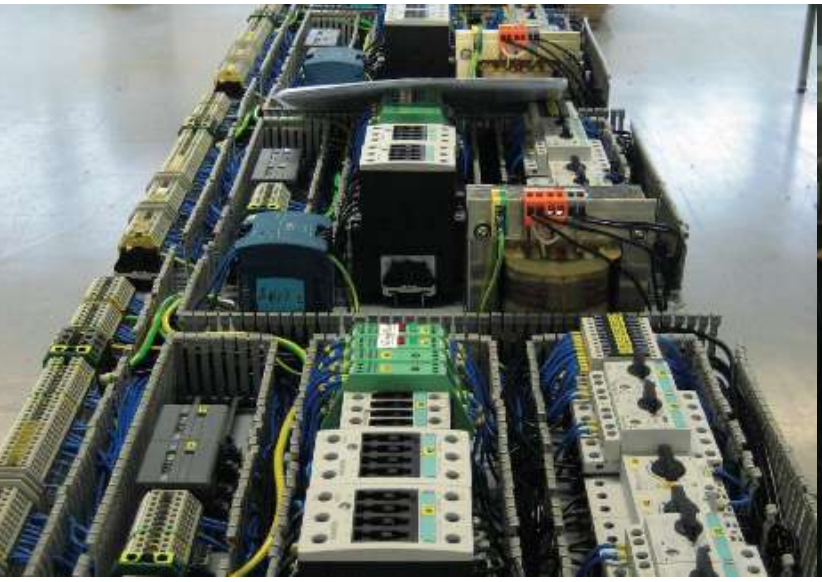


Manufacturing at Dr Honle

The team at Wacker Chemie

says Bernd Schopferer, marketing director at Muller Martini. 'More and more printers are being asked to complete highly complex solutions with many variations, using different types of colors and materials.' The company is also looking at how to expand its presence in the flexible packaging sector.

Muller Martini already had its Concepta press for these markets. It uses inserts and has the capability to run with up to 12 offset printing modules as well as flexo, letterpress, numbering, continuous varnishing and security printing inserts.

But the company's latest development, the Alprinta V, uses lightweight plate and blanket sleeve cylinders within a shaftless design, available in both 520mm and 740mm variants. The Alprinta-V also has a flexo tower utilizing sleeves mounted on an air shaft. The cylinders are automatically registered once a changeover has been completed.

A new laminating station has been designed to sit on the flexo unit where UV-curing glue is applied to the web. Directly afterward, the laminating station dispenses a film onto the web. The web then runs through a UV dryer, where the glue is cured with UV radiation.

Also new for the Alprinta-V is a matrix-removal system for high speed production. Speeds of 280m/min have been achieved producing self-adhesive labels on 40 micron OPP. The non-stop design means the press doesn't have to be stopped in order to change the matrix-roll, because the waste is removed to the gear side of the press by a conveyor belt.

'It is with flexible presses such as these that printers can fully embrace the "Swiss Army Knife" approach to converting labels,' Schopferer adds.

Dr Honle

Founded in 1980, Dr Honle offers a wide range of UV technology for the global printing and medical industries. The company has had sales representatives in the US since 1994, has 130 employees worldwide, and in 2006 had its highest ever sales of 24 million euros, with printing representing around 60 percent.

Dr Honle recently introduced its patented pureUV technology, designed to reflect all of the light from the bulbs around the lamp, making the range more efficient. It has also developed a new power supply with better efficiency, lower cost, and a wider range of power control. Also now available is an advanced 'cold mirror' system allowing the curing of unsupported films without cooling drums.

A recent development is inert chamber technology for flexible packaging, which, combined with Dr Honle's Uvaprint range of UV driers, helps to reduce the odor of UV inks.

Wacker Chemie

Wacker Chemie, based in Munich, has 14,700 employees worldwide and annual sales of 3.34 billion euros. Main facilities in the US are located in Adrian, Michigan and Portland, Oregon. Wacker invests five percent of its sales back into R&D, filing 150 patents every year. The silicones division makes up 37 percent of the group sales, with a significant share of silicones used for the paper, film, foil and coating markets. Germany is the company's largest overall market while the US is one of Wacker's largest foreign markets; however, the comapny anticipates business in China to supersede US volume within the next few years.

The Dehesive Release Coatings constructed by the silicones division is the main Wacker product line available for the label industry. There are three product groups in the Dehesive product line: silicone emulsions, solventless silicones, and solvent-based silicones.

The best raw material for the catalyst in the process, platinum, has seen a dramatic price increase since 2001, and Wacker designed its Dehesive 915 and 960 and the crosslinkers V85 and V90 to minimize usage. The 915 allows converters to use up to 20 percent less silicone by weight while halving platinum consumption in a label liner using 100ppm silicone. 'The silicone is very reactive and our customers have still been able to increase productivity. They have cut costs and it still works just as well,' says the company's Martin Bruetsch.

Wacker has also developed an anti-misting agent, AMA, for its Dehesive product line that enables manufacturers to run at faster coating speeds. AMA is delivered premixed with the anti-misting additive in the Dehesive polymer or catalyst. Coating speeds up to 1600m/minute have been achieved.

CRA (controlled release additive) modifiers can be added to any Dehesive product to change the level of release force and peel rate. ■

Converters Bond at TLMI

The James Bond-themed 2007 TLMI Technical Conference covered a wide range of subjects of interest to converters – everything from sleeves to 2D barcodes. **Danielle Jerschefske** reports

TLMI Technical Conference co-chairs Mike Buystedt, Xsys Print Solutions, and Art Yerecic, Yerecic Label, put together an enlightening meeting that would make James Bond proud. TLMI members asked that their conference be 'shaken, not stirred' and that is precisely they what they got. For two days, attendees were updated on such important topics as lean manufacturing, digital plates, color management, the new label technologies, press technology, counterfeiting, films, packaging, digital options and converting electronics. The '2 double 07 mission' – 2007 technical advancement – was accomplished with the usual Bond mastery.

Lean Manufacturing

The initial session, 'Dr No Downtime', examined ways to increase profitability in converter shops. 'The objective,' said Paul Brauss, Mark Andy president, 'is to operate close to the customer's rate of use or demand. Investing in technology can help, but it must provide a solid ROI, be able to expand current capacity, and provide for increased productivity.'

'The best answer,' he continued, 'is to improve profitability on the floor of the press room.' After all, the chief reason to invest is to improve the bottom line.

Tom Spina, founder of Luminer Converting Group, shared his pathway to success in implementing lean manufacturing at his facility in New Jersey. Top tips included: enforcing the environment while rewarding success; making methodical, time-lined advancements and changes rather than trying to do everything immediately; and lastly, having the personnel who perform each task write down the procedures to be audited. Spina adamantly recommends moving as many press-side jobs as possible away from the press itself.

Brad Elledge, director of operations at Nosco, echoed the advice: 'you have to move as much as possible off the press, group similar jobs together, pick the things you need to measure and begin quantifying your operational situation.'

A speaker from AVT showed attendees the savings that can be realized by reducing the speed of the press to lower the high costs of defects – and emphasized the importance of automatic inspection to reduce waste. Lastly, Harper Corporation conveyed the need for departments to work together more closely rather than independently. 'There always seems to be a disconnect,' explained technical graphics manager, Alexander James. 'If you tie the pre-press into the process, it gives them ownership.'

Digital plates

The next session, 'Digital Plate Secrets Revealed', provided a converter's perspective of the technology. Chairman of the FTA's 1999 technical forum and VP of operations for McDowell Label and Screen Printing, Jay Luft, said, 'Without question, digital thermal technology speeds up the process and reduces labor in the plate department. It is extremely important to test various plate materials because no single plate material is the best fit for all cases. Then, when determining what plate material to use, all variables must be taken into account, such as your inks, sticky backs, plate repeats and substrates.'

Color control

Color management was addressed in the third session 'Performance Never Dies' and the '3 Cs' were the words of the hour. According to the Eastman Kodak Company, the keys to error-free, seamless color control are communication, control and confirmation. 'The number one complaint of print buyers is inconsistent color,' said Arjen van der Muelen, worldwide product manager of color products, graphic communications group.

He explained the value of exchanging color parameters using consistent terminology, which would reduce the number of re-prints, reduce pre-press labor costs and speed up turnaround. 'To improve uptime, make sure that color is under control,' he said. In conclusion, van der Mulen stressed the importance of verifying that the achieved color matches the requirements set. He said, 'confirmation eliminates errors.'

Iain Pike from Sun Chemical, then emphasized how critical consistent color is to brand success. 'Process colors may provide economic savings on the front end, but at the expense of brand vibrancy. Consistency and vibrancy of brand are best achieved with specific spot colors,' Pike said.

But when extending the color gamut beyond CMYK, documented trials are essential to obtain acceptable quality. Extended gamut printing also demands impeccable registration control to avoid unpredictable results.

Sun Chemical advises converters to really communicate well with its customers long before press time and the communication must continue through to implementation. 'Communication of ink factors to prepress, design, and brand owner can help to minimize on-press disappointment,' Pike concluded. 'Ask the right questions, and suggest alternatives to meet expectations.'

Drew Miller, technical manager, Multi-Color Corporation, discussed subjective and objective quality control. Miller advocates the use of spectrophotometer readings, density readings and dot gain measurements to obtain repeatable, high-quality runs.

'Objective measures are good for printers,' Miller said. 'The areas of responsibility become clearer.' However, it is still vital to implement inclusive quality checks, including checks throughout the supply chain from supplier to operator to brand owner. 'Communication is critical,' he said. Once an effective quality system has been realized, converters must provide a documented approach. 'Generate custom reports for each job so you can track the variables that measure quality and success for your customers,' Miller continued. 'When you do this, you can exceed your customer's expectations.'

Today's color control technologies offer both off- and on-line measurement capabilities for offset, flexo and gravure printing – but where is the technology heading? RIT's printing applications laboratory technical manager, Bill Pope, offered listeners some ideas on future technologies. 'Closed loop viscosity and impression control will reduce error by eliminating human intervention,' he said. Pope also acknowledged the possibility of image analysis systems for color control that use microdots hidden in the image for measurements.

Two dimension barcodes

Founder of NeoMedia Technologies, Chaz Fritz, wowed his audience in the opening of the fourth session, 'License to 2D Barcode'. Fritz said that 'smart' 2D barcodes are already being used in various parts of the world. 'Smartcodes are everywhere in Japan,' Fritz explained. 'They are printing them on chocolates and billboards. In a London newspaper, there was a 2D barcode that increased readership interaction. When you scan these codes with the proper cell phone camera, it automatically connects you to a website with more information than you can fit on a standard label.' Other uses include location-based consumer promotions, where a GPS system will direct you to the retail store.

A 2D case study completed by The Kennedy Group, demonstrated how the printing of codes on the front and the back of labels prevented the mix-up of different labels with similar artwork. 'We chose to solve our customer's problem with 2D barcodes because it allowed for more information to be stored, did not

Print Another Day

The TLMI pulled together a panel session with some most of the world's leading press manufacturers. Representatives included: Nilpeter USA, Mark Andy, Aquaflex, MPS America, Matik North America, Stork Prints America, HP, ETI, Paper Converting Machine and Gallus. 'Print Another Day' persuaded attendees to ask the panel questions about what press technology is moving towards, and where they think technology will be in 2010.

Much of the panel agreed that 100 percent (or close to that) of presses in 2010 will be servo driven. Concerns about the inability to obtain and retain top talent to run the presses were also widespread across the group. 'The press needs to be run correctly, so we are creating a more user-friendly interface,' explained Mac Rosenbaum, Aquaflex.

'The learning gap is big and not simple to fix,' said Mark Andy's Paul Brauss. 'We plan to be there to ensure new operators can learn this technology. To start, we need to start with the younger operators coming out of the schools who are computer savy.'

Sleeve technology was certainly another technology trend highlighted by the panel. 'As more sleeve technology is adopted, quality of sleeves will improve in a relatively short time,' commented Andy Colletta, Nilpeter USA. And the panel agreed that the effect of sleeves on traditional flexo labels is the versatility they provide.

Lastly, the panel members discussed their ability to help converters service their customers through consistent supplier service. 'The biggest thing we see, which is quite compelling, is service,' said Ray Dickenson, HP. 'Increasingly we are seeing more opportunity for converters to improve their service. It is important to get some depth with the brand owners to get them what they want, when, and how.'

interfere with the design and there was no chance for a mix up with the UPCs at the checkout,' explained Todd Kennedy of the Group. This application of 2D is a good example of an internal process solution. Other possible applications for the technology include business-to-business solutions to help achieve ROI and business-to-consumer marketing solutions.

Sleeve technology

The 'Investment Royale' session dug deeper into sleeve technology and made some important points to remember when investing in the equipment. Paul A. Roux, VP development at Syracuse Label Company, Inc., provided the converter perspective to the audience: 'sleeves weigh less and allow for quick changeovers. We are not likely to buy another flexo press without them.' Roux then highlighted storage, pre-mounting of plates, installation and cleanup as additional advantages to investing in the technology. 'Installation is a quick one person task,' he said. Cost comparisons have not been completed yet, Roux pointed out, but the overall costs of sleeves in terms of workflow efficiencies are believed to offset the additional cost of sleeve-equipped presses.

From a supplier's point a view, Joe Tremper from Rossini North America explained the positives and negatives of increased wall thickness. 'Sleeves have been supplied in increasing wall thicknesses to accommodate the increasing repeat ranges of sleeve presses,' he explained. 'Yet, as the sleeve wall thickness increases, the sleeve weight, cost, and delivery time also increases. Therefore, suppliers introduced carriers, which act as mandrel extensions. The effects of the increased thickness with a carrier decrease the weight, cost, and delivery time, while the TIR (Total Indicated Runout) increases.'

Tremper then identified the primary issues with narrow web sleeve technology – TIR and delivery. He recommends that converters be aware of their current sleeve inventory so that demands for replacement can be met within a reasonable amount of time. He also advises replacement of an entire sleeve inventory every 2-4 years because of sleeve abuse and changes in TIR.

Brand protection

The highlight of 'The Brand with the Golden Gun' session was the brand protection presentation by Paul Fox, ER leader of global operations at Proctor and Gamble. Fox discussed the massive cost of the counterfeit goods trade, and looked at how new technologies might play a key role in curtailing the illicit market. 'A major area of focus must be the supply chain. We must work together to develop best practices and intelligence processes.' Fox said that RFID already plays a significant role and explained that he has seen an increase in its use for case and pallet-level applications. He also believes that the combination of RFID with other technologies like taggants, nanotechnology and holograms will play en even bigger role in the fight against pirating. Fox told converters that the best way to help is to form a relationship with companies like P&G and present your unique technology ideas to them.

Printing films

Nick Van Alstine, president of Macaran Printed Products, was the first and only converter/presenter in the 'Profits Forever' session dealing with film printing. 'Challenges such as, ink adhesion, press tension and heat, ink opacity on clear film, and dust and static are all involved in printing films,' Van Alstine noted. 'Checking the dyne levels is the first step in solving an ink adhesion problem. The ideal range is a dyne level of 40-42. Choosing the right inking system and regular lamp maintenance have played significant roles in solving the problem.' He explained that rolls must be uniformly wound because if they are too tight or too loose telescoping can occur.

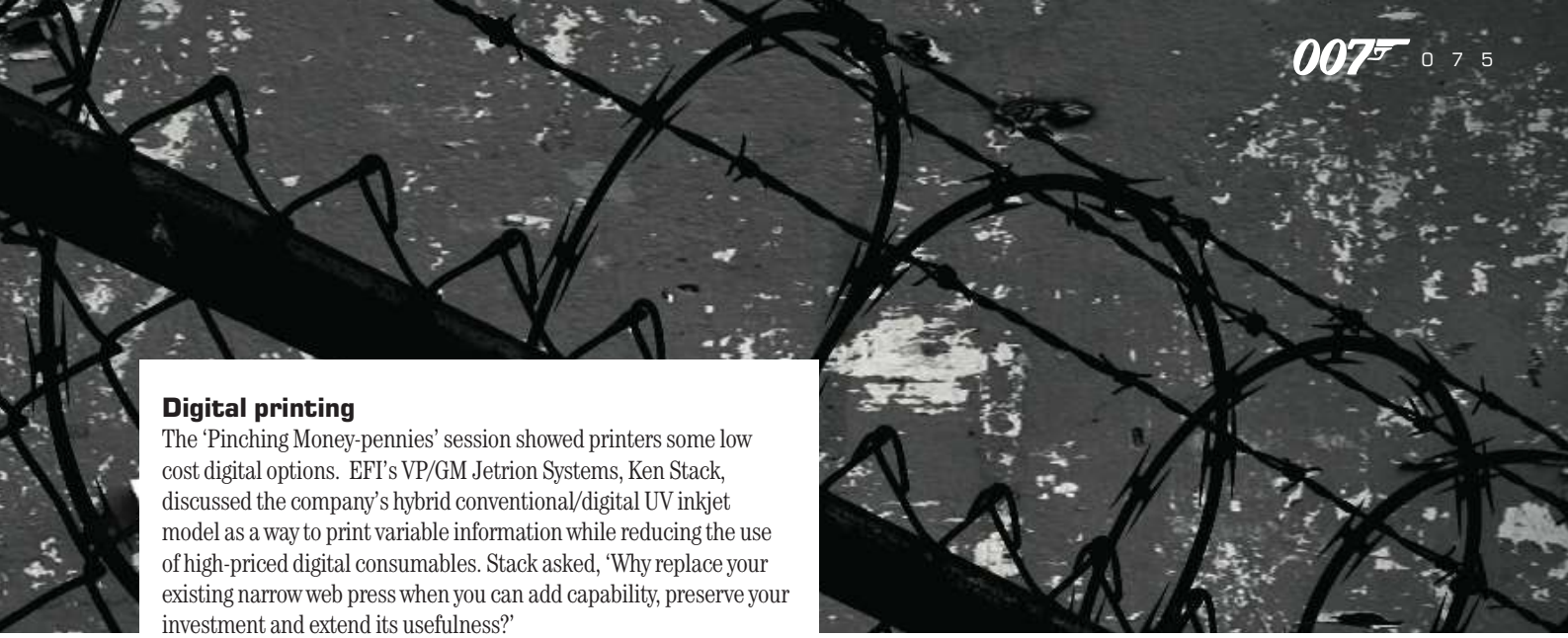
Innovia Film's Patrick Seemann analyzed the variation between top coated and treated films based on tests conducted by Innovia. 'Treated OPP and coated OPP have similar surface energy, but long term adhesion in aggressive environments is not the same,' said Seemann. 'Good surface energy facilitates ink lay down, but does not ensure ink adhesion.'

Kurt Hudson GM UV products at Water Ink Technologies pointed out that to achieve proper wetting, the surface tension of the ink must be lower than the surface tension of the film being printed.

TLMI announces press guard contest

TLMI has introduced a narrow web flexographic press guard contest open to all TLMI members and non-members. The contest's objective is to urge industry members to submit designs for a flexo press guard that will assist in injury prevention industry-wide, and to generate new ideas to advance current standards, as well as to tap into designs that may already exist.

All narrow web press operators are eligible to enter the Press Guard Contest. Deadline for entry is March 5, 2008. The award includes a substantial cash prize along with publicized industry recognition, and will be awarded at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago next September. Entries will be judged based upon their level of protection, regulatory compliance, functionality, translation and uniqueness. Submission guidelines can be found on TLMI's website, www.tlmi.com.



Digital printing

The 'Pinching Money-pennies' session showed printers some low cost digital options. EFI's VP/GM Jetrion Systems, Ken Stack, discussed the company's hybrid conventional/digital UV inkjet model as a way to print variable information while reducing the use of high-priced digital consumables. Stack asked, 'Why replace your existing narrow web press when you can add capability, preserve your investment and extend its usefulness?'

Low-cost digital thermal printing was offered as yet another cost saving option for printers looking to produce short runs, variable data and/or prototypes. Steve Albert of Gerber Scientific Products displayed the finding of two price-profit case studies. The case study quantities produced were 250 and 500 respectively, and both required custom die cuts. The materials for case study one cost $90, producing a 71-81 percent gross profit margin after labor and price were factored in. In case study two, the gross profit margin came out to be 84-89 percent. 'Thermal printing can be leveraged to maximize the profitability of short-run and prototype tag and label production,' Albert summarized.

Packaging

The 'Printraker' session explained to the audience some of the directions that packaging was taking because of the increasingly important sustainability issue being discussed at present. The Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) encourages converters to be more aware of material health when choosing supplies. 'Material health refers to products that are safe and healthy for humans and the environment during their full life cycle,' the Coalition said. The organization offered three strategies for material health. First, know your product and develop an x-list and a preferred list for suppliers. Next, know what the potential impacting consequences are of choosing a particular material. Lastly, know that the SPC choose converters to who choose Green chemical products and processes.

Printed electronics

Printed electronics was the topic of discussion during 'A View to a Skill' session. Experienced converters from both WS Packaging and Nashua Corporation shared their feelings on the status of RFID technology at this time. Dave Uland from WS Packaging said that RFID has become 'a solution in search of an application'. Nashua's Bob Pernice said, 'The DoD (Department of Defense) needs to build an RFID infrastructure. While adoption is increasing, it is increasing more slowly than even conservative projections.'

Pernice went on to point out that in North America there is an abundance of converters servicing a limited demand, 'so we can expect to see more consolidation.' Pernice's expectations seemed to be right on. Shortly thereafter, Resource Label Group merged with Mid-South Graphics.

As for other printed electronics applications, Uland views their status to be similar to that of the silicon industry in 1970. The materials are extremely expensive and hard to obtain. Although flat batteries and conductive metallic inks were briefly discussed, they were viewed as up-and-coming technology rather than something for the here-and-now. ■

Tours to focus on topical themes at drupa 2008

To smooth the way for trade visitors to gain an overview of individual themes, guided tours spotlighting current industry developments will be staged at drupa 2008. The range of topics runs from workflows and web2print through offset and digital printing to packaging production and finishing.

Participants in groups of a maximum of ten people will be taken to between six and eight exhibitors relevant to the tour. Due to drupa's increasingly international profile, the 2008 tours will not only be conducted in German and English but also, for the first time, in Chinese, Spanish and French. 'With this range of language offerings, we hope to cater to the diverse mix of visitor nationalities,' says Manuel Mataré, drupa project director.

The German and English-language tours will run daily (excluding weekends), while the Chinese, French and Spanish versions will be staged on alternate days. Topics are as follows:

- Networked print production: How much of a workflow do printers need?
- Web2print: Fundamentals of automated print production
- Creating printed products: Trends in design, image processing & layout
- Computer-to-plate: Innovative imaging technologies and the appropriate plates
- Digital printing: Cutting-edge printing systems – innovative printed products
- Inkjet printing: A printing process with a bright future
- Offset printing: Improve cost effectiveness through automation
- Mega-trend inline finishing: Systems and materials
- Packaging and label production: Innovations in the spotlight
- Print finishing: Innovative inline production

As at drupa 2000 and 2004, the Deutscher Drucker publishing house is coordinating the drupa Highlights Tours in collaboration with the Association for Managers in the Printing and Information Processing industries and the Department of Print and Media Technology at the University of Wuppertal.

The cost of participation will be 40 euros for advance bookings (from January 2008 at www.highlightstouren.de). Tours booked at the fairgrounds will be charged at 45 euros. Subscribers to magazines published by Deutscher Drucker and FDI members pay 35 euros for advance bookings. For further information on timings or to reserve places on the tours in advance, contact Ms Regine Grossmann of Deutscher Drucker at r.grossmann@publish.de During drupa 2008, participants will only be able to make bookings on site at the Highlights Tours stand.

Kodak fights counterfeiters

A recent conference in Italy saw Kodak promote a new authentication system to fight the growing problem of counterfeiting. **James Quirk** reports

Kodak hosted a recent conference in Milan, Italy, to highlight the importance of brand protection and promote its authentication solution: the Kodak Traceless System.

According to estimates, counterfeiting and piracy costs the global economy $700 billion every year. The World Health Organization says that $40 billion a year is lost in counterfeit drug sales alone; while the Federal Aviation Administration believes that two per cent of airline parts installed every year are counterfeit – amounting to 520,000 components.

The cost of counterfeit goods cannot, however, only be counted in monetary terms: often it is the consumer who bears the brunt of phony products – particularly in the pharmaceutical sector, where fake medicines can be life threatening. For example, a Panamanian prosecutor recently said tests show at least 94 people died from taking medicine contaminated with diethylene glycol since July 2006 and that 293 more deaths were under investigation. This is the same chemical found in counterfeit 'name brand' toothpaste in the United States earlier this year.

'The true cost of today's counterfeiting problem is measured in lost reputation and brand equity, lost sales and profits, lost jobs and even lost lives,' said Steven Powell, general manager and director, Security Solutions, Kodak. 'Kodak is combining its experience with specialty materials and the power of its digital technology to help companies around the world take the offensive in fighting counterfeiters and protecting their brands and customers.'

Traceless System

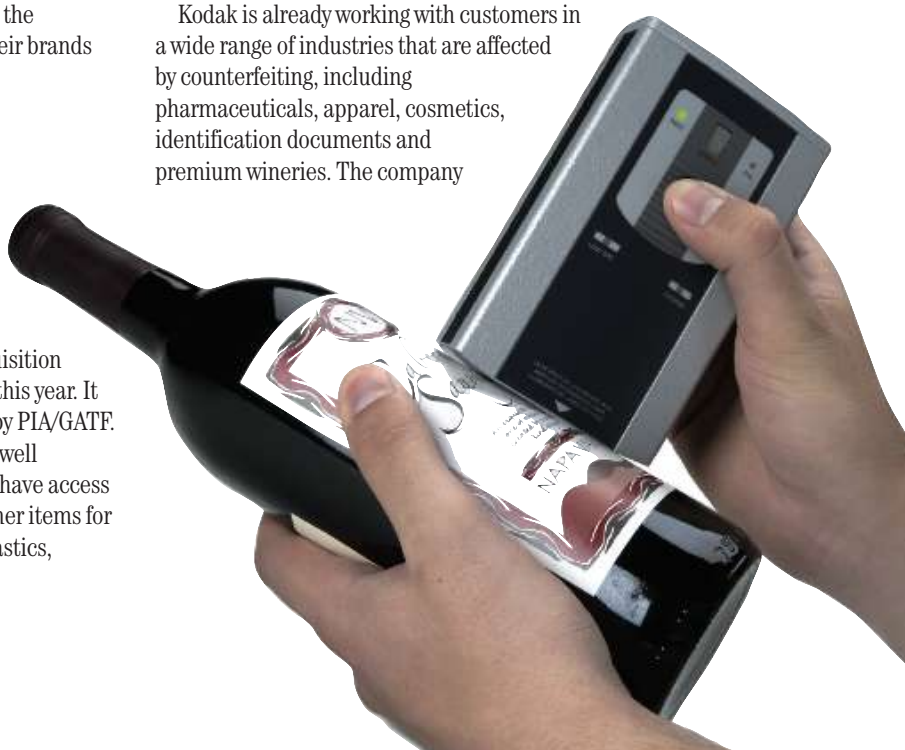
Kodak's Traceless System, part of the company's recently-launched suite of security products, is an authentication system whereby micro-particles are integrated into the packaging or label during printing, or even the product itself, and then identified by a hand-held reader.

The technology was born out of Kodak's 2005 acquisition of Creo, and its official US launch took place in July this year. It has been awarded the InterTech Technology Award by PIA/GATF.

The Traceless System marker materials, which Powell describes as 'an ingredient that counterfeiters don't have access to', can be mixed with inks, toners, varnishes and other items for analog and digital printing, as well as paper pulp, plastics, powders, pigments, liquids and textiles.

The markers have no effect on the characteristics of the end products or packaging. Users license the technology under multiyear agreements, and have secure control of the markers, the readers and associated software. Brand owners receive unique markers, so one company's readers won't be able to verify another company's products.

Kodak is already working with customers in a wide range of industries that are affected by counterfeiting, including pharmaceuticals, apparel, cosmetics, identification documents and premium wineries. The company



The counterfeiters are the competitors

Igi LeRoux, technical director and partner of brand security consultant Secura Monde International, stressed the importance of brand protection but said that he was 'yet to find a brand owner who can actually put a figure on the cost of counterfeiting or gray marketing on his brand'.

'Industries such as pharmaceuticals and tobacco now recognize that the counterfeiters are the main competitors,' he said. 'There is no silver bullet against the werewolves of counterfeiting – security features need to co-habit in harmony.'

Secura, a private company founded in 1994, has managed the deployment of 20 billion bank notes in the last five years.

Micro-particles are integrated into the packaging or label during printing, or even the product itself, and then identified by a hand-held reader

"There is no silver bullet against the werewolves of counterfeiting – security features need to co-habit in harmony"

intends mainly to sell directly to the brand, while working with manufacturing companies such as label converters to implement the solution into the production process.

Customer feedback

Dr Ulisse Vivarelli, president of Italian brand protection and anti-counterfeiting company Solos Identificazione e Protezione, spoke at the conference about his company's experiences with the recently installed Traceless System. Solos is the first company in Italy to apply Kodak security technology in the fashion industry, and has implemented solutions for various brands in items such as security threads, hang tags, woven labels, garments, fragrances and eyewear.

'Counterfeiters have access to technologies that can be as good as those used by authentic producers so our customers need a robust yet simple solution,' said Vivarelli. 'The Kodak technology is embedded in the items themselves and does not require the addition of anything to the product, which makes it easy and cost-effective for our brand customers to use.'

'The Kodak Traceless System meets several critical needs,' explained Powell. 'It's easy to implement, difficult to reverse engineer and affordable for mass implementation. We can customize our security solutions to fit a customer's needs and we can do it quickly.' Powell reported that the company already has Traceless System customers on every continent.

The Kodak Security Solutions portfolio has applications for an even wider range of markets and industries that are being harmed by counterfeiting, such as financial documents and tax stamps, ticketing for lotteries and special events, pharmaceutical packaging, food and beverages, luxury goods, prescription pads and vital records.

In addition to the covert Traceless System, Kodak security technologies are utilized to implement other hidden features, such as digital watermarks, magnetic ink character recognition (MICR), and a variety of forensic markers. Measures such as these are useful to prevent document fraud via counterfeiting or alteration. ■

Kodak's Traceless System – what's new?

An early version of the Traceless system was introduced in 2005 by Creo of Canada, prior to the company's acquisition by Kodak in December 2005.

Kodak scientists and engineers made modifications and improvements to the Traceless system in 2006. Specific areas of improvement include:

- redesign of the ergonomics and usability of the reader, including the addition of new audible and visible indicators to the device
- improved power performance for longer use
- redesigned circuitry that adds new operating features and creates a platform for future upgrades
- improved programmability for specific customer tailoring
- improved optics, allowing greater materials analysis

'When thinking about the Traceless system, it is important to remember that the reader is an intelligent image capture device, and as such this is an area of considerable strength at Kodak in comparison to Creo,' says Steven Powell. 'Everything from illumination, optics, image processing, compression, data transfer and storage and many other areas of digital image processing have been analyzed, improved and planned for enhancement as a result of Kodak engineers working on this system.'

The Kodak team has also expanded the range of applications in which Traceless can be deployed. These include work in virtually every type of digital – thermal, ink jet and EP – and conventional – flexo, offset, gravure, etc. – printing methods with a wide variety of 'host' materials, such as colored inks, varnishes, toners, dyes, adhesives, laminates and powders. In addition, the company has formulated and implemented commercially its materials in other delivery methods including plastics, threads, natural materials and more.

Powell reports that a new development being worked on is in the field of software applications for item identification, diversion control and track and trace. 'We have some initial customer implementations of this technology and expect to be making more public statements about our capabilities in this area early next year,' he says.

Desert sunrise in Northeast Scottsdale

In-mold opportunities in the US

Danielle Jerschefske finds there are significant opportunities for the growth of IML in North America – particularly for injection mold applications

According to Tarsus Group's 2006 Label Converting in North America: A Market Survey and Analysis, by Mike Fairley, 12.98 percent of label converters in North America produce in-mold labels (IML). At AWA's 15th annual IMLCON Conference held in Scottsdale, Arizona this fall, VP, Dr William Llewellyn, presented data from the company's market research that showed that only 2 percent of labels produced in North America were IML last year.

Although a seeming dichotomy, studies do show that, in 2006, IML did post the greatest growth percentage of label types worldwide, even surpassing the growth of shrink and pressure sensitive labels. In North America last year, there were 220 million square meters of IML produced for the marketplace. This was less than Europe by about 150 million square meters, yet still around 100 million square meters more than Asian production.

Currently in North America, the predominant technology for the in-mold label process is blow mold (EB IML), whereas, in Europe, injection mold (IM IML) is the dominant technology. To contrast: sales of EB IML in North America reached $142 million in 2006. That same year, sales of IM IML amounted to only $20 million.

Reliable research shows that there is a great opportunity for significant growth of IML, specifically IM IML, in the North American market. And, since 57 percent of in-mold labels produced in North America are made from film, there is a parallel opportunity for the growth of film in the marketplace as well.

Perhaps the most exciting analysis to come out of IML figures for North America is the ratio of sales in the market compared to production. Research revealed that while sales in 2006 reached $20 million, one out of three in-mold labels sold in NA were also produced there. These statistics would indicate a promising growth rate of 20-25 percent in a market where the overall growth rate is a steady 2-3 percent.

But despite these lofty growth possibilities – upwards of four

Keys to solving stacking and un-stacking problems:

- **Do cutting offline** – print at 600ft/min, cut at 200 ft/min
- **Slow or simplify cutting** – cut only one layer at a time
- **Minimize moving the stack** – stack the labels into a returnable magazine
- **Only stack the magazine once**

A suguaro cactus silhouetted against an Arizona mountain sunset

In-mold terms to know

Pinning Force – electric force that holds the label to the surface
Label Profile – how thick the label is
Speed of fill – how fast the label is applied to the mold surface
Ghost – a blemish on the finished container

times the potential in Europe – AWA did identify a few trends and even potential threats to be alerted to. For example, while there is definitely room for stronger growth in IM IML markets, where IML converting developments are quickly advancing, the overall expansion of IML as a technology is slowing.

Other risks include competition from heat shrink sleeve labels, produced by the same percentage (12.98) of converters in North America that make IML. And, as retailers demand more frequent changes in their packaging, some segments may be just too small for IML.

Nevertheless, IML's time for growth in North America is real and here. There is, undeniably, a demand from brand owners for both large runs and packaging shape-changes in order to differentiate themselves in the highly competitive product decoration market. IM IML can offer them these solutions now, in a region where it is rarely found.

Printer presenter

Bob Travis, founder of Express Label and Graphics, located in Glendale, Wisconsin, specializes in digital IML printing, using HP's ws4500. He presented the attending converters with helpful information on how best to maneuver the complicated IML process. 'You must be able to tweak, change and do different things,' Travis explained. 'To do in-mold well, you need to have the capability to be flexible.'

Image quality, volume capacity and material thickness are all significant factors depending on the type of printing used to produce an in-mold label.

With screen printing or flexography, spot color image quality is produced, while with rotogravure and digital printing, IML results will be almost photo quality.

About a 38 micron thick substrate is necessary for flexo, rotogravure and digital roll-fed printed in-mold labels. On the other end, about a 10 mil media is required to print a screen IML. Lenticular in-mold labels call for about a 50 micron thick substrate to perform properly and provide the necessary quality.

Manufacturing in-mold labels is much more complicated than other label production. There are numerous variables that come into play continually during the process. 'The key variables in the actual manufacturing of the IML are: antistatic in film, antistatic in coatings, offset powders, and the edge weld,' said Travis.

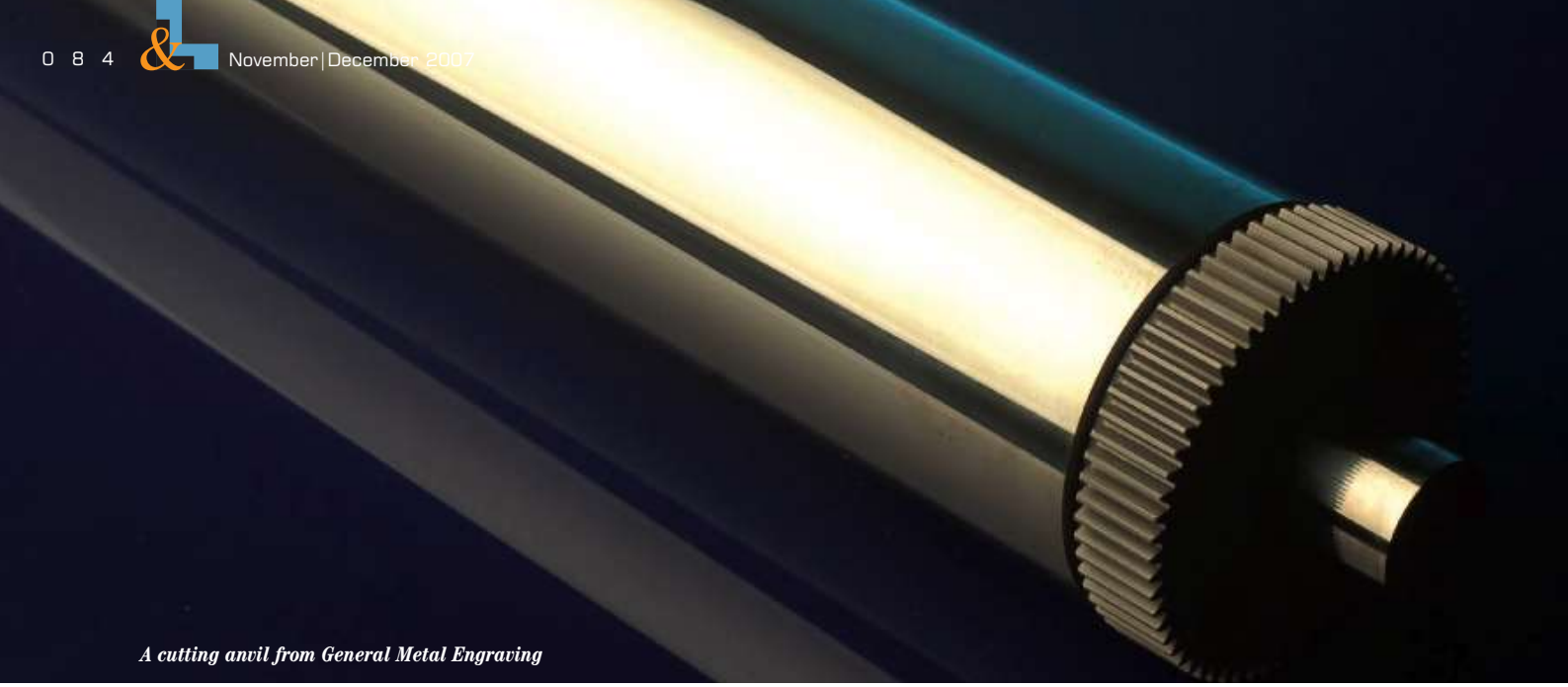
Once those manufacturing variables have been mastered, the next hurdle to overcome in the production process is the stacking and un-stacking of the labels. Travis says that this is where the true problems arise with IML. 'Once the key variables are identified, much of the difficulty with printing IML labels can be reduced,' he says, 'but throughout the entire process, it is imperative that everyone involved in each step has good communication and understands the variables. That is when you can start solving problems.'

IML molders, materials suppliers and printers at the conference, all felt very strongly about the need to explain the value of IML to brand owners. ■

Value advantages of IML brand owners

• **Superior decoration**	= Brand image enhancements
	= Increased sales
• **Rectangular or Square Containers**	= Increased 'billboard'
	= More product (lbs.) on shelf, pallets, trucks
	'sustainability'
• **Moisture resistance of PP & PE Containers**	= Improved shelf life
	= Improved product experience
• **Reusability of Containers**	= Brand exposure again and again

(supplied by Treofan materials)



A cutting anvil from General Metal Engraving

Die developments

Andy Thomas rounds up the latest developments in flexible and solid tooling, cutting cylinders and pressure setting systems

The key development in the dies industry continues to be the migration towards use of flexible dies – particularly in North America, where solid dies have historically dominated the rotary tooling sector. .

Much of the success of flexible die/magnetic cylinder combinations comes from the new range of coatings and machine hardening technologies which allow magnetic dies to cut a wider range of materials – including more abrasive materials – and to handle longer runs without the need for re-sharpening.

Gerhardt, for example, has recently completed a development program which widens the scope of use for its flexible dies to include much thicker substrates including compressible foams up to 0.9mm (0.6mm compressed) in caliper. The caliper capability has been around for a number of years, but Gerhardt says it has now developed 0.78mm dies capable of converting a range of high tolerance applications including 0.5mm diameter circles, 0.6mm gaps between images, micro perforation of any shape in any position, continual cutting lines and multiple cutting heights.

'This means that most materials converted with solid rotary dies, can now be converted with flexible dies, passing on huge cost savings to converters,' says the company's Bo Meier.

Electro-Optic, meanwhile, says its carbon coated DLS-C dies, previously recommended only for polyolefin foils, are now specified for tough and abrasive materials included polyester, tyvec and thermo sensitive papers.

Spilker has developed a new series of flexible dies called Speedcut, designed to convert a wide range of paper or filmic materials, and able to move from paper to film and back without problems, according to Spilker.

The standard product, with a height of 0.440mm and of nickel surface coating can optionally be upgraded with three different heights – for example for sandwich labels. Hard chrome plating, laser-hardening and micro-perforation are also available.

Speedcut is available with a short lead time in one piece sizes up to 800mm x 1000mm.

The growing use of flexible dies has prompted manufacturers to develop systems which reduce the lead time between order, manufacture and shipping of the finished die. This has involved the development of on-line ordering and tracking systems, as well as Lean Manufacturing programs by all the leading players. The latest supplier to announce such a program is Spanish flexible die manufacturer Lartec. The company's online utility allows converters to follow their orders from receipt through to delivery via the Lartec website. The system highlights the status of the order during the production process, showing a status bar between 0-100 percent, as well as providing a forecast for when it will be completed. Once the package has been sent, the web site is updated with the tracking number and expected delivery date.

The client can see the global status of all orders in process, as well as historical orders, allowing repeat orders to be implemented immediately. Converters can also view the die design for added security.

Implementing the system has required internal restructuring within Lartec, with the stated objective of completing all orders in the European Union within 24 hours.

'Customers are increasingly demanding more information about their orders, quotations, packets and invoices which is both reliable and in real time,' says Raúl Silvestre, Lartec's product manager. 'All of this information can now be viewed immediately and securely at any time from our web site'.

Despite the growing usage of flexible dies, solid dies remain the tool of choice for many applications – particularly longer runs on more abrasive materials – and technology developments continue in this sector. RotoMetrics, for example, now has its RD200 machine finished solid dies - best suited for thin film liners and extensible films –available with optional Yellow Jacket surface treatment. The company's Steve Lee says this system offers die life at least double that of conventional dies.

Optimizing die workflow

With intense competition and declining margins compelling converters to find ways of cutting out internal waste, we have seen an increasing emphasis on improving the storage, handling and setting of dies. It is still astonishing to visit manufacturers and see the number of dies returned because of avoidable damage in the press shop.

There are two aspects to proper die care: lessening damage to dies in storage and movement to the press, and in correctly setting the pressure between die cylinder and anvil to avoid excessive wear of the die.

Kocher + Beck pioneered the development of pressure setting and gap adjustment tools with the GapMaster system, and has now introduced the GapMaster IC, which can be inserted directly into the cutting unit. And at Labelexpo Europe, Gerhardt demonstrated its latest DropSetter, an improved version of the company's adjustable anvil. Like the GapMaster IC, the unit can now be dropped into an existing die station. The adjustable gap can be set on each side individually or together as a unit.

Israeli company Suron has taken a different approach, with the development of a patented adjustable anvil system. The new anvil design allows complete control of the gap between anvil and magnetic cylinder, allowing use of the same flexible die for various applications and different material properties.

'Another advantage is the simplicity of assembling the new anvil,' says Eliav Silberberg, flexible dies division marketing manager at Suron. 'The adjustable anvil is useable with the same cutting unit. As a result, the printer benefits from quick and easy assembly and can soon get back to printing and die cutting.'

One aspect of die handling often overlooked is maintenance of die cutting anvils. This has become a big concern for Garrik Kumjian at General Metal Engraving, who notes that a proper anvil maintenance program saves much down-time and drastically extends die life.

'In the old days, the anvil was considered a fixed part of the machine,' Kumjian tells *L&L*. 'Converters were messing up brand new dies by pairing them with beat-up anvils. To make matters worse they'd crank up the pressure to get the die to cut and screw up other components of the machine. In spite of our best efforts, our pleas for better anvil maintenance fell upon deaf ears. The industry was starting to become very competitive and managers were trying to cut corners in the wrong places. We couldn't understand it. Shops weren't sending out their anvils for regrind because they weren't willing to invest in a backup anvil roller. They were stepping over dollars to bend down and pick up pennies.'

Kumjian says converters are now starting to realize that investing in machine maintenance makes money. Greater competition creates a greater need for more efficient machinery and processes. 'Our most profitable customers have become savvy with lean concepts and are investing more in their anvil rollers than ever before. We've even started offering carbide anvils and they've been producing tremendous results. They're made of some of the hardest stuff on earth. Our carbide anvils almost never have to be resurfaced

Die news in brief

Electro-Optic doubles capacity

Electro-Optic has started production from its new flexible die production plant in Bavaria, doubling production capacity and allowing the company to implement a Lean Manufacturing program with state-of-the-art machinery and an optimized production layout. As well as flexible dies, the site will produce correction tools to repair minor nicks or low spots in the die line as well as the company's Electronic Power Check for repeatable control of pressure in the cutting unit.

Rotoflex brings cylinder production home

As reported on our news website, Rotoflex Tooling, a division of Rotoflex International, is now manufacturing magnetic cylinders in its home country, Canada. 'With the increased demand for flexible dies, our customers need the shortest possible lead times,' says Earl Warren, general manager, Rotoflex Tooling. 'Manufacturing the magnetic cylinders in Canada will result in faster service, reduced downtime, and better value.'

Wilson Manufacturing completes expansion

Wilson Manufacturing has completed a 35,000 square foot expansion on its St. Louis, Missouri facility, boosting the total square footage to 81,000. New sales and administration offices were included with the expansion plus additional production space and a new demo/training pressroom. In 1998 the company moved from a 15,000 square foot facility to its current location, which enclosed 46,000 square foot at that time.

and might be one of the best investments a converter can make in die-cutting efficiency.'

Another workflow issue, as presses get wider, is how to accurately mount larger, single piece dies onto bigger magnetic cylinders. This has been addressed by Spilker with the launch of its installation support system. The installation support unit is mounted with adapters to the existing cutting unit, then centred register bars are adjusted to the width of the magnetic cylinder to allow a precise, centred mounting of the flexible die.

Still in problem-solving mode, Spilker has developed a system to help converters rescue a label web where kiss cutting of the liner or bleeding of adhesives affects the dispensing of the label.

Spilker's ingenious Label Shifter moves the labels – in an inline process – from their original position to a new one on the liner. The degree of offset is freely adjustable. The gap from label to label and the production speed remain unchanged.

How does it work? After removal of the waste matrix, the kiss cut web runs over a deflection roller directly into the Label Shifter. A specially shaped dispenser blade carefully detaches the labels from the liner and at the same time, without affecting register, moves them to a new position in the web direction.

The Label Shifter can be easily integrated into existing cutting stations during label manufacture and to an off-line machine during rewinding. Electrical connections and adjustments to machine controls are not required.

Cutting beyond PS

There are, of course, many applications for die outside PS converting. Development of rotary carton dies continues, for example. Gerhardt showed a male/female flexible die system for the conversion of light carton board up to 600 micron at the last Labelexpo show. The system is non-contact between dies, and incorporates cut, crease, simple emboss and glue assist elements. An interesting development seen at Labelexpo from Kocher + Beck was a sheet cutter offering rotary die cutting for short runs of printed sheets. Features include adjustment of sheet angle to compensate for possible print error; cutting and creasing in one step; and quick set-up times with the use of magnetic cylinder and flexible dies.

With in-mold labels continuing to show good growth as a narrow web application, specialist die cutting systems have been developed with the ability to handle the high levels of static and the extensible nature of the material found in these applications. The latest system comes from Schober, whose RSM cutting machine is designed to convert pre-printed in-mold OPP roll labels as well as PE coated paper and composite material. Delivery options include Schober's M-Stack and STAR-Stack, which is recommended for 50 micron in-mold label foils. A vacuum conveyor combined with an adjustable spreader unit ensures safe product stacking, including when products are printed in a nested pattern. Standard working widths are 260, 410, 520 and 670mm.

Another major application for die cutting beyond strictly labels, is the production of self-adhesive die-cut parts. Although this tends to be the preserve of specialist suppliers, there are opportunities for label converters to apply their existing precision rotary die cutting skills to diversify their business operations.

Specialists in this area include Schober, which has developed a Cut & Place module for its multilayer product processor (MLPP) system, designed for the production of high precision self-adhesive elements used in the automotive, telecommunication and electronic industries. The technology is used for the transfer and placement of pre-cut parts or products at fixed and variable distances, in register on a continuous running web.

Rotoflex is another manufacturer with significant installations in the diecut parts sector, and has been involved in pioneering work to introduce rotary die cutting as an alternative to traditional punch methods in applications like foam cutting.

Spilker, meanwhile, has launched a new business division, called S.M.A.R.T (Spilker Machine And Rotary Technology), which seeks to move the company from a supplier of standard tools to a supplier of modular machine concepts capable of solving complex die cutting issues. This will allow the company to offer custom-made integrative systems consisting of tools and machines. ■

RotoMetrics: a 50 year history

In 1957, in the Midwestern United States, Richard R. Rosemann, the founder of Roto-Die, later to become RotoMetrics, began designing and manufacturing simple rotary dies in St Louis, Missouri, for the earliest flexographic press manufacturers. In the 50 years that followed, those first innovative Roto-Die tools would help create a global industry.

From offering hardened blades and chrome-plated dies in the 1960s, to adding fully hardened tool steel dies, print cylinders and other rotary tools to its product line in the 1970s, RotoMetrics products helped define rotary tooling during the industry's early years.

From the late '70s through the early '80s, RotoMetrics was the first manufacturer of rotary tooling to automate its processes by adding CNC machining capabilities, which ultimately replaced the pantograph for die manufacturing. With the later addition of EDM manufacturing techniques and other technologies, RotoMetrics helped usher in a new era of automation and set new industry standards for delivery times.

RotoMetrics also led the way toward industry globalization in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s. With the opening of RotoMetrics International in the UK in 1989, RotoMetrics became the first manufacturer of rotary tooling to open an international office. Locations in other countries followed, leading to the global presence RotoMetrics enjoys today, with offices and representatives in Canada, Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain and India.

RotoMetrics continues to be at the forefront of industry developments, embracing challenges like working with evolving filmic materials and increasingly thinner liners and face stocks. 'Were also planning for the challenges of tomorrow, such as RFID labels, laser die-cutting, as well as developing and embracing new manufacturing, order management and delivery technologies,' says company veteran Steve Lee. 'And as we have since 1957, we'll also be keeping an eye out for unforeseen opportunities that may take our industry in directions we can only imagine today.

Filling the gap

Martin Johns, senior product manager, ProGraphics at Epson UK, explains the key concepts in obtaining an accurate flexographic contract quality proof

Whether litho, digital or flexo, printers are fighting the constant erosion of their profit margin by looking for ways to improve and streamline the manufacturing process. One method is to make sure that the job that the customer gets matches what the customer is expecting to avoid costly re-makereadies and reprints. This means an accurate, contact quality proof.

Proofing has always been something of an issue for flexo printing. It could be argued that the easiest way to show the customer what is going to come off the press is to put it on the press in the first place. However, this method is not easy. It is expensive and time consuming. With other methods of printing, it can be a relatively simple process to produce an inkjet proof that accurately matches what will come off the press. Flexo is different with its tendency to dot gain and screen clash, and its extensive use of spot color and metallics.

When it comes to flexo a highly technical approach is required. The printer should have a Rip driving an accurate and reliable output device. The Rip in a specialist flexo proofing system will be able to reproduce the myriad variables that is integral to the process, and then output a contract-quality representation to the proofer. The quality of the proof is paramount, and Epson's range is second to none, hence its large following in the proofing market. It recently revamped its range of eight-color printers with the Stylus Pro 4880, 7880, 9880 and 11880, all of which use UltraChrome K3 technology with vivid magenta for extra image enhancement, plus award-winning Micro Piezo technology in its printheads. This provides high quality proofing at an affordable price.

A stumbling block when it comes to proofing flexo has always been the fact that plain white paper is one of the few substrates that isn't often used in the end product, and plain white paper is what the majority of proofers print on. The only way to produce a proof on the actual substrate is to use a wet proof machine, which financially is out of the range of many printers. The alternative is to find a way to replicate the finished product by using specially-developed technology along with high specification inkjet proofing printers.

The FlexoProof system from GMG has the ability to reproduce specific substrates, corrugated board, for example, as well as the color. In fact, any lower quality paper can be simulated with the use of variable image noise. GMG has long supported Epson Stylus Pro printers within its products, taking advantage of the clarity and density of its UltraChrome K3 ink systems and the accuracy of Micro Piezo printhead technology, which has the precision of Ultra Micro Dot Inkjet Droplets.

StarProof from Compose System addresses the complex issue of dot structure by analyzing CMYK dot patterns and screen angles. This analysis is provided by its Actual Dot system, which replicates original screening and dot patterns at proofing resolutions. When sent to a high resolution printer such as the Epson Stylus Pro 4880, it can deliver high quality proofs with a hard dot, sharp images, accurate color and fine detail.

Screening dots prepared for flexo plates are normally adjusted in width or height by a

small percentage to compensate for expansion during printing. With StarProof, the distorted dots are expanded to the original size with user controls to correct the size of the screening dots based on the original distortion ratio or the expansion ratio. It also compensates for the loss of small dots in the transfer to flexo plates during printing. By entering a Dot Lost size, then any dots smaller than this will be removed and will not appear on the proof.

Most Rips tackle spot colors in the same way in that those colors are analyzed by the software and the closest possible CMYK values are used. The Advanced Proofing section of Xante's OpenRIP Flexo prints composite color or specific color builds for press proofs and customer approvals. It is possible to change the spot colors at the Rip, reduce ink on any or all colors and preview traps, overprints and knockouts. OpenRIP uses its KoolKolor inkjet proofing technology which can utilize ICC profiles as well as destination profiles for a proof that simulates your final printed product.

All standard spot color systems such as Hexachrome and the Pantone Color Library are supported by GMG's FlexoProof and are supplied with the product. It can manage up to 64 separations in one image with no limit on the total number of separations in one print job. The colors are held in a database to which colors can be added by the user. Color opacity and the associated print sequences can be specified as needed. White underprint can be defined as a spot color.

Early detection of screening problems has been addressed by GMG's FlexProof. In addition to processing many industry-standard prepress data formats, it can also work with final 1-bit data, such as that created by CTP Rips. The data is color-profiled with the original screen information retained, not descreened. This supports the early recognition of tonal break-offs, moiré artifacts and trapping errors before plates are ever exposed.

Getting the best out of the Rip is one thing, but will the end result do justice? If the color is out of gamut the proof will not look as expected when it comes off the printer. Proofers need to have the ability to reproduce the amendments made by the proofing system. Epson's range of large format printers have a formidable reputation for color quality due to the performance of the UltraChrome K3 eight-color, pigment-based ink technology, which is water-resistant, quick drying and has excellent light fastness. Instead of simply using one black, it selects the most suitable from its choice of three special blacks. Coupled with a printing resolution of up to 2880x1440dpi, an excellent match from the Rip can be expected.

Proofing for flexo is not yet perfect, despite the huge inroads made by specialist Rip suppliers such as GMG, Xante and Compose System and the sophistication of Epson inkjet printers. But the gap in the process that should be filled with a contract proof is shrinking all the time. The bottom line is that the closer a proofing device can get a proof to the finished product the happier the customer will be. ■

Flexo news

Aluminum sleeves from Spilker

Spilker has launched aluminium sleeves as an alternative alternative to conventional printing sleeves. Spilker says the use of aluminium allows the development of lighter sleeves with greater precision.

Spilker summarizes the advantages: 'Increased reliability and better concentricity compared to conventional printing sleeves by means of a hard and precise surface, which optionally can be hard-anodized or ceramic-coated.'

Lightweight cylinder from Kocher + Beck

Kocher + Beck has introduced a new light-weight flexo plate cylinder, which the company says offers a 60 percent saving in weight compared to existing systems

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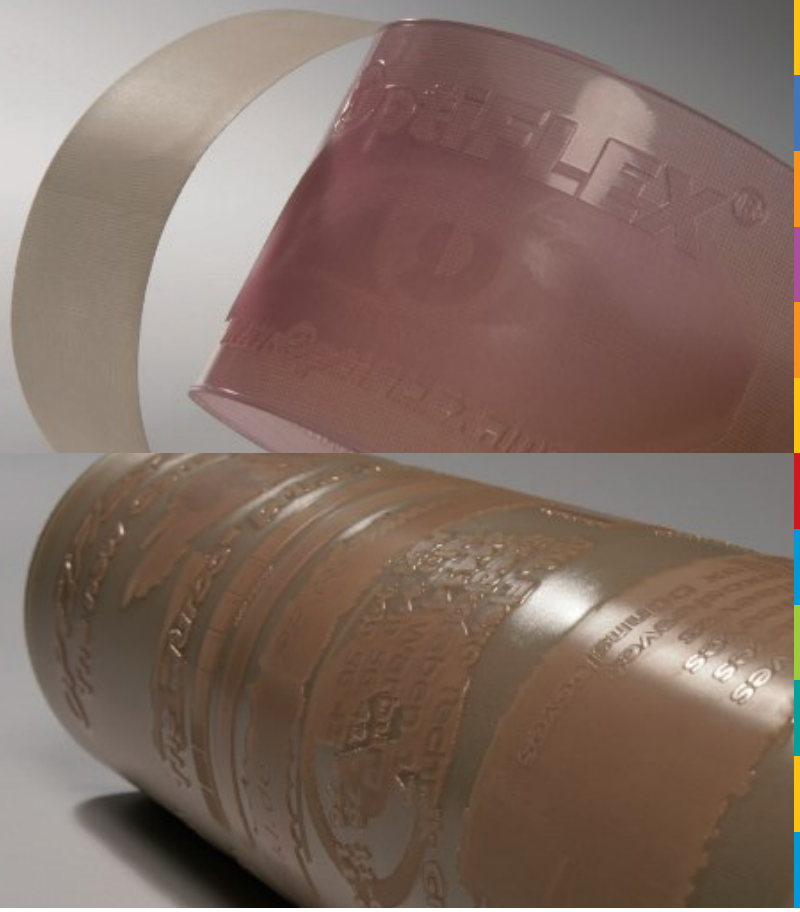

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