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SEPTEMBER 2008
L&L

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LATIN AMERICA:
The strategies of the world's leading press manufacturers

Q&A WITH WAL-MART
What Wal-Mart's top label expert expects from you

APPLICATOR FOCUS:
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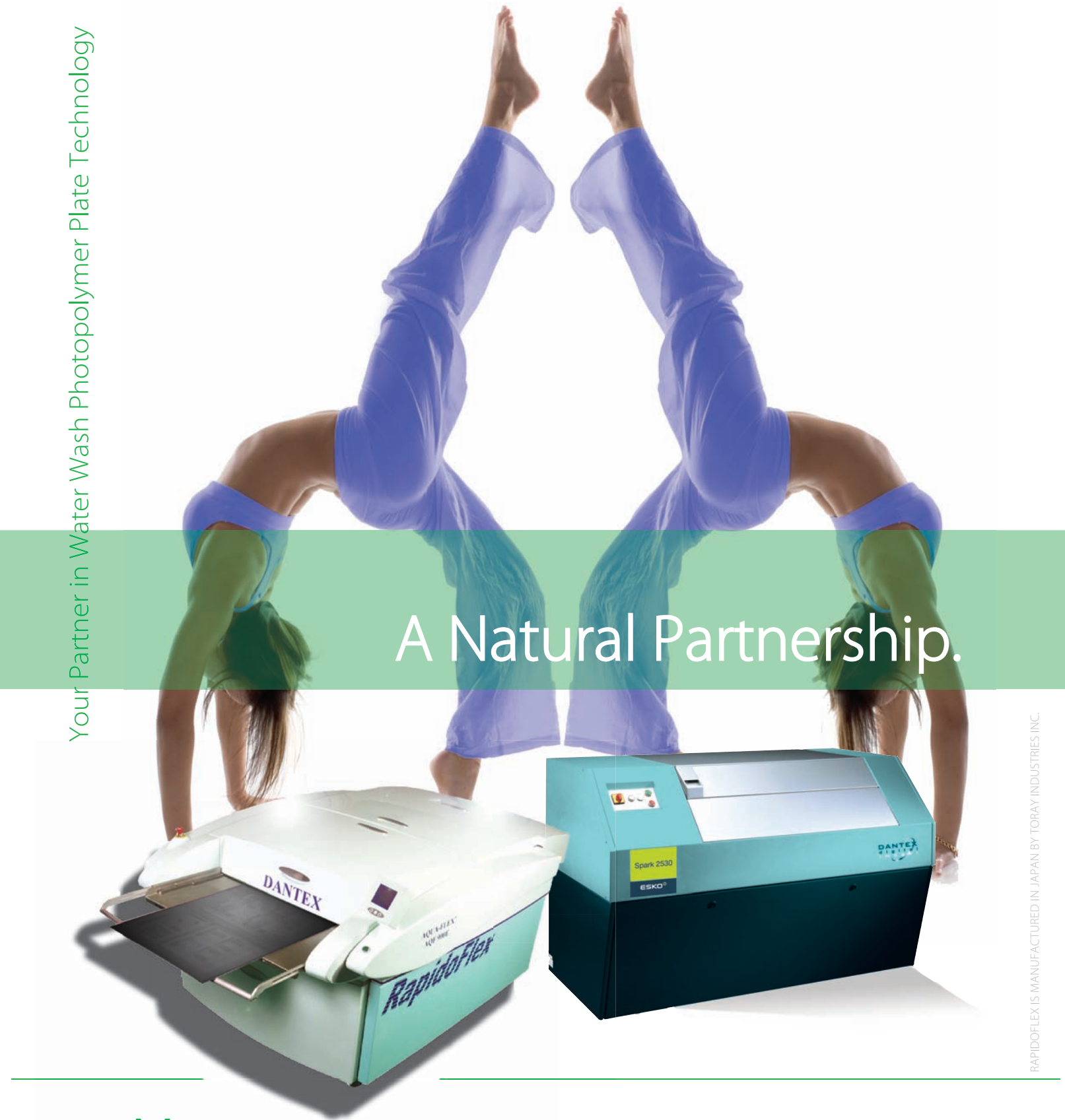

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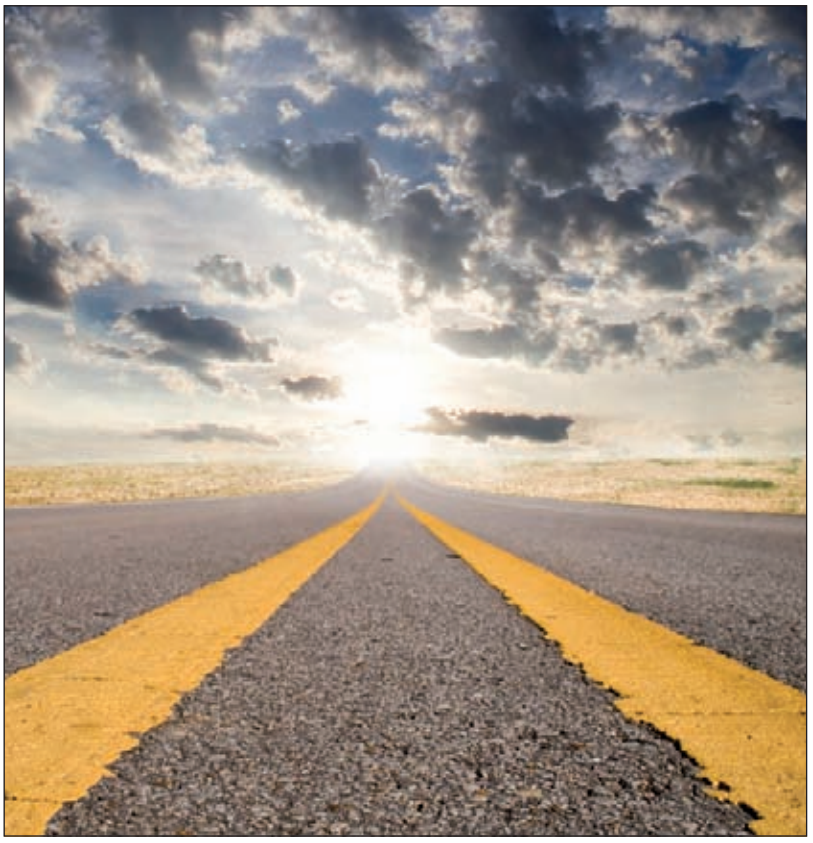

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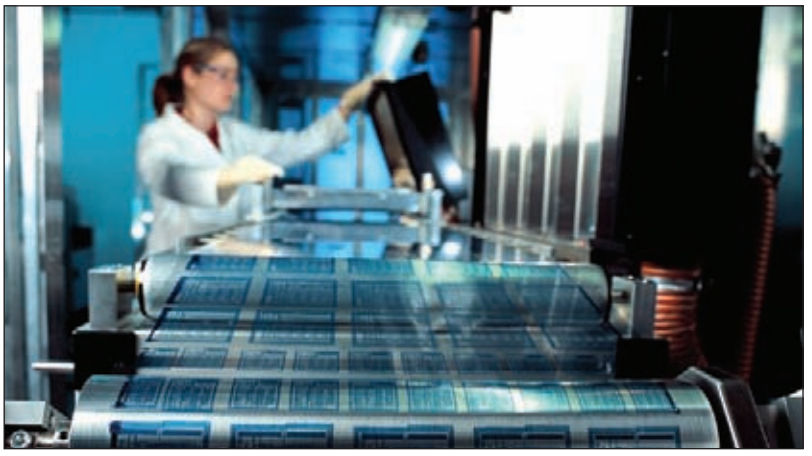

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NEW DIRECTION

Over the last 20 years we have seen an accelerating movement of manufacturing industry away from the 'developed' towards the 'developing' economies to take advantage of cheaper manufacturing costs.

These brands and industrial conglomerates must then decide whether it makes more sense to label locally and ship the finished goods direct to Western retailers' warehouses, or to ship first and label closer to the point of distribution. Upon this decision hinges which label converters will lose, and which will gain business.

A number of factors will operate on the end user's decision. Can they source labels of high enough quality and with the correct levels of service at the point of production? Do they require the flexibility of labeling closer to the point of distribution – particularly if the demand for a particular product is hard to gauge?

Even if the decision is made to label in the 'Western' country, closer to the point of distribution, a lot of label work has already gone overseas: pallet labels, track and trace labels, apparel labels applied at the manufacturing site and so on.

So what can the Western converter do to retain as much work as possible as end users move East or South? Firstly, offer management services for the brand's labeling requirements. As brands concentrate on their core businesses – marketing, advertising, research and development – 'peripheral' services like label sourcing are often outsourced to independent contractors. As a label converter already aware of the technical and service requirements of the brand, you are in an excellent position to make a management proposal, which might also take in brand protection and logistics solutions.

Secondly, form a loose association with local converters to capture, or manage, the label work wherever the brand moves its manufacturing. In this edition of L&L we have articles on converters in Dubai, Russia, Latin America, the US and Europe, and along with Labelexpo, FINAT and TLMI, they can act as your gateway to these global opportunities.

ANDY THOMAS
GROUP MANAGING EDITOR
athomas@labelsandlabeling.com

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L&L ISSUE 4

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US MAILING
Labels & Labeling 002914 is published bi-monthly by Tarsus Publishing Ltd c/o SPP, Emigsville, PA. Periodicals postage paid at Emigsville, PA. Postmaster send address corrections to Labels & Labeling PO Box 437 Emigsville, PA 17318-0437

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INBOX

R&D, environmental protection and cost savings

The Inbox concept comes at a wonderful moment. Novelprint has been seeking to reach out to our global counterparts in specific regards to the recycling of plastic liners. Fellow readers know that we produce our own labelstock and for over 25 years we have been manufacturing plastic liners, both BOPP and PET with hotmelt and acylic adhesives.

Our most recent successful technical endeavor is the recycling of the liner. At the turn of the millennium we began testing the recycling process. Surprisingly, the recycling company began purchasing our liners as the silicone helped them in their own industrial process. Long story short, a new service was born: waste removal and treatment for our clients, promoting not only environmental solutions but also economical savings.

The current program is for local customers. The multinationals often require that these standards are specified at the headquarters and sent to the Brazilian branch. In this case, we ask fellow L&L readers if they believe this warrants further discussion? We would like to find ways to join forces with our colleagues abroad expanding this service.

Finally, in our view, as both cleaner manufacturing processes and cost savings are sought out, converters are responsible in aiding the end users in their selection of labelstock, offering them recyclable options which meet corporate governance missions.

Jeffrey Arippol, Novelprint, Brazil

Corporate social responsibility

I work with an organization in Swindon, UK, called Enterprise Works which employs over 100 people; 50 percent of whom are disabled. Part of Swindon Council, it has a printing division with wide format digital and litho print capabilities. My brief as a consultant is to develop sales for them in the face of reducing Government funding. My experience is that whilst the Government and big business talk a lot about social responsibility, in reality it's often just posturing and PR. I feel quite passionate about the lack of real support for organizations like these that offer disabled people the opportunity to enter or re-enter the workplace.

Ian Brown, Principle Partners, UK

FORUM THREAD

INKJET – THE NEW PRETENDER?

POSTS:

In my opinion, the big opportunity for inkjet is integrating it in-line with an existing flexo or offset web press or cut-sheet press. This combination forms what we call a hybrid analog-digital press, allows for keeping the cost-to-print low for the fixed data, and for imprinting the variable data at the lowest possible cost. Because about 90 percent of all variable data printing is black, there is not much demand for full process color for VDP applications. Therefore, companies that need VDP capability can very economically add an inkjet system to their existing presses or finishing equipment, which also further leverages their existing equipment assets.

Curtis Miller, *Printing Technology Services, USA*

Drupa demonstrated the start of an inkjet revolution in printing as far as I am concerned, but the quality of image just isn't there yet. The Impika is only 600 dpi, the much touted Xaar 1001 printhead was much on display but still only 20m/min. I think inkjet will overtake the conventional HP and Xeikon machines for labeling, but not for another couple of years yet.

Adrian Steele, Mercian Labels, UK

I agree with the comment about the print quality of inkjet not yet approaching the established Xeikon/ HP Indigo digital systems. The point is that the 4-color inkjet needs to find its own 'killer application' – particularly if we are to combine it with a conventional narrow web press. If inkjet is not yet in the league of producing prime labels, perhaps there are new applications where the hourly cost of current digital presses is too expensive for some end users to contemplate going digital?

Andy Thomas, Labels & Labeling

LATIN AMERICA L&L4, pg48

LATIN AMERICA

Having spent six wonderful years working in one of the biggest label producers in Latin America – AGM – I think that there is an awful lot that we in the so-called 'developed' economies can learn from such converters.

Many of the larger, more successful converters have ridden the boom and bust cycles with such tenacity and improvisation that I sometimes wonder whether, if the same conditions applied in the USA or Europe, we would have an industry at all.

Case in point – AGM: not content with being held to ransom with unpredictable deliveries and price fluctuations, they buy the raw materials they need to manufacture self-adhesive labelstock in bulk, and convert and slit these materials into press-ready quantities as and when required.

The company has also formed many strategic alliances with distributors for its range of label applicators which it also manufactures itself. The company has invested heavily in new technologies and is always looking at new markets and trends. To have operated and grown in such a volatile and unpredictable environment requires skill, judgment and leadership that rival anything we can offer in Europe.

With regards to the relationship with North America, I was often embarrassed by the level of arrogance and ignorance that companies displayed when visiting South America.

I would welcome comments to the following statement made by a friend of mine in Chile: 'Most of the big players in South America have often been more willing to invest in European technologies/machinery than North American because they believe they are buying quality and reliability.'

Mark McNulty, MJM Consulting

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HP Indigo's recyclability claims

On page 48 of *L&L* Issue 2 (April-May) we find the claim that 'ElectroInk 4.0 prints are de-inkable and recyclable'. As an organization of all the major European recycling paper mills, INGEDE runs constant efforts to discuss recyclability issues with printer manufacturers, ink manufacturers, publishers, printers and other members of the paper chain.

We have established a European Round Table dealing with the deinkability of digital prints. We have also conducted a survey investigating the deinkability of prints from different manufacturers including HP Indigo.

Our investigations since 2001 (see 'Workshop' on our website www.ingede.com) show that HP Indigo prints create problems in the recycling process and cannot be regarded as deinkable according to our test methods.

The flexible ink film breaks apart into large pieces that pass all screens and pass the flotation step. They can only be removed by dispersers and a second flotation step. Not every paper mill is equipped with these features as they cost additional energy and lead to additional fiber losses. This equipment is needed to reach higher quality, higher brightness levels. Its availability cannot be taken as an excuse to challenge it with problematic prints as HP Indigo's. We have discussed that with HP.

Axel Fischer, INGEDE – International Association of the Deinking Industry

Deinkability of HP Indigo prints

In recent weeks, INGEDE has made statements about the deinkability of HP Indigo prints, claiming the following: HP is making incorrect claims regarding the deinkability of its inks; and that 'there is no deinkability test available that supports these claims'. We categorically refute both of these points based on the following facts.

HP data regarding the deinkability of its Indigo inks is based on research reported in 2005 by CTP Grenoble France. The research report was presented by CTP at the INGEDE Seminar on September 13, 2005 in London. The report presents data from research commissioned by INGEDE and ADEME, the French Agency for Energy and the Environment, to test deinking results with various inks and research commissioned by HP. The original research commissioned by INGEDE and ADEME only tested 'old' ElectroInk. Accordingly, HP commissioned work by CTP to research 'new' ElectroInk. The 'new' ElectroInk is ElectroInk 4.0, which has been in use since 2004.

INGEDE chose to base their claims on the results achieved with the older generation of ElectroInk, ignoring the results achieved with ElectroInk 4.0. ElectroInk 4.0 deinking results that appeared in the CTP report were found to be in the same range as dry electrophotography.

Moreover, in recent tests designed to better represent the deinking process implemented in real industrial processes by paper mills, the results improved by an order of magnitude. Reference: 'Simulation of the 2nd Process Loop of Laboratory Deinking Trials – INGEDE 108 06 PMV/PTS' by Hans-Joachim Putz, Kai Blasius and Elisabeth Hanecker – January 24, 2008, Munich INGEDE Seminar.

INGEDE to date has not presented any alternative test results which show the data from CTP's tests on Electroink 4.0 to be incorrect or unrepeatable.

Each month, tens of tons of prints from HP Indigo presses are regularly and successfully recycled as part of an established recycling process, mainly in European paper mills. HP Indigo is successfully engaged with a recycling company who purchases the continuously growing quantities of prints from the sites for recycling.

HP Indigo

FORUM THREAD

Environmental legislation is adding costs to converters' and suppliers' businesses. Think of packaging recycling legislation, solvent emissions etc. Are these generally sensible measures, or should our industry associations be lobbying for exemptions? Or has anybody saved money or increased efficiency by implementing schemes like ISO 1400?

POSTS:

Without exception the label converters I have visited who have implemented ISO 1400 say the process has directly benefited their bottom lines by identifying sources of waste. It also enables converters to emphasize their environmental responsibility in dealing both with customers and with their local communities who often regard print as a 'dirty' industry. The commercial benefits should not be underestimated.
Andy Thomas, Labels & Labeling

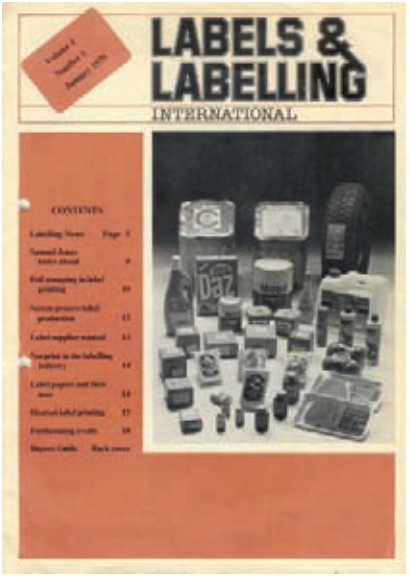
It continues to intrigue me that most of the environmental dialogue is focused on how to recycle or reduce the gauge of waste silicone liners rather than their elimination. Over many years different technologies have offered the 'holy grail' of a linerless technology. Advances in materials and engineering now make it possible for linerless application systems to meet a reasonable percentage of demand, particularly in food packaging where liner waste has the biggest financial impact.

The simple price case for linerless is problematic since there is no way the converter can coat silicone and adhesive as efficiently as the high speed wide web machines used by the laminators. However, their highly efficient systems carry a waste penalty as in so much of our convenience society; when all the waste cost is factored into the equation, as well as the transport penalties of shipping 5 billion square meters of liner around Europe, the results are very different. The strategic choices of how to take linerless to market have to be given more air time, and there is a real educational gap to be filled where the end user lacks detailed knowledge of the cost drivers.
Mike Cooper, Catchpoint Systems, UK/USA

KEEP IN TOUCH

Do you have a comment or question you'd like to put to the editor or the industry as a whole? Would you like to respond to any of the comments on this page? We will publish letters/emails to the editor as well as comments posted on our blogs on our website. *Email Andy Thomas at athomas@labelsandlabeling.com or visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/blog.*

NEWS



L&L unveils new look

THIS edition of L&L is the first of the redesigned magazine

Founded by Mike Fairley, who still writes for the magazine today, *L&L* has witnessed massive changes in the label industry over the years.

This issue of the magazine is the first after its redesign. A survey of readers was undertaken, feedback incorporated, and our award-winning design team – also behind the innovative Labelexpo Europe campaign which won at the Association of Event Organizers awards – has come up with a fresh look for the industry's leading publication.

Key to the new design is a more modern feel, as well as greater structure – which will allow for easier navigation by our readers.

Regular new sections will appear in every issue: including the inbox, Q&A, environmental news, the Big Issue, and Corporate Culture. There is also greater scope for interaction between magazine and reader – with the inbox and Big Issue sections providing vehicles for comment.

We hope you enjoy *Labels & Labeling's* new look, and here's to another 30 years!

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER ANNOUNCED

NEIL MCDONOUGH, president of FLEXcon Company, has won the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award

The international judging panel for the Label Industry Global Awards 2008 met at the FINAT World Congress in Paris in June to select the winner.

The president of FLEXcon Company has always been a force of inspiration to his colleagues and peers. Among the innovations he fostered as president was the 'no-label' look for glass bottle labeling with Clearly Canadian in the 1990s – a concept that is now a staple of the labeling industry.

In recent years, McDonough has led the development of FLEXcon's Value-Better-Supreme (VBS) product offering, which features a selection of proven, readily available products for the most popular labeling applications. Today FLEXcon supplies a variety of film, adhesive, topcoat and liner combinations for customized applications.

McDonough's industry involvement also includes participation in numerous Labelexpo shows, conferences and seminars, in the TLMI (for which he chairs a committee) and in other organizations.

McDonough said: 'I am thrilled and humbled to learn that I have been selected by the judging panel of the Label Industry Global Awards as the recipient of the R Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award 2008. I am delighted to confirm my acceptance of this great honor.'

Winners of the other Label Industry Global Awards 2008 will be announced at the Gala Dinner and Awards Evening at the Donald E. Stephen's Convention Center on September 9 – the opening day of Labelexpo Americas. The final shortlist for each award is as follows:

CONTINUOUS INNOVATION AWARD

- 3M Corporation
- ExxonMobil Chemical
- CCL

NEW INNOVATION AWARD

- EFI Jetrion
- PunchGraphix/ Xeikon

SUSTAINABILITY/ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY AWARD

- Overnight Label
- Metro Label Group

Judges for this year's awards, under the chairmanship of Mike Fairley, were Jan Frederik Vink, president of FINAT; John Hickey, TLMI chairman; Andy Thomas, group managing editor, Labels & Labeling; Tony White, editor NarroWebTech and John Penhallow, European correspondent of Label & Narrow Web.

PHARMA CONFERENCE TO TACKLE BRAND PROTECTION AND LEGISLATION ISSUES

VIBPHARMA'S 7th annual Pharma Packaging and Labeling conference will take place in Barcelona from September 17-19

Counterfeit medicines are a growing problem, particularly in developing countries. The World Health Organization estimates that in areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America up to 30 percent of pharmaceutical products on sale are potentially counterfeit. The Center for Medicines in the Public Interest, based in the USA, predicts that counterfeit drug sales will reach 75 billion US dollars globally in 2010 – an increase of more than 90 percent since 2005.

These bleak statistics have encouraged VIBpharma to gather some leading experts for its annual conference to discuss, amongst other topics, brand protection and anti-counterfeiting measures in the pharmaceutical industry.

Speakers will discuss developments in pharmaceutical packaging and labeling and how best to create child-resistant packaging. They will analyze the new varying needs for labels used in clinical trials, decide on how best to reduce production costs, and examine artwork requirements.

The conference program will also look at Braille legislation and its implementation in pharmaceutical packaging and labeling. John Gill, chief scientist at the Royal National Institute of Blind People, will highlight

the problems caused by visual impairment and the role of packaging in ensuring the partially sighted consume correct dosages.

The subject of Braille regulatory requirements will also form part of a series of roundtable discussions. Each session will be chaired by an industry expert who will facilitate an exchange of opinions, essential experiences and learning related to a current aspect of packaging and labeling. Leading end-users such as GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson and NAPP Pharmaceuticals will form part of the conference program, while additional input will come from agencies and regulatory bodies such as the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency, the Federal Institute for Drug and Medical Devices and the National Patient Safety Agency.

NEWS IN BRIEF

ETI OBTAINS EUROPEAN PATENT

After obtaining in 2005 a patent for the United States, ETI Converting Equipment has now received a patent covering 27 European countries, for its: 'Method and apparatus for manufacturing pressure sensitive adhesive labelstocks with printing under adhesive and product produced thereby.'

KOMORI TO OPEN NEW TECHNICAL CENTERS IN EMERGING MARKETS

Komori Corporation has announced that in order to speed service and provide technical support and training in emerging sales markets, it will open new Technical Service Centers in Malaysia and the Czech Republic. Both centers are scheduled to open in September 2008.

GIDUE ANNOUNCES NEW DISTRIBUTION AGENCY FOR FRANCE

Gidue will now be represented in France by Graphic Evolution, part of IGE Groupe.

The alliance between the two companies started in 2004, when Gidue needed a distribution channel to bring its products to Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria.

THE INSIDER

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

ASHLAND TO BUY ADHESIVE AND POLYMER ASSETS FROM AIR PRODUCTS

Ashland has signed a definitive agreement with Air Products and Chemicals for an asset purchase of its pressure-sensitive adhesive business and its atmospheric emulsions business. The USD $92 million transaction includes manufacturing facilities in Elkton, Maryland, and Piedmont, South Carolina. The purchased operations, which will merge into Ashland's Specialty Polymers & Adhesives (SP&A) business group, had sales of $126 million in 2007, principally in North America.

Approximately 80 employees will transfer to Ashland upon closing of the acquisition dependent upon a number of standard closing conditions including regulatory review.

GALLUS APPOINTS ITALIAN DISTRIBUTOR

Franchini has assumed sole responsibility for sales and service for Gallus label printing presses in Italy.

For 35 years, Gallus press systems in Italy were distributed by So.Ma.Ca in Milan.

Franchini, headquartered in San Giuliano Milanese, in the industrial heart of Italy, has over 40 years' experience in label printing. As well as actual sales, Franchini will also assume responsibility for technical customer support and supply of spare parts and accessories for Gallus presses.

SURFSCAN ENTERS SPANISH MARKET

Vision inspection company Surfscan Technologies has appointed an agent in Spain. Converpack, which also represents IMS Deltamatic, Höcker Polytechnik, Airtec, SMS Material Handling and Allimand in Spain, expects to make a breakthrough sale in the country.

DATALASE AND ORBID SETTLE CASE

DataLase and Orbid have agreed to settle the patent infringement case brought by Orbid against DataLase and FractureCode in the Netherlands relating to Orbid's patents on its 2DMI technology. Whilst Orbid will be continuing its case against FractureCode, it will withdraw the case against DataLase.

John Mills, managing director of DataLase, said: 'Our co-operation with FractureCode had effectively ceased some months ago, and needless to say the Orbid Corporation lawsuit caught us by surprise. We had no idea that Orbid believes that FractureCode is infringing its patents, and we are happy to reassure Orbid that we will not be working with FractureCode again.'

GALLUS ORDERS EQUIPMENT FROM MARTIN AUTOMATIC

Orders for two press lines taken at drupa

Matthias Boog, chief operating officer, folding carton division, of Gallus, and Jim Ward, VP of engineering for Martin Automatic

Gallus placed orders at drupa 2008 for non-stop splicing and automatic rewinding systems from Martin Automatic for two new Gallus press lines to be installed in North America and Asia.

One project will feature a Martin model MBX automatic butt splicer for paper and paperboard, used in conjunction with a Martin model LRD automatic transfer rewind. The other project will incorporate a Martin model MCB automatic butt splicer. Both splicer models use Martin's patented lift-and-load roll loading and butt splicing system.

'We are very pleased to be able to announce this major order during Drupa 2008. This order continues a long and successful relationship between our two companies,' reported Jim Ward, vice president of engineering for Martin Automatic.

YORK LABEL PARTNERS WITH NEW EQUITY SPONSOR

Diamond Castle Holdings signs agreement

LabelCorp Holdings, Inc. (York Label) has partnered with a new private equity sponsor, Diamond Castle Holdings, LLC of New York. Diamond Castle, in partnership with York's senior management team, has signed a definitive purchase agreement to acquire York Label from Wind Point Partners of Chicago, Illinois.

York Label has steadily grown in the prime label market through strategic acquisitions over the last 24 months, most recently with Cameo Crafts of Montreal, Canada. The company is a provider of labeling technologies to major consumer products, wine and spirits, pharmaceutical, and food and beverage companies worldwide. With fourteen production facilities and fifteen sales & technical offices throughout the Americas, the company services over 3,000 customers.

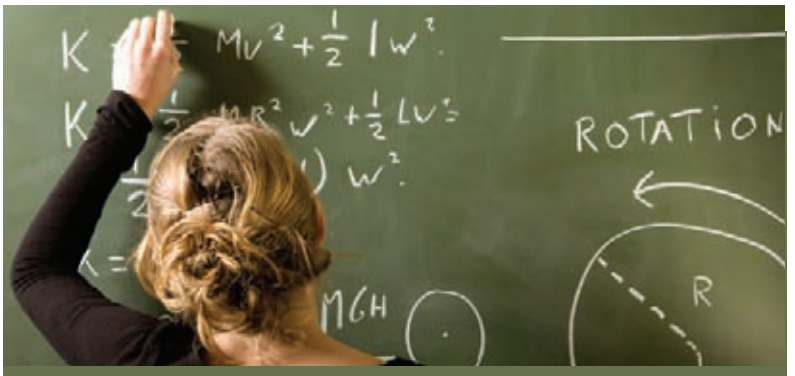
York Label CEO Rich Egan said, 'We are excited about this new partnership with Diamond Castle. York Label is now well positioned to make immense progress in reaching our goal of becoming a significant global supplier to our major customers and end markets. Diamond Castle has a phenomenal record of partnering with Senior Management to provide significant capital necessary to create more valuable organizations. We expect the transaction to close within the next 60 days.'

MARK ANDY CUSTOMERS HONORED AT FTA AWARDS

Half of winning labels printed on Mark Andy presses

The 32 labels awarded in the narrow web category of the 2008 Excellence in Flexography Awards, half were run on Mark Andy and Comco presses.

Paragon Label, a printer of prime and luxury labels for wine, gourmet food, health and beauty aids, led the category, bringing in seven wins, including two gold honors. 'We compete in a label market that demands us to push the limits of flexo printing, and in most cases we are bettering competitors who are using more expensive flexo or even offset presses,' said Jason Grossman, president, Paragon Label. 'We are proud to consistently produce some of the highest quality wine labels in the market on our flexo presses. Our first press was a Mark Andy and our last press will be a Mark Andy.' Other notable winners in the narrow web category include several top printers. Smythe Companies brought in two awards in the Screen, Coated class; Insulair/Georgia-Pacific received two nods in the Process, Paperboard division; and Quality Assured Label the Gold in the Process, Metalized category.



DUPONT SUPPORTS EDUCATION

DuPont has developed the Cyrel flexo education curriculum based on the technical knowledge of the company's application specialists and research and development scientists. Designed to advance flexographic education, the DuPont program offers educators the opportunity to investigate new teaching approaches for existing material or to develop entirely new flexo courses.

The flexo course programs offered by the institutions that cooperate with DuPont Packaging Graphics are designed to give students access to an advanced printing education. The programs provide students with the opportunity to experience in-depth investigation and discussion of flexographic printing through teaching that encourages students to become active participants in their education.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

JET EUROPE DISTRIBUTES NEW SCREEN CTP PLATE RECORDERS

Dutch company to distribute new products

Jet Europe B.V., based in Zeewolde, Netherlands, has been appointed distributor for two new CTP plate recorder. These include the PlateRite FX870 for flexo, letterpress, thermal offset and thermal ablation film, and the flexo-letterpress PlateRite FX1524 unit, for flexo and letterpress imaging.

Suited to narrow web imaging applications, the PlateRite FX870 offers competitive exposure times for both letterpress and flexo plates. The unit supports a wide variety of plate sizes, from 200mm x 200mm (7.9"x 7.9") to maximum exposure size of 870mm x 762mm (34.2"x 30")

With its multi-channel laser diode, the PlateRite FX870 optionally offers output of thermal offset plates, which are suitable for high-quality sticker/label applications.

PlateRite FX1524 is suited to flexible packaging, carton, corrugated packaging relief-process imaging applications, with a format of 1067 mm x 1524 mm (42" x 60").

Screen's CTP recording systems eliminate the intermediate production steps involving film, freeing the operator from time-consuming tasks like film preparation, step-and-repeat preparations and imposition work.

CTP eliminates problems associated with platemasking using film, including those arising from dust, image unevenness and UV scattering.

DUAL ROLE FOR NEW PRESIDENT

Toyokoki has manufactured Ko-Pack rotary presses for over 20 years and specialist presses for KPG worldwide since 2006. Mr Suzuki will also continue to be president of KPG Corporation, Japan.

This dual role will serve to strengthen still further the relationship between KPG and Toyokoki, combining the design and engineering skills of Toyokoki with the sales and marketing operations of KPG. As former technical director of Ko-Pack International, Mr Suzuki has many years experience of press design, development and engineering.

This new appointment signals the start of a new era for both companies, enabling KPG to respond to new market demands from a proven engineering design base, whilst at the same time utilizing many years of experience in providing solutions for difficult and unusual printing and packaging applications.

SUMMIT URGES CHANGE FROM PACKAGING INDUSTRY

Sustainable packaging issues took center stage at the third Packaging Summit Europe, held recently in Amsterdam. Design innovations and supply chain strategies were also key themes at the two-day conference and exhibition, which attracted nearly 300 senior packaging professionals from across Europe – including a diverse range of end-users and suppliers of packaging products.

Highlights of the conference program included Steph Carter, packaging sustainability director at Unilever, who explained how the company integrates environmental concerns into the packaging development process. He argued that brand owners need to consider the whole product when setting sustainability targets, and not just packaging in isolation. He listed several metrics that need to be measured and highlighted a number of common misunderstandings of the waste management industry amongst packagers. Leading sustainability 'myths' include the fact that packaging itself is 'evil', where in fact, according to Carter, 'food packaging typically has less than 10 percent of the environmental impact of its contents. It preserves and protects far more than its own impact.'

An exhibition featuring 30 stands ran alongside the conference. Exhibitors included leading packaging materials and services companies such as DuPont, Smurfit Kappa, UPM, Eckart, Micro-Pact and Kinneir Dufort. Praveen Kapse of multinational packaging designers Tata Elxsi, exhibiting for the first time at Packaging Summit Europe, felt that the exhibition provided 'good insights for the European market'.

The fourth Packaging Summit Europe is scheduled to take place in Amsterdam in June 2009.

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LABELEXPO EUROPE SCOOPS ‘CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR’

AEO awards ‘innovative’ event promotion

Labelexpo Europe was awarded ‘Marketing Campaign of the Year’ by the AEO (Association of Event Organizers). The colorful, illustrated campaign was delivered in thirteen languages and helped to boost the 2007 show to record-breaking attendance.

The panel of judges drawn from across the events industry said: ‘In an extremely tough category the winner impressed the judges with an innovative campaign that delivered strong growth across all of its objectives. A brave, bold and creative performance worthy of victory.’ The impact of the marketing campaign can be seen in the show statistics: Multiple visits increased by 66 percent, compared to the 2005 show. The digital personalization technology used in direct mail helped increase pre- registration by 47 percent. Promotional material was translated into 13 European languages making the process of registration easier for visitors from the wider European region. As a result, attendance from Eastern Europe increased by 33.4 percent.

Michael Hatton, group communications manager, said: ‘We are very grateful to be recognized by our peers. Every element of the campaign was developed in-house and the result was an unusual creative concept that delivered our message in an entirely different way.

ITW FOILS ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT

ITW Foils has reached an agreement to transition the production, assembly, sales and after sales support of its Ikela hot stamping units to Telstar Engineering.

The Ikela rotary hot stamping unit provides converters with the capability to hot foil stamp in-line with their current equipment. Rather than buying a separate off-line press, converters can use hot foil stamping in-line in combination with flexography, rotary screen printing, rotary letterpress and other technologies in a variety of combinations.

The hot stamp unit production will move from the Ikela facility in Sarasota, Florida, to the Telstar facility in Burnsville, Minnesota. ITW will continue to produce Ikela brass flat and rotary tools for the hot foil stamping industry at this location.

FIRST SPANISH RFID APPAREL APPLICATION

BÓBOLI, a major children’s clothing brand, pilots RFID program

Boboli, one of the main Spanish clothing brands for children, is piloting an RFID deployment program to effectively track and manage items from manufacturing through to point-of-sale (POS).

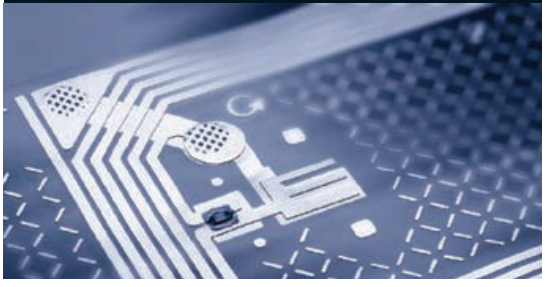
Bóboli is the first Spanish brand apparel manufacturer to drive a project in an RFID item-level tracking system. Manufacturing over two million items per year, Bóboli distributes its products through 900 POSs and has 30 exclusive own and franchise stores with products available throughout Europe, the Arab States, the Far East, and Americas.

The initial pilot will consist of RFID solutions from Tagsys and Avery Dennison and the integration of Cetemmsa. The project consists of a Tagsys UHF tunnel that will scan and read in a few seconds each garment tagged with RFID Avery Dennison UHF tags that include contents of Bóboli’s inbound and outbound warehouse shipments. Scanned items will automatically be checked against the boxed item’s packing slip to verify content accuracy. It is anticipated that this will reduce the amount of time that items remain in Bóboli’s distribution centre by five days. Ultimately, this will enable Bóboli to quickly and accurately replenish store inventory and ensure product availability to strengthen sales.

At this first phase, the pilot program will involve 10 percent of Bóboli’s production inventory with plans to expand full RFID deployment for all items and possibly a final store level phase to provide complete visibility and product tracking from manufacturing through point-of-sale.

‘This is a strategic step for our brand to keep up with our rapid expansion, while reducing our operational costs and staying ahead of our competitors,’ said Domingo Garrido, operations director at Bóboli.

Cetemmsa, the Spanish innovation and technology center, defined the project’s guidelines and will manage the execution, as well as provide technical support and ongoing consulting and training to Bóboli‘s staff.



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COVER STORY

ZELLER+GMELIN, GALLUS, KURZ FOILS AND COE

co-operated on producing the front cover of L&L

The L&L front cover was printed by a combination of UV cold foil stamping and UV flexo. UV printing inks and UV adhesives for stamping were supplied by Zeller+Gmelin and printed on a Gallus EM 410 S.

'To combine cold foil stamping and UV flexo you need a machine with excellent in-line printing capabilities and the possibilities to process a wide range of different materials,' commented Andreas Rascher, product manager at Zeller+Gmelin. 'The Gallus EM 410 S gave us this choice. It´s a flexible and multi-purpose machine system with strengths in in-line printing and processing of self-adhesive labels on paper and plastic (PE, OPP, etc.), as well as monofoil labels, OPP and PET wraparound, in-mold and shrink sleeves, flexible packaging and a wide range of other applications.'

Rascher also pulled together the team which printed the stunning cover in last year's pre-Labelexpo issue (L&L 4 2007). The difference here is that the cold foil is over-printed with the UV flexo printing inks. 'We applied the cold foil over the whole magazine page size and overprinted it in-line with UV-flexo inks and thereby we created a colored metallic effect,' said Rascher.

For this application the team used Kurz's special over-printable Alufin KPW-OP cold foil system.

The cold foil stamping used Zeller+Gmelin's specially developed Uvalux U0842 UV adhesive. 'This is a high-reactive adhesive which allows very sharp printing and has a good adhesion on foil and substrate,' says Rascher.

For the print, Z+G's Uvaflex Y7 series 4-color set was used – a free-radical curing, odor-reduced UV-flexo ink series. The headline text features an invisible UV flexo lacquer which fluoresces blue under UV light.

The job was printed on the EM 410 S at 90m/min. The anilox rollers were specified as follows: magenta: 400 l/cm, 3,1cm3; yellow: 400 l/cm, 3,0cm3, cyan: 400 l/cm, 3,5cm3, black: 400 l/cm, 4,3cm3; cold foil I: 220 l/cm, 6,0 cm3; invisible fluorescent lacquer: 140 l/cm, 9,1 cm3; gloss lacquer: 260 l/cm, 6,1 cm3; opaque white: 120 l/cm, 10,0 cm3

Repro and plates were produced by COE-Carl Ostermann Erben GmbH, using digital DuPont Cyrel Fast DFH printing plates.

Zeller+Gmelin, is a specialist manufacturer of quality printing inks. Since 1970 the company has been active in UV curing technology. Zeller+Gmelin has a number of facilities in the USA, UK and Europe and has a wide network of distributors worldwide. The company focuses on self-adhesive label printing, In-mold labeling and flexible packaging.

More information:

Zeller+Gmelin *Stand 851*
Gallus Ferd. Rüesch AG Stand *Stand 5901 / 5803*
Leonard Kurz GmbH & Co. KG *Stand 1817*
COE – Carl Ostermann Erben GmbH
www.coe-stuttgart.de

GALLUS USA NAMES NEW PRESIDENT

BRIAN BISHOP replaces Jon Guy

Gallus Inc., the North American arm of the Swiss manufacturer of narrow web printing presses, has a new president. Brian Bishop joined the company on July 7 with responsibility for US sales and service of Gallus equipment. He replaces Jon Guy, who was president for six years. Gallus is based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Gallus CEO Klaus Bachstein said, 'Bishop has a proven track record in service and sales functions, and brings extensive experience in dealing with European headquartered companies.'

Bishop worked at Demag Plastics Group, a manufacturer of injection molding machinery, from 2003 to 2007 and served as president of the company's North American operations in Strongville, Ohio, from 2005 to 2007. Prior to that, he was VP of sales for Engel Machinery. Bishop is a graduate of Ohio Northern University with a BS in mechanical engineering.

Jon Guy, the former president, said that he is interested in the field of brand protection and intends to explore opportunities in that arena. Bachstein said, 'We thank Jon for his contributions to Gallus and to the Gallus Group, and wish him all the best.'

- **Pamarco approved supplier for Gallus**
  Pamarco Global Graphics is now an approved supplier for the Gallus EM 410 S label printing press. Gallus currently has a set of Pamarco sleeves on site at its factory in Langgöns, Germany, and is using them for machine demonstrations.

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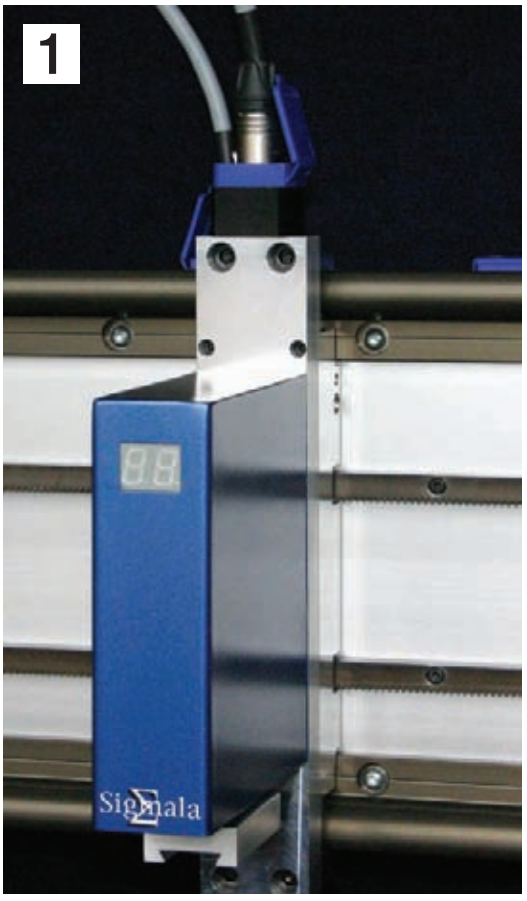

1 ALL-ELECTRIC KNIFE HOLDER
SIGMALA

Knife holders are an essential element in slitter rewinder construction. UK-based converting and packaging equipment design consultant Sigmala has replaced, for the first time, conventional pneumatic controls with electrically powered embedded servo motors in its new SL50 knife holder.

The result is a system that requires no manual set-up or intervention. Servo controls throughout have enabled Sigmala to introduce another new concept – adaptive slippage compensation (ASC) – to monitor knife wear and adjust the side-load automatically to prevent slippage between upper and lower knife blades. This development is not possible with pneumatic knife holders since they do not incorporate a sensor to detect the rotation of the upper knife.

Each of the three major components of the SL50 – traverse unit, upper knife holder and lower knife holder – are controlled by servo motors. The first two are embedded and incorporate individual microprocessor controls. The lower knife unit uses an AC pancake servo motor for the main drive and a Gates Polychain belt to connect the drive to the knife hub.

2 NEEDLE-TRAP SYSTEM FOR INJURY PREVENTION
SCHREINER MEDIPHARM

Schreiner MediPharm, a provider of specialty pharmaceutical labeling solutions, has introduced the Needle-Trap system to help prevent accidental needlestick injuries to healthcare providers from disposable syringes.

The Needle-Trap system features an integrated safety mechanism that is a component of the self-adhesive syringe label. This simple, economical design allows the needle to be safely and easily secured after it has been used and enables healthcare providers to use the same injection technique and disposal process as before.

The Needle-Trap labels can be easily integrated into conventional labeling systems and are adaptable to the most common syringe types. Needle-Trap can also provide optional detachable documentation labels to reduce the risk of medication errors. This functional label innovation has received FDA 510(k) clearance for marketing in the US and has won an award from FINAT, the international label manufacturers' and converters' association.

When Schreiner MediPharm performed a market survey of 239 nurses and doctors in the US and Europe, the results confirmed a high level of acceptance of Needle-Trap, with 91 percent rating the system as 'excellent/very good' and 94 percent saying they would recommend the system for their healthcare organization.

3 LABEL LOCK SECURITY SEAL
SECURITY LABELS INT.

Security Labels International has announced the launch of Label Lock for security labeling.

Label Lock is the latest product to grace the portfolio of the Cannock, UK-based company, part of the Mercian Labels Group. It is available for distributors to stock in bulk, yet each label has a unique number.

Because the surface of each security seal changes dramatically once removed to display the words 'opened' – but leaves no marks on the product it sticks to – Label Lock is seen as ideal for items that will be re-used.

Sales director Hugo Gell said: 'A padlock can be picked, unlike Label Lock which will seal everything from doors to CD and DVD cases without the need to drill holes or spend money on electronic monitoring. It's designed initially as a deterrent, but the label tells you instantly if someone's tried to get past it, and it can't be replaced because every label has a unique number printed under the surface. What's more, there is no sticky mess left behind once you've removed it.'

4 NEW ADDITIONS TO PARADE PRIMA SPECIALTY PAPERS
SAPPI

Sappi has introduced two products to its Parade range of specialty labeling papers at drupa – Parade Prima High Gloss, suitable for prestige chocolate wrappers, cigarette soft packs, banderols, board lamination and dry goods labeling, and Parade Prima FS for face stock applications for self-adhesive labeling such as VIP (Variable Information Printing) and point of sale/purchase labels. Both products are suitable for food applications.

Parade Prima High Gloss is the high gloss line extension of Sappi's premium Parade Prima one-side coated white labeling paper aimed at the dry goods sector. Available in grammages of 80 and 90g/m2, it is suitable for wet and dry glue labeling and purpose designed for high quality offset and flexo printing.

With Parade Prima FS, Sappi is entering the growing market for self-adhesive labels. The 80g/m2 one-side coated white glossy face stock has good dry strength properties and is also designed for offset and flexo printing.

5 COLOR TO COLOR CHANGE INK FOR LABEL PRODUCTION
LCR HALLCREST

LCR Hallcrest, a Chicago-based manufacturer of temperature sensitive inks and promotional products that change color, has been working closely with label printers in the development and production of temperature sensitive bottle labels that are compatible with the needs of high speed label production.

Chromazone is a reversible temperature sensitive ink or pigment that is used to produce a finished ink that changes color within the range of 'Touch Sensitive Temperature'. Labels utilizing Chromazone are interactive and transform graphic copy or images into dynamic communication tools that respond to changes in temperature producing a persuasive, exciting graphic instrument that allows the brand to interact with the consumer.

Rocco Sapienza, president of Hallcrest, commented: 'We are delighted to be working within the labeling industry and are excited about the recent introduction of the new Coors Light label that utilizes Chromazone to produce a high impact visually stunning graphic label, that changes color with temperature reinforcing the brands message.'

KEEP OUR READERS UPDATED

Keep our readers updated by sending press releases about new products, news and appointments to jquirk@labels&labeling.com. Submissions will appear on our website, and may then be included in our online newsletter Label News and in Labels & Labeling.

1

2

3

4

LABELEXPOSURE

The first of this new, regular section features winning labels from the World Label Awards announced earlier this year at the TLMI Converter Meeting in Cabo San Lucas in Mexico.

The World Label Awards is an annual competition, with judging rotated around the world and held during one of the major Labelexpo events. The judges are a select group of experienced professionals from each association. In the past two years the judges representing each association included Tony White, FINAT; Akira Takasa, JFLP, Pete Petran, LATMA & SALMA and Mike Buystedt, TLMI.

The categories for the judging criteria are agreed by all the global associations - now including the LMAI, which represents Indian converters. Labels entered into the competition represent the category award winners from each association. There are a total of 27 judging categories encompassing the full range of print processes used globally. The next edition of Label Exposure features the FINAT award winners announced at the Paris congress

1. DOW INDUSTRIES This label submitted by TLMI and converted by Dow Industries, USA, was the winner of the Multi Process Line & Screen Tone category. This label had excellent registration, with very clean type and smooth vignettes. The main thing that set this label apart from other labels in its category was the degree of difficulty and converting complexity.

2. CAN HASSAS This label submitted by FINAT and converted by Can Hassas, Turkey, was the winner of the Letterpress Color Process category. This label was set apart from other labels in its category by the sharp process dots and the smoothness of the vignettes in the steam coming off the coffee.

3. SOBI This label submitted by JFLP and converted by SOBI, Japan, was the winner of the Offset Cosmetic category. This label had excellent registration, with very sharp dots and nice gold hot foil stamping. Judges were impressed by the very tight registration and the sharp process dots on rice paper material – which can be difficult to print on.

4. COLLOTYPE This label submitted by LATMA and converted by Collotype, Australia, was the winner of the Non-Pressure Sensitive Any Process category. This label had excellent registration, with very sharp dots and bold spot colors. Judges praised the label's tight registration and the sharp process dots.

HOW TO GET EXPOSED

Label Exposure is a new, regular section in *Labels & Labeling*. Submissions do not have to be a part of an awards competition – we are interested in any label which you feel deserves exposure. If you want to contribute, please send us information about who printed the label, for whom it was printed, and the specifications of the job. It is essential to include a good quality, high resolution image with your submission. **Contact:** jquirk@labelsandlabeling.com.

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LABELS DIARY

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER

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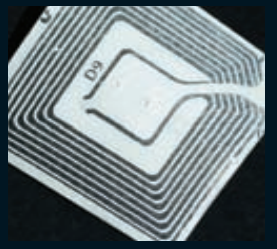
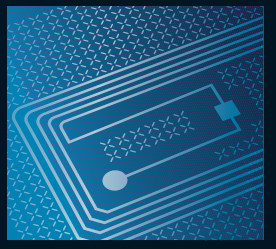
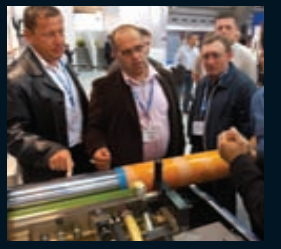
3-5 September
Expo Pack
Monterrey, Mexico
Mexico's largest packaging and processing machinery and materials show; over 850 companies will exhibit.

8-10 September
RFID World 2008
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA
In its sixth year, RFID World is a gathering place for the builders, buyers and sellers of RFID and other Auto-ID Technologies





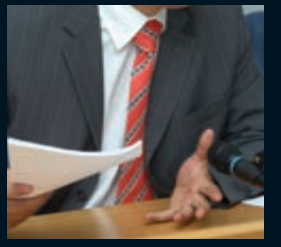
9-11 September
Labelexpo Americas 2008
Chicago
Labelexpo Americas is the largest event for the label, product decoration, web printing and converting industry in the Americas



9-11 September
Gravure Association of America's 2008 Annual Meeting and Leadership Summit
Parsippany, New Jersey, US
'Bridging the Gap… People, the Environment, Technology'

11-12 September
PABS 08 North America
Chicago, USA
Brand owners and suppliers will discuss and learn about today's challenges, anti-counterfeiting strategies and solutions for brand and product protection.

17-19 September
6th Annual Pharma Packaging and Labeling conference
Barcelona, Spain
ViB events' sixth annual conference



17-20 September
RFID Europe
Cambridge, UK
RFID Europe will give full technology analysis and unrivaled market insight from leading adopters in a two day conference and exhibition

7-11 October
Tokyo Pack
Tokyo, Japan
Tokyo Pack has been held biennially since 1966 and is the largest packaging exhibition in Asia.

7-10 October
Etiketka
Moscow, Russia
Etiketka (Label Show), in its 13th edition, will feature materials and machinery for label printing and packaging.

15-17 October
Brigl & Bergmeister's 8th Annual International Label Conference
Bad Hofgastein, Austria
The theme of this year's event is 'Fascinating Label Papers'.

15-18 October
SGIA
Atlanta, Georgia, USA
Specialty Graphic Imaging Association's expo and conference will feature more than 50 educational sessions over the course of four days.

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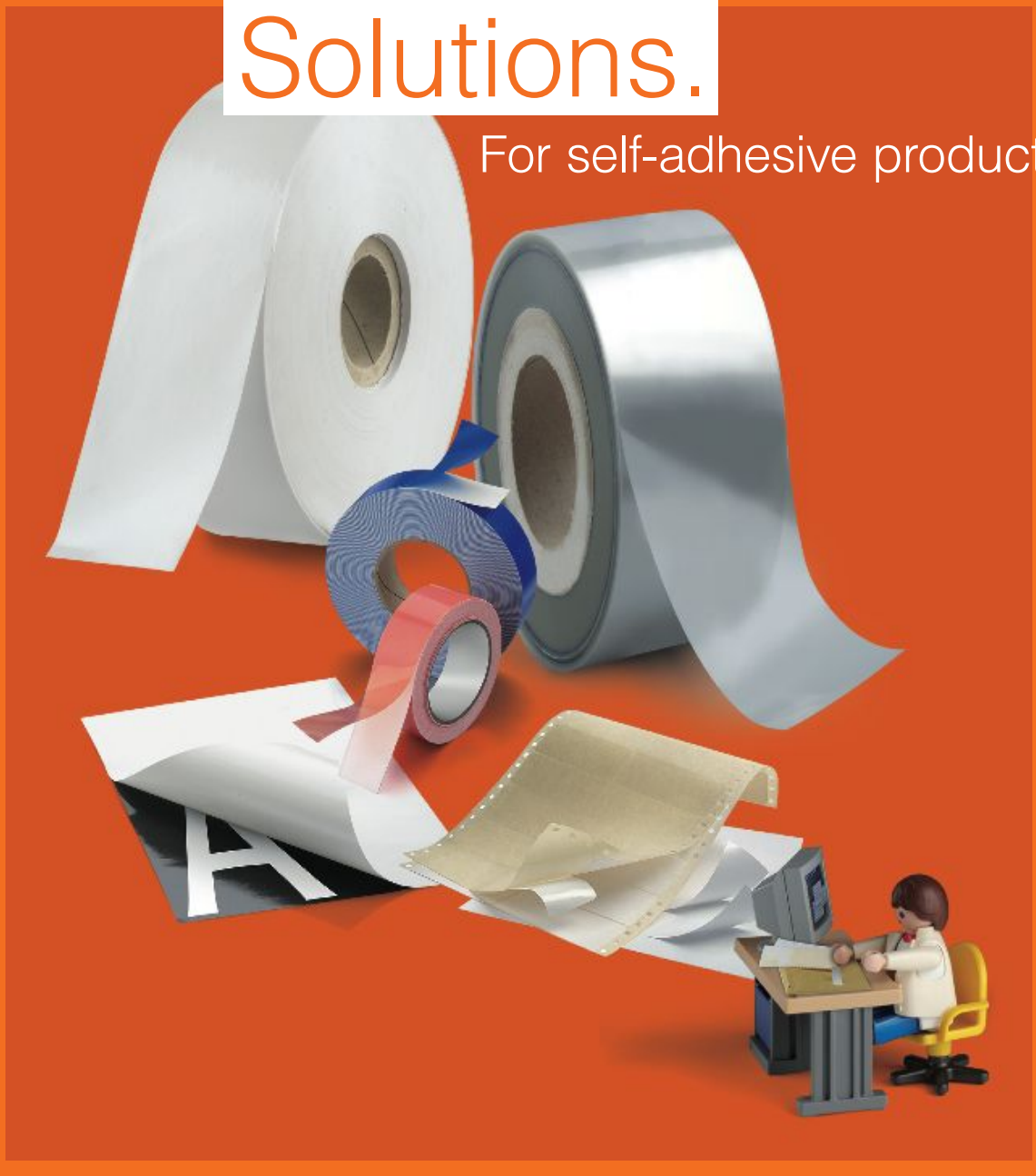

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Q&A

MARTY VAVRA, label product manager at Wal-Mart

JAMES QUIRK talks to Marty Vavra, label product manager of Wal-Mart

Marty Vavra, label product manager of Wal-Mart, took part in Label Summit Latin America in Mexico earlier this year as a speaker and panelist. Vavra spoke about the company's environmental initiatives and relationships with its label converter customers. In the first part of our Wal-Mart coverage, L&L provides those not at the Summit with a summary of Vavra's comments. In the next issue, read about how Wal-Mart's Printing and Mailing Distribution Center (PMDC), located at its global headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas, goes about printing labels for its own products.

L&L: What is your role at Wal-Mart and what does your team do?
MV: My team sets the specifications for new labels and makes sure that we are using the correct label converter. We look for suppliers who will exceed what the normal supplier offers, to take Wal-Mart to the next level. We look at how we supply product, at consignment programs, at the whole relationship to help the supply chain move faster and more efficiently.

Internally, we have a buying group and steering committee which audits converters and suppliers. We have to start by understanding what the expectations are. One point of contact is what we want. When we have a problem we want to ring one person.

L&L: How has Wal-Mart evolved in recent years in terms of what it looks for from its label suppliers?
MV: Five years ago, Wal-Mart looked for the lowest prices from our suppliers, but our converters gave us low quality labels. This was when Wal-Mart product buyers bought from printers, but they were not experts in labels. Now we have our label steering committee, which sits between the product buyers and converters. We will offer help to our vendors, we select the converter and then give them the specifications for the label. This will be a comprehensive four page document detailing everything from the size of the core, the number of rolls in a box. Then you can see exactly what you need to do when you give us a price.

When you give us a price, you will put yourself out of business if you do not implement a Lean manufacturing program. Raw material costs are increasing and it's my responsibility to defer that increase to the buyer. I have challenged our operations to cut costs by 50 percent by cutting out costs within the business.

L&L: How can you advise our readers to cut costs?
MV: You need to have a Lean operation. I advise you to take one job with Wal-Mart and you will learn what you need to do to work for us. If you make a small profit, then reduce your scrap, you will make more profit.

L&L: Aside from cost, what other things does Wal-Mart look at when choosing a label supplier?
MV: It's not all about the lowest cost. You have to educate the buyer about what 'Wow' costs. At the same time you need to maintain color consistency of the Wal-Mart logo and you will need to buy the correct testing equipment to guarantee color consistency from job to job.

L&L: How does Wal-Mart educate its label suppliers about exactly what it is looking for in terms of quality control and production processes?
MV: As Wal-Mart we will give advice to converters as regards implementing a quality control program. We do an audit every three years. We visit converters and look at all areas including equipment, your safety program and your quality control program. Each time you produce a job it will be the same quality as when we originally approved the job. We do not test incoming material – that is up to you as a supplier. As a converter we challenge ink suppliers and roll stock suppliers to ensure the quality is there.

We will ask to spend some time with your operators. We will ask 'how do you set this job up? What kind of ink do you use? Do you have a documented ink program? How do you select the right die and mandrel to match the specification of a job?

L-R: James Quirk, Marty Vavra, Wal-Mart and Claudia Baltazar, Unilever

L&L: How does Wal-Mart's converting division implement quality control?
MV: At our plant we have a very good track record on quality control. When our operators set up a job, the PMS numbers and item number for the ink is known.

We want to give the operators ownership. You can't over-emphasize how important our press operators are. Our operators know our label buyers by name. Our operators visit stores to see how the labels are used. In Wal-Mart everybody has an input from press operators to the distribution area.

We work hard on how to set up a job quicker, especially with new equipment. The focus is on what the operator does on a daily basis. We enroll our operators at trade schools and we take our operators to trade shows like Labelexpo. If the operator understands the business, he can make more and better decisions.

L&L: What affect has Wal-Mart's quality control program had on the company's operations?
MV: Our quality control program took two years to implement. We have cut scrap by 30 percent with a new automated unwind and rewind unit, and this investment was suggested by operators who saw the equipment at a trade show. In the last year we have started to measure our progress and we are certainly getting results.

L&L: What environmental initiatives is Wal-Mart implementing?
MV: We have implemented a recycling program to reduce the scrap that was going to landfill.

Anything that you can do as suppliers to help us move forward is welcomed. We are looking to Fasson and Green Bay to help us in reducing our scrap. All our label waste is being sent to a company which chops it up. Last year we sent four tonnes of material to landfill, and this year we are aiming to send nothing.

We are also looking at reducing all our packaging, and we are now testing rolls without cores. It will cost more in equipment to run coreless, but the ROI is less than one year, so we reduce both cost and environmental impact.

CHICAGO-BORN MARTY VAVRA GIVES HIS TIPS FOR YOUR VISIT TO THE WINDY CITY

1. **Where is the best place in the city to get pizza?**
   Home Run Inn and Geno's for deep dish.
2. **What is your favorite Chicago memory?**
   Super Bowl 1985! 'Da Bears'!
3. **Who is your favorite Bears player?**
   William Perry – 'The Fridge'
4. **What is your favorite bar in the city?**
   Buddy Guys and Harry Carry's
5. **Where can you get the best Chicago-style hot dog?**
   The street vendors on Halsted Street
6. **What is the best 'touristy' thing to do?**
   Take a walk on the Magnificent Mile or at the lake front in downtown Chicago. The museums are very interesting. Visit the observation deck located in the Sears tower. See the Cubs play at Wrigley Field even if you are not a Cub fan. The park will make you a fan for the day!

WORDS OF WISDOM:

"When you give us a price, you will put yourself out of business if you do not implement a Lean manufacturing program. Raw material costs are increasing and it's my responsibility to defer that increase to the buyer"

"Our quality control program took two years to implement. We have cut scrap by 30 percent with a new automated unwind and rewind unit, and this investment was suggested by operators who saw the equipment at a trade show"

"I advise you to take one job with Wal-Mart and you will learn what you need to do to work for us. If you make a small profit, then reduce your scrap, you will make more profit"

"We have found that at times the best service comes from the smaller shops; while the best research and development has come from the larger companies. We tend to select converters that excel in each area of the label products they are supplying to us"

GALLUS RCS330 demonstration featured a hybrid offset-flexo press configuration

Industrialization seminar

GALLUS introduced a filmless plate and screen system and looked at how conventional presses fit into a digital workflow. Andy Thomas reports

The third in Gallus' series of Industrial Printing seminars looked at digital workflow. Among the highlights, the company demonstrated its new digital Screeny plates imaged on an EskoArtwork CDI CTP unit, and introduced the 'Blue Box' concept for integrating conventional presses into a fully digital workflow. The day concluded with a demo showing a hybrid flexo-offset configuration of the RCS330 press.

FROM MANUFACTURING TO SERVICE

Following a welcome address from Ferdinand Rüesch Jr, vice chairman of the Gallus board, Felix Egger, VP sales & marketing, introduced industry consultant Dr Reinhold Rapp, whose Strategy and Learning Consultancy is currently working with organizations such as Lufthansa – and now Gallus – on re-engineering corporate cultures for the 'service age'.

Dr Rapp's central idea is that 'production-led' companies must adapt themselves to an age in which service adds more to the value of a product than the manufacturing process.

Service-oriented organizations generate ideas co-operatively with a network of customers, suppliers, development partners and outside experts. 'The ideal size of these teams is twenty – the Rule of 20 – of which no more than four should be company employees,' said Rapp. Apple was used as an example of a company which had beaten far larger 'production led' rivals by adopting such a networked, service-driven model.

INDUSTRIALIZING THE LABEL INDUSTRY

Gallus Group CEO Klaus Bachstein explained to delegates the urgent need to industrialize the label converting business in the face of unprecedented profitability challenges now facing label printers. He revealed the results of a survey which asked Gallus RCS press owners to identify the main obstacles to profitability. Top of the list was price pressure from end users, closely followed by hikes in the cost of raw materials, wages and energy. Bachstein estimated that over the last ten years, these costs have risen by at least 20 percent after inflation.

At the same time, the survey showed run lengths getting shorter, with 75 percent of jobs now below 80,000 labels (2,000 running meters) and a significant number between 20-50,000. This means more and more time is being spent on makeready – which accounts for 70 percent of production costs – and less time on printing saleable labels.

Bachstein said label converters can only combat these pressures by embracing industrialized work practices. This means synchronizing all the company's operations – from order processing to delivery – through a centralized data handling system. And it means embedding the 'conventional' printing press into the same digital workflow. 'As press manufacturers we need to enable data and information exchange along the value chain,' said Bachstein.

Bachstein pointed out that even small changes in overall efficiency have a major impact on the bottom line. A five minute reduction in set-up time on an average job mix allows an extra 189 jobs to be printed a year. For a press costing 1.5m euros, this reduces the ROI period from 5.6 years to 4.1 years.

The RCS customers polled by Gallus reported that they had all changed their working practices to increase efficiency around the press to shorten makeready times.

BLUE BOX – THE GALLUS WORKFLOW SOLUTION

Paul Mattle, head of marketing, explained in more detail Gallus' 'Blue Box' concept of press integration, which is now

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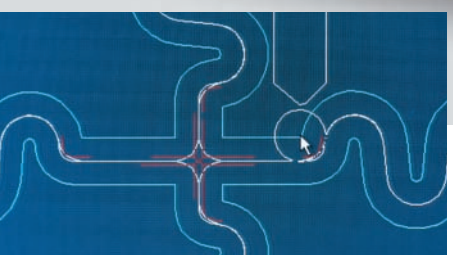

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under development. 'All the information we need to set up the printing press is already in the workflow. Blue Box – the Gallus Workflow Solution – brings it all together,' explained Mattle.

Blue Box The Gallus Workflow Solution is a browser-based system which distributes the manufacturing information embedded in a PDF file to all relevant departments – pre-press, tool making, ink mixing etc. The same information is used to pre-set the press with a wide range of information including substrate type and thickness, print pressure, UV power settings, color station order and number of labels to be printed. Additional data for offset presses could include ink key pre-setting and control parameters for closed loop in-line densitometry – which could later be extended to in-line spectrophotometry.

Data flows not just to the press, but also from the press to provide the MIS with real-time information on job status and cost.

Mattle pointed out that industry-standard file formats are now in place to allow this to happen. PDF-X, for example, allows a standard PDF document to carry manufacturing metadata, while JDF and JMF can communicate the relevant information to the converter's MIS system for distribution throughout the plant.

CO-SUPPLIERS

In the afternoon Gallus laid on demonstrations of how digital workflows are impacting screen platemaking, flexo CTP and inspection technologies.

DIGITAL SCREEN

For converters with combination presses which include screen units, it has been impossible to eliminate the use of film, since screen making remains an analogue process.

But Gallus now has a digital Screeny plate, which is coated with a black ablation layer and can be imaged on

a standard EskoArtwork CDI unit. The company demonstrated this process, with the plate mounted on the drum in exactly the same way as a digital flexo plate. After imaging, the Screeny plate is exposed and washed out in the normal way. The ablation mask layer is water washable. The digital option will be available in the first step for all Screeny S-Line plate types and Screeny DW and BZ, including the new Screeny S.

This means that the EskoArtwork CDI unit can now digitally image the full range of plates used in combination printing, including CTP flexo plates and sleeves, digital letterpress plates – both metal and mylar – Flint's digital varnishing plates, Presstek's chemistry-free offset plates, and now Gallus' Screeny plates.

DIGITAL SLEEVES

DuPont was present to talk about its digital roadmap. Label printers were among the first to take up digital flexography and DuPont's Fast thermal plate processing systems. The company reported that 44 Fast TD1000

RAKO'S EXPERIENCE

Sebastian Koch from Rako, one of Europe's leading label converters, gave a presentation on the company's practical experience with the Gallus RCS press.

'We were impressed with Gallus focus on set-up and changeovers,' said Koch. 'The concept is an analogy to industrial servo-machines and setting up an industrial manufacturing environment with quick, automated change of tooling, parallel triggering of servo-driven axes and the use of digitalized data for pre-adjustments. The offset option was also interesting for us.'

In practice the press has halved set-up and changeover times compared with Rako's 'conventional' machines, increased production speed by 5 percent, reduced material waste by ten percent and increased job throughput by 50 percent, said Koch. Features which particularly impressed the press crews included the secure fit of the screen modules and the registration accuracy in combination printing. The press is used for short runs of high quality products using combination printing processes.

systems have been installed by label converters worldwide – almost one quarter of total installations. Well over 80 percent of Fast installations are producing digital plates.

DuPont's next step – 'thermal, digital, round' is the slogan – will be in-the-round digital imaging and thermal plate processing systems, imaging either a pre-mounted plate or a seamless photopolymer sleeve.

Although primarily a wide-web application at present, the company believes sleeves will come to the narrow web market when more competition causes prices to drop. Presses will then be able to reach higher speeds with better register, less spoilage and no plate fly-off.

INSPECTION

Digital integration has also affected inspection systems, and Erhardt & Leimer was present to demonstrate how a PDF can be used as the basis for print image comparison. The PDF is sent to a hot folder on the press camera station on the printing press. The company's Web:Inspector:2 system then creates a digital 'roll map' of defects based on this comparison, which drives the rewinder to place the defective label in front of the operator. The rewinder on this demo was a Leomat.

Using a press inspection camera in this way allows converters to dispense with a camera on the rewinder, and places the emphasis on picking up and correcting defects at an earlier stage.

The company also demonstrated its TubeLight illumination system, which allows inspection of 3-D and reflective features such as embossed foil and holograms. This means that security micro text features can now be inspected within a hologram.

PRE-PRESS STANDARDIZATION

A key feature of today's digital pre-press landscape is the widespread adoption of open platforms. As an example, brand owners have effectively standardized on PDFs as a universal file format, and upwards of 90 percent of labels are designed using Adobe's Photoshop and Illustrator packages.

EskoArtwork has reacted to this trend by integrating its high end flexographic pre-production tools as plug-ins which will handle tasks such as barcode generation, ink density analysis, conversion between spot and process colors, PDF editing and flexo plate preparation within an Ilustrator/Photoshop workflow. Another particularly interesting development is the company's Visualizer software, which produces 3-D models of how label designs will appear on a container or pack – including special finishes such as metallic inks and embossing.

DEMO JOB

Following these digital workflow presentations, Gallus demonstrated an offset-flexo configuration of its Gallus RCS 330 press. Paul Mattle revealed that of the 85 RCS machines sold since its launch in 2001, twenty are offset. 'Offset is a worldwide standardized process with low plate cost and is capable of a high degree of automation,' said Mattle.

First up was a clear-on-clear job configured with UV screen, UV flexo, printing on the hot foil and a glitter varnish. Then in a 15 minute changeover sequence, the substrate was changed to PE, the first screen unit and hot foil module removed, the screen unit replaced with an offset station and a flexo unit replaced by a screen module. The press automatically changed the format size from 15 to 24in. This job changeover produced just 65 meters of make-ready waste, which is one machine length. The offset head was brought into production at 100 m/min to demonstrate flying imprinting.

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SAMPLE LABELS showing combinations of color tiles, 2-d barcodes and microtext

Security solution

HP has demonstrated how RFID and digital printing can work together to secure pharma products across the supply chain. Andy Thomas reports

The scale of counterfeiting in the pharmaceutical industry is truly terrifying. According to widely accepted estimates, at least ten percent of pharmaceutical products are counterfeit globally, rising to 60 percent in under-developed countries.

The growing menace of the pharma pirates has led legislators in the EU and US to demand 'e-pedigrees' which would allow pharmaceutical products to be tracked from manufacturing sites to pharmacies and hospitals around the world.

As well as directly threatening the health of patients, counterfeit products cost the pharma industry around $50 billion a year. Add in the losses associated with damaged brand equity, of products diverted to grey markets and the $2bn a year spent on product recalls, and the scale of the supply chain challenge confronting the industry becomes apparent.

ENTER HP

Other industries of course suffer similar counterfeit and diversion attacks. Hewlett Packard's Inkjet Systems business is an example. The Imaging & Printing Group (IPG) of HP manufactures and distributes millions of inkjet cartridges along with desktop printers. Immense efforts have gone into producing a system to secure and track these products through HP's complex global supply chain.

Puerto Rico also houses the manufacturing centers of the world's largest pharmaceutical corporations, and two years ago HP set about adapting some of its own supply chain solutions to their requirements. The result was demonstrated at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels last year as the Smart Label and Authentication (SL&A) solution, bringing together HP's combined expertise across a range of disciplines, including smart labels, digital printing and secure server technology.

SERIALIZATION

At the heart of the SL&A system lies the powerful concept of serialization: the ability to code individual pills and containers at source, and link that data via a secure server to case and pallet-level tracking systems through the supply chain.

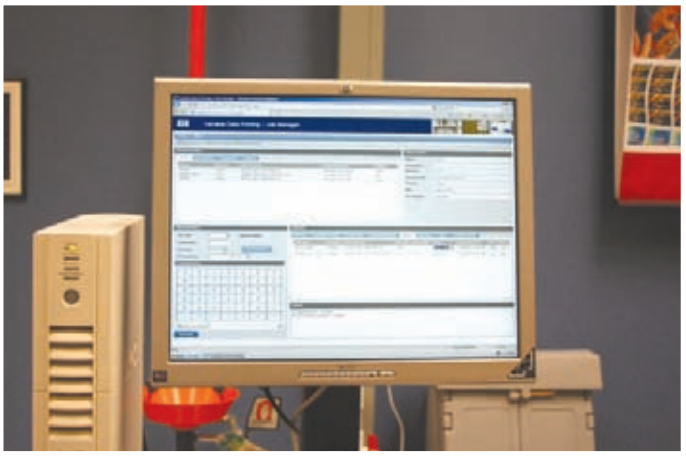
Serialization is far more than just sequential numbering, as HP's Ray Dickinson explains: 'Serialization creates a unique identifier for a product and points towards "mirrored" information for that product held on a secure database.'

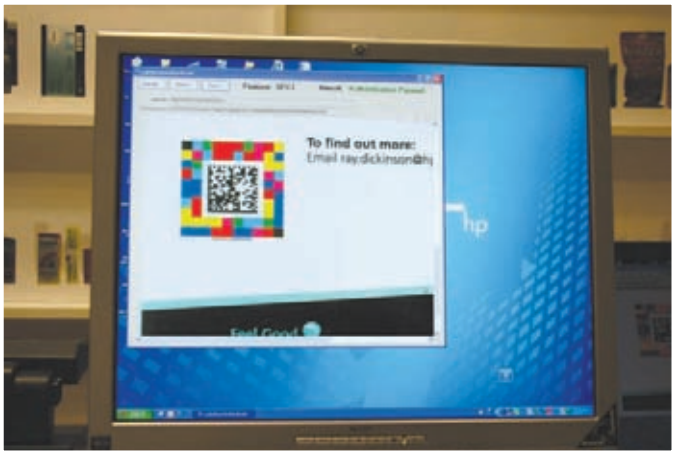
HOW IT WORKS

The database generates a serial number for each pill/capsule using industry-standard bar code symbologies typically used by pharmaceutical manufacturers.

The data is printed onto the pill/capsule with a thermal inkjet head using proprietary HP inks- including invisible security inks. Imaging at 300/600dpi allows the printing of 1 – and 2-D barcode symbologies.

At the container level, the database generates label information based on the type and origin of the products. An





HP Indigo digital press, driven by HP SmartStream Label and Packaging Security Manager, encrypts the data in a range of user-definable formats and prints it onto the label.

RFID labels programmed from the same database track individual cases and pallets through the distribution network. The server now holds the history of each EPC/SGTIN code as well as parent-child relations between items – for example, the location of specific bottles and the boxes in which they are packed. This makes it easier to avoid putting the wrong products into cases, and makes updating inventory easier.

Authorized users can interrogate the database over a secure internet connection to access a wide range of data, including a product's ingredients and timestamps of all actions, such as when it was produced, packed, shipped, received and examined.

DIGITAL PRINT

To prove the serialization concept through to pilot stage, HP has set up a comprehensive demonstration facility at its PT&A Solutions Center in Puerto Rico.

Of most interest to the label printer/converter is the digital printing suite, where an HP Indigo ws4500 is used to demonstrate how security printing of encrypted data works in practice.

For the press operator the process of generating a security label is straightforward. Using the HP SmartStream workstation – which integrates with existing third party workflows – the operator opens the design file and defines the variable element zones. The data is downloaded from HP's secure server, along with the security algorithms which generate the label's variable print elements. These elements can include any mix of database-registered serialized 1, 2 and 3-D barcodes, microtext, data matrix and variable color matrixes. Digital 'noise' can be added to any image to produce unique digital fingerprints.

The same information can be encrypted in multiple graphical elements or combined to minimize space usage – for example a color tile, matrix code and microtext can appear in the same small square. 'A powerful anti-counterfeit feature is that it takes the high quality digital printing engine of the HP Indigo press to produce these images, which would be very difficult to reproduce using conventional printing techniques,' says Jorge Badillo, smart labels & authentication program manager.

A wide range of tamper-evident security substrates can be used to ensure the integrity of the labels once applied to the container.

It is worth noting that these same security elements can be integrated into any packaging material which the HP Indigo press can print, including cartons, pack inserts and shrink sleeves, allowing the converter to offer a fully integrated packaging solution.

TOP LEFT: Variable data and transformation algorithms are downloaded from a secure server. **TOP RIGHT:** At the pharmacy: capturing security elements in a flatbed scanner and authenticating using a secure browser. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** RFID integration demo area

INSPECTION

At the end of the digital printing line at the demo center is an automated 100 percent inspection system. This system checks the variable coding features on each label to ensure there are no duplicate codes and automatically discounts the codes from damaged labels. The inspection system was developed in partnership with the Flytec division of AB Graphic.

A data file containing the inspection information is sent to the end user along with the finished roll. An inspection system on the label applicator checks that only labels with those recognized codes are applied.

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LEFT: PT&A development team at HP's Puerto Rico facility
RIGHT: variable elements of each label are inspected and the file sent to the applicator line

VERIFICATION

A key feature of HP's Product Tracking and Authentication system is the ability to securely decrypt the serialized information at any point in the supply chain with a non-specialist image acquisition system.

Stakeholders with access to a barcode scanner, flatbed scanner or PDA/cellphone able to grab an image with sufficient quality, can read the security information and decrypt it via the secure web server.

At the Puerto Rico PTA center, a demo room simulates how this might work at an average pharmacy. Once the security image is acquired, a software program locates the security regions, decodes the security elements and checks on the secure web-based server that those numbers match the information held in the central directory.

The data can be captured regardless of the orientation of the label – and even if the label has been warped. The demonstration given to L&L showed that the system can easily find if a counterfeiter has put random colors into a color tile, and can determine from the screening pattern whether the label has been printed on an HP Indigo press or an inkjet.

HP is currently working on the development of a dedicated handheld image acquisition device.

INTEGRATING RFID

The demo center includes an RFID lab complete with conveyor and palletizer to run customer trials.

'We want to show that both RFID and print technologies can co-exist using standards developed by EPC Global/GS1,' says Martin Bresciani, marketing manager, graphic arts enterprise solutions for HP in Aguadilla. 'Serialization and digital printing is a complement to RFID and in some cases can be used as an alternative system.' Bresciani points out that the cost of integrating item-level RFID into the pharma chain could be up to tens of millions of dollars. 'But integrated with secure printing technologies we can significantly reduce that investment and still implement a track and trace system down to item level. We can track the product from the manufacturer, we can tell you if a label is an original or a fake, we can collect information from the supply chain and use that to build your business efficiency – exactly as we are doing with our own supply chain.'

'RFID is integrated into the smart labels system, it is not disruptive,' adds system architect Juan C Villa. 'We link the features of the RFID tag with the printed features. The data on the RFID label and in the color matrix code are linked, for example, so you know that each component has not been faked.'

Villa says that in the future a lower cost RFID chip could be integrated directly into the digitally printed container label, 'allowing a direct matching of matrix code and RFID information.'

WIDER APPLICATIONS

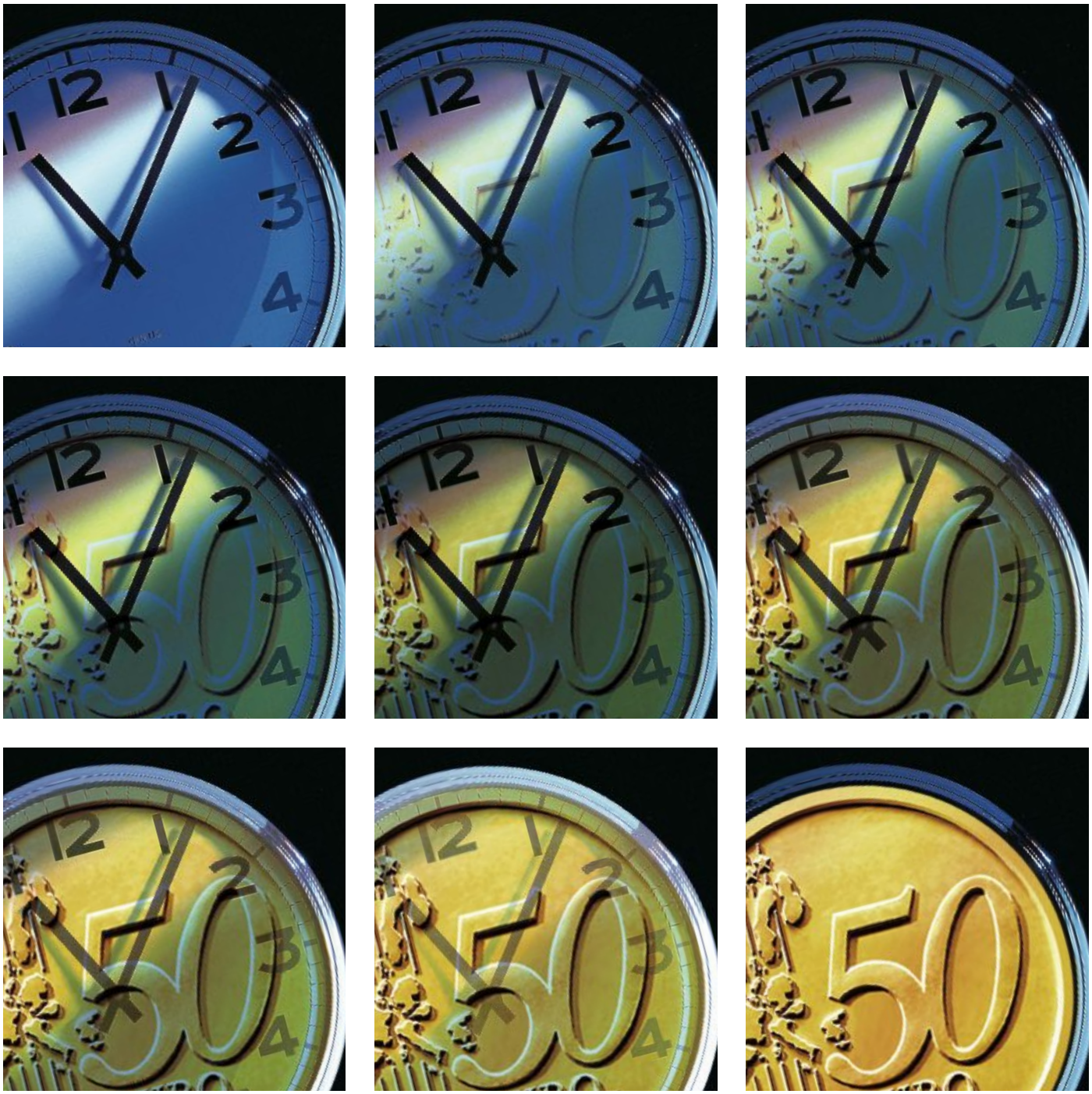
The ability seamlessly to integrate RFID and security printing makes HP's Product Tracking and Authentication system interesting to any global industry facing supply chain attacks – spare parts suppliers for the automotive and aerospace industries, for example, or electronic components and high value branded consumer goods.

And as Martin Bresciani points out, HP is committed to the further development of these systems for its own global supply chain. 'HP has one of the strongest portfolios of product authentication technologies which is proven in daily practice. As a company we are constantly looking forward 10-15 years.'

MEMORY CHIP

HP's Memory Spot, a low cost read-write chip with integrated antenna, can optionally be integrated into the security label. Developed two years ago by HP engineers and based on CMOS low-power integrated circuit technology, the Memory Spot measures just 2-4 sq mm and has a claimed 10 megabits-per-second data transfer rate – ten times faster than Bluetooth and comparable to Wi-Fi speeds. With a storage capacity currently ranging from 256 kilobits to 4 megabits, it could store a short video clip, several images or dozens of pages of text.

The chip is powered by inductive coupling, where a change in current flow through the read-write device induces current flow in the chip. That read-write device could be incorporated into a cell phone, PDA, camera or printer. As soon as the read-write device is held over the memory spot, the information is immediately transferred to the screen of the host device.



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SUSTAINABLE labeling

MIKE FAIRLEY looks at changing environmental pressures and assesses some of the actions converters should be taking

There can be little doubt that global label converters are coming under ever increasing pressure in terms of their environmental performance and 'green' credentials. But the challenge is much wider than just environmental performance. It's about waste streams, life cycle assessment and documented waste management programs, FSC/SFI and Chain of Custody certification, about packaging disposal, carbon footprints, global supply and distribution chains, label sustainability, issues of excess packaging, the recycling of used packaging and label materials, development of on-pack recycling logos and consistent consumer labeling schemes, pack and label reduction targets, increasing potential pack re-use, biodegradability, the building of waste composting targets, etc. Almost every month sees some kind of new initiative.

"Consumer and 'green' groups are pressing for certain things, but perhaps do not always consider the commercial issues that converters and packers have to face"

The big challenge for label converters is that this continuing raft of proposals is all now becoming part of the problem. Consumer and 'green' groups are pressing for certain things, but perhaps do not always consider the commercial issues that converters and packers have to face. Governments and local authorities are introducing legislation or proposing alternatives – to reduce landfill, promote home recycling, raise revenues, encourage improved resources management.

Certainly the best label companies want to comply with requirements but need to protect their business and margins. In any case, which requirement do they comply with this month, or next year – particularly if their business is supplying on a global basis? Paper, film and labelstock suppliers are looking at a rather different and bigger materials picture: how to better manage resources and provide sustainable materials that will ensure their future.

Talk to some of the major global brand owner and retail groups about what quality, sustainability, waste or environmental requirements they expect from their label and packaging suppliers and there is perhaps beginning to be some consensus. They increasingly expect them to have ISO 9000 as a starting point. Then to be working towards attaining ISO 14000 in the coming year(s) and, in the food/supermarket sector, to also have the – increasingly international – BRC/IOP Global Standard – accreditation.

ISO 9000 quality registration has already long been a necessity for many converters to do business worldwide. Similarly, the ISO 14000 environmental standards are expected to become (indeed are already starting to become) the primary requirement for doing business in many regions or industries – such as packaging and labels.

Typically, ISO 14001 requires an environmental policy to be in existence within a (packaging or label) company, fully supported by senior management, and available to customers, staff and the public. This policy sets out the company's compliance with current environmental legislation and also stresses a commitment to continuous improvement. Like ISO 9000 before it, the Environmental Management System requires a periodic audit to ensure that it is effective, meets specified goals, and continues to perform in accordance with all the appropriate and relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

The other standard now increasingly becoming common in the retail supplier field is the BRC/IOP Global Standard – Packaging and Packaging Materials. Originally created by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) in the UK to establish a standard for the supply of packaging and packaging materials for the food industry, this Standard's publication has rapidly become a global standard adopted by major retailers, packaging and label businesses around the world. Certification to the Standard verifies technical performance, aids manufacturers' fulfillment of legal obligations (including environment and waste), and helps provide protection to the consumer.

Put together, ISO 9000, ISO 14000 and the BRC/IOP Global Standard are becoming a core basis by which increasing numbers of global label and packaging buyers are judging their suppliers' competence and commitment to quality, to the environment, to the fulfillment of legal obligations and to consumer protection.

Undoubtedly there will be converters who say that meeting all these global standards is just another on-cost to them. Yet there is already documented evidence from converters that have implemented ISO 14000 and/or the BRC/IOP Global Standard that they have been able to significantly reduce materials (substrates and inks) wastage, have improved their manufacturing efficiency and reduced downtime, have helped their customers to reduce or lightweight their packaging or labels, created a better partnership with customers in solving joint environmental problems, found new solutions for, say, label matrix waste disposal and re-use in fuel efficient energy (pellets) or building materials. In short, meeting the standards is proving to be a good business decision.

If converters, industry suppliers or the industry's customers wish to go even further in enhancing their sustainability, recycling and packaging focus, then they might decide to look at or implement BS 8900, which focuses on developing procedures and ways of working that do not produce negative environmental effects or impossibly high costs for those involved. It works towards providing for the needs of the world's current population without damaging the ability of future generations. Issues such as climate change, energy and waste are just a few of the areas of concern.

Similarly, if biodegradability and composting of packaging/

label materials is an issue then BS EN 13432 might be of further assistance. This standard sets out the requirements for packaging recoverable through composting and biodegradation: organic recovery of used packaging is one of several recovery options within the overall lifecycle of packaging.

"By now it must be obvious to everyone in the label and packaging fields that the issues of sustainability, environment and waste are only going to intensify in the coming months and years"

In North America there also appears to be a growing requirement to obtain Forest Stewardship Council/Sustainable Forestry Initiative certification and the associated Chain of Custody certification which guarantees the path taken by raw materials from the forest to the consumer. Certified label printers are eligible for on-product label use and CoC certification.

Environment and sustainability issues are certainly not going to go away. They can only become more intense globally. Even the Chinese government is introducing far reaching legislation requiring all product packaging materials to be recyclable, degradable or recoverable, while some plastic materials are to be banned altogether. Package light-weighting and reduction will become mandatory, research into materials and technology is to be incentivized, waste recovery and recycling systems are to be established, transport and storage of recyclable and recycled materials are to be regulated. A whole range of penalties for infringement are also specified.

It would be possible to go on and look at what each particular country or region is doing in terms of the environment. Certainly any label or packaging converter who has some kind of global customer base will have been facing differing requirements or demands. Yet they all have most elements in common. Brand owners, governments, industry suppliers, etc, are generally all working towards common requirements, although they may be implemented in slightly different ways. However, they can all generally be implemented through ISO 14000 – a standard that can incorporate local, regional, national or international requirements.

By now it must be obvious to everyone in the label and packaging fields that the issues of sustainability, environment and waste are only going to intensify in the coming months and years. Those converters already working towards or implementing ISO 14000, who achieve environmental management certification, or can meet relevant customer environmental, CoC or scorecard compliance schemes, are undoubtedly at the forefront of this global revolution which is aiming for a cleaner, safer and healthier world for everyone. They are also best placed to obtain new business in this fast-changing world of ever-more demanding environmental issues.

Perhaps it is too easy to say at the present time that many countries or regional groupings are generating their own requirements for environmental improvement and that the converter could decide to wait until the issues become clearer before taking action. By then it may well be too late for those converters who find some of their accounts slipping away because they are unable to comply with new environmental demands. At least a single international standard – ISO 14000 – ensures that there are no regional conflicts between regional or country interpretations of good environmental practice. In any case, ISO 14000 is easily adapted to take into account any regional or local variations or requirements.

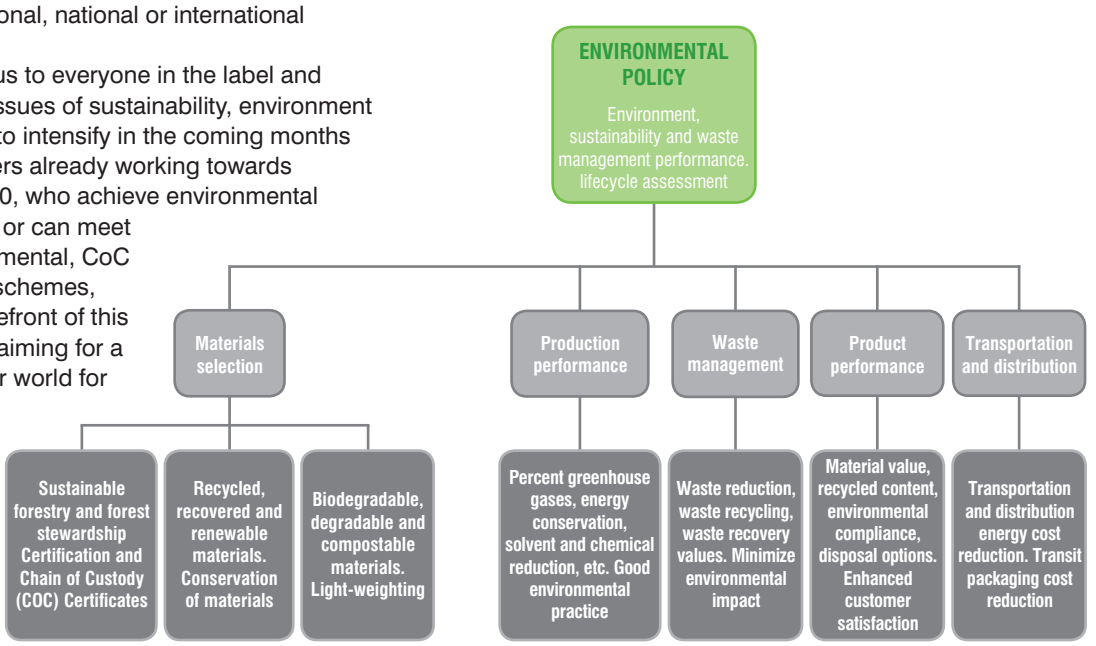
There is no opt-out choice for label and packaging converters now. They have to go forward and meet international environmental standards, develop more sustainable ways of working, find new materials and solutions, change the way in which they manage their business and handle and dispose of waste. It is not just their future we are talking about it is also the future of the planet we live on – and every converter should now be looking to have an environmental policy. A diagram showing some of the key elements that can be built into a label converter environmental policy is shown in Fig. 2 below.

The label and packaging industries have undoubtedly faced many challenges before, and come out of them stronger and fitter. They will do the same with the many and ever-growing environment and sustainability challenges that they are now facing, and hopefully sooner rather than later.

For the label industry, Labelexpo Americas this year will undoubtedly provide a strong and additional focus to look at and assess these many industry environmental issues – both in the conference program and through being able to talk with key industry suppliers developing new environmental products and solutions and with other converters who are visiting the show.

Don't miss this key opportunity to work towards implementing environmental standards and to become your own converter environmental expert.

DIAGRAM SHOWS KEY ELEMENTS THAT CAN BE BUILT IN TO A LABEL CONVERTER ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY



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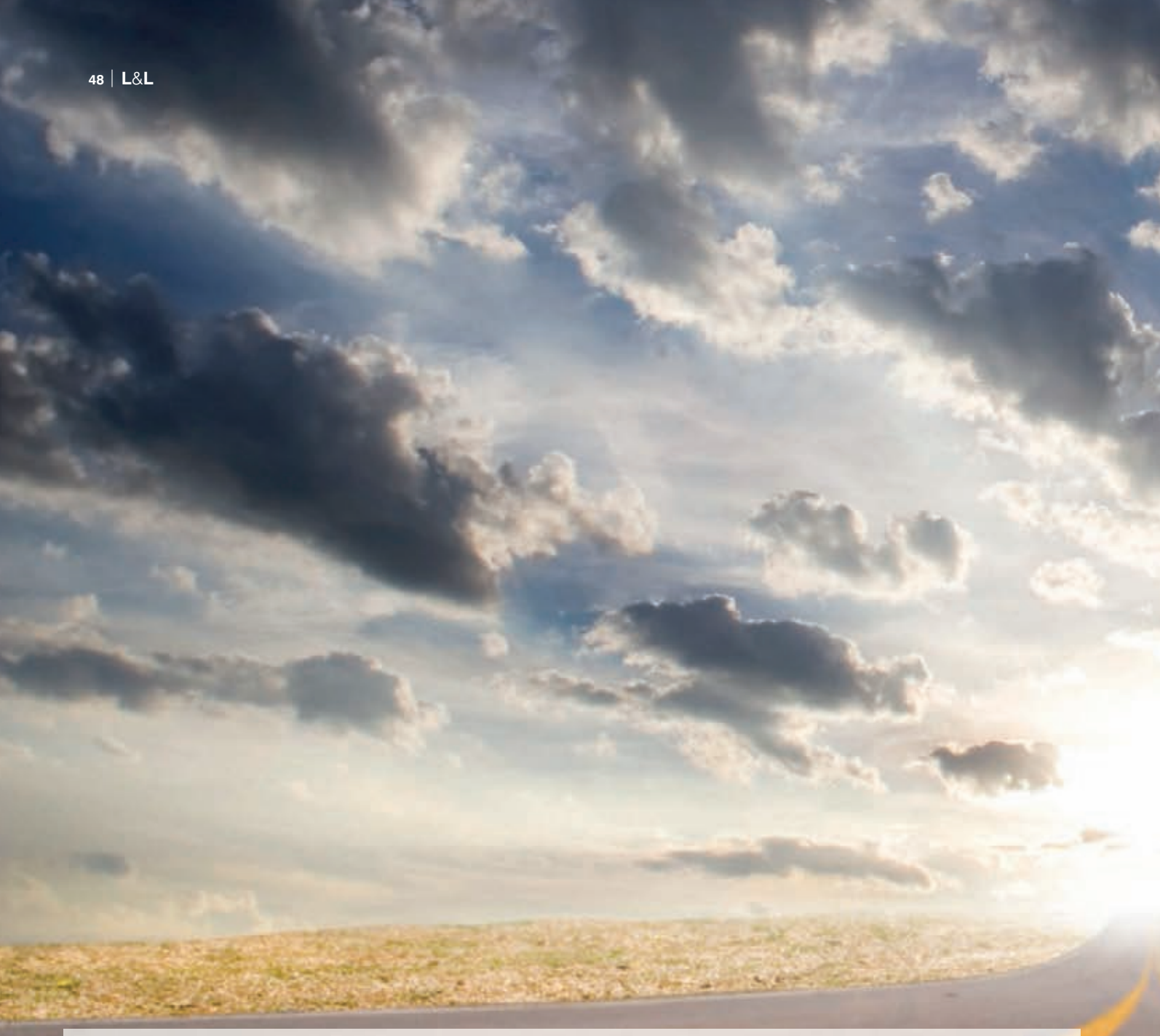

DRIVING CHANGE IN LATIN AMERICA

LATIN AMERICA has been the recent focus of press manufacturers looking to increase their international presence – with Gidue and Nilpeter setting up operations in Brazil and MPS opening a dedicated office for the region. James Quirk reports

There has never been a better time to be a label converter in Latin America. A survey carried out by Labels & Labeling last year showed that printers in the region now have amongst the best profitability performance in the world, while GDP growth has increased at above 3 percent for six consecutive years.

The survey also revealed that 75 percent of respondents were actively seeking to invest in new equipment in the next year. Their options are widening, as three of the industry's largest press manufacturers – Gidue, MPS and Nilpeter – have all increased their presence in the region.

Italy-based Gidue and Danish company Nilpeter opened manufacturing operations in Brazil last year, while Dutch manufacturer MPS announced at Labelexpo Europe 2007 its intention to set up a dedicated MPS Latin America office. Labels & Labeling talked to all three companies and visited some of their customers to discover their strategies for the growing Latin American market; while also learning what some of their rivals in the region are doing to counteract these moves.

MPS TARGETS INCREASING POOL OF QUALITY CONVERTERS

MPS Latin America is a partnership between MPS and its regional distributor ProFlexo International. Based in Miami, Florida, and headed up by former ProFlexo managing director Jaime Dagnino Jr, the company has engineers based in Chile, Mexico and Miami – fully trained and responsible for all MPS installations, training and support. MPS Latin America has a Spanish speaking 24 hour call center with full remote diagnostics service aimed at swift response in customer service. Representation in Mexico is continued by Grupo Novaro, which has MPS-dedicated sales persons amongst its team.

The company already has installations in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, and Dagnino Jr, a Chilean who has lived in North America for a number of years, is confident the company can take advantage of a new generation of Latin American converters keen to invest in advanced technology to increase their market share and, ultimately, compete abroad.

'We are seeing a trend in Latin America,' he says. 'Many small and mid-range companies are making the leap to high-end technology. The top printers are of course the natural market. But now there is a pool of companies looking at this type of technology that has grown ten-fold in recent years.'

'In Mexico, for example, our customers estimate that 50-60 percent of labels are imported due to issues of quality and reliability,' he continues. 'That shows the potential of the market, as increasingly these companies will serve their own market and ultimately their exports will increase too.'

MPS has set up a low threshold financing scheme – reliant on projected growth instead of assets – which allows smaller companies to invest in its technology. 'Financing is key,' says Dagnino Jr. 'For these companies, purchasing an MPS machine represents a big investment. We work with an export insurance company and financier, with a dedicated Spanish and Portuguese speaking team. It is not just an office in Europe: it does a hands-on study of the company.'

The company's focus in Latin America is on its EC and EF flexo press models, which offer printing on a wide range of substrates. Multi-drive technology incorporates separate digital servo drives for converting functions, web handling and tension control.

The press can be expanded to include a wide range of modules, including rotary screen printing, multi rotary die-cutting and hot and cold stamping. The MPS models are available in 10, 13, 14.5, 16 and 20 inch widths (255, 330, 370, 410 and 510 mm). 'We give press operators 30 minutes training on our press, and that's all they need to start running it,' says MPS sales director Erik Blomjous. 'It is a major selling point for us.'

'We have a very clear and focused five-year plan,' says Dagnino Jr. 'We have opened the door to the market, and we are growing successfully in this region. Our aim is to be the leader in the market, and everything we do is geared towards that.'

ETIQUETAS ANRO AIMS FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

Etiquetas Anro could be a blueprint for any family-owned print shop looking to expand into new markets through investment in new technology and streamlining of processes.

The company has been revitalized since the arrival of brothers Fabián and Amín Silva Yedra to their father Joel Silva y Arteaga's company six years ago, and the purchase of an MPS press this year is the culmination of a long period of overhaul and investment. (See 'New blood' boxout.)

Aware of the fact that many Mexican end-users have been buying their labels from abroad – due to issues of reliability and quality – the company began four years ago to travel around Europe, the US and Asia to learn about new technology and processes.

At Labelexpo Europe 2007, Anro visited Gallus, Omet, Nilpeter and MPS looking to purchase a high-end machine that would allow them to diversify from their traditional food and beverage sector.

'We were looking for a press that would allow quick changeover, flexibility, fast production and high quality print standards,' says sales director Fabián Silva Yedra. 'We chose the MPS partly aiming for differentiation in the Mexican market, as Nilpeter has many machines here. This is what is going on in Mexico: there is new technology around, and you have to impress. We believe that MPS's servo technology allows printing of offset quality, which was key. Its financing option was also the best of the companies we looked at. It was part of the excellent service.'

L-R: Fabián Silva Yedra, Joel Silva y Arteaga, Amín Silva Yedra, Erik Blomjous, Jamie Dagnino

Desire to innovate is anther reason cited by the brothers for the MPS press purchase. 'The machine's flexibility gives us the opportunity to be flexible and enter new applications,' says Amín Silva Yedra, operations director.

The machine is an 8-color, 330mm EC flexo press with silkscreen, cold foiling and two rotary die cutters. Fully servo driven as standard in MPS presses, Anro hopes it will help the company enter the cosmetics sector. It joins an existing fleet of three 3-color Mark Andy machines and a 6-color Nilpeter, all flexo.

The MPS press was installed in July, after the Etiquetas Anro father and sons team traveled to Holland to sign the deal and run tests, and is housed in the 1,500 square meter

ETIQUETAS Anro's factory in Mexico City

facility into which Anro moved in April last year. During their many visits to Europe, the Silva Yedra brothers picked up the culture of lean manufacturing: every part of the plant was pre-planned months in advance – including the entry and position of the MPS machine – so the process flow has maximum efficiency. Every print job is meticulously documented and stored, allowing easy reproduction in the future, while Anro is implementing ISO 9001:2000 as well as Mexico's national quality model.

'We moved in just four days without affecting production or delivery,' recalls Fabián Silva Yedra. 'In Mexico, not many plants have a specially-planned lay out. We are trying to lead the way."

The factory is a mixture of technology: a Mark Andy machine which has been running, with perfect registration, since 1976 recalls Anro's humbler past, while brand new equipment – the MPS, slitter rewinders from Rotoflex and a high-speed inspection machine from Grafotronic – point to an exciting future. The brothers are rightfully proud of both: 'We work at maintaining equipment, not repairing it,' says Fabián.

The factory's capacity is 350,000 square meters in one shift – which the brothers believe can be tripled with extra shifts – and space has been left for future investment. Amín Silva Yedra says Anro is looking to purchase three new presses in the next five years, and will 'most likely' continue with MPS.

'We now realize that we are not far behind other companies in the world in terms of quality controls, processes and technology,' says Fabián Silva Yedra. 'The first step is to focus on the Mexican market, but we are also sure that there are areas in the US, for example, where we can compete in terms of price and quality. There are other companies which may be larger than us, but our focus is to be a leader in innovation.'

Etiquetas Anro employs 45 people and has around 200 customers, including a number of large Fortune 100 companies. It recently became a Sony-approved supplier – an accolade reserved for only 20 of the 800 companies which supply Sony. Anro is the only converter on the list.

Fabián Silva Yedra believes that MPS's increased focus on Latin America 'was not just an advantage, but a requirement'. 'It is essential to have a good level of support and service,' he says. 'Here in Latin America, we have options. Suppliers trying to sell into this market need to be aware of this if they want to take advantage of the region's growth. The world doesn't have borders any more. We were in Brussels, talking to a Dutch company with Chilean employees based in Latin

L-R: The whole family – Fabián, Nidia, Angelica, Joel and Amín

GALLUS CONCENTRATES ON REPRESENTATION AND SERVICE

Gallus has sold over 100 machines into Latin America since it started to supply the region in the 1950s. Nearly half of these are in Mexico, where Gallus' Latin American base has been headed up by Hans-Roman Hoffman since he joined the company in 2005.

Gallus reports that its presence in the region has been increasing since Hoffman has been based their full-time. 'We see positive tendencies in the market,' says Hoffman. 'Quality requirements are growing and consumers can afford more every year. Top level printers in Mexico, for example, will in time certainly begin to take business away from US converters. But while we see a lot of potential, the market needs to mature in terms of productivity.'

John Guy, president of Gallus' North American operation, says he is 'watching with a great deal of interest' Gidue and Nilpeter's strategy of manufacturing in Brazil. 'But is the market big enough to set up an operation for your supply chain?' he asks. 'We don't want to compromise our quality

"The art of manufacturing doesn't necessarily mean that you have more focus on the market"

.'The main reason for manufacturing in Brazil is to avoid the tariffs. But how many presses are you going to be making per year? Relationships are more valid in this region. I think representation is more important than manufacturing – the art of manufacturing doesn't necessarily mean that you have more focus on the market. Sales and service are the most important things; it is about people.'

Guy agrees that Latin American converters will begin to export more, but sees the potential in sectors like food packaging as opposed to established sectors like cosmetics. 'But logistics are crucial: if energy costs keep rising, export – both from Mexico to the US and vice-versa – will be restricted.'

As well as the office in Mexico, Gallus has a sales representative based in Brazil. Argentina-based Hagraf distributes Gallus presses in that country, as well as Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay.

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ETIQUETAS Anro's new generation: siblings Fabián, Nidia and Amín Silva Yedra

NEW BLOOD

Many label converters around the world have experience of integrating the new generation into the family business. For Etiquetas Anro, the arrival of founder Joel Silva y Arteaga's sons into the company provoked a period of drastic – and ultimately successful – transition.

This period was the focus two years ago of an article – entitled 'New Blood' – in leading Mexican business magazine Expansión, which interviewed the family about how it dealt with the upheaval.

Etiquetas Anro was founded in 1986 by Joel Silva y Arteaga in a workshop of just nine square meters with one printing press, with his wife Angelica Yedra de Silva controlling administration. Over the following years, the company expanded to a workforce of 12 employees and three presses in a facility of 300 square meters.

By 2002, though the company was enjoying a good reputation amongst clients and suppliers, opportunities abounded for improvement in technology, processes, marketing and human resources.

His sons, Fabián and Amín, had chosen not to enter the family business. Fabián, an economics graduate, was working for Procter & Gamble as a financial analyst; Amín, an industrial design graduate, was employed by Mexican glass company Grupo Vitro. But in 2002 they decided to join their father at Etiquetas Anro.

Fabián and Amín's analysis of the company was ready a few months after their arrival. They saw the need for investment in new technology, alliances with suppliers to buy bigger volumes, increased workforce productivity, bigger clients and quicker invoicing.

Their initial focus was on streamlining productivity and the company's finances. The combination of fewer costs and more efficient processes quickly tripled productivity. The brothers then installed broadband internet, replaced archives with administrative software and sought advice from experts in human resources, finances and engineering processes.

Anro stopped supplying to clients until they'd paid outstanding bills, and rose prices for companies buying small volumes. These measures scared away 24 customers. The Silva brothers weren't worried: their analysis revealed that these customers were among the 45 companies which only generated 15 percent of Anro's sales, but which represented a greater percentage of the company's costs. Rid of them, Anro freed up resources to the benefit of larger buyers.

With these changes, they began to offer their services to large businesses such as Sony and Procter & Gamble, among others.

But the changes were not easy. The father and brothers had to align their different visions to work together in one direction. They hire an expert on family business, Carlos Morales, and worked with him for three years to help reorganize the business. Under his guidance, they divided the company into three areas according to the skills of each family member. Joel Silva, the father, remained as general director; Amín was in charge of production, Fabián looked after sales and finance; Angelica remained as administrative director.

The company was boosted two years ago by the arrival of Amín and Fabián's sister, Nidia Angelica, in charge of human resources. The brothers credit her with a crucial role – recruiting, training and maintaining a consistency of staff with the necessary expertise – in aiding the company's development.

These changes have resulted in a six-fold multiplying of sales, and Etiquetas Anro has become an impressive example of how the new generation can revitalize the family business.

America and financing in Luxembourg.'

Etiquetas Anro also distributes label dispensers and thermal printers, including brands such as Start International, Zebra, Datamax and Eltron, part of the company's aim to supply multiple services to its customers.

Its product range is wide and innovative: a patented 'magic label' which reveals hidden images when run under water, ideal for children's promotions; a patented system for fragrance encapsulation; direct thermal and thermal transfer labels; special materials for laser and inkjet printing; tamper-evident security labels. Its Etimpress range is made up of premium labels of up to eight colors, and offers different finishes such as UV varnish, lamination and cold foiling.

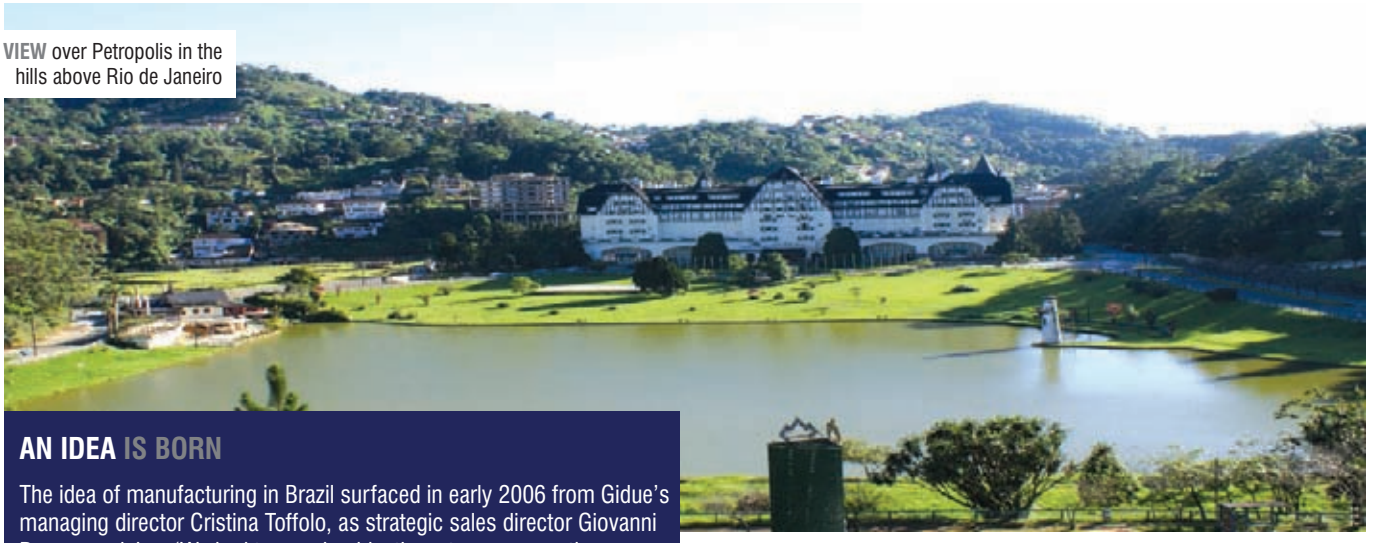
'We are doubling our efforts so we can compete with the more established markets such as the US,' says Fabián Silva Yedra. 'They need to be aware of us, because we want to take a share of the market.'

BRAZIL: A EUROPEAN INVASION

Suppliers to the Brazilian label market have long suffered under – or been completely restricted by – heavy import tariffs. It can also be difficult for local companies to get financing for expensive foreign equipment. Avoiding these obstacles is a key motivation behind both Italian company Gidue and Denmark-based Nilpeter opening manufacturing operations in the country.

Of the two announcements, Gidue's was perhaps the more surprising; the project in Brazil represents the company's first manufacturing foray outside its home nation, while Nilpeter already has experience of setting up a new operation in the US. But despite the proximity of the announcements, the two companies are not necessarily in direct competition. Nilpeter has already installed its top-of-the-range MO-Line into some of Brazil's biggest converters – such as CCL and Baumgarten – and is aiming the FBR-Line it is manufacturing in Brazil at smaller and medium-sized companies who might not normally be in the market for a Nilpeter press. Gidue, meanwhile, is pitching its S-Combat machine at a level in between Nilpeter's ranges.

What the two moves have in common is their organizational structure. Both Gidue and Nilpeter have essentially licensed out their technology to be manufactured by local partners with existing facilities, and then sold by local representatives.



VIEW over Petropolis in the hills above Rio de Janeiro

AN IDEA IS BORN

The idea of manufacturing in Brazil surfaced in early 2006 from Gidue's managing director Cristina Toffolo, as strategic sales director Giovanni Perego explains: 'We had two main objectives: to overcome the problems caused by the Brazilian Government's high import taxes, and to increase our machine sales in an area where the printing industry is undergoing important development.'

Comprint's role in facilitating the move was crucial, explains Toffolo: 'Comprint supported us not only in the search for the right partner, but also by taking care of all legal and commercial aspects involved. It also played an important role in sustaining the relationship and helping information flow smoothly between Italians and Brazilians, enabling everyone to work at their best.'

GIDUE SETTLES IN THE HILLS

Gidue's local manufacturing partner is Raeder, founded in 1986 and based in Petrópolis in the hills above Rio de Janeiro. It is a picturesque setting, where former Emperors Dom Pedro I and II would spend their summers in the 1800s to avoid the oppressive Rio heat.

Gidue has licensed its S-Combat press technology to Raeder in an initial deal for the manufacturing of twenty machines over three years. Traditionally a manufacturer of offset units, as well as mechanical parts for the aeronautical and oil and gas industries, this is Raeder's first experience of building flexo machinery.

Local sales and support is offered by Gidue's existing distributor Comprint, which has represented the Italian company in Brazil for five years. Among its team, it has around eight people dedicated to selling Gidue's machines.

'There are three parts to the jigsaw,' explains Gidue's area manager for Latin America, Davide Perfumo. 'Gidue provides the technology, Comprint the sales and support, and Raeder the manufacturing. Each knows his role and the system works very well.' Technology support is also offered by Gidue, with special project manager Gianluca Colombo, who speaks Portuguese, making frequent trips to Brazil to assist the manufacturing process.

The S-Combat features flexo and silkscreen printing with a host of additional features: hot stamping, cold foiling, lamination, die-cutting, embossing and sheeting. The machine is equipped with Gidue's Flower print heads, and 430mm, 370mm and 280mm versions are being built in Brazil. Gidue has sold five of the presses since its Brazilian project began just over a year ago.

Gidue, Comprint and Raeder combined to host an open house at Raeder's facility earlier this year. Both versions of the S-Combat were on display, and the event provided an interesting opportunity to gauge both local reaction to the machines and the interaction of the three companies involved in the project. The two presses at the show were equipped with UV lamps from GEW, tension control from BST, while Altech – a Brazilian company which serves Latin America and the US – supplied the register control.

Visitors from eighteen companies were present, including a small delegation from Argentina, where Gidue has a distributor. Two Brazilian companies, Inde Metal and Grafica IPE, bought machines immediately afterwards.

Comprint took center stage, with managing director Christian Vorländer guiding visitors through presentations about the S-Combat press. The company, which employs around 30 people, has a great deal of experience in the label and packaging sector, and also represents AB Graphic, HP Indigo and Drent Goebel in Brazil.

Vorländer reports that the move has been well-received by the local industry, and that the project is catering to the increased desire for diversification in Brazil: 'The Brazilian label industry is striving to increase its general efficiency and is characterized by a strong tendency to diversification,' he says. 'This is happening rapidly in the renewal and modernization of the installed machine base – which was also confirmed by the recent buying intention survey of Labels & Labeling.

'Customers warmly welcome the local availability of the machines, thanks to the interesting investment credit line opened with Finame, as well as easy access to spare parts without time consuming and expensive import.'

Vorländer also gives credit to the manufacturing capabilities of Raeder in making the project a success. 'The big advantage for us is that Raeder is very verticalized,' he says. 'The company does everything in-house so doesn't need to subcontract. The press on display at this open house was

L-R: Christian Vorlaender, Comprint; Jayme Costa, Raeder; Gianluca Colombo, Gidue; André Costa, Raeder; Davide Perfumo, Gidue

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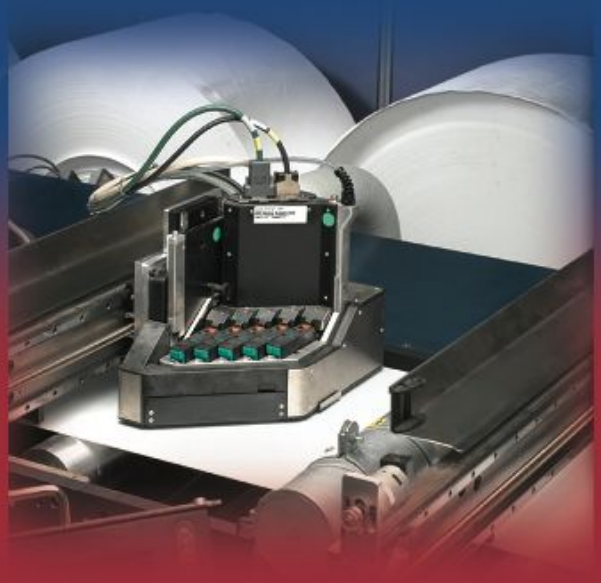

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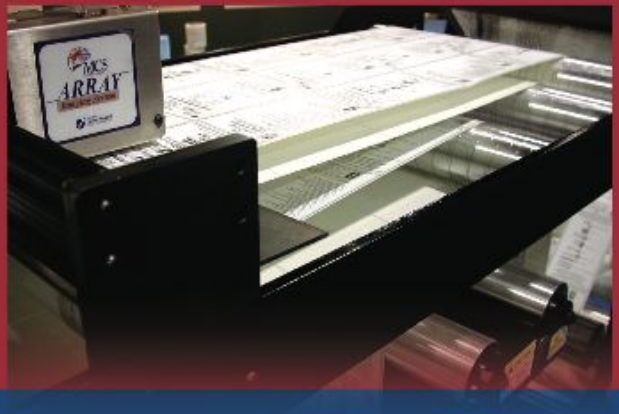

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only finished last week, but after very minor adjustments it is ready to be demonstrated. This level of manufacturing expertise is rare.'

Vorländer says that twelve machines per year can currently be manufactured, but that figure could 'easily increase' if necessary. 'The initial idea was to do more export from the Brazil site, but current exchange rates make it difficult,' he says. 'Neighboring countries such as Argentina can be served, however, because it is part of MercoSur.'

RISK?

If setting up a manufacturing operation abroad has inherent risks, Gidue seems to have side-stepped them in its set-up with Raeder and Comprint. The manufacturing expertise is in place; an experienced team, well-known in its local market, is selling the machines. The figure quoted to L&L of what Gidue has spent on the project is certainly well within the means of a company its size; contracts have been signed to protect Gidue's intellectual property.

'The risk was the initial investment,' says Raffaella Comunetti, marketing manager. 'Now we have the feeling that we are over the hard part. It is also an R&D investment for us, because we have been so impressed with Raeder's manufacturing expertise.'

Comunetti reports that part of the project is to adapt the S-Combat press to run film, because of the expense of importing a film press from Europe. 'The stressing of quality is important for us because our machine is more expensive than the Nilpeter FB-Line and the Mark Andy presses in this market, for example,' she says.

MACK COLOR: THE FIRST BRAZILIAN S-COMBAT INSTALLATION

It is a surprise to see a self-adhesive label converter promoted at a large international airport, but travelers to Guarulhos in São Paulo can see Mack Color's name advertised on baggage trolleys.

It is part of an aggressive marketing strategy for which the Brazilian converter has become famous: walk down the São Paulo street where it is located and every tree has a Mack Color poster on it.

Director Marcos Rossi founded the company 30 years ago with a single 1-color press; now, Mack Color has grown into one of Brazil's largest converters, with a host of different technology and plans to move into a new facility in the near future. His marketing strategy has paid off: the readers of a Brazilian business magazine recently voted Mack Color as the country's most famous self-adhesive label company.

'The most remembered companies in Brazil are those with good advertising,' explains Rossi. 'But just as important here is corporate social responsibility, which is why at Mack Color we run ecological campaigns, for example.'

Mack Color became the first company to install Gidue's made-in-Brazil S-Combat, after buying the machine that was debuted alongside Label Summit Latin America in São Paulo in 2007.

'The Gidue machine has surprised us,' reports Rossi. 'In terms of flexo, it meets all the needs of both Mack Color and the Brazilian market. We bought the machine because of its technology and productivity,

ETIRAMA BITES BACK

Brazilian press manufacturer Etirama has responded to the arrival of Nilpeter and Gidue manufacturing in its local market in the best possible way – it has launched a new machine.

The company has introduced an updated version of its Superflex shaftless flexo press: the Superflex Elite. The modular machine can print up to ten colors, is equipped with UV drying and comes in 250 or 300mm print widths. It boasts silkscreen printing, hot stamping and hot and cold foiling amongst its options.

Etirama's commercial director Ronnie Schröter believes that the machine's shaftless technology gives it an advantage over the presses being locally manufactured by Nilpeter and Gidue. 'They have brought their simplest models to be manufactured in Brazil,' he says, 'so we can differentiate ourselves through quality, flexibility of options and our shaftless technology, which has not been brought to Brazil by these companies. We have an excellent press which is half the price of Gidue's, for example.'

Based in the town of Sorocaba, just outside São Paulo, Etirama has installed over 3,000 machines in around 50 countries. Aided by recently increased representation in the UK, India and throughout Latin America, the company sells around 120 per year. Etirama also has distributors in France, Poland and Russia.

At Labelexpo Europe last year, Etirama launched its 6-color Flexowine press, which was subsequently purchased by companies in Latin America, Western Europe and Africa. The press can print in widths of 160, 250 and 400mm, and comprises of a central drum of 800mm in diameter. There is an independent varnish applicator that can also be used as a seventh color for overprinting.

The Flexowine is equipped with a triple die cutting station, an online slitter and rewinder, and a UV dryer. Optional accessories include, amongst others, a laminator unit, cold foiling, corona treatment, and automatic tension control.

The company exports 50 percent of its presses – a figure that has risen by 10 percent in the last eighteen months.

TOP: L-r: commercial director Ronnie Schröter and technical manager Edson Pantarotti

BELOW: Superflex Elite from Etirama

THE S-COMBAT press at Mack Color

MARCOS ROSSI, director, Mack Color

and have been impressed with its quick changeover and the agility with which you can work the machine.

'It is also a big advantage to have 24 hour technical support, as opposed to just sales representation.'

Mack Color's S-Combat is an 8-color, full UV machine. Sixty percent of the company's business is in food labeling, while the cosmetics, pharmaceutical and promotional sectors take up the rest. The company has 180 employees working in a 4,000 square meter facility. Mack Color will move into a new 10,000 square meter factory, currently under construction, in 2010.

Rossi built the company up gradually in the 1980s and 1990s, until a flurry of investment from 1998. Five Comco presses were installed, and followed two years later by two Gallus letterpress machines. 'We began to understand the need for quality and innovation in the market,' says Rossi. 'New technologies, for example, were important. Our credibility rose as we bought machines which satisfied our customers.'

Rossi visited Labelexpo Europe in 2005 with Comprint, which introduced him to the HP ws 4050. Rossi bought one during the show, and a second just 90 days later. An AB Graphic Digicon finishing line and a Nilpeter 9-color FB-Line flexo machine were purchased at the same time. 'We then developed a finishing line with AB Graphic with flatbed hot stamping and die-cutting – the first in Latin America,' reports Rossi.

Rossi has high hopes for the future for digital in Brazil, but says that does not preclude further investment with Gidue. 'Digital is the future for the Brazilian market, and we are looking at buying another HP press. But we are also thinking of buying a second Gidue S-Combat, which is excellent for this market. It has surpassed all our expectations – you can reach offset quality with this machine and a good pre-press system. In Brazil, companies which don't invest in new technology will not survive: the market here is growing rapidly.'

MARK ANDY APPOINTS LATIN AMERICA SALES MANAGER

Mark Andy has increased its focus on Latin America by appointing a sales manager for the region. John Cavey, who was brought up in Brazil and speaks fluent Portuguese, has been with the company for six years and brings over 20 years of industrial equipment expertise to the role.

Cavey will manage Mark Andy's 11 regional distributors, offering full application and equipment support. 'Face to face contact makes a huge impact with converters in Latin America,' he says. 'Having direct contact with someone from the "home office" provides a much higher level of commitment to those converters.'

Mark Andy reports increased interest from companies in Peru and Chile, while the US free trade agreement with Colombia led to the installation of over ten machines in that country last year. Mark Andy has sold seven presses into Brazil so far in 2008.

The company admits it has been considering manufacturing in Brazil. 'There has been a surge of interest in flexo in the country, but there are three barriers to market for us at the moment: converters prefer to deal in their local currency; tariffs are very high for manufacturers who import; and customers are looking for quick financing solutions,' says Cavey. 'But I see a big opportunity. We are focused on overcoming these barriers and there are many companies eager to buy our machinery. The easier the purchasing process is, the more companies will buy.

'One angle we continue to explore is manufacturing in Brazil. We looked at several operations with a view of creating a partnership. But, based on our studies, the start-up and operational costs, quality control and revenue benefits just do not currently reflect a solid business decision. Legalities and other complexities with importation companies also create new challenges that may divert focus away from supporting the converter. We are going to continue to look at Brazil as well as other parts of the world.'

But Cavey does not anticipate that a lack of local manufacturing will impede the company's progress in the market: 'We have always been challenged by import duty, but we have competed successfully with local manufacturers due to our leadership and quality.

'With other global competition moving limited operations into Brazil, the landscape may be changing. My job is to push the right solutions, both short term and long term. A decision is likely to be made soon for future plans in the Brazil region.'

Mark Andy also says it is benefiting from the value of the US dollar, leading to an increase in demand for the company's equipment.

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NILPETER TARGETS NEW AUDIENCE IN BRAZIL

The Nilpeter customers visited by Labels & Labeling provide an excellent cross-section of the company's activities in Brazil: Art Chik is a medium-sized converter which has benefited from its proximity to Nilpeter's manufacturing facility; Goldlabel, a smaller company, has been able to boost its range and productivity dramatically following the installation of an FBR-Line; while Prakolar, one of Brazil's leading label printers, has installed an EMO offset machine.

Nilpeter's operation in Brazil is a joint venture with A. Ulderigo Rossi, a manufacturer of paper folding and cutting machines. Rossi's factory of 6,000 square meters is located 400km from São Paulo in Ribeirão Preto, one of Brazil's largest interior cities. The company employs 55 people and has over seventy years of manufacturing experience.

The decision to build a modified version of the company's FB-Line – the FBR-Line – was taken in 2004. The project began in 2006 and the first machine was installed in early 2007. Nilpeter do Brasil's sales and support office, with ten employees headed up by managing director Rubens Wilmers, is based in São Paulo.

Nilpeter's operation in Brazil allows the company to avoid paying the country's steep import taxes, but its activities go further than that. The company already boasts an excellent presence amongst Brazil's top label printers, which can afford to purchase expensive machinery from Europe. But by producing its FBR-Line in Brazil, Nilpeter can now supply to much smaller converters, which otherwise might not have been in the market for its machinery. When visiting a company such as Goldlabel, covered in more detail later, the benefit to the market is tangible.

Rubens Wilmers is a former employee of Comprint – the company now representing Gidue – and he recruited an ex-Comprint colleague, Claudio Ogawa, when Nilpeter do Brasil was formed.

'Rubens is probably the best salesman in this industry in Brazil,' says Ogawa. 'When he approached me I was very excited to return to the label industry.'

For Wilmers, Ogawa and the rest of the Nilpeter do Brasil team, expectations have been exceeded in the first 18 months of selling the FBR-Line. Ten machines have been installed; five more sales have been confirmed.

'Local manufacturing allows our customers to receive financial support, so there is less risk for them,' says Ogawa. 'Importation costs would be 40-50 percent of the press. Some clients don't have the need, or the capital, for an FA-Line machine from Denmark, so we have brought a new option to them. This technology can push them up a rung in the ladder.

RIBEIRÃO PRETO

Ulderigo Rossi dedicates 40 percent of its facility to its partnership with Nilpeter, and can manufacture around ten machines per year. There was an initial learning curve, with the first machine taking around six months to complete, but now presses can be turned around in 40 days.

'It is a new technology for us,' says Rossi's production manager Luis Carvalho. 'But it is a real plus for us to be able to manufacture these machines: the deal has helped our business to grow. Though the technology is different, after the first machine we were able to adjust. Now we have been doing it for two years, so there are no problems.'

The FBR-Line is essentially the same machine as the FB 2500 model which Nilpeter manufacturers in the US – the only difference is the lack of the quick-open cassette found in the original. The FBR-Line is full UV, comes with relam-delam units and hot stamping, and prints a width of 10.75 inches (273mm) at speeds of up to 228 meters (750 feet) per minute. The machines sold thus far are 8-color, with the exception of one 9-color.

Ninety percent of the presses' parts are sourced in Brazil: some, such as the gears, are imported. 'Our aim is for 100 percent of the machine to be manufactured in Brazil: it is a question of finding the right suppliers,' says Claudio Ogawa.

The converter which bought the first FBR-Line press is a short drive from the Rossi facility in a 1,500 square meter facility which houses 35 employees. Art Chik installed the machine in April last year, and director Edson Antonio Bianchi believes their proximity to be a 'great advantage'. 'We would not have been in the market for a Nilpeter machine without it manufacturing locally,' he admits. 'But now we have an agreement that any improvements made to their machines will also be made to ours.' Art Chik is undergoing an overhaul of its technology and processes in order to increase productivity and enter markets such as pharmaceuticals. The company is being certified to ISO standards and has altered the layout of its machinery to streamline processes.

'By improving sales and the factory layout, and implementing ISO, we can double our productivity,' says Bianchi. 'It is an 18-month project, but we will see the benefits before that.'

Twenty percent of the company's business is in agricultural food products, but Art Chik's FBR-Line is mainly dedicated to printing cosmetic labels. Three of its eight colors are UV, but the company is updating this number to five. As well as relam-delam units, the machine has cold foil capabilities. Bianchi reports that one particular job, a film label for food packaging, can only be handled by the Nilpeter press.'We have been impressed with the machine's tension control and register,' he says. 'Investment in the press has allowed us to enter more sophisticated markets. It is important to have the right technology.'

The bulk of Art Chik's work is printed flexo, but it also has offset, silkscreen and letterpress machines available. An 8-color modular press from Etirama was bought at the same time as the FBR-Line. The company produces 70,000 square meters of labels per month, and has a sister company dedicated to thermal transfer ribbons.

L-R: Moisés Lima of Goldlabel with the FBR-Line; Luis Carvalho of Rossi; Nilpeter's Claudio Ogawa and Karina Spina of Prakolar

GOLDLABEL STEPS UP

At the time of L&L's interview, Goldlabel, based in São Paulo, had been running its FBR-Line for two months. A company of 30 employees in a factory of 600 square meters, it is dedicated to food, cosmetics and pharmaceutical labels. The Nilpeter press joins 1-, 2- and 4-color machines from local manufacturers Etirama and GGS, and a hot-stamping and die-cutting machine from Brazilian company Turo.

The FBR-Line, therefore, is Goldlabel's first press of over four colors. Quality control manager Moisés Lima says that it was necessary to invest in a modular machine to keep up with customer requirements. 'The demand is for increasingly elaborate labels. We were supplying simple 1-color labels to a large cosmetics client, while more elaborate labels were being supplied by converters such as Mack Color and Prakolar. We decided to purchase the Nilpeter press to try to compete. But we wouldn't have been able to buy this machine from Europe. We got financial support from the government. It is a great advantage that the machine was manufactured in Brazil.'

Lima reports that the addition of the press has resulted in new business as well as better jobs from existing customers. 'We can now produce labels of greater quality at an increased level of productivity,' he says. 'We are using better quality inks, too, which we couldn't before without UV drying.

The machine has opened new possibilities to us in terms of new sectors and clients. We can't necessarily compete with the bigger local converters when it comes to productivity, but we can say that we have the same technology as them, and can achieve the same quality. We can also go after these new clients knowing that we have local technical support.'

A LONG-TERM BENEFIT

The number is machines installed by Nilpeter and Gidue in the first 18 months of their manufacturing in the country is testament to the growth of the Brazilian market. Both press manufacturers have met or exceeded their own expectations, and the speed of both companies' sales is increasing. MPS, too, is benefiting from an increased regional presence.

PRAKOLAR UNVEILS MO PRESS

Brazilian converter Prakolar hosted an open house in June to show off its new MO 3300 from Nilpeter. Over one hundred visitors from clients and suppliers watched a promotional label job in action on the 8-color machine. The MO press is a combination rotary offset machine. Five offset colors are fixed, while three flexo colors can be interchanged as necessary with silkscreen and hot stamping. The press is servo-driven and fully UV.

It is Prakolar's first experience of offset, with the MO joining a fleet of five Mark Andy 2200s and 4150s of six, eight and nine colors. The company also has five Rotoflex inspection rewinders and a Newfoil machine for hot stamping and die cutting. Prakolar's focus has historically been on industrial pharmaceutical labels, for both local and international markets, but it has interest in food and promotional labels too. 'We work at least a little in all markets,' says Karina Spina, marketing and new business coordinator.

Spina reports that the motivation behind the purchase of the Nilpeter MO press was greater focus on cosmetics and food labels. 'We always want to stay at the cutting edge,' she says, 'hence the purchase of the Nilpeter. Its modular form has big advantages, and gives great flexibility to be able to offer different products.'

Given that much of its pharma work is short run, and Prakolar's machinery is more suitable to long runs, the company is looking into digital technology. 'We know the level of the market, and there is an increased need to have different types of technology and options to offer,' says sales manager Rafael Buglione. 'Digital is a recent technology that is still on a learning curve. It has deficiencies. We are known in our market for our consistency of quality, and digital can have problems maintaining color standards. But is evolving, and it is likely that in the future we will have to invest in this technology.'

Prakolar has been dedicated to the self-adhesive label sector since its foundation in 1967. In the mid-1990s, when it began to purchase Mark Andy machines, Prakolar grew by an astonishing 253 percent in a four-year period, and is now one of Brazil's leading converters. It employs 100 people and operates three shifts, six days a week, in a facility of 5,000 square meters.

By adapting their approach to the Latin American market – whether through new manufacturing or increased presence of sales and technical support – these press manufacturers are supplying technology in a way that caters to the needs of the local converters. A large pool of companies now has easier access to a wider range of technology – something which can only benefit the market as a whole.

It can be argued that Gidue and Nilpeter's manufacturing operations are currently more a reflection of the financial complexities of the Brazilian economy than representative of an industry-wide shift in attitude towards local manufacturing. But if import taxes are just one motivation for local manufacturing in a foreign country, there are others, and not just in Latin America. Converters' profitability is everywhere under pressure and suppliers need to find the best way of delivering technological expertise locally and economically - and to sell to converters which have not traditionally been in the market for their products. It will therefore be interesting to see the long term impact of Gidue and Nilpeter's local manufacturing in Brazil, and whether this model will increasingly be replicated in other growing markets.

Combining print possibilities

NIKLAS OLSSON, brand manager, Flint Group Narrow Web, looks at what can be achieved with the best of today's combination print and ink technology

Today's narrow web presses are highly versatile machine tools, allowing converters to combine all the known print technologies with in-line finishing and converting in one pass.

In the printed example opposite, we at Flint Group Narrow Web wanted to show what can be achieved with the best of today's combination print and ink technology.

For a job which demanded multiple passes through the press along with the highest quality combination printing, we selected a Gallus RCS 330. We wanted to show what combinations were possible on a narrow web press, and to be able to compare the two fastest and most versatile print techniques – UV offset and UV flexo – all in one job.

Fasson supplied the double-sided label with ultra-clear adhesive and transparent backing, using a clear PET 30 micron. The PP50 Top Trans substrate is a low calliper, biaxially-orientated blown face film, offering environmental benefits due to its reduced label weight.

The printed piece contains UV offset and UV flexo, over-printed with UV screen white, which is then over-printed with UV flexo inks and HolographINK – a decorative method for applying holographic patterns using the cold foil principle. Last but not least, certain parts were over- varnished using a UV flexo varnish specially developed to prevent – or at least reduce – the static chargeability of synthetic substrates. Sheeting was done off-line to better control static build-up.

"As one of the fastest growing print methods, UV flexo is still developing in versatility and print quality"

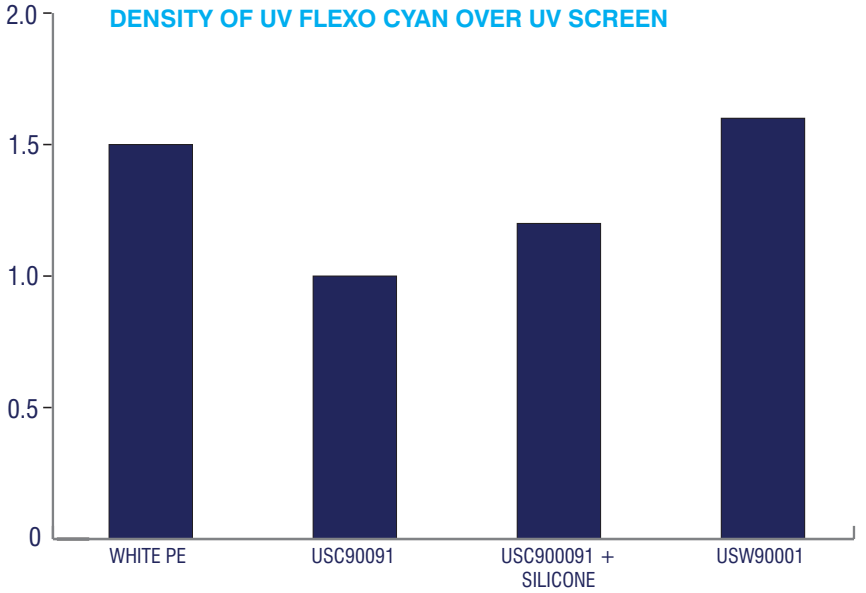
UV OFFSET

First run we printed UV offset using Lithocure 3 G, a universal UV offset ink developed especially for multi-substrate usage. The design was challenging, as it contains both full coverage and ultra-fine vignettes – a unique capability of UV offset technology. The ink needs to exhibit excellent printability in order to manage the whole spectrum of solid to ultra-fine dots, and this on synthetic substrate. While it is important to measure the density and dot gain in the printed area, it is just as important is to ensure that the ink/water solution is kept clean so that there is no ink transfer – so-called 'toning' – to the non-printed area. This is a crucial aspect of on-press control, as unless the ink and water balance is 100 percent, there will be unwanted discoloration of the non-printing area.

A good UV offset ink will maintain a fine and stable emulsion throughout the run, with the fountain solution acting as a coolant, and helping to maintain stable viscosity, control solid density, and minimize dot gain. But the press operator still needs to formulate the initial 'recipe' carefully, and monitor any changes in the ink emulsion levels. Coarse or unstable emulsions can give excessive dot gain, tinting and scumming, ink piling on the rollers, and poor gloss levels. The variables with UV offset print are many, especially compared to UV flexo. The key to high-quality, consistent narrow web UV offset printing is unquestionably to map and understand all the variables within the process, and then to maintain an optimal ink/water balance in the press.

Repro, plate type and production process (baked/unbaked), blanket (type, shore hardness, compressibility) – in other words, the basic hardware for the job – can have a major effect on print quality. Our own experience suggests that accurate fingerprinting and plate correction are essential prior to press set-up, with pre-sensitized, baked aluminum plates preferred. Attention also needs to be paid to the quality of the blanket's top coat – EPDM is normally used – which needs to give good chemical stability and resist swelling.

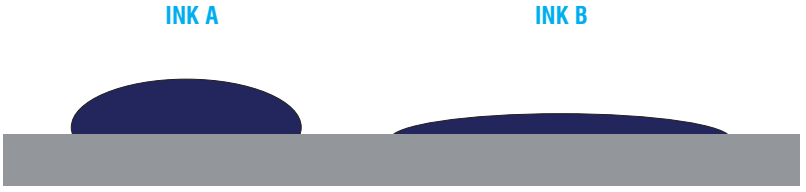
Water type – hardness, pH – and quantity are obviously critical, as are the characteristics of the chosen fountain solution in terms of buffer



capacity, conductivity, and formulation. Print speed, pressroom humidity (which can affect the stability of the fountain solution, and should ideally be maintained at 50-60 percent RH), substrate hardness, and the rollers, which must be EPDM and UV-compatible, are also influences on the key component of the printed image: the inks.

THE HEART OF COMBINATION PRINT – ROTARY SILKSCREEN

To enable the 'front print' to be 100 percent visible, a no see-through UV screen white was applied on top of the UV offset and UV flexo inks. It's a true challenge for a screen ink. First it has to have a perfect lay on top of synthetic substrates and UV offset ink – and at the same time be 100 percent over-printable. The ink film weights required on a substrate with these different print processes are roughly as illustrated on bottom of page 64.



REQUIRED INK FILM WEIGHT IN GRAMS/SQM (MICRONS)

We chose CombiWhite as it offers great opacity, excellent cure capabilities and perfect over-printability. Obvious benefits are improved color strength of the ink layer below, and no-to-minimal dot gain, irrespective of print method chosen.

The perfect screen white requires a low enough surface tension to enable it to wet the surface of, for example, a synthetic label material. However, the surface energy needs to be carefully calibrated: too low a reading after curing would create problems for the UV flexo ink used for over-printing and make it difficult for it to adhere to the surface of the screen ink. This can simply be demonstrated with this example above:

Ink A has a higher surface tension than the underlying substrate/ink layer. This results in poor coverage, mottling and sometimes, bad adhesion. The solution would be to lower the surface tension of ink A, or to increase surface tension of the substrate/ink layer.

Ink B has a lower surface tension than ink A, or the substrate/ink layer under Ink B has a higher surface tension, and therefore the ink will wet the surface better.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST – UV FLEXO

As one of the fastest growing print methods, UV flexo is still developing in versatility and print quality. With the latest developments in anilox roller engravings, ink layers can be controlled better, enabling finer screening in repro and plate making. The development of digital plates is pushing the boundaries in what line counts are possible, allowing very fine dots to be reproducible and stable throughout longer runs. Added to this you need the ultra-strong inks currently available – like the Flexocure chosen in this case. These are delivering stunning color densities in combination with ultra-fine dot reproduction and neither dot gain nor pinholes in solid printing. All this is possible through optimized rheology, which creates improved print quality in terms of low dot gain and crisp text and line work, while delivering excellent color strength.

The UV flexo inks must be formulated in the optimum strengths to match the different types of engraved anilox metering rolls – particularly for high definition print with ultra-fine engraved anilox rollers. With excellent hold-out on cast-coated and machine-coated papers, plus very good adhesion on a wide range of synthetic substrates, Flexocure is highly versatile for all types of UV flexo printing, including combination printing with rotary screen.

ICING ON THE CAKE – CREATING EFFECTS FOR MAXIMUM SHELF IMPACT

The final piece of this puzzle was to create a stunning decorative effect which can be expanded into a security feature. The choice fell on HolographINK – a method using ink and holographic foil, where the holographic image is transferred over the ink part in the UV curing process.

These inks convey various messages to the final consumer. The 'hidden' message is what is described as 'shelf appeal' – making the product stand out on the supermarket shelf. This can be via bold graphics, bright colors, fluorescents or metallic shades. But more and more frequently we receive a request for 'effect' inks. This is something leading end users are more and more aware of, as they see in their focus groups that the consumer perceives different values even in a product which simply has different color packaging.

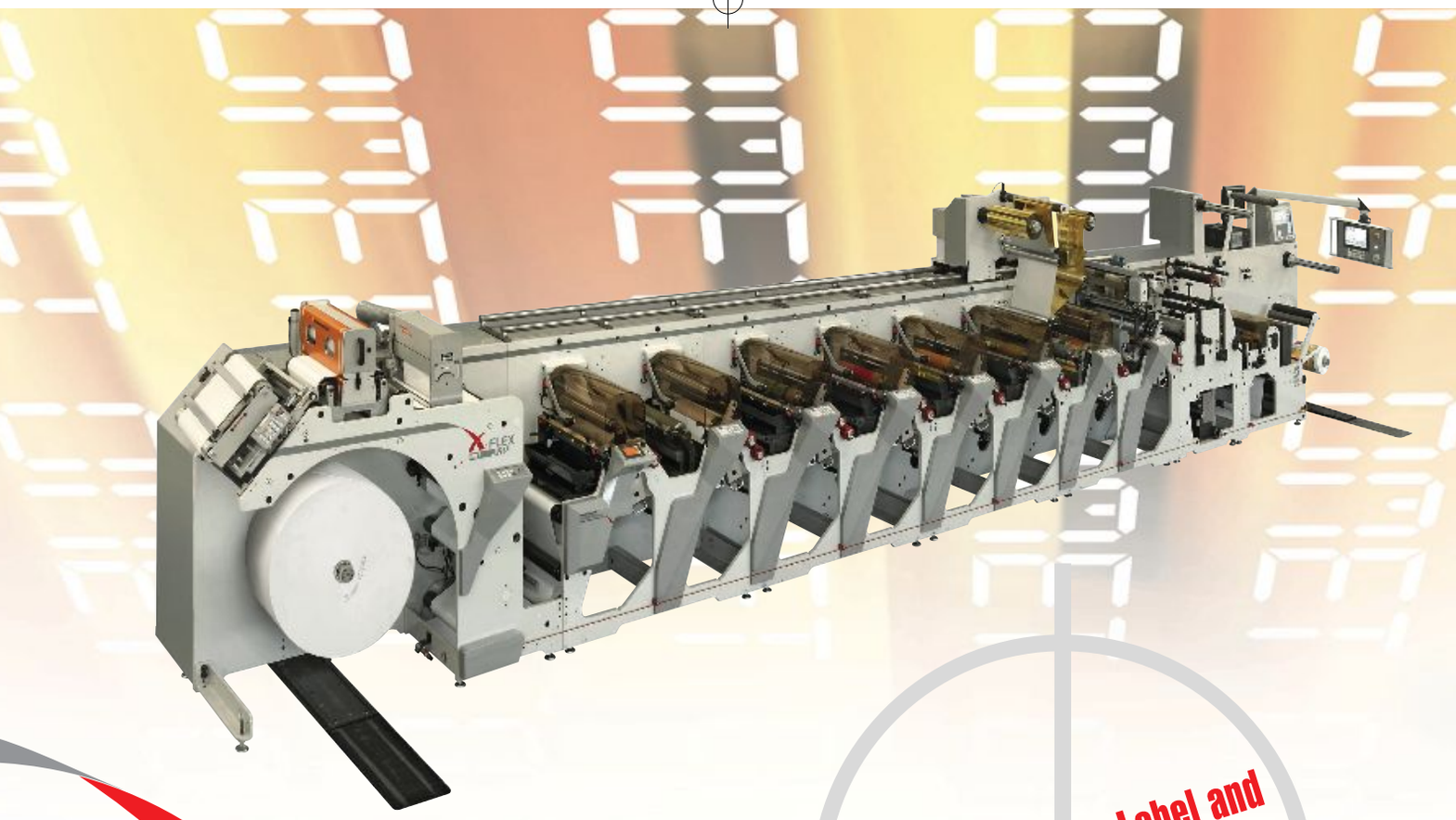
INKS NEED TO PERFORM BEYOND THE PRINTING PROCESS

Inks for today's applications have to perform beyond the printing process. This became evident in the planning stage, as we needed the print to be delivered sheeted. In this process, minimum static is essential, as the sheets need to be picked one-by-one.

The solution was obviously to use anti-static bars in all processing equipment, and in addition to this we applied a UV flexo varnish developed for in-mold labels. In the molding process it is absolutely crucial for the labels to be picked one-by-one, and through our experience in this area we had a UV varnish formulated to give full gloss, good chemical resistance as well as full anti-static properties. It exhibits low static COF as well – meaning high slip!

CONCLUSION:

These are just some of the possibilities available in narrow web. We hope this has opened up new possibilities for some of you and this printed sheet inspires people to push the boundaries in narrow web.



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Innovation With Passion

SCHREINER has production operations in Munich, Dusseldorf and the US

Schreiner shines

THE SCHREINER GROUP is a model of award-winning, high tech innovation. Mike Fairley talks with the Group's managing shareholder, Helmut Schreiner, about its journey to global success

HELMUT Schreiner, chairman and CEO of the Schreiner Group

The Schreiner Group is today one of the world's leading award-winning high-tech niche groups at the forefront of self-adhesive labels, self-adhesive functional components, marking technology and systems solutions, with an annual turnover in excess of US $160m (100m Euros).

The Group has evolved from a small father and son printing business specializing in embossed voucher stamps and labels to a global business with sales operations in over 30 countries.

The company was initially founded by Helmut Schreiner's father, an engineer, in 1951. He built printing machinery and also found a way of producing cutting dies. 'I joined him as an apprentice at the age of 13, attending evening classes and working during the day on a Keese press producing anniversary labels,' recalls Helmut Schreiner. 'By 1954, I was producing 4-color self-adhesive labels on a specially adapted seal press, as well as producing special labels for architects on transparent material. It was from this beginning that the Schreiner Group of today has eventually evolved.'

By 1987, Etiketten Schreiner occupied a 3,500 square meter factory and was turning over some 19.3 million euros. It was only in the 1990s that the current Schreiner Group operation was formed to start specializing in niche, added-value high-tech markets. Today, the company is a 100 million euro business with five production operations near Munich, Dusseldorf and a new one in the USA.

SCHREINER MEDIPHARM OPENS US FACILITY

Schreiner MediPharm recently opened its first US production facility just outside New York City, in Blauvelt, New York.

The 50,000 square-foot facility features a variety of screen and flexo printing technologies and will be ISO-certified as soon as possible. The company will produce a product line that includes specialty peel-off labels, combination hanger labels, brand protection and RFID solutions, expanded content labels as well as functional syringe labels.

Gene Dul, president of Schreiner MediPharm, L.P., said: 'It is with great pride that Schreiner MediPharm opens its new Blauvelt, New York production facility. We are happy to offer Schreiner's award-winning manufacturing expertise, labeling innovations and beginning-to-end customer support to the North American healthcare industry directly from an American location.'

RECORD GROWTH

The Schreiner Group has achieved record growth rates in recent years – against many of the world's economic trends – from a clearly defined product and service portfolio focused on specific markets and customer segments.

The Group is actually an umbrella brand for six different divisions, each focused on a specific market. 'This lets us achieve the agility and powerful performance capabilities of each individual division, yet still retain the effectiveness, synergies and connecting elements of the overall Group umbrella,' explains Helmut Schreiner. 'This means that customers can draw on a wide range of products and services from a one-stop resource.'

The Schreiner Group is also a certified development partner to many leading corporations in sectors such as pharmaceuticals and general engineering,

and works closely with these customers to develop added-value innovations that help them to simplify their processes and to reduce costs. Group divisions work together on projects and applications for customers, and can call on a central Group R&D central function. This structure appears to work extremely well, with each division acting as an individual cost/profit center enterprise. Group exports are over 50 percent of turnover.

THE DIVISIONS IN MORE DETAIL INCLUDE:

• PROTECH

Of the Schreiner Group's six divisions, the largest division is Schreiner ProTech, which develops and produces industrial labeling solutions and functional films for engineering industries; in particular for the automotive, telecommunications and electronics industries.

'For many requirements in these industries we already have fully developed products which we can readily adapt to a specific application, while for new tasks we will develop a pinpointed solution that meets individual requirements and specifications,' says Helmut Schreiner. 'In addition, we are certified to DIN ISO 9001, TS 16948, QS 9000, VDA 6.1, as well as EMAS and DIN EN ISO 14001, the international environmental management standard.'

The division's support to the telecommunications industry includes areas such as sealing, insulating, shielding, sensor technology and production logistics control. In the electronics sector it mainly delivers custom-tailored products that meet minimum space requirements, while solutions for the automotive industry include such areas as marking, production control, quality assurance or OEM parts protection against product piracy.

• MEDIPHARM

Next is Schreiner MediPharm, which focuses on products for medical technology and pharmaceuticals. The division is well known worldwide to the largest pharmaceutical companies for the development and manufacture of innovative labels and innovative solutions that enable an easier and safer use of drugs. Specific solutions offered to the pharmaceutical industry include labels that indicate changes in temperature, labels to protect against forgery, manipulation, tampering or re-importing, labels for clinical drug testing samples, logistics labels and medical tapes.

LASER-ENGRAVING of labels

• PROSECURE

For customers requiring anti-counterfeiting solutions for authenticity and value protection, there is Schreiner ProSecure, which offers labels with a variety of solutions where security is concerned, such as the counterfeit-proof Advantage-Label, Micro-Code marks or MasterSeal closures. Applications for ProSecure products are as diverse as PIN protection on credit cards or cell phones, tamper-evidence on product packs, document seals, and security films for photos in passports or ID cards.

"The Schreiner Group has achieved record growth rates in recent years – against many of the world's economic trends – from a clearly defined product and service portfolio focused on specific markets and customer segments"

• LOGIDATA

Schreiner LogiData is a division that specializes in data carriers, transponders and identification systems based on barcoding and RFID technology, so ensuring that customers' goods get to the right place at the right time – 'with optimized processes, lower costs, better quality, higher security, documentation, identification, tracking and tracing – as well as inspection and monitoring,' says Helmut Schreiner.

• SCHREINER SYSTEMS AND SCHREINER LABELS

Customers requiring consultancy support, development of specifications, delivery and installation of hardware or software components, can make use of the services of Schreiner Systems, while Schreiner Labels produces labels for product marking and advertising.

• VARIOLIGHT

The most recent of the Group divisions is Schreiner VarioLight, which develops and produces high-end electroluminescent (EL) systems for industrial applications.

'Light based on electroluminescence technology offers concrete benefits for processing as well as integration into existing assemblies and, in this field, we are a quality supplier certified according to the strict standards of the automotive industry,' says Helmut Schreiner. Applications include glove compartment lighting, gear shift knob lighting, ash tray lighting, lighting of door handles and finger plates, A/C panel lighting and floor lighting.

SKILLED PERSONNEL

All the Schreiner divisions seem to be at the forefront of high-tech innovation. This raises the question of how to

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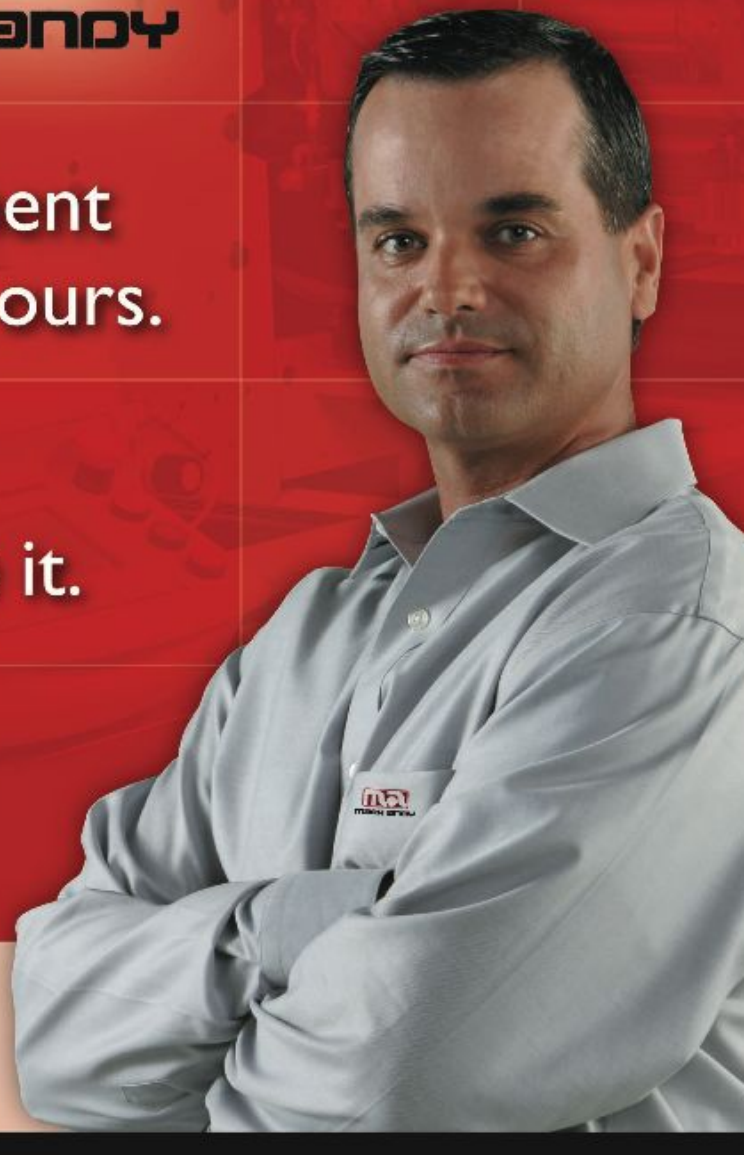

Byron Bievenue
Senior Manufacturing Engineer

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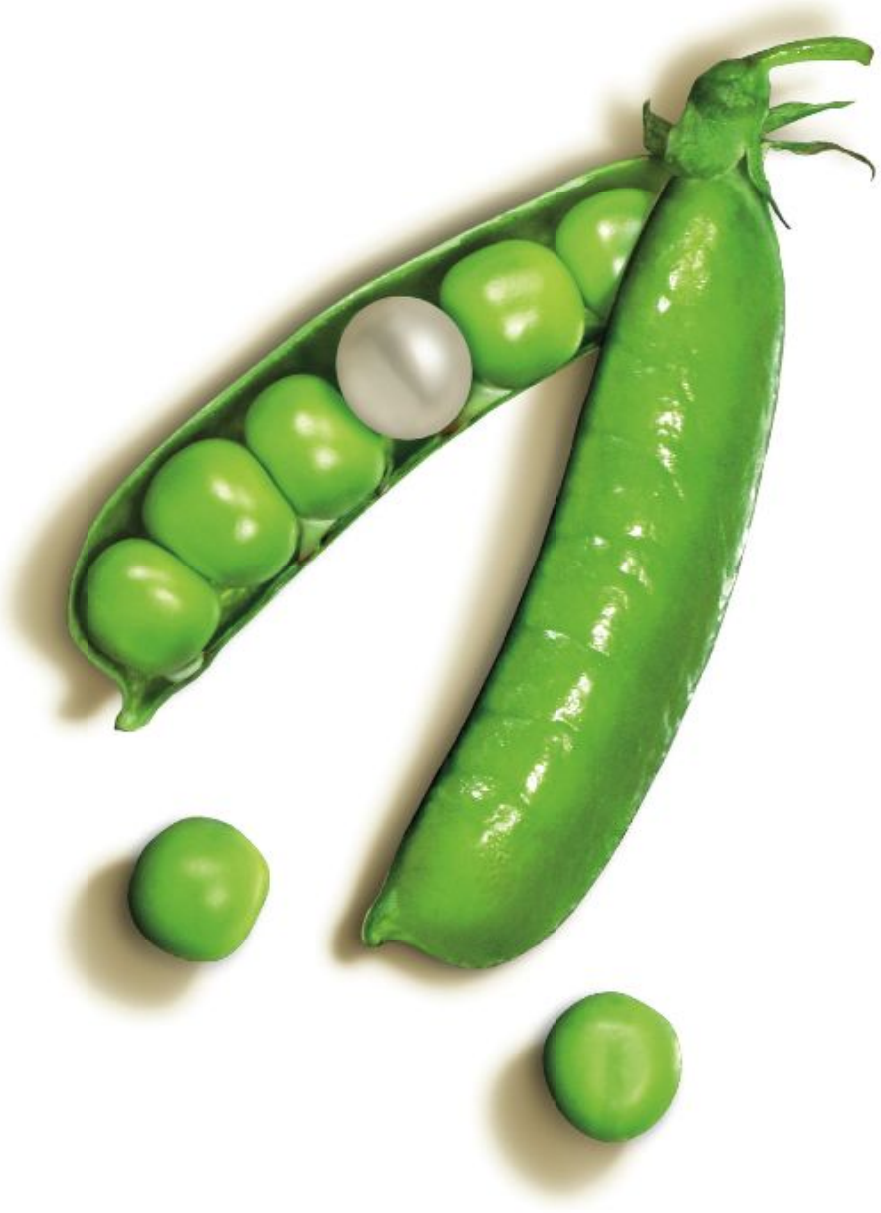

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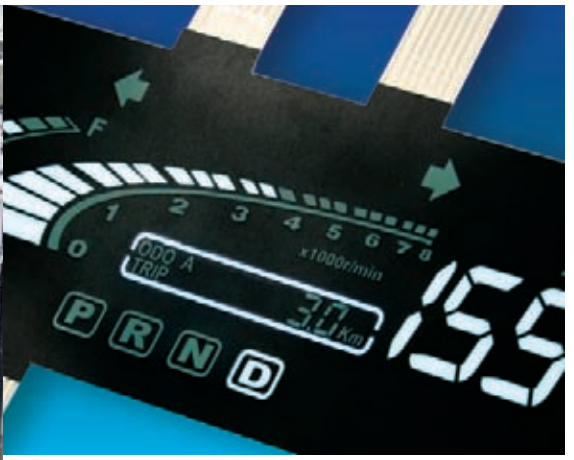


L-R: Ko-Pack press; Vario-Light automotive instrument panels produced at Schreiner

"All the ladies in the Schreiner Group even receive f owers on Valentine's Day. With such a working environment and facilities there is a very low staff turnover"

obtain and retain the necessary skilled personnel to develop such leading-edge technology solutions.

'The Group employs around 600 people and they all are regarded as key factors in our success and as co-entrepreneurs,' notes Helmut Schreiner. 'Every manager delegates tasks, as well as the responsibility for achieving the respective objectives, to their employees. All the managers complete a professional coaching program and are rated by their employees every two years.'

Continues Schreiner, 'We also believe that employees can only make a valuable contribution in a positive environment. To this end we attach great importance to optimum working conditions. All operating areas are air-conditioned; workplaces are ergonomically tested; work rooms are like living rooms; every building is designed for a happy environment, while performance is rewarded by success-orientated remuneration systems and intensive advanced training programs.'

The company also offers facilities for exercise – including Pilates classes, for example – and provides company flats for new employees, apprentices and other employees until they can afford to buy their own homes. All the ladies in the Schreiner Group even receive flowers on Valentine's Day. With such a working environment and facilities there is a very low staff turnover.

The Schreiner group has dedicated programs to keep employees up with the latest technology in this high-tech business environment

'We see ourselves as an upwardly mobile company in which all employees are involved in a continuous process of learning and improvement,' notes Helmut Schreiner. 'We operate a comprehensive advanced training program and have our own advanced education institution – the Schreiner Academy – which offers around 150 training programs as well as more than 500 online seminars. In total, we are looking at more than 2,800 employee training days in 2007.'

Additionally, every employee is expected to 'keep their eyes open and to actively contribute and implement suggestions for improvement'. In 2007, more than 5,800 Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) suggestions were successfully implemented.

APPRENTICE PROGRAM

There is a comprehensive apprenticeship training program within the Group, 'both to secure the company's future and to honor the company's commitment to social responsibility,' explains Helmut Schreiner. 'The number of training slots we offer has considerably increased in recent years and, in the current year, we have some 46 apprentices on three-year training schemes. Promoting young people has a high priority within the Group and, overall, the average age of all our 600 employees is just 36 years.'

The company also has a close co-operation with schools, technical colleges and universities, and provides 'trial apprenticeships', internships and support for students who are undertaking thesis work. In the past ten years, some 96 percent of former apprentices have been offered jobs.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental issues have become increasingly important in recent years, and Schreiner has worked hard to promote environmental conservation and sustainability.

'The Group has a very strong belief in conserving natural resources and promotes environmentally-conscious thinking and actions,' says Helmut Schreiner. 'All employees are expected to provide proof of being "friends of the environment" in their day-to-day activities.'

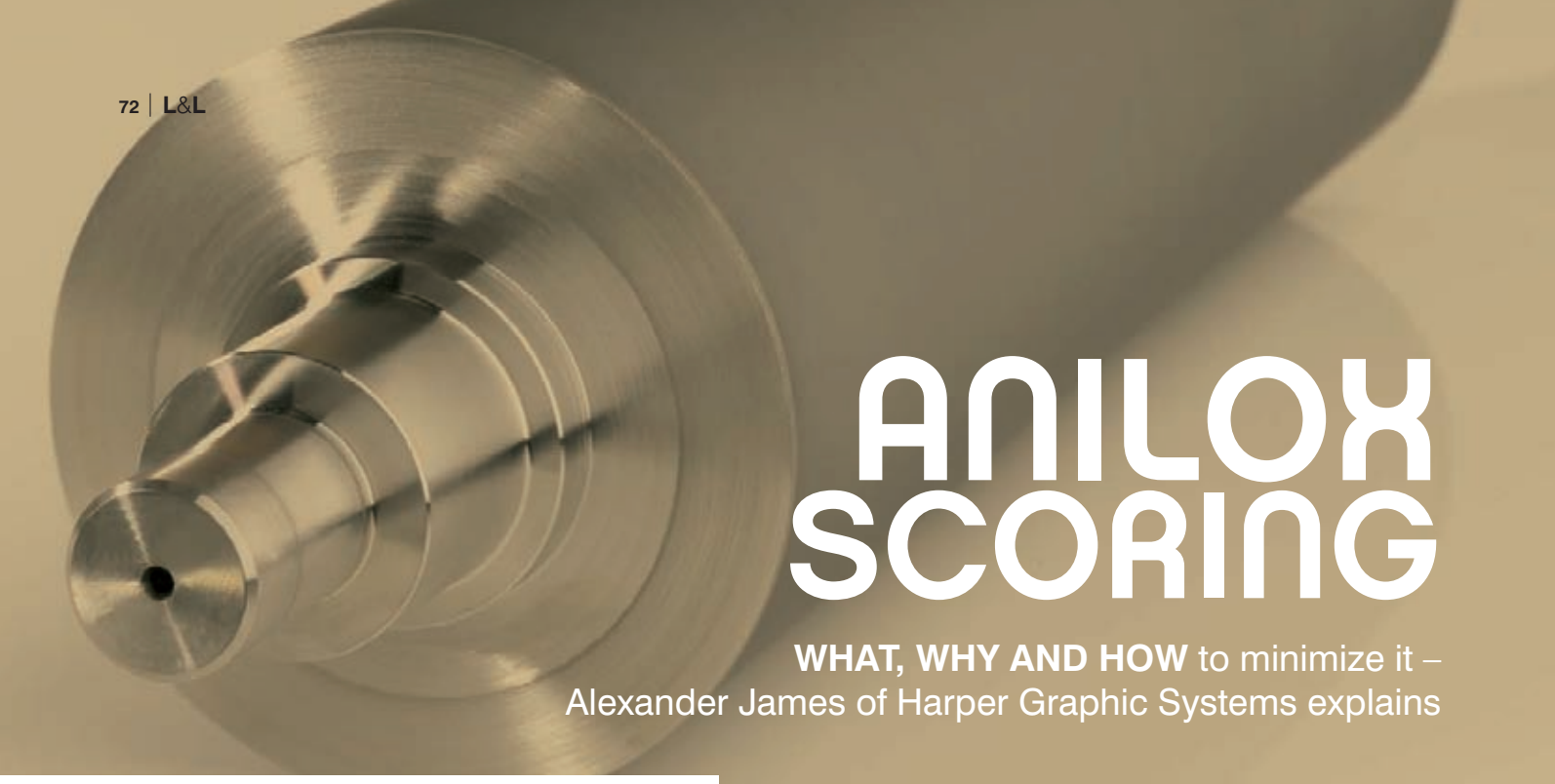
Environmental protection activities at Schreiner cover all areas of the organization and are considered in the concept design of facilities, machinery and technologies, during product development, recycling/use of waste materials, and in the daily work flow of every employee.

THE FUTURE

Having achieved this level of success as a Group, where does Helmut Schreiner see the company in five years time?

'My vision for the future is perhaps three-fold,' he explains. 'The process of generation changing is finished; we want to become even more professional at what we do; and, thirdly, we want to continue successfully and profitably growing each one of our current divisions.'

With the Group's dedicated employees, the ongoing vision of division success, and the commitment and investment behind the Group, Schreiner will continue to grow and profit in an ever-more global world.



ANILOX SCORING

WHAT, WHY AND HOW to minimize it – Alexander James of Harper Graphic Systems explains

Anilox scoring seems to be a never-ending challenge; it can occur immediately upon starting up a new operation, at other times it can appear suddenly, and at still other times it comes and goes, yet never seems to go away.

IN THIS ARTICLE WE'LL COVER THE FOLLOWING:

- What is anilox scoring?
- Why does it occur?
- How to minimize it

Regardless of the level of pressroom technology, anilox scoring can rear its head, and if left unchecked, it can become very costly.

WHAT IS ANILOX SCORING?

Anilox scoring is visible as thin circumferential lines on the surface on the anilox roll which quickly show up on the print surface. When particles become trapped between the doctor blade and the anilox, it's likely that the engraved cell walls and structure of the roll can be damaged or destroyed. Ideally, all particles are consumed in the inking system. However, trapped particles can accumulate, harden and eventually destroy the ceramic engraving. Although anilox ceramic is an extremely wear-resistant metal oxide, it is not impact-resistant or ductile.

There are two main types of score lines – deep gouging and light polishing. Deep gouging score lines initially appear as dark streaks, and quickly change to light streaks as the doctor blade wears into the area. Light polishing score lines are the most common and also show up as light streaks in the printed area. Light streaks are the result of a change in the cell walls of the engravings – a reduction in height – resulting in less ink volume in effected cells. A common misconception is that all streaks are score lines, but that is not so. 'Fill-in lines', also referred to as 'pick-up lines', are a group of cells that have become plugged with dried ink residue. Ink residue builds up and eventually gets ground into the anilox cells. The plugged cells contribute to a loss of volume in that area of the anilox roll, resulting in a loss of ink transfer to the polymer visible as light streaks on the printed substrate.

WHY DOES IT OCCUR?

The primary culprits of anilox score lines are doctor blade tip slivers. Slivers are various sizes of wire-looking metal shavings that wear off the tips of the doctor blade. Under normal setup, doctor blades should wear by shedding microscopic levels of metal particles that are consumed in the chamber system or extracted by the magnets in the ink filtration system. However, large slivers of metal can often get into the ink system when there is excessive pressure on the doctor blade. Excessive pressure forces the doctor blade backward and changes the contact angle away from the tip.

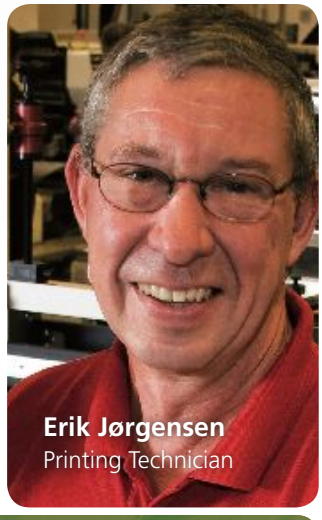
This change in pressure wears the blade in a location which will ultimately cause long tip slivers to shear away. Under normal setup with correct pressure, these wear away slowly in small particles. Instead these slivers get into the ink system, and if there is not a strong clean magnet in the ink loop, the slivers eventually get back into the chamber and become embedded in the back of the doctor blade against the anilox roll – resulting in a 'shoreline'.

Overhanging doctor blades – those that hang past the end of the anilox roll – can contribute to leaking, which in turn usually leads to additional doctor blade pressure in an effort to minimize the leaking. Excessive pressure will contribute to the wearing of a deep groove where the doctor blade overhangs, and that can cause large particles to wear off. It is best to keep the ends of the blades as flush with the ends of the roll as possible.

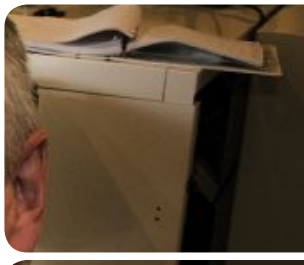
Additional culprits are the overuse of doctor blades, contaminants in the ink system, misaligned chambers, excessive chamber pressure and rough anilox surfaces. Over-used doctor blades require excessive pressure; excessive pressure leads to doctor blade slivers, and thus the undesirable cycle continues.

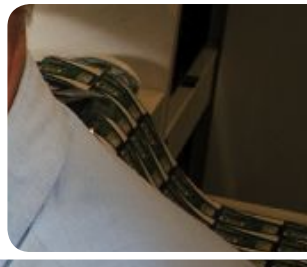
Contaminants can make their way into the ink system in many different ways. If the mixer is allowed to bottom out against the drum or metal bucket, it will generate metal shavings and flakes. The metal pads or metal scrapers used in cleaning can generate metal shavings that cling to the frames of the chambers and once back on the press, make their way into the ink system. Cleaning rags or roll covers are sometimes contaminated with metal particles, and when they come in contact with the anilox roll, the

P E O P L E T O P E O P L E



Erik Jørgensen
Printing Technician





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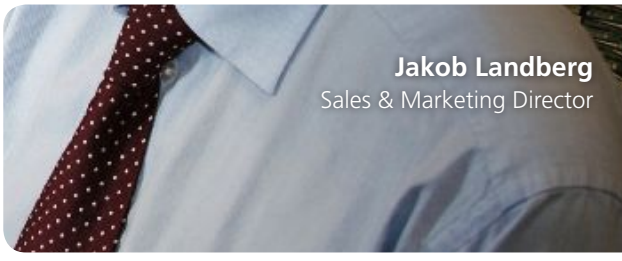

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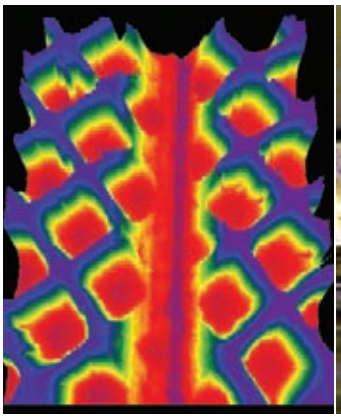
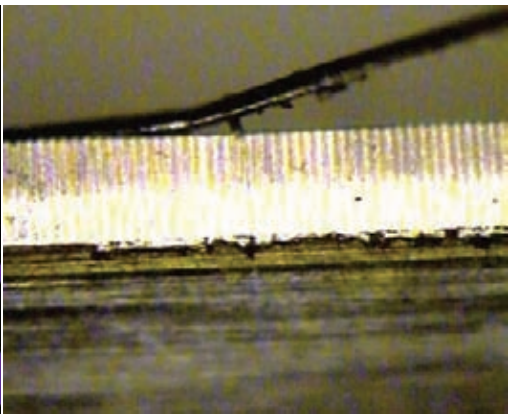


ABOVE: Magnification of a deep score line on the surface of an anilox role



ABOVE: Slivers of metal on the edge of a doctor blade

particles get back into the ink system.

Chambers will not always hold their alignment, so they should be checked on a regularly scheduled basis. Misaligned chamber frames can rub against the anilox roll, and the worn particles will go directly into the ink system. Inspect the doctor blade clamp frame nearest to the anilox roll; if there is a groove the same length as the anilox roll, chances are there will be scoring. The common way to compensate for a misaligned chamber is to add more pressure.

Another factor can be the surface of the anilox roll. If the surface is not properly prepared and the cell walls have excessively uneven heights, the ceramic can be sheared off and make its way into the ink system – or it can shear parts of the doctor blade, and these particles eventually collect behind the doctor blade, causing a score line. Anilox rolls with chipped ends can also contribute to scoring, especially if parts of the chips are sheared off by the doctor blade, or the doctor blade is worn off in chunks, adding metal particles to the ink system. A good cardinal rule is– to never rotate a dry anilox roll against the doctor blade.

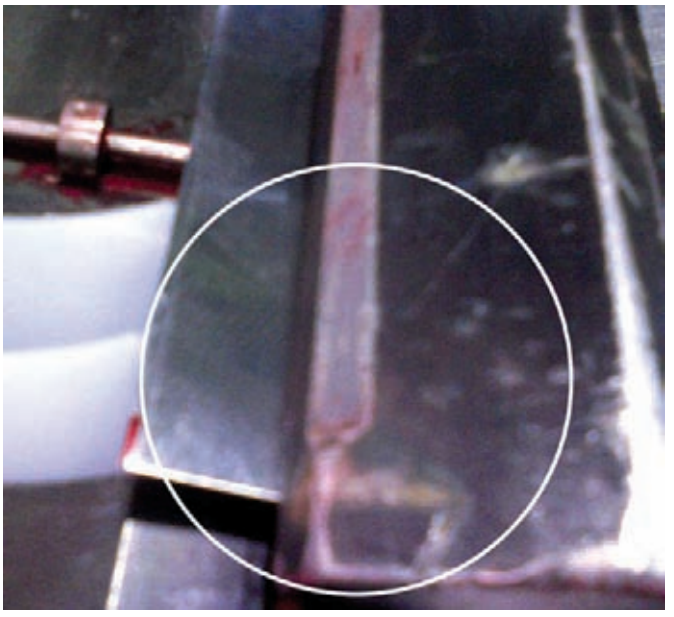
MINIMIZING ANILOX SCORING

The best way to minimize anilox scoring is a good care and maintenance program that includes the anilox roll, the chamber system, the ink department, the parts cleaning department and the pressroom environment. Additionally, adopt and maintain sound operational practices. Establish a checklist as part of your operation that includes the following:

- **Keep aniloxes clean** – establish scheduled, verifiable cleaning of anilox inventory. Anilox rolls should be inspected for cleanliness and if they need attention, should be cleaned as soon as possible
- **Fix aniloxes with chipped ends.** Chipped ends will wear chunks of metal particles from the doctor blade into the ink system
- **Establish monthly chamber maintenance.** Check chambers for vertical and horizontal alignment
- **Keep ink tubing and fittings cleaned** as part of the monthly maintenance program
- **Keep chambers aligned** – use a .005" plastic feeler gauge to test contact of the upper and lower blades to the anilox roll.

Do this without the installation of end seals

- **Inspect chamber frames for worn contact areas**
- **Establish a schedule for changing doctor blades** based on the amount of wear
- **Establish practices** to minimize excessive chamber loading pressure. Change seals when leaking starts, change blades on a regular schedule, and select the correct anilox roll for the right color instead of adding additional pressure to achieve color
- **Reset the chamber pressure** when changing to a new doctor blade. Unless adjusted, the chamber pressure will be set for a worn doctor blade and with a new blade the excessive pressure will quickly create metal slivers in the ink system
- **If 'stops' are available on your stations,** use them. This will prevent the chamber from contacting the anilox roll
- **Clean the sling guards and press area** to keep dried ink out of the ink system. Dirty sling guards will accumulate dried ink that wears grooves into the end rings. These worn particles will make their way into the ink system
- **Use the largest, strongest magnet possible:** a rare-earth neodymium magnet
- **Clean filters and magnets on a daily basis.** It takes less than a minute per station to remove and clean filters and magnets. That is time well spent
- **Check that ink mixers** do not rub against the drums or ink kits
- **Use filters and magnets** with work-off inks
- **Keep pumps in good operating condition**
- **Use good quality doctor blades**



MISALIGNED chamber frame can cause particle contamination

- **Select the correct doctor blade** tip for your application
- **Always tighten doctor blades** by starting from the center and going out
- **Cut doctor blades to correct length.** Doctor blades hanging over the length of the anilox roll will contribute to end seal leakage and will wear a deep groove on the contact area on the overhang
- Use the magnets from your filters to remove metal shavings

AVOID damage to anilox rolls by storing in a clean and well organized area

from shop floor towels, anilox covers or rags that come in contact with the anilox roll

- **Keep the press area clean**

The last point – 'keep the press area clean' – will reflect the totality of your work environment and work ethic. A clean pressroom area is almost always a reflection of a well-maintained production area. Adopting and maintaining good practices throughout your pressroom will help minimize scoring issues. Ongoing training and verification of proper procedures is imperative, especially when there is an employee change. Frequently when experienced staff members move up or move out, the value of care and maintenance practices is lost. Make those practices a part of your standard operating procedures and part of an ongoing training program.

Scoring can be a costly challenge if left unchecked. Hopefully the issues covered in this article will help to minimize that challenge, and provide you with enough information to determine and fix the source of any scoring issues you may encounter.

For more detailed information, see Harper Corporation's Anilox Scoring Prevention Guide. To receive a copy, call 1-800-438-3111.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Alexander James is a technical manager for Harper GraphicSolutions, a division of Harper Corporation of America based in Charlotte, North Carolina. He earned a Master of Science degree in graphic communications from Clemson University and has more than 16 years of experience in the graphics industry. Alexander has presented at major industry forums and is the author of numerous published articles. He travels globally helping companies resolve their wide- and narrow-web flexographic workflow challenges.

Thinking BIG

A SMALL MIDWEST CONVERTER has invested in a Nilpeter press to break into the prime label market, writes Danielle Jerschefske

Labelaid, located west of Cleveland in Huron, Ohio, was founded 25 years ago by Carl and Lucille Crooks. The company started with a 10-inch Mark Andy, printing labels for industrial and food applications.

Labelaid really took off when it broke into the automotive printed tape market. Now, the company has customers throughout North America and even ships labels to China. 'Automotive parts are manufactured there,' explains Carl Crooks, founder. The shop currently is home to a 6-color Mark Andy 2200 press, two 4-color 910 and two Italian Siats used for tape production.

Its latest investment, installed in February, is a 10 inch 8-color Nilpeter FB 2500, a modular flexo press that can print up to 750 ft/min, complete with three GEW e-brick UV units and cold foiling capability. 'We chose this press because the set-up time is shorter, it produces high quality print, has tight registration and runs at high speeds,' Darlene Crooks, VP, explains.

Before the purchase, the Labelaid management team went to Nilpeter USA to run test jobs at the plant. 'We felt really valued by the Nilpeter people. They were fabulous to work with and made us feel like they were partners with us through the process.'

The main reason for this purchase was to allow Labelaid to enter the prime label market. 'Our equipment is good, but we needed something new, better,' Carl Crooks says.

Once the decision to purchase the press was finalized, the supplier called Labelaid to congratulate the converter on its new investment and to ring the victory bell so often heard at Labelexpo. Both Carl and Darlene Crooks really appreciated the gesture and personal touch. 'It makes you feel like you're not just a small number to somebody.'

The Crooks have been extremely pleased with the quality of their GEW equipment and high-level of service as well. 'It is easy to work with people that want to see you achieve your goals and be successful.'

Labelaid has seven operators working on one shift, five days a week. 'Our employees are amazing and an absolute tribute to our success,' both Crooks say. Some of them have been working there since the company started.'

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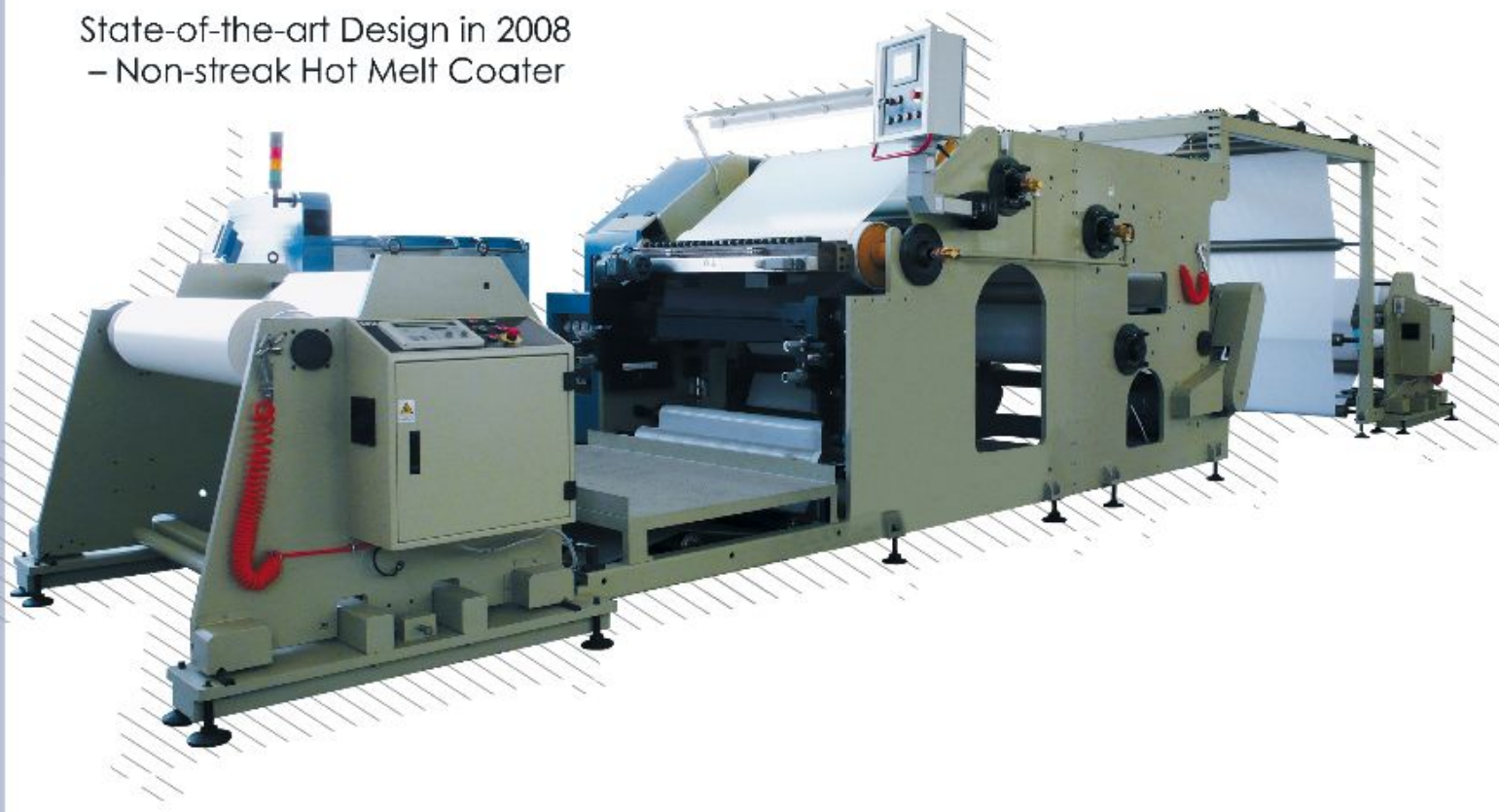

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MD Denis Okulov in front of the Rotomec gravure press

Okil powers ahead

RUSSIA'S leading label converter is engaged in a 30 million euro investment program. Andy Thomas reports on the company's ambitious expansion plans

Okil is engaged in a 30 million euro ($47m) investment campaign which will reinforce its position as Russia's leading label converter – and as one of Europe's biggest.

St Petersburg-based Okil has made investments across the range of label converting technologies including rotary offset, UV flexo, gravure, screen and digital, and has established an entirely digital pre-press workflow – including direct laser engraving of plates and screens.

The scale of production at Okil is already striking. Where the Russian self-adhesive label market has been growing at 15-20 percent annually, Okil's output has increased consistently by 30-40 percent a year. Last year that figure soared to 60 percent, and the company anticipates an increase of 80 percent in 2008.

Put another way, in 2007 Okil printed over 377 million square feet of labels, and expects to reach 650-700m square feet by the end of this year. The company employs 650 workers and operates 24/7, with teams working in four shifts, seven days a week.

'Figures from 2007 show that, with 200 printing houses producing self adhesive labels in Russia, 18 percent of combined market turnover was attributed to Okil,' states Denis Okulov, Okil's exuberant managing director and majority shareholder. 'I am confident that in the next 3-4 years, the market share of Okil will increase to 25-30 percent.'

This growth is all the more remarkable when one considers that ten years ago Dennis Okulov was screen printing T-shirts for St Petersburg tourists. 'In 1998, we acquired a used Nilpeter flexo press, and since then our core speciality has been self-adhesive labels,' recalls Okulov. 'In 1999 Okil was the first Russian converter to acquire a flexo press with a rotary screen printing unit, and we were the first label printing house in Russia to obtain ISO 9001 certification in 2003.'

Okil's main sales focus has been the multinational brands which moved into Russia following the opening up of the country's economy over the last decade. Today companies like Pepsi, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Henkel, Reckitt-Benckiser, GGN and EFES Pilsener account for up to 60 percent of the company's work.

Okil has also expanded its geographical reach, with sales offices throughout Russia and in Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, which is a major export target along with Kazakhstan.

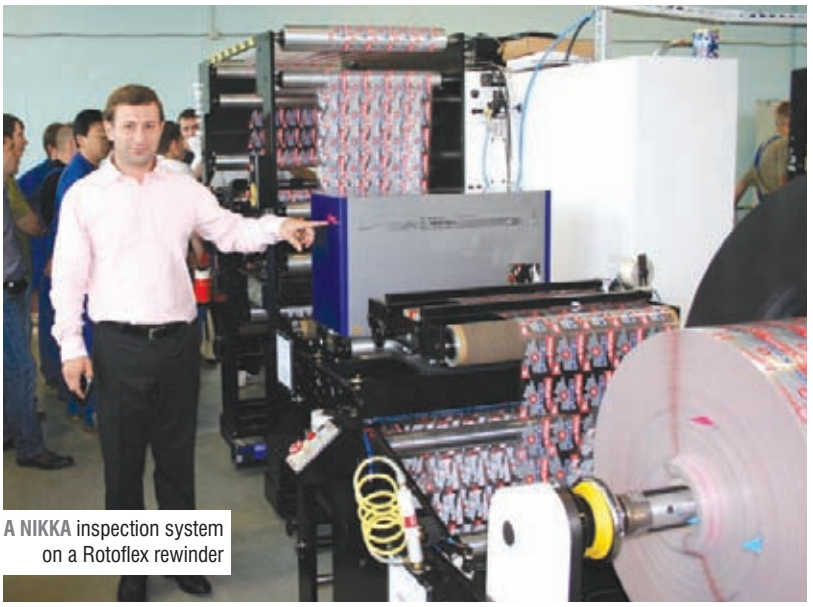
"This growth is all the more remarkable when one considers that ten years ago Dennis Okulov was screen printing T-shirts for St Petersburg tourists"

Although production is centralized in Saint Petersburg, the regional offices run their own logistics operations.

Denis Okulov attributes Okil's success to his willingness to invest when things get tough: 'In the times of production and industry crisis, businesses should focus on long term growth. We made a decision that our future lies with specialization and continuous improvement of quality standards of our products and customer service.'

MARKETS

Okil's strategy is to be the first market player to identify and occupy profitable new market niches, and to be the first to invest in new technology. The company's biggest market is alcoholic beverages, but it is also finding good growth in household chemicals, pharmaceuticals and food.



A NIKKA inspection system on a Rotoflex rewinder

SHRINK SLEEVE LABELS

Expanding its shrink sleeve label operation is a key business goal for Okil. The company is already producing some shrink sleeves on its Rotomec MW80 gravure press, and a second machine is under consideration for this application, along with a color matching system.

'We want to expand our shrink offering to companies like Coca-Cola, whom we already provide with PS labels,' says Denis Okulov. 'Companies like Heinz and Campina also have volume requirements for shrink labels and we have a great demand for shrink-wrapped Easter eggs.'

Shrink sleeves have also been produced on the Drent Goebel VSOP. Opaque white is laid down by a gravure station, which is used for varnishing when PS labels are run. The second VSOP will be dedicated to shrink sleeves. This will be a 9-color machine configured with six offset units and three flexo units, along with two cold foil units and one lamination station. There will be two additional flexo modules which can be inserted at any point in the press line.

BEER, WINE AND SPIRITS

• BEER

Around 25 percent of Okil's sales go to the Russian beer sector. Russia is the world's third biggest market for beer, driven by an increase in disposable income and a shift in consumer demand to from hard liquors to low alcohol beverages. The market is dominated mainly by foreign players and is highly consolidated, with six major breweries controlling 90 percent of the Russian market.

The globalization and consolidation of the Russian beer sector has led to the rapid introduction of new decoration technologies, particularly clear-on-clear filmic labels. This move has been led by Heineken, Russia's biggest volume user of PS. 'The trend to film labels for beer happened in Europe and North America three and a half years ago,' says Denis Okulov. 'Film labels came to Russia in 2007 and Okil was first to print them. After major investments this year we have 40-50 percent of this market.'

Okil installed an 800mm-wide Rotomec MW80 gravure press for filmic beer labels – at the time only the second such machine in the world. It is a gearless, sleeve-based press, designed for very short runs with just 1.5 machine lengths of material in the press during makeready. A sleeve change takes just ten minutes, and a color change around one hour. Rolls are slit in-line, then inspected and sheeted off line. Other off-line units include die cutters and laminators.

There is a new gas-oil heating systems built with the capacity to support another two gravure presses.

Okil also uses its ETI Cohesio laminate manufacturing line to produce clear-on-clear beer labels, integrating promotional techniques such as removable labels with sequential numbering and scratch-off panels. 'This is a product which I developed and proposed to the buyer,' says Denis Okulov. The labels are laminated to protect the print and provide a gloss finish.

'We perform special kinds of work on our Cohesio line, something that ETI said was impossible,' notes Okulov. 'The Cohesio is good if you want to make one very big complex order or for expensive shorter orders. This is not for standard products.' A new wider web hot melt unit is planned.

Okil's 10-color MPS press, fitted with dual inkjet numbering heads, was printing Baltica filmic beer labels with sequential numbering and a scratch panel when L&L visited the plant. And when Okil's second Drent Goebel VSOP 520 arrives it will be used to print filmic labels for Efes, a Turkish-owned brewery which does 75 percent of its business in Russia.

There is more to come: 'The Russian Ochakovo brewery does not yet use PS at all,' enthuses Denis Okulov.

Okil has been active in developing washable film labels, working closely with an adhesive supplier on a new hot melt formulation. This is despite the fact that only one brewery is currently demanding washable labels. 'We want to be positioned for when the rest switch over,' explains Okulov.

• Wine

The CIS region has a long history of wine making. Georgia in particular is a source of fine wines, and pressure-sensitive labels are increasingly used. Russia banned Georgian and Moldavian wines and mineral water two years ago, but local wine producers have risen up to fill the gap.

Okil originally purchased a highly specified Codimag Viva 340 to cover the requirement for high quality wine labels. The machine incorporates five offset units, two letterpress, one flexo, one screen and a hot foil head. The recent acquisition of an HP Indigo ws4500 digital press along with an ABG digital converting line – incorporating hot stamping, screen and flexo coating – has given Okil additional flexibility for short run wine and spirit label production, including some variable numbering.

• Vodka

Russia, Ukraine and Belarus are generally acknowledged to be the leaders in quality vodka production. The better brands, distilled from rye and wheat, are exported to the West, and high-quality brands are once again being produced for Russia's new social elite. This has led to a demand for high quality labels. 'Vodka moved from wet glue to pressure-sensitive in 2001-2

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THE STORK HELIOS engraver has eliminated film from plate and screen making

and I saw this new niche,' states Denis Okulov.

Clear-on-clear vodka labels are manufactured on the ETI Cohesio, and screen printing has also proved a good choice for this sector. 'We bought a Smag Galaxie screen press 4-5 years ago – the first company in Russia to do so – but we were too early,' recalls Okulov. 'For one year we could not use it. Now we use it for short runs of Vodka labels. The price for a flat screen is much less than a rotary screen, and now that press works 24 hours at full capacity. It has very good register control dot for dot using a register control system which uses a mark on the first print station.'

OTHER SECTORS IN WHICH OKIL IS ACTIVE INCLUDE:

• Household chemicals

One fifth of its Okil's production goes to the household chemicals sector. Both shrink sleeves and pressure-sensitive labels are converted primarily on the Drent Goebel VSOP 520 press. 'We were the first company to see that Proctor & Gamble would introduce household chemicals to Russia in Western packaging formats, and today we have 80 percent of this market in Russia,' says Denis Okulov.

• Cosmetics

Around 12 percent of Okil's output goes to the cosmetics sector, an application covered by the company's three Nilpeter MO3300 combination rotary offset presses. The move into offset happened in 2004 'to strengthen our position with multi-nationals like P&G and Unilever,' says Okulov. Unilever has a cosmetics production plant in St Petersburg.

The HP Indigo digital press is also used on cosmetics jobs –for example a range of hair care products showing different hair colors. 'The quality of this press is very good, but the main limitation is Pantone colors, which stops it being useful as a proofing press,' says Okulov.

• Food

18 percent of production goes to the food sector, particularly locally produced meats, and fish, an area covered by Okil's narrow web flexo presses, which include a 10-color MPS EF 410 (with a second on order), Nilpeter FA3300 and FA 2400 presses and a Gallus EM280.

• Promotional and booklet labels

An increasingly important strategic sector is promotional and booklet labels. Promotional labels have been developed on the ETI Cohesio and on a 10-color Ko-Pack Bookletlabel 250 letterpress fitted with a hot stamping, flexo coating and multiple die stations.

DIGITAL PRE-PRESS

All Okil's pre-press and platemaking – apart from gravure cylinder imaging – is in-house and has entirely eliminated the use of film.

Offset CTP capability is provided by Kodak, while an EskoArtwork CDI images flexo plates and a separate unit images letterpress CTP plates.

Okil recently installed a Stork Helios direct engraving unit, which can produce screens, flexo and letterpress plates.

'We have 16 Stork printing heads on our presses, so we do not have a big volume. But quality with the Helios is much higher. When we were using film to make the screens, we did have problems when printing small text. We do not have those problems now.'

The Helios also produces good results on flexo plates – 'better than ablation' according to Dennis Okulov: 'with more experience we have produced better and better plates, particularly because the Helios can shape individual dots with different heights and shoulder characteristics. The problem is that the system is very slow, which means we only use it for longer runs. It takes 20 minutes to make a plate for the MPS 410, for example, and 10-15 minutes for a screen plate – all depending on if there is just simple text or more complex raster work.'

THE FUTURE

In 2006 28.5 percent of Okil's share capital was sold to a western-based venture capital firm, Quadriga Capital. Dennis Okulov retained 51 percent of the company and other senior team members became shareholders. Quadriga provided the funds for the extraordinary expansion program of the last two years, and there is more to come.

An adjoining 150,695 sq ft factory has been acquired and will be turned into a modern production space, housing equipment from the older factory.

When the second Drent Goebel VSOP and the new 12-color MPS presses arrive, the company's press arsenal expands to 23 machines. Some 80 new employees have been taken on this year alone.

Denis Okulov is certainly optimistic about the future: 'This business has got a lot of potential and we are already on a par with the leading players in the European and US markets. Russia-based printing houses that can form industrial alliances with western producers would be able to stand up to any competition.'

Okil's future priorities are to develop shrink sleeve label printing (see boxout), and to manufacture specialist pressure-sensitive materials for sale to other converters.

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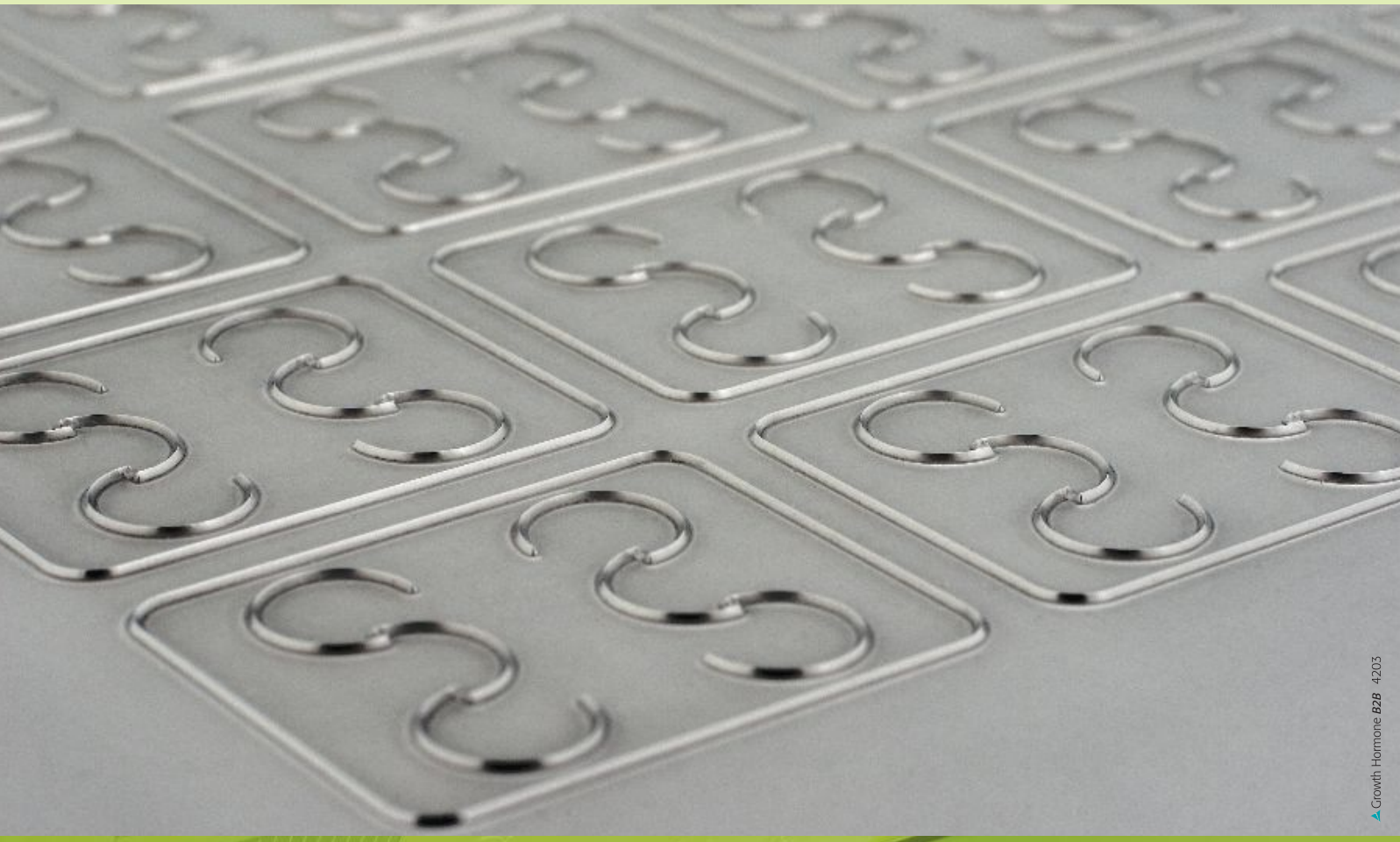

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DUBAI aims to become the Gulf region's main export hub

Growth in the gulf

ANDY THOMAS visits two of the most influential label converters in Dubai, the largest city in the United Arab Emirates, at a time of massive investment in print-related infrastructure

Under its energetic ruler Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Dubai is making an ambitious bid to become the Gulf States' principal import-export hub. Sheikh Mohammed has been the driving force behind giant infrastructure projects like the world's busiest airport – due to open shortly and including a new light rail system – an 8-lane highway linking Dubai with Sharjah along the coast, and whole new 'cities' dedicated to printing, logistics, media and IT. On the back of these investments, new hotels, shopping malls and office complexes are springing up.

The majority of label end users are engaged in export or re-export related businesses. Goods for trans-shipment arrive from as far a field as China and there is a significant industrial base manufacturing products for export.

All of this provides huge potential for the prime and autoID labeling sectors, with Dubai-based management consultant IMES forecasting 15-20 percent annual growth in the key dairy, soft drinks and flexible packaging sectors across the UAE. Dubai's biggest challenge is tackling the rising cost of doing business. Like other non-oil economies, the country has been hit hard by hikes in fuel costs. Things are particularly tough for label converters, who buy their inks and substrates from suppliers' European warehouses – so are also hit hard by the rise in the value of the Euro against the dollar, to which Dubai's currency is pegged. This means holding extensive stocks, which is an additional cost.

Other issues for converters include a shortage of skilled production staff, which is often overcome by attracting employees from India and the Philippines.

The Tarsus Group, organizer of Labelexpo and publisher of L&L, now has a direct interest in the UAE region after acquiring the Gulf Pack and Gulf Print exhibitions, which run between April 6-9, 2009. A label-specific pavilion and conference will focus on the impact that new technologies such as RFID and Track and Trace will have on the region.

REGIONAL PIONEER

PACMAN has grown into one of the Middle East's pioneering label converters

Pacman is one of the Middle East's pioneer label converting operations. It claims to have been the first label printer in the region to be accredited to ISO 9001 in 1996 and has won a number of prestigious international awards, including ExxonMobil's OPPack Gold in 2004, a FINAT Special Award and awards from several major international suppliers including Avery Dennison, Raflatac and Akzo Nobel.

Pacman was founded in Dubai in 1980 as a division of the Albwardy Investment Group. Albwardy has interests in a vast range of industries from steel fabrication to industrial coating and is one of the country's five largest locally-owned corporations.

In 1996-7, Pacman expanded its label converting operations to Muscat in Oman, and to Cairo, Egypt. These plants are now undergoing accreditation to ISO 9001. In addition, Pacman has sales offices and agencies in Lebanon, Jordan, Iran, Sudan, Libya and South Africa. The company has a turnover of USD $25m and exports half its total production to 25 countries as far a field as Morocco, Algeria, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Pacman's main end user markets include toiletries and cosmetics, oil and lubricants, and food and beverages. In each of these sectors it services the local operations of global multi-national corporations. Procter & Gamble, one of Pacman's biggest customers, is the largest consumer of pressure sensitive labels in the region. Its production facilities in Dubai are used as a base for export throughout the Gulf region. Pacman's close relationship with P&G extends into

LEFT Pacman's Dubai staff, with John Dawson standing center back

training their staff in the fundamentals of label technology.

Regional brands are also important customers for Pacman. Tariyat, for example, is a mineral water bottler from Afghanistan. A wide range of food and toiletries products are also produced by locally-owned companies.

DUBAI PLANT

L&L was recently invited to visit Pacman's Dubai plant, which employs half of the company's 200 staff and covers an area of 50,000 square feet.

Pacman was founded as a Gallus letterpress house, starting with a Q33 and quickly progressing to R200s, which are still running today. Englishman John Dawson became production manager in 1998, and transitioned the company into flexography via a Webtron, two Gallus EM410s and two Comco MSP Proglides.

'I also got Pacman to diversify beyond PS into other substrates,' recalls Dawson. 'We were the first Dubai company to move into OPP wraparound, as well as shrink sleeves and injection IML.' Dawson says IML in particular is 'taking off' for ice cream and dairy products, especially in Egypt, which is emerging as a sophisticated retail market and an enthusiastic adopter of supermarket-style retailing.

'This region has lagged behind European consumer trends, but consumers are now becoming richer more demanding, and that presents a great opportunity if you can demonstrate added value,' says John Dawson. 'Everyone talks about India and China, but we are forecasting 35 percent growth! We have been growing at more than 20 percent a year. We have seen printed containers moving to labels and pressure sensitive labels moving from paper to film – that ratio has changed from 80/20 paper/film to 60/40. But even PS is not growing as fast as IML and shrink sleeve labels.'

This product mix is reflected in the specification of Pacman's first Comco MSP, now seven years old. It is equipped with both UV and EB curing – although UV is most commonly used – and is fitted with an IML delivery and Martin Automatic unwind and rewind equipment. 'The Comco is a great workhorse and the Martin equipment is a great product,' says Dawson. 'The automated unwind and rewind are specifically for shrink sleeve

labels because the reels are slit down to a very small size and every time we stop we waste 100 meters of material.'

A Karlville seamer and inspection system has been installed to convert the PVC shrink sleeve labels.

John Dawson says one of the fastest growing end use sectors is the beverage industry. Bottled water in particular has seen a rapid transition from paper to wraparound OPP. 'But our smaller customers did not have the money to invest in the applicators,' recalls Dawson. 'So we went to ExxonMobil and worked with them on the development of cut and stack OPP patch labels. These have the same appearance as a wraparound but are applied on the same machine, and using the same adhesive, as a traditional paper label.' Dawson reckons that Pacman is ExxonMobil's biggest single customer for cut & stack film.

Pacman Dubai also converts a range of non-label products including in-line flexo folding cartons, and tags and tickets, fully utilizing the ability of its modern presses to handle substrates in a range 12 microns to 450gsm. Applications have included tea tags and event ticketing incorporating numbered serialization and holographic stamping. Promotional products have included scratch & win cards and peel & reveal stickers, all with serial numbering.

A recent installation is a Longford booklet inserter, which will allow Pacman to target new value-added opportunities in promotional and informational labels.

The plants in Oman and Egypt are dedicated PS operations running the same Gallus equipment as the Dubai plant, allowing production to be shifted rapidly between them. In addition to the Gallus machines, the Egyptian plant has an

PACMAN'S production team in front of Comco MSP with Martin unwind

MPS EF330 flexo press, which continues the company's move away from letterpress. Rewinders include systems from Rotoflex, Arpeco and Prati.

'We are the only label converter in the region that can offer this disaster insurance program,' states John Dawson. 'This is increasingly demanded by the global multi-nationals.' The three plants run 24/7 all year round.

PRE-PRESS

Pacman has its own pre-press and platemaking facilities, driven from an Artpro (now EskoArtwork) front end. 'When we were owned by a Swedish company we sourced our repro from there,' recalls John Dawson. 'It could take 4-6 days to send the artwork to Sweden, get the films back, then correct the artwork. But it did give Pacman the highest quality repro in the region! We then started working with a local repro house

who after two years managed to achieve the same quality, and within three months we were achieving the same quality in-house.'

A Heidelberg CTF system images film for platemaking. John Dawson is not yet convinced that CTP will offer a significant quality edge for the extra investment. 'CTP could increase quality on 2 percent of the jobs by around 2 percent. But for us it is saving production time which is key in areas like plate wastage and downtime.' The company is currently in the early stages of a Lean manufacturing program which includes pre-press optimization.

Pacman has a comprehensive quality control system. A dedicated QC lab performs a wide range of standard tests including ink adhesion and release force testing, with random checks performed on incoming materials. 'We are the only converter in the region to have this level of testing equipment,' says Dawson. 'It is particularly important for materials like PVC shrink film, where you can easily get variations in every shipment.' Quality Control is run as an independent department. In terms of ink management, Pacman has a close partnership with Xsys, now Flint Group Narrow Web. 'They are an excellent supplier in terms of technical support and service,' says Dawson.

Although there is a shortage of skilled labor in Dubai, Pacman has been able to attract skilled production operators from India and the Philippines.

The future could see Pacman undergoing further geographical expansion. 'We are already under pressure from brand customers to move to India, and this is a move Pacman is seriously considering,' notes John Dawson. 'We would certainly be open to strategic partnerships with other label converters.'

KIMOHA TURNS 20

BUSINESS philosophy of community involvement

Dubai-based label and business paper converter Kimoha recently celebrated its 20th birthday with generous contributions to a local cancer charity and an uplifting concert by Heart-2-Heart, a group of technically superb, sight-impaired musicians whom Kimoha sponsors.

This creed of community involvement is central to the business philosophy of managing director Vinesh Bhimani. 'I also see this reflected in the cultural diversity of our 200 employees, who are encouraged to celebrate the festivals of Ramadan, Diwali and Christmas,' says Bhimani.

ISO-certified Kimoha is a division of the Al Ansari corporation, a major player in industries from civil engineering to steel fabrication and industrial coating.

Kimoha has a $25-30M turnover and is currently growing at up to 15- 20 percent a year. The company is organized into five divisions, covering the auto ID, business papers and prime label markets.

Kimoha moved into prime label production 1995, and since then has steadily upgraded its production and converting capabilities. Its most recent addition has been the establishment of a digital pre press.

Among Kimoha's principal end user markets are edible oil, lube oil and industrial chemicals. Kimoha was the first certified label supplier in Dubai for Shell's lube oil products, which are manufactured in Oman. Other markets include home and personal care, dairy, beverages and pharma. In all these sectors pressure-sensitive films are replacing paper face materials, reflecting Kimoha's move away from commodity into higher value added products.

The company has become skilled at moving established decoration technologies into new markets. One example is the use of clear-on-clear front label and front/reverse-side printed back labels - first developed for toiletries - into edible oil products, with striking results.

Kimoha is also an authorized 3M converter. This allows the company to produce 3M-certified industrial tags and labels for a wide range of high performance applications - including ID tags for the metal and building industries, where the requirement is for weather resistant tags capable of handling temperatures up to 200 degC while resisting dirt and oil. Other high performance end use markets include the garment industry, asset management, automobile parts marking, circuit board ID labels, warranty and void security labels.

Kimoha has also diversified into non-PS product areas, including shrink sleeves. A packaging-related project is carry-handles for multipacks, which consist of a self-adhesive strip and a carry portion printed with the client's logo.

Kimoha's future is certainly looking bright. Next year the company moves into a new factory, which will be a lot bigger than the existing plant.

VINESH BHIMANI, MD Kimoha (left) with management team

AUTO ID

Kimoha's auto ID division supplies complete Kimoha's auto ID division supplies complete barcoding systems including readers, thermal transfer ribbons, barcode printers and software, as well as offering a barcoding bureau service.

Kimoha runs a separate factory converting paper media, with a product line which includes inkjet papers, tags and stickers, photocopy papers, fax and telex papers and weigh scale labels. A particular specialty is till rolls flexo printed front and back in up to 8-color colors. In addition there is a ribbon converting factory in Hyderabad, India.

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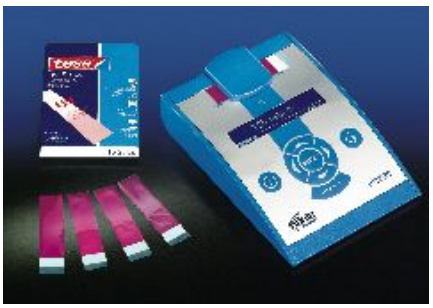

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LabelIT first with X-Flex

THE FIRST INSTALLATION of Omet's acclaimed X-Flex press is at LabelIT, Italy. Andy Thomas reports

It always takes a lot of faith, knowledge and courage to install the first machine of a manufacturer's new press line. Italian company LabelIT, based outside Venice, is the first label converter to install Omet's X-Flex press, which caused a lot of interest when it was launched at Labelexpo Europe in Brussels last year.

LabelIT was founded 25 years ago and has had an average turnover in the last couple years of 6-9 million euros. Printing processes include flexo, offset, letterpress and screen on ten production lines. The company specializes in food labels, toiletries and cosmetics, wine, household chemicals and pharmaceuticals.

The company has 42 employees working over three shifts and eight sales agents. 'We are a small and flexible company. We offer a full service, and short runs are a specialty,' says Giuseppe Picello, LabelIT managing director.

'We wanted to differentiate ourselves from a conventional label company. Label prices are going down, so you need to do something special. Flexible packaging is an example – especially in the food sector – where end users are prepared to accept both label and packaging products from the same supplier. At the same time

"We wanted to differentiate ourselves from a conventional label company. Label prices are going down, so you need to do something special"

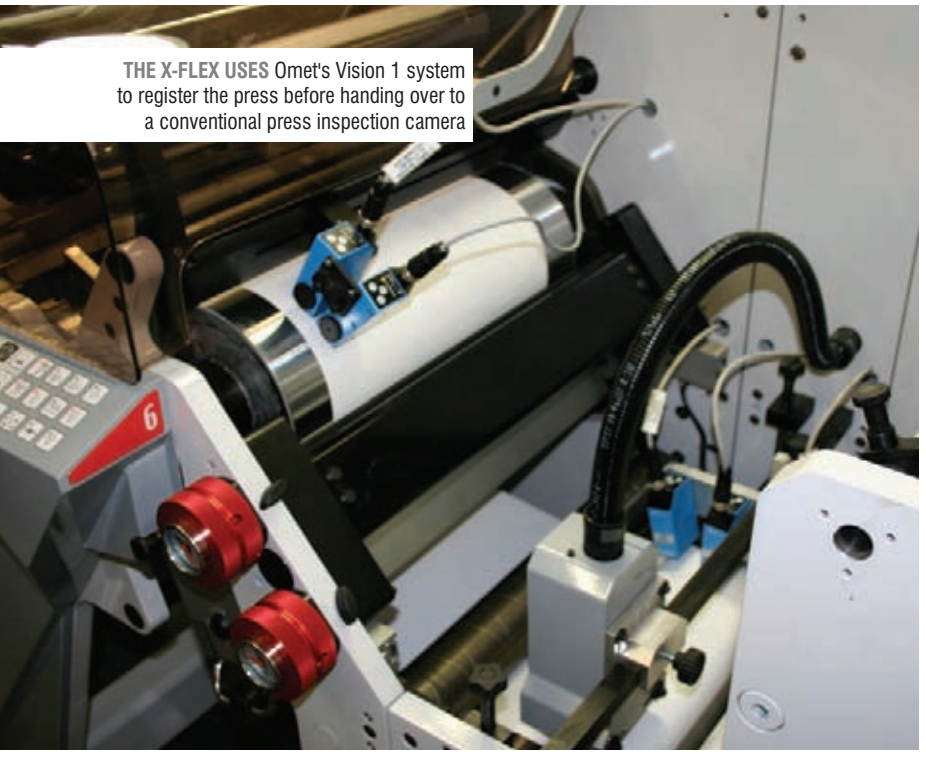
we are restructuring our customer base towards bigger, but fewer.' A new press dedicated to flexible packaging is certainly on the company's radar.

Around one tenth of LabelIT's production is exported, particularly to Austria, Switzerland and Germany. Turkey is opening up as an interesting market, where LabelIT has found a good sales agent. 'Our exports to Turkey are growing by 3 percent a year and will drive our total exports to 13 percent of our production,' says Giuseppe Picello.

Interestingly, LabelIT also has a co-operation agreement with a printer in Shanghai to sell its labels. 'Establishing business contacts in China will take time. In Turkey it took 1.5 years to get our first commercial contacts.'

In both Turkey and now China, LabelIT works through trading companies, making full use of the Italian national 'brand' name. 'We sell the idea of Italian design, brand, style, service, quality and technology.'

A major growth sector is wine labeling. Although there are still a lot of wet glue labels used, the major vineyards have already moved to pressure sensitive labels, reports Giuseppe Picello. Many smaller vineyards have yet to make the move: 'The wine business is big volumes but mixed with short runs. It is key for us to have pre-press in-house, which helps us offer a short run service to these companies.'



THE X-FLEX USES Omet's Vision 1 system to register the press before handing over to a conventional press inspection camera

"We can substitute paper for film with no waste and no movement in registration. To achieve this on competitive presses you have to go to a different price range"

ENVIRONMENT AND TRAINING

Two of the biggest issues confronting label converters today are the Environment and training.

'We are feeling these pressures,' confirms Giuseppe Picello. 'On the environment, we have taken action with our release liner. After stripping the matrix, we separate the liner from the face material for recycling, and we recycle the end user's liner waste. Liner should not be on siliconized paper and customers are now requesting recyclable PP/PE liners. But the price of PP/PE liners is too high compared to paper, so who pays? There are very few suppliers prepared to help take the liner back or recycle it.'

In terms of training, LabelIT is fortunate to have an excellent source of skilled printers nearby at the San Marco (Venezia) graphics college. The college provides on-going training for LabelIT employees and in return the school uses LabelIT to place its students for work experience.

LabelIT has considered digital. 'But digital can't substitute the offset quality of our two Gallus TCS 250s. The changeover time is perfectly short along with high quality.'

The offset presses print mainly paper substrates, while film goes through the flexo presses. 'Film is still a niche for us. With label papers we have lots of ideas to add value that can't be achieved with film.'

Shrink sleeve labels are a growing niche for beer and soft drinks, but the household chemicals market is still price sensitive area. 'There is volume growth here though.'

In the food sector, Giuseppe Picello identifies a lot of changes – especially in the prepared and pre-packed food market. 'Here we have to sell packaging and not just labels. Up to now we have outsourced flexible packaging for food products, but now we will start to bring it in house. We will laminate where there is food contact.'

'Our big mission in 2008 is to grow our mix of products,' says Giuseppe Picello. 'This means flexible packaging, OPP labels for PET bottles, and water-washable adhesives for use on glass bottles.'

X-FLEX

LabelIT started out as a letterpress house servicing mainly the fabric label and tag market with Gallus RB200s and an early combination letterpress/flexo press from Omet. In the last four years the company has bought a press a year, taking its tally to two Gallus TCS250s, Nilpeter MO3300 offset and FA3300 flexo presses, and two Omet ET400 combination of letterpress and flexo presses. Now the company is the first to install an Omet X-flex. The press is 430mm (16.9in) wide with 6-colors.

'It is really true that with the X-Flex we have zero waste along with a high flexibility to combine different processes,' says Giuseppe Picello. 'We are investigating digital plate making to go with the press, which would make our print results very close to offset.' Currently LabelIT is using water-wash analogue plates, but has experimented with digital plates from outside houses.

'It is the registration control system that is the main difference,' says Picello. 'We can accelerate from press stop to 100m/min and maintain press stability. We can substitute paper for film with no waste and no movement in registration. To achieve this on competitive presses you have to go to a different price range.'

The press combines 'conventional' automatic inspection with Omet's new Vision 1 registration control system. 'When we start the press the Vision is on for one pass of the web, when it takes a picture of a circle printed at each color station. The camera measures the position of each circle along an x-y axis, and that tells the motorized control of each print unit what adjustments need to be made in the cross direction. On the second pass of the web, the circles should be concentric on the operator's screen. The system then switches to the conventional auto-registration system which maintains that registration during acceleration and deceleration, color-to-color and die cut-to-color.'

So confident is Giuseppe Picello about this combined registration and inspection system that he plans to inspect on the press camera alone – and not on the slitter-rewinder. The company operates three Prati rewind systems.

Picello is also impressed by the design of the inking and print units. 'On the inking system the way to perform a changeover is unique, so the ink pan and anilox can be quickly changed. You simply bring down the ink pan, and rotate the anilox against the doctor blade, which fully cleans it.

'There is an equal triangle between the sleeve, anilox an impression roll,' continues Picello. 'If you need to change the pressure between the anilox and plate, you normally have to adjust plate to impression pressure. But here, anilox to plate and plate to impression all change simultaneously.'

The X-Flex represents LabelIT's first experience of using sleeves. 'It makes an extreme difference and makes life much simpler,' says Giuseppe Picello. 'The press automatically loads the sleeve, and this is its most important feature.'

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Cutting laminate costs

THE pressure-sensitive adhesives (PSA) industry is under enormous cost pressure. Nikolaus Trippen from Wacker Silicones discusses how silicones producers can help solve the cost problem

Silicones were first used for release liners in the 1950s. Initially, only solvent-based condensation-curing systems were available. They were joined in the 1960s by solvent-based addition-curing silicones and then in the 1970s by a solventfree counterpart. The latter rapidly established itself in the release liner market and continues to dominate to this day – with nearly 80 percent of the market. This market is now mature, and strong cost pressures are beginning to emerge in certain segments.

Self-adhesive applications account for more than 90 percent of global output of release liners, most of which go into label stock production. The intense cost pressure in the market for self-adhesive labels is squeezing labelstock makers from two sides. On one side are the end-customers, trying to maintain low prices. They enjoy some leverage because PSA label users can switch to cost-effective alternatives in product decoration technologies – for example in-mold labels.

On the other side are the prices of raw materials, which have soared in recent years and are trimming the label-stock makers' profit margins. In an effort to remain profitable in this environment, makers of release liners and laminates are seeking ways to cut costs.

GOAL: LOW TOTAL COSTS

The bind in which the PSA industry finds itself extends to silicone manufacturers. This has prompted Wacker Silicones, in cooperation with key customers, to analyze the cost structure of label stock production. Base liner, adhesive and facestock prove to be far and away the three largest cost factors in this value-added chain, each accounting on average for nearly 25 percent of the total cost. However, these costs fluctuate enormously with their constituent materials. The silicone systems account for approximately 5 percent, while production, administrative and distribution costs together form about 20 percent.

Clearly, then, silicone is a comparatively low cost driver. But its influence on the performance of the entire label stock is critical. When decisions have to be taken as to which silicone system to use, it becomes clear how heavily dependent the individual process steps and the raw materials are on each other – and just how difficult it is to strike the right balance of components. That said, though, this very relationship can serve as an effective tool for cutting costs.

The place to start looking for savings is the major cost drivers, such as the quality of the base liner, the quantity or quality of the adhesive, and the facestock thickness. The only way to realize savings potentials in these areas is to have a properly balanced silicone system. In other words, the correct choice of silicone is the key in reducing the cost of the total product.

This is the idea underpinning the 'Low Total Cost Concept' devised by Wacker Silicones. It identifies twelve areas in the fields of raw materials and processes where silicone manufacturers could help their customers cut overall costs There has been a related shift in the focus of development work in recent years. While previously the goal was to make the impossible possible, nowadays it is to render the feasible more efficient. For example, the fastest coating machines commonly in use can process more than 1,000 meters per minute. The only way to attain such high speeds – without detriment to the quality of the laminate – is to optimize the flow properties of the silicone system and effectively prevent the formation of spray mist. The supplier has to develop an appropriate silicone chemistry that answers these new requirements. This enables customers to slash the fixed costs per square meter of liner by doubling the coating speed.

ECONOMIZING ON THE SILICONE SYSTEM?

The silicone share of the total cost is determined chiefly by the thickness of the silicone release coat and by the platinum content, providing the system is the platinum-catalyzed addition-curing type, which is usually the case.

In classic silicone systems, the platinum content is about 100 parts per million (ppm), and so 1 kilogram of the blended silicone system contains 0.1 grams of platinum. The use of highly reactive specialty silicone systems can cut the platinum content down to 30 ppm (Figure1). Assuming an annual production of 200 million square meters release liner and taking the current platinum price of over 40 euro/gram as our basis, this clearly translates to savings of above half-million euros per year.

However, it must be remembered that lowering the platinum content increases the risk of incomplete curing. While cost considerations make it favorable to introduce low-platinum systems nowadays, expert technical advice from the silicone supplier remains essential.

Reducing the silicone layer thickness can have even greater effect on costs than lowering the platinum content. A 20 percent reduction in coat weight yields the same savings as a two-thirds reduction in platinum costs and can be achieved with specialty novel silicone systems, without detriment to coverage of the substrate surface (Figure 2). Also for coatweight reduction, a deep understanding of the product by the silicone supplier is crucial as the coat weight may also influence the release

FIGURE 1: EXTRACTABLES AS A FUNCTION OF DWELL TIME

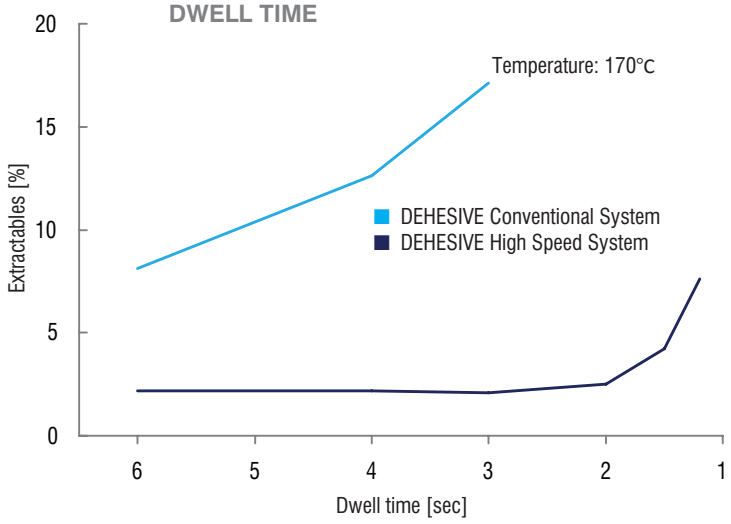
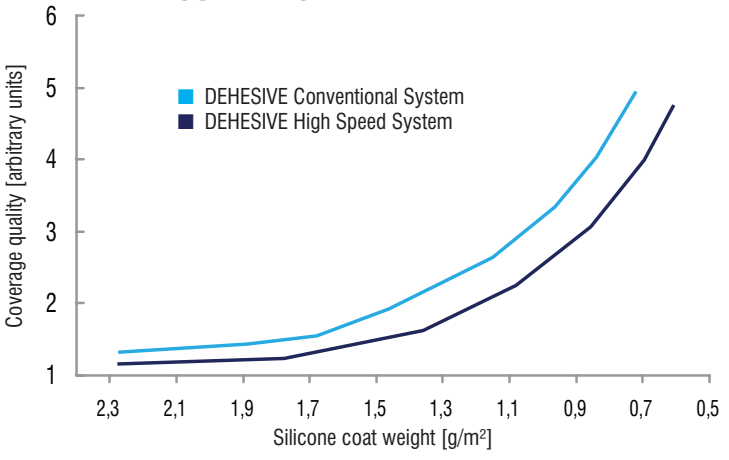


FIGURE 2: COVERAGE AS A FUNCTION OF SILICONE COAT WEIGHT



performance. In any case, a margin of safety should be always incorporated to prevent the quality of the entire laminate from being jeopardized.

REDUCING SUBSTRATE COST

The largest cost in the value chain is usually the uncoated base liner. Using a lower cost base liner can therefore be an effective way to reduce the total cost. The savings accruing from paying 20 percent less for the base liner are often equivalent to 100 percent of the silicone cost.

For paper substrates, the two ways to start lowering costs are to use thinner base liner and more economic paper grades. This means, though, if glassine paper is to be replaced by a less calendered paper grade, the silicone must provide excellent coverage and the lowest penetration into the paper.

There are silicone emulsions and specialty high-viscosity, solventless silicone systems available that provide such good coverage on more porous paper grades. In some cases, it is best to coat such economic paper with a highly reactive silicone system at a reduced oven temperature, as that will prevent excessive heat stress on the paper and the need for remoisturization. This is an instance in which a highly reactive system is being used not to lower the platinum content, but to lower the substrate costs – and magnify the savings effect.

The siliconizing of film depends critically on the adhesion between the substrate and the silicone. Indeed, poor adhesion is the main reason that more expensive, primed films are used at all. New, solventless silicone polymers are now available that provide good anchorage and a smooth silicone release coat even on the much cheaper, untreated films.

REDUCING PROCESSING COSTS

Process costs, too, usually exceed the silicone costs. There are various ways for silicone manufacturers to help savings be made. These include developing silicone systems that are conducive to higher coating speeds, easier handling, reduced VOC emissions, and lower energy demand.

In particular, increases in coating speed are hampered by the formation of spray mist. Wacker Silicones offers an on-site service – at the customer's coating plant – for evaluating spray mist problems. Trials of newly developed anti-misting additives and highly reactive silicone systems show that speeds of up to 1,600 meters per minute can be achieved on the newest generation of coating machines (Figure 3).

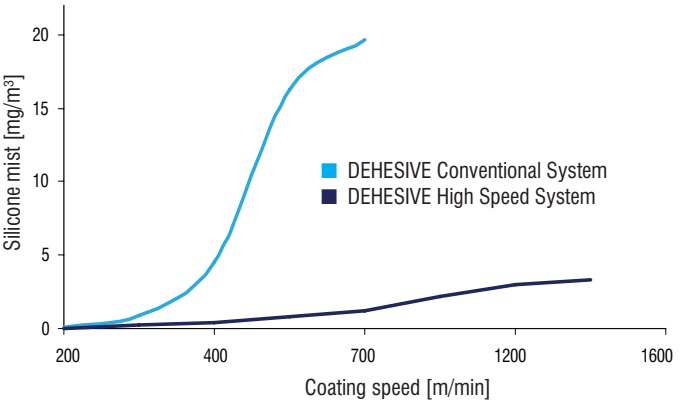
But silicone users can also conserve resources by taking advantage of a comprehensive package of supplier's technical service and close technical cooperation. This type of intensive, all-around product-service is the most efficient way to arrive at the necessary selection of components and their right mix ratio in the customized silicone formulation.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

Silicone systems are not commodities. Their highly diverse product characteristics and the quality of services provided afford scope for differentiation. To be sure, price is important when a silicone system is being purchased, but it is not the only criterion, as the examples illustrate.

The silicone system determines the functionality and performance of the label stock. Choosing a silicone system that is customized to all the raw materials used and to the process chain can slash the total cost of the laminate. The silicone system therefore is key to solving the cost problems of the PSA industry. To realize future savings potentials, a customer ought to partner with a silicone supplier they feel offers reliable, innovative and economically sound products. However this is sometimes not enough. These must be combined with competent technical service, based upon a deep understanding regarding the requirements of following production steps and ultimately the finished product.

FIGURE 3: MISTING LEVEL AS A FUNCTION OF COATING SPEED



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LABELS produced by McDowell for Cellucor

DANIELLE JERSCHEFSKE talks to McDowell customers to find out why they have chosen to work with this award winning printer

Prime label innovation

With well over 100 industry awards under its belt, including six World Label Awards, McDowell Label & Screen Printing must have a trophy case that proves the old adage 'everything is bigger in Texas' true. Founded in 1981 and located outside of Dallas, Texas, the packaging printer has the customer appreciation to support its national and international industry recognition.

McDowell's most recent World Label Award was for its 'Back in Blaque' shrink sleeve label produced for OL Products, a 15-year old cosmetics company which has been working with McDowell for three years. 'It is very important for us to be on the cutting edge,' explains Lewis Henry, marketing director. 'When we started working with McDowell Label, we wanted shrink capability with something different. We needed vibrant colors and a look that was intriguing.

'One of the things about McDowell is that they like to push the envelope, and so do we. It's great working together because we keep pushing each other to stay ahead of the curve.

Doss Cunningham is the CEO and managing partner of Woodbolt International, a company that focuses on developing products that are superior in both packaging and product formulation. Launched in 2002, the brand holds an exclusive distribution pattern to protect its products' price integrity and to increase the brand's stay. One year ago, Woodbolt decided to re-launch the brand packaging of its Cellucor nutraceutical product and chose McDowell as a partner because 'they have the technology and the ability to take the Cellucor brand much farther'. The company wanted a totally revamped label using the newest types of film and most modern printing methods.

Cunningham says, 'While brand recognition is important, it is more critical to give the consumer a great brand experience. That way the customer becomes committed to the brand. This starts with the packaging.'

'McDowell was very clear from the beginning with its mission statement that its priority is to help the client achieve their goal in packaging,' Cunningham said. 'Immediately I felt an intimacy with them that we had not experienced with others. They understand our vision of the re-brand and how important it is to not just to make the change, but to be ultimately, revolutionary. We felt very comfortable that they would provide us with the solutions to get our brand to the next level by delivering innovation and superior value-added quality.'

When asked what it was that separates McDowell from its competitors, the answer from both Henry and Cunningham is the same: service.

'The service?' Henry asks. 'You can't beat it. They are not just a vendor, but our partner. We expect superior quality print, the best print you can get, with vibrant colors, and everything spot on. On top of that, we demand time efficiency; it is incredible how McDowell is able to turn a job around. No matter how big or complicated a project is, McDowell stands behind it from start to finish. Other companies can only give half of what they do – at best.'

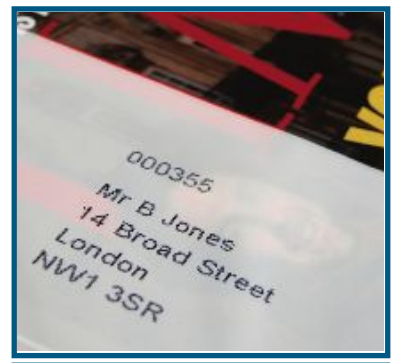
Cunningham said: 'They take the extra step to make sure that when the label is applied, it has that finished look. McDowell even visited the company that applies our labels to ensure everything went smoothly. They helped the contract packager understand the necessary specs of the labels as far as heat application and humidity. And, even from the planning stages, we received the support we needed. They have remarkable service.'

'When I walked into their building and saw the awards, I knew we would want to repackage together, with them. It is now our intent to achieve major international acclaim,' Cunningham said. Woodbolt has its sights set on a World Label Award globe. 'It's possible,' he says. 'They are of the very best in the industry, like a Mercedes – regarded as the most premier.'

'In conjunction with the McDowell graphics team, we have won numerous awards within the industry, including the World Label Award,' Henry said. 'And both of our companies have grown immensely since working together.'

MCDOWELL'S executive team – Jay Luft, John McDowell and Dave McDowell

INK JET



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Hammer rolls forward

HAMMER PACKAGING continues its transition into rolls while holding onto its sheet expertise. Danielle Jerschefske reports

Ever since its investment in a Drent Goebel variable-sleeve roll-fed offset press (VSOP) almost one year ago, Hammer has been in the midst of a significant transition. Traditionally, its growth and strength has been in the sheet-fed market, and will remain so, according to management, but market demand dictates the shift into the roll-fed world.

Mostly, the shift on the offset side is to meet the increasing market demand for high quality, multi-sku'd shrink sleeve labels used on more customized bottles and containers. And with this transition, Hammer will also continue to expand its roll-fed flexographic printing operations, investing as ever in the latest technology.

FROM SHEETS TO ROLLS

'We sell billions of cut and stack, but we see a new future in package decorating and we're trying to stay ahead of the curve,' vice president of sales and marketing, Lou Iovoli explains. 'We have been working hard with our customers as they go from sheets to rolls, helping them prepare for and execute the move.' Hammer looks at the transition as a gravure or flexo replacement strategy. The ability to easily change the graphics on the VSOP press provides the same quality of gravure, without the need for costly gravure cylinders or flexo plates.

The company's current position in the sheet-fed market will continue to be their niche base. Hammer's management team has, over the years, engineered a highly customized process for the bottled water market that is virtually unmatched by the printer's competition – high volume, dedicated runs of film- and paper-based labels. It is because of this model, that Hammer was able to reduce costs significantly and therefore prosper in the sheet-fed arena.

As its cut and stack work transitions into a growing roll-fed and shrink market, Hammer does not intend to abandon its roots. It will continue to produce sheet-fed niche products in a variety of categories, one of those being blow IML, that also have a need for a gravure replacement strategy. Iovoli explains, 'There is still a market for sheet-fed labels; it's just changing. So we are simply moving along with the trend in the industry doing what we do really well: offset printing.'

Continues Iovoli: 'While the press has some limitations, we've learned over the last year that with the outstanding print quality, its flexibility and lack of gravure cylinder cost, fantastic labels can be made at a lower cost. Once realized, the work filled it fast. Now, this doesn't mean that capacity was reached on the Drent purely from new work. The growth happened concurrently as new former-gravure customers realized the value of the press and our current cut and stack customers also saw the potential. We had no idea that the message would resonate so well.'

'It has taken a while to get to where we want to be [in the roll-fed sector],' says James E. Hammer, president and CEO. 'Yet the markets to develop are growing quickly. We are already near capacity and will have another Drent installed late this year. We will continue to invest in what we believe is the leading technology.'

The new machine will be oriented for poly film, not shrink. Everything that is run on the current press is film and film-based. Hammer strongly believes its strategy has been validated.

ON THE FLEXO SIDE OF THE BUSINESS

To improve its flexographic capabilities, Hammer installed a 16 inch Nilpeter FA-4 at the beginning of the year. 'We went with Nilpeter because of the quality it produces, its uptime, registration and the strong support from the company,' says Hammer. 'We have known Nilpeter for some time now, and we have a very good relationship. They were on time and have done what they said they would.' The printer decided to further expand its flexo operations because its customers have been demanding it. The 8-color Nilpeter FA-4 has all the bells and whistles on it, including two screen stations, and hot and cold foil stamping.

Mostly shrink and PS products are done on the flexo press. According to Ed Nugent, director of national accounts, 'we purchased the Nilpeter specifically to support the growth we're experiencing in the PS markets. Hammer has transitioned, in the past years, from commodity PS to more high-end prime labels. In the end Nilpeter was the clear choice. Their technology has the reputation of a Cadillac – it's the best – and it supports our business.'

The company feels that, despite its ingrained affinity towards offset quality, the excellence of the Nilpeter machines is enabling them to produce high-end labels with flexography. 'The press runs primarily clear PS film,' Nugent continues.

Hammer's flexographic operations have given the company the chance to master web printing before jumping feet first into roll-fed offset technology. 'The ability to learn web-based printing on flexo is what really helped us jump start the offset roll-fed transition at the company,' explains Iovoli. 'And, now, because of the Nilpeter's ability, we are able to do anything that we can think up. It has allowed us to go into markets that are not complementary to what we traditionally were a part of, and it helps diversify our portfolio of clients. We have definitely captured new business because of this investment.'

Nugent says, 'there is definitely room for even more growth within the flexo sector of the company. We will seriously look at wider format presses

HAMMER Packaging's main facility in Rochester

(about 24 inches) for our future investments because of the copious opportunities such as flexible packaging.'

Of course because of the increased volumes coming off the presses, Hammer has also needed to invest in additional ancillary equipment. By the end of the year, it will have more than doubled its capacity with new slitter and seamer equipment from companies such as Arpeco, KOR and Karlville.

STAYING AT THE TOP

With two new presses this year and all the other related investments the company has made, Hammer Packaging is successfully implementing its business plan to expand its current market share and enter new growth areas with the goal of doubling in size in the next five years.

'We will certainly be expanding our wide format offset capability, and we are looking at central impression flexo,' Hammer says.

And, though competition is tough in this difficult economic time, Hammer Packaging continues to push on with its plans. 'Inflation is a big problem right now,' Hammer says. 'The ongoing material price increases are a major concern and the weak dollar doesn't make things any easier. This is a challenge as customers are having a tough time passing this on to their end-customer.'

While Hammer has the technology to produce flexible packaging, it is staying focused on its main market. Its leaders believe strongly that, as a company, they must maintain core capabilities for the time being with so much opportunity in the shrink and other film label markets.

'In the future, I see us having a row of web-offset presses at our main plant,' Iovoli says. 'There are endless possibilities. For the customers that want gravure quality with lots of skus, many settle on flexo. We have the perfect solution to exceed flexo print quality more cost effectively and to replace gravure.'

JAMES E. HAMMER'S SUCCESS RECOGNIZED

James E. Hammer, president and CEO of Hammer Packaging Corp., has been recognized by Rochester Institute of Technology for his business success in the Rochester community. The E. Philip Saunders College of Business at RIT has named Hammer as recipient of the 2008 Herbert W. Vanden Brul Entrepreneurial Award.

RIT's Vanden Brul Award annually goes to a successful individual who developed a business that improved the Rochester economy or whose innovative management skills have changed the course of an existing business.

'I was very honored to be considered for the award,' says Hammer, who is carrying on the printing business his great-grandfather founded in 1912. 'But as a commercial printer we've come a long way since seed packages.'

Saunders College of Business dean Ashok Rao says, 'Jim Hammer is an unusually creative and innovative individual. He has survived and prospered in a very tough business environment by identifying niche opportunities, taking calculated investment risks and growing new ventures in those niches.

'He has stayed in Rochester in large part because of his connections to RIT. We look forward to continuing our mutually beneficial relationship.'

Hammer agrees he is no stranger to RIT. 'We work closely with RIT's co-op program, especially students from the School of Print Media, and have quite a few RIT alumni working in our manufacturing plant, which also is located on a parcel of land we purchased from RIT.'

ABOVE: Hammer Management – (from left to right) Joe Mahar, manager of manufacturing & technical processes (at Metro Park); Jack Turan, Metro Park team manager; and Jim Hammer, president and CEO

UNIQUE APPLICATION

Hammer has been working closely with a domestic supplier to produce a reliable new polystyrene substrate. This new material, to be called HammerSHIELD, has a flexible Styrofoam feel, shrink-like qualities and the ability to retain heat. It is precisely this insulation property of the material that allows Hammer the opportunity to break into yet another market with its current machinery. The timing of the introduction of this substrate to Hammer customers and additional capacity available with the installation of the new Drent later this year has worked out perfectly. 'This helps us to address the microwavable market,' Hammer says.

SHRINK sleeve printed on Drent VSOP

PS label printed on the new Nilpeter

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ENVIRO NEWS

HOT OFF THE PRESS

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MDV and Tech Folien unveil BioStar for tags and labels

MDV's experience in supplying speciality substrates to the label and tag industry and Tech Folien's expertise in producing PE and PP blown films has led the company to define the requirements of an oxo-biodegradable film which could be used in the label industry.

It has to be resistant to tear; transparent, white or colored; degradable in a controlled fashion; printable by most conventional methods including thermal transfer; exhibit sufficient stiffness in higher microns for tag applications.

In other words, it should be a normal PE/PP film with the added advantage of a built-in 'trigger' which would start the degradation process according to the requirement of the customer.

Hence BioStar, a family of polyolefine films available in thicknesses ranging from 10 micron to 400 micron, and which begins to degrade after a specified period, be it six, twelve, eighteen or twenty four months, after exposure to ordinary light.

The principle utilised in the production of BioStar is that the addition of certain Organo-transition metal complexes to the polymer will catalyse the auto-oxidation of PE. The oxidation process results in a drastic reduction in molecular weight and introduction of carboxylic acid functional groups into the polymer chain.

As conventional biodegradable and compostable film have been around for much longer than

Oxo-biodegradables, there has been attention and time devoted to setting industry standards as well as obtaining environmental friendly classifications. However, their usage has been limited to food packaging applications, especially where there is certainty that the product will fly off–the-shelf (eg potato bags).

THE FASHION retail market is becoming more and more eco-aware with branding

Eco-chic branding sweeping the high street

ECO-CREDENTIALS are having an impact on garment branding

Eco-credentials are having a massive impact on garment branding. According to branding specialists Nilorn, the fashion retail market is becoming more and more eco-aware with branding increasingly reflecting the trend for clothes with a more organic, eco look. Natural looking cardboard is replacing card, and ribbon or string becoming the equivalent to plastic ties as fashion labels go all out to be eco-trendy.

Nilorn head of creative design, Simon Harrup, said: 'More and more we are hearing about how important it is to be environmentally friendly and conscious of the effect our business has on the environment around us. We are also seeing this being outwardly displayed on branding across the high street. Many top retailers want to give their product and effectively their brand a bit of eco-cred.'

The result is an increasing number of garment 'adornments' (labels, tags, zippers etc) that suggest a little eco-chic: a green couture using more natural labels, swing tickets and other brand accessories gives the impression of eco-friendly and natural clothing.

Look out for rope-ties and ribbons that attach tags to the clothing labels, as well as lots of natural colors; creams, browns and beiges that all add to that eco-trendy vibe.

NewPage achieves FSC certification

NewPage Corporation has received chain-of-custody standards certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) at its Stevens Point, Wisconsin, mill.

This FSC certification (SW-COC-001930) signifies that the Stevens Point mill has in place a tracking system to control and verify certain levels of FSC-certified fiber and that the mill obtains at least 10 percent of FSC-certified fiber from FSC chain-of-custody sources. By achieving certification to this standard, the Stevens Point mill, which produces specialized labeling and packaging papers, is able to supply FSC-label products to its customers.

Chain-of-custody is the traceable path logs take from the forest, through the pulp manufacturing process, to the paper mill, all the way through to the certified product sold to an end user. Compliance with this standard means that Stevens Point mill employees have established and engage in best practices to process pulp derived from certified suppliers.

Sleeping coder saves energy

TO help Pepsi-Co meet its sustainability goal, Markem-Imaje developed energy saving function for its most widely-used thermal transfer coder

The provider of coding and marking solutions has designed a power saving feature for the SmartDate 5, one of its best selling coders. This is now included as standard to all new units and can be easily retro-fitted to existing ones, reducing the amount of power consumed by half, according to the company.

Pepsi-Co, which has been using SmartDate coding technology for the past decade, has embarked on a project with Markem-Imaje to upgrade its existing coders with the new function and eventually roll out its use across many of its sites.

Steven Brooks, Pepsi-Co regional packaging manager for Europe and the Middle East, said: 'Globally we have over 2,000 SmartDate coders installed on our packaging lines.

'Our largest areas of energy usage in packaging are electricity and compressed air and our goal is to reduce our energy consumption in these areas significantly over the next three years.'

UK engineering director for Pepsi-Co, Martin Miller, added: 'In the UK Pepsi-Co is dedicated to using resources carefully. The challenge to our equipment and instrumentation suppliers is to find ways to decrease the amount of power that their products consume, a task which Markem-Imaje has responded to. Although the power saving on each SmartDate 5 may not be dramatic in its own right, the cumulative effect will help us meet our overall targets.'

With the new function, the SmartDate switches into sleep mode if the parent packaging machine is powered down, and it can also be programmed to sleep if the line is unused for a pre-determined length of time. It displays a small moon graphic while in sleep mode and, when the line re-starts, the coder powers up again in less than one second.

Markem-Imaje product manager Andy Gray said: 'Having been at the forefront of coding and labeling in the packaging industry for many years, we've recognized a notable shift in attitudes to energy efficiency on the production line. Leading manufacturers such as Pepsi-Co are seeking more environmentally friendly solutions that will help them reduce their carbon footprint and their energy costs. This was the impetus behind the development of the Sleeping SmartDate.'

EVIRONMENTAL NEWS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL STORIES

TORRASPAPEL EXTENDS CERTIFICATION TO ALL ITS SITES

Torraspapel has obtained the multi-site PEFC Chain of Custody (CoC) certification (14-33-00002) to assure all of its merchants and subsidiaries that the wood used in its pulp and paper manufacturing processes originates from responsibly-managed forests. Currently Torraspapel holds PEFC and FSC CoC (SGS-COC-003753) certification for its coated paper and pulp production, and PEFC certification for its merchant and sales offices. During 2008 it plans to certify the CoC of its specialty paper and self-adhesive paper factories. In addition to PEFC and FSC CoC certification, all of Torraspapel's paper mills hold ISO 9001 quality certificates and ISO 14001 environmental certificates, and the company is working towards obtaining the European EMAS environmental certification.

US FPL CERTIFIES PS ADHESIVES FROM FRANKLIN

Franklin Adhesives, a division of Franklin International, is playing a role in helping keep paper out of landfills: the US Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) recently certified three of its Covinax pressure sensitive adhesives as 'environmentally benign', indicating that the adhesives can easily be removed from paper during the recycling process.

The certification is in part a result of the division's joint-research project with the University of Minnesota, which was funded by the Department of Energy, to reduce or eliminate residual adhesive from waste paper during recycling. Residual adhesive adheres to papermaking equipment during the manufacture of paper from recycled paper, leading to machine down time and specks or tears in the final paper products. Franklin Adhesives provided products for testing to the university; the research team found that three of these formulas were easily removed from paper during re-pulping.

The three Covinax products to receive FPL certification are Covinax 324-39, 379-05 and 418-02.

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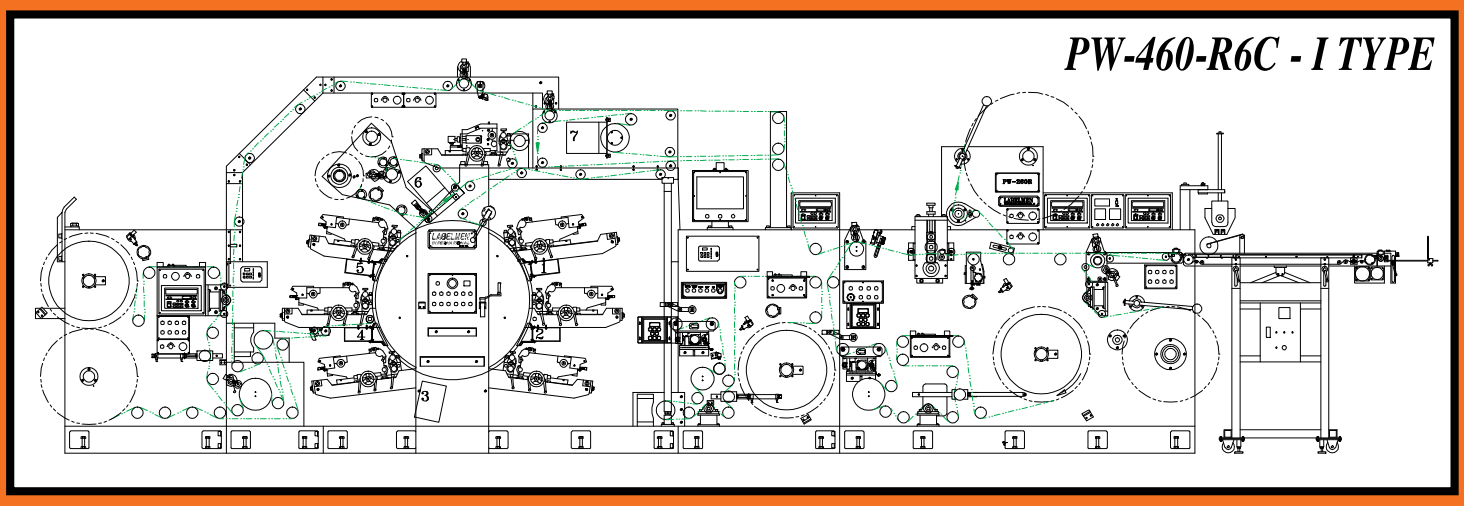

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Global apparel player

AVERY DENNISON has spent the last year integrating Paxar Corporation into its global apparel industry services operation. Andy Thomas reports from India on the results

DEAN SCARBOROUGH, Avery Dennison president and CEO, visits the Paxar/RIS site in Bangalore, India

One year ago Avery Dennison completed its acquisition of Paxar Corporation. Merged with its existing Retail Information Services (RIS) business, this created the largest tag and label operation in the global apparel industry.

The $1.34 billion deal was a sharp reflection of the realities of globalization in the apparel industry. 'Years ago, we would not have considered acquiring Paxar, due in part to potential regulatory hurdles in the US,' recalls Avery Dennison president and CEO Dean Scarborough. 'But as the industry landscape changed, driven by the move of the apparel industry offshore to Asia and the emergence of alternative labelling technologies, it became increasingly clear that competition had moved to the world scale, and so we took the opportunity to acquire it. Now it operates as part of a $1.5bn business within Avery Dennison.'

There were certainly major challenges to overcome in integrating the two companies' operations. Terry Hemmelgarn was appointed group vice president of the expanded Retail Information Services Group, and James Wrigley became VP and general manager

"We never thought we could acquire Paxar because of the anti-trust issues in the US. But because of the move of the apparel industry offshore to Asia we could argue that we were competing globally and we took the opportunity to acquire it"

EMEA and South Asia. Their management teams consisted of members of both Paxar and RIS leadership groups.

Although streamlining of the merged operation continues, the broad success of the strategy can be clearly seen: the combined Paxar/RIS operation today represents around one quarter of Avery Dennison's revenues - up from 12 percent before the combination – and is Avery Dennison's second biggest division.

Paxar's geographical spread in offshore apparel manufacturing markets and its complementary technologies allowed Avery Dennison quickly to tap into new segments of the retail services market — particularly retailers serving local customers in emerging markets such as China and India.

The services offered by the RIS Group involve not only managing global logistics and price ticketing, but also managing brand integrity in a wide range of areas from color consistency to anti-counterfeit and anti-diversion technologies.

For Dean Scarborough, this is familiar territory. His career began at Avery Dennison's Soabar Systems division, which provided ticketing, barcode and variable information printing services for vendors to the North American apparel industry from the 1960s.

COMPLEMENTARY TECHNOLOGY

In terms of complementary technology, Avery Dennison brought to the party its experience in streamlined global manufacturing and RFID production . Following the acquisition, the RIS Group is handling Marks & Spencer's RFID supply chain solution for its apparel products, now the largest application of UHF technology in the world. There are also an estimated 50 pilot programs involving other European retailers looking to replicate M&S' success.

James Stafford, who was key to implementing the item level RFID solution at Marks and Spencer now works for Avery Dennison's Information and Brand Management Division, and is heavily involved in talking to customers about how to implement item-level RFID. Revenues from Avery Dennison's RFID business tripled last year, and sales are expected to top $50M in 2008.

Avery Dennison's RIS operation is also experienced in handling complex informational needs for multiple SKUs in short runs with different color, size and price information. 'We make sure that the right shirt of the right color, size and price is put in the right box and the right ship and sent to the right port and gets to the right distribution center and the right retailer,' explains Dean Scarborough. 'Our expertise is to manage this global distribution system for the global retailers and brands. There aren't many companies in the world which can process 9 million orders/pieces in a day as well as manage the whole brand image.'

Paxar had key technology strengths in care and other labels which are sewn directly into apparel products, and the company was particularly strong in anti-counterfeit and brand protection technologies.

'These multiple-level covert/overt solutions utilize the techniques developed for banknote protection,' points out James Wrigley. 'These include microtext, UV light readable inks and taggants. Typically there might be four layers of brand protection in the average apparel label.'

For the future, Dean Scarborough says the RIS/Paxar operation has 'wonderful opportunities' to grow globally. 'The apparel industry in South China is very competitive, and we are not seeing much growth there. Vietnam is growing fast as an outsourcing center, and more sourcing is set to move out of Europe, which has generally not been as quick to outsource as North America.'

The growth of the Indian retail sector will also provide more local opportunities. 'We can certainly offer Indian retailers support through the whole process from design through to price marking and distribution.'

BANGALORE SITE

During a recent visit to the Avery Dennison coating line in Pune, India, L&L had the chance to visit the RIS site in Bangalore. Around 95 percent of Avery Dennison's Indian output goes to products which will be exported, mainly to Europe and the US.

The site manufactures a wide range of labels and labeling products, including printed and woven clothing labels, along with variable data and barcode labels. It also supplies turnkey on-demand printing systems which combine hardware, software and consumables.

Avery Dennison is currently implementing its enterprise-wide Lean Sigma program to maximize efficiency at the Bangalore operation, which recently moved to a new green field site. 'Our experience with carrying out this process in Hong Kong is that you can expect to find massive productivity improvements in the order of 30-40 percent,' says Dean Scarborough.

The Bangalore operation has a battery of offset presses for 2 and 4-color production. Around 70 percent of its orders are for less than 10,000 pieces across more than 300 product lines. Given the multi-order, short run nature of the company's work, it is not surprising to hear that sheetfed presses are to be installed at the Bangalore site to complement the offset machines.

In the course of a 'Town Hall' meeting with the Bangalore team, Dean Scarborough was informed that the company was receiving requests to handle the whole packaging operation for the end customer. 'More US and European retail customers want us to do more packaging – how will this play out?' asked Scarborough. 'We have proven ourselves able to produce high quality with good color consistency in the tag and label segment, so why not packaging?'

Scarborough also pointed out that there are opportunities to provide source tagging EAS solutions to global retailers.

ABOVE TOP: Bangalore production team. **ABOVE MIDDLE:** Focus Proflex press. **ABOVE BOTTOM:** Fabric label printing on Focus Machnery

AVERY ACQUIRES DM LABEL GROUP

Avery Dennison has further expanded its capability to produce woven labels with the acquisition of the Taiwan-headquartered DM Label Group.

'The DM Label Group strengthens our woven label product line and reinforces our presence in Asia, a major sourcing area for the global apparel, retail branding and marking industry,' said Dean Scarborough.

Founded in 1960 by the Hsu family, DM Label Group has 11 manufacturing facilities in six countries, including China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan and the United States. Hsu will serve as a vice president and general manager, reporting to Terry Hemmelgarn.

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PILOT ITALIA sales manager Andrea Vimercati

Pilot Italia means Lean

A TOUGH QUALITY CONTROL PROGRAM and value-added services have kept Pilot Italia at the top, as Andy Thomas reports

Pilot Italia was set up in 1968 as the Italian branch of the French multinational Pilot, a pioneer of self-adhesive labels in Europe. The company supplied the full range of services from paper converting, to printing labels and print & apply systems.

The Italian division went on to become one of the country's leading label converters in the 1970s, specializing in the pharma sector. In the early 1980s a management buyout saw Pilot Italia become a wholly-owned Italian company. It converted into an Spa (Joint-Stock) company and moved to its present site in Usmate Velate. Today the company has a turnover of 20 million euros, and is looking to increase that to 22m by the end of this year.

Pilot Italia started out as a letterpress house, before moving into combination offset in 1999 with the purchase of a 10-color Nilpeter MO 3300 with automatic reel changeover on both unwind and rewind and expanded its business into toiletries, food and beverages. The press was specified for combination printing with screen, hot stamping and flexo varnishing stations.

A second MO 3300 combination press followed – also 10-color, but incorporating embossing – then a Codimag Viva 340 waterless offset press for shorter runs.

In 2000 Pilot Italia acquired its first flexo press, an Arsoma. A dedicated pharma division, Pilot Divisione Pharma, was established in 2004.

A second production plant was opened in Merate in 2007 with a fourth, 8-color offset press for films and sleeve printing.

With 100 employees, Pilot Italia's key end use sectors include cosmetics, toiletries, pharmaceuticals, detergents, wines & spirits and foodstuffs.

QUALITY CONTROL

A Kaizen-style Lean manufacturing program was started some months ago at Pilot Italia. Andrea Vimercati, sales manager at Pilot, is an active member of the organization and its next president. He is also a founder member of FINAT's Young Managers Club, which looks to promote networking and best practice among the new generation of label converter managers.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Pilot Italia has not encountered 'Environmental' pressure from end users yet, but has investigated ways of reducing the impact of matrix waste and discarded release liner. The company already prints on the silicone face of the release liner for specialist security applications (see above) and has even proposed printing on a clear liner and using that as a wraparound label. Unfortunately that idea did not find a buyer.

The Italian Label Association has investigated a deal with an incinerator company to recover heat energy from liner waste, but this has not been a success. Somebody has to compress the liner/matrix waste into briquettes first, and this is an additional cost for somebody in the supply chain.

Gipea, under the new presidency of Alfredo Pollici, is working hard to find a common solution for all its eighty members.

ABOVE: Andrea Vimercati (left) and FINAT chair Jules Lejeune with the Kodak Thermoflex Narrow CTP imager. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Vimercati with Andrea Dellepiane (right), quality control manager

E-AUCTIONS

'We do not trust in the future of the e-auction,' says Andrea Vimercati. 'We have often heard that the customer who had used this method to save on the cost of labels complained about the scarce quality got at the end. In the carton arena e-auctions have driven down prices by 30-40 percent. But there have been problems with rejects because the converters are forced to buy cheaper materials.'

The Lean program stretches to all elements of the company's business, from sales to shop floor and dispatch. Andrea Dellepiane, Pilot Italia's quality control manager, runs his own independent department: 'We have seen a continuous reduction in the level of faults in our processes and our raw materials. The value of failed labels has decreased from 1,773,000 euros in 2003 to 362,000 euros last year, with a strong downward curve.' Pilot Italia guarantees its labels will run on automated label application lines – providing the company is able to influence the choice of materials and adhesives at an early stage of the design process.

'If a customer has a problem with a particular reel, we know where and when that reel has been printed,' says Andrea Vimercati. 'We can trace back to the original roll and work out which other customers might face the same problems. Our first object is to make sure the customer can keep on working, and then solve the problem.'

He gives as an example a customer who experienced a broken liner. 'When we did tests on samples of that roll, we found missing silicone on the liner – something we could not have spotted at an earlier stage. We told the customer not to use the bad reels, but told him what reels he could safely use.'

Last year Pilot had no claims at all from one of its major customers, a multinational toiletry brand, on 6,000 deliveries. 'The customer says its does not need to check 60 percent of our deliveries before they go on the line.'

Pilot Italia still relies primarily on rewinder inspection – they are not yet convinced that an inspection camera on the press alone is a safe substitute.

At the extreme end of quality control, Pilot Italia is one of only seven converters licensed to supply drug pricing labels to the Italian government. The labels are pre-printed letterpress, then inkjet printed, including variable numbering on the silicon face of the release liner. The label, printed with an OVD on watermarked paper, is used by the chemist as a receipt to get payment from the government. The liner remains on the medicine box, showing the printed security code.

CONSULTANCY

As well as implementing its Lean program, Pilot Italia continues to develop its packaging consultancy services. 'We study the technical possibilities with our suppliers and finally test the solution in a production environment,' explains Andrea Vimercati.

An example is a customer who wanted to eliminate the carton containing his ready meal trays. Pilot developed not just a wraparound PS sleeve concept, but the machine to apply and seal it. A recipe which had appeared on the back of the carton was printed on the back of the label.

Another excellent example is the 'Caldo Caldo' hot chocolate beverage brand, which self-heats in a can. The can had a plastic sleeve to keep the liquid warm. 'We worked with Avery Dennison to develop an insulating 300 micron sleeve which maintains the temperature within a range of 10 deg C,' says Vimercati. 'This allowed the brand owner to save the cost of tonnes of plastics.'

Developing tube labels for toiletries and cosmetics is another area where Pilot Italia has active R&D programs.

Pilot also likes bringing customers into the plant to see how their labels are made, 'which also gives them a better idea of new possibilities.'

A result of this combined emphasis on quality control and customer-focused R&D, is that Pilot Italia experiences a high level of customer loyalty. Of the company's 15 main customers, three have been with the company for more than twenty years, and three for more than 15 years.

PRE-PRESS

In 2005 Pilot Italia became the European beta site for Kodak's Thermoflex Narrow hybrid CTP system, which images letterpress, flexo and offset plates. 'The offset plates are imaged in one minute and have a life on the press of 30,000 impressions,' says the technical director Antonio Panariti. 'From receiving the PDF to outputting a plate can take as little as half an hour.'

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HANDS ON

VINCE DITROLIO, president of the DiTrolio Flexographic Institute (DFI), will troubleshoot common practical problems encountered in flexographic printing, in this regular series of articles for Labels & Labeling. DiTrolio has worked in the flexographic printing industry for over 19 years, and provides training and consulting through his DiTrolio Flexographic Institute, an Illinois State Board of Education and Department of Veteran's Affairs approved program. At the DFI, Ditrolio runs regular training and troubleshooting sessions for flexo printers at all levels of experience, and there are certain issues that come up again and again. Flexography is a process capable of superb results, but there are a great many variables to keep under control if you are to establish a consistent process control regime.

Plate lift – its causes and how to deal with them

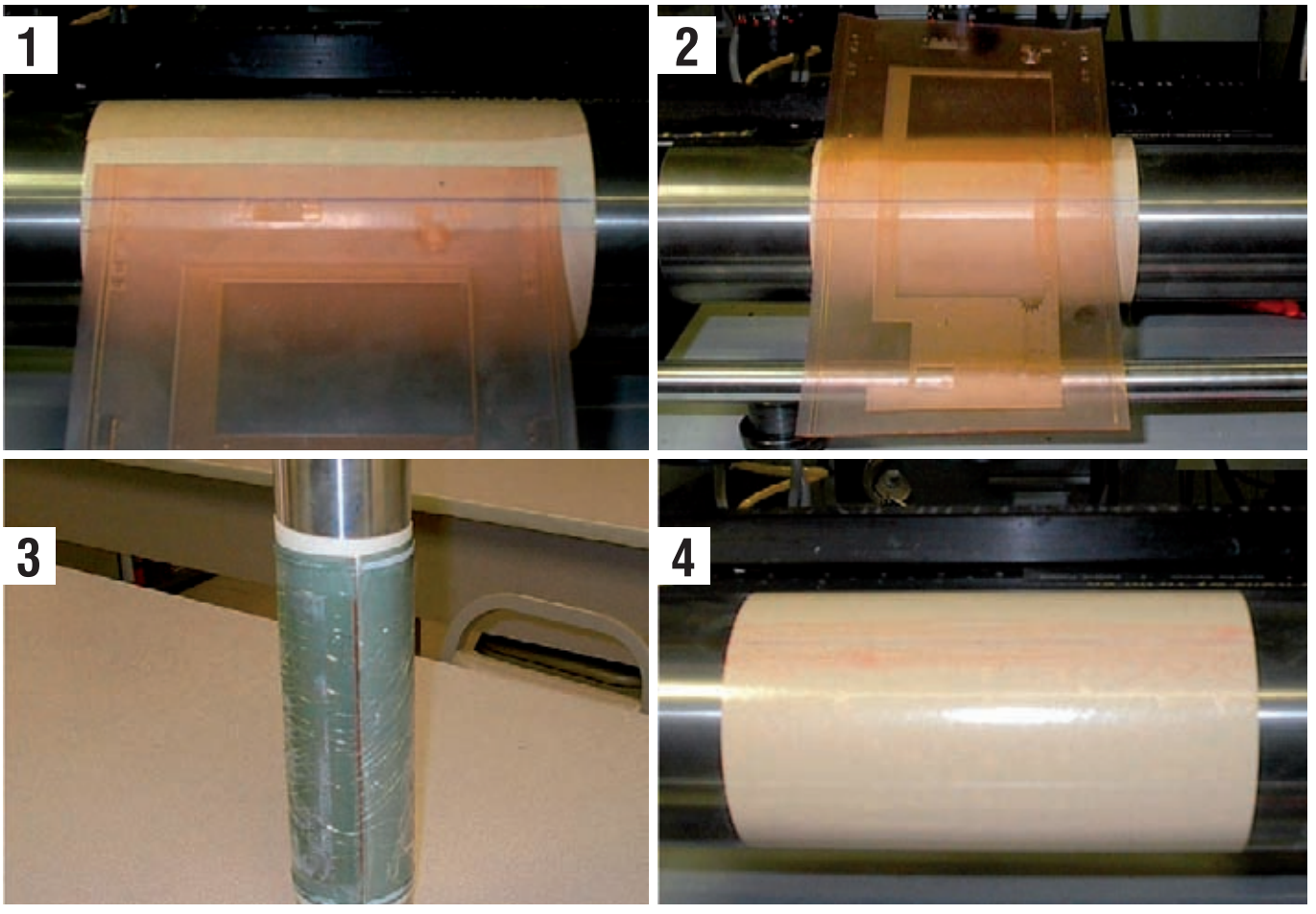

PLATE LIFT CAN HAVE A MULTITUDE OF CAUSES:

1. **Worn mounting tape**
Solution: Replace worn tape with new tape

2. Mounting and repositioning from edge
Solution: Mount plates from center. This allows the adhesive to remain undisturbed at the plate seams

3. Plate wash and ink under plate
Solution: Use a damp horse or pig hair brush, then blot dry with wipe instead of cleaning with a wet wipe

If the plates are NOT going to be run soon, wrap them for protection and to assist adhesion to mounting plate.

4. If the mounting tape comes off the cylinder and stays on the plate back when demounting, deaden the seam of the mounting tape with highlighter. Deadened seams assist with avoiding sticky back lift while repositioning plate

CONCLUSION
To combat plate lift, remember the following checkpoints:
- Use new mounting tape (sticky back)
- Mount plates from the center
- Don't use excessive wash up solution at the seams
- Wrap plates on cylinders
- Deaden seam with a highlighter marker

Polish FTA holds seminar

POLISH CONVERTERS interested in learning more about narrow web production attended a seminar held by the local Flexographic Technical Association. Andy Thomas, also a speaker at the event, reports

The Polish Flexographic Technical Association (PFTA) has held its fourth one-day seminar on narrow web printing, reflecting the growing interest in the technology in Poland. A record number of 17 printing houses took part in the seminar, along with supplier companies who took tabletop stands. These included Erhardt+Leimer, EyeC, Grafikus, Pakmar, Rotary Die Company, tesa tape, and Zeller+Gmelin.

'An increasing share of the flexographic process in label converting in our country, as well as membership in our association of 18 narrow web-printing houses, were key issues for us to organize this event,' said Krzysztof Januszewski, president of the PFTA.

The seminar program was kicked off by Günter Kern of tesa Tape, who discussed tesa's UV-Strip measurement system for checking UV dose on the printing press. The system is simple to use, very accurate and reliable, said Kern, who explained that tesa originally developed the UV-strip to optimize its own internal manufacturing processes. A reading device from UV lamp specialist Hoenle completes the system. 'If a printer can accurately measure UV dose and determine whether the intensity is enough to cure the ink as planned, this means that sticky surfaces, radical photo initiators or over-cured, stiff ink surfaces can be avoided,' said Kern. Knowing the exact UV dose allows printers to optimize press speed, reduce energy usage and to run UV lamps at an optimal quality level.

Andre Verhoeven of IGT focused on the components required to build a color control system: a color matching program, a spectrophotometer, a printability tester and a dispensing system. Verhoeven outlined his three-phase procedure for setting the parameters relating to testing through to execution on the printing press.

The justification for implementing an in-house pre-press facility in small and medium-sized print shops was examined by Dariusz Szymendera. Various organizational formats for this department were presented, depending on available financial and personal resources.

The main external factor driving printers to take pre-press in-house is growing product diversification in the FMCG industry, which results in the shortening of product lifecycle and a growing focus on cost. An in-house pre-press studio allows converters to shorter the pre-press process, and Szymendera presented figures to demonstrate where an internal facility is cheaper than an external one – even for a printer consuming only 8 sqm of photopolymer plates a month.

Federico d'Annunzio, president of Gidue, examined the possibilities presented by hybrid presses using a combination of flexo, offset and screen printing modules as a response to constantly changing market expectations. Flexo and offset printing technologies were compared – for example reproduction of color gamuts – and d'Annunzio finished by comparing the costs of both technologies.

"An increasing share of f exo in label converting in our country, as well as membership in our association of 18 narrow web-printing houses, were key issues for us to organize this event"

John Fehrenbacher of Zeller+Gmelin looked at how brands' increasing demands for print quality, shorter reaction times and more complex print acceptance procedures is creating the need for quicker ways to formulate speciality inks. Fehrenbacher said automated ink management and mixing systems greatly increased efficiency compared with manual ink mixing.

Pantone ink mixing in particular is associated with the risk of over-inking for more intensive colors, while there is always the risk of metamerism and loss of brightness due to absorption of pigment. The mono-pigmented mixing system offered by the Z&G is based on colorimetry and X-Rite's database-driven ink formulating system, which contains basic ink data for quick formulation of speciality colors. Also on the subject of ink, Adam Bigielmajer of Michael Huber Poland, looked at developments in low odor UV flexo inks and varnishes.

FEDERICO D'ANNUNZIO, president of Gidue, explained how flexography and offset can be complimentary processes

Donald Lewis, Erhardt+Leimer, looked at requirements for true 100% print inspection, emphasizing the need for a workflow which integrates pre-press with inspection control during printing.

Such systems can spot errors which are otherwise almost impossible to control – particularly foreign languages or character-based language systems. Lewis also presented E+L's TubeLight technology which enables inspection of raised surface features including foiled patterns and stamped holograms.

Avery Dennison Polska's Robert Brania took a wider look at pressure-sensitive market trends, identifying a growing demand for diversity and more complex product decoration from end users, growing price pressures, globalization and consolidation, the development of new printing technologies and increasing demand for security and tracking through an ever-more complex supply chain. Brania said that environmental protection pressures in the European Union would generate growing interest in biodegradable films and adhesives.

Overall the seminar was counted a success by delegates, and the PFTA plans to hold its next narrow web event in spring 2009.

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Breit idea

BREIT Technologies unveils its cast and cure process – a more 'sustainable' way to decorate a product – at Labelexpo Americas 2008. Danielle Jerschefske talks with some users and Procter & Gamble

At Labelexpo Americas this year, Breit Technologies will unveil its cast and cure decorating solution to the label world. The company is the exclusive North American distributor for this decorating technology, which was developed in China.

Cast and cure is an in-line decoration process which allows converters to laminate a reflective coating onto any substrate. The technology has already been adopted by P&G as a low-cost decoration replacement for holographic foil, and is set to be rolled out from the carton sector into pressure-sensitive labels.

In operation, the laminating machinery is attached on top of the press and the target substrate is webbed through the equipment. A micro-embossed film is laminated to the substrate, where it is cured while wet. The substrate is then stripped away from the embossed-film and each is rewound separately. The light reflects off the angles embedded in the coating, producing the same effects as holographic foil.

> "The structural elements create the interference or light distraction. Now this is smart"

Arguably the best characteristic of the cast and cure process is the cost saving. The cost to decorate a package with cast and cure can have an MSI as much as 35 cents less than the cost of foil decoration, according to Breit. And because the coating is only applied where needed it helps save money and reduces waste.

Paul France, principal engineer and technology entrepreneur within P&G's global packaging and device development organization, says, 'P&G's relationship with Breit Technologies began when we started looking for a low-cost decoration replacement for holographic foil. With the cast and cure technology, there is significant cost savings on added-value packaging and we can put an affordable upgrade on packaging for products that previously couldn't afford the added-value.' P&G has used its open innovation model, Connect & Develop (C&D) to introduce the Breit technology to its top suppliers.

CUSTOMER RECOGNIZED

Breit Technologies' customer Shorewood Packaging won not only a Gold award at the 65th Annual National Paperboard Packaging Competition, but also an Innovation Excellence award. Its customer, golf ball manufacturer Bridgestone, needed to spotlight the launch of its new brand extension, the e6+ golf ball, but wanted an understated pattern that would stand out among the sea of holography that currently characterizes golf ball packaging. Shorewood used Breit Technologies' cast and cure finish to create this unique packaging experience that Bridgestone was looking for. The combination of rich, vibrant color and subtle embossed pattern provided just the right effect.

Ellis Packaging, located in Pickering, Ontario, has been working with Breit Technologies' cast and cure process for over two years now. Bill McKnight, director of the company's web flexo division, says, 'I recognized the process as a very economical in-line decorating option and a means of differentiation. Since the installation, we have experienced a very high level of interest from end-users. Several product trials have led to the largest North American commercialization of the process.'

Shane Vaughn, president of KDV Labels in Waukesha, Wisconsin, installed the equipment on his 14-color 13 inch Mark Andy 2200 earlier this year. Vaughn says, 'with the added capability of the cast and cure process, this press gives us the most flexibility.'

KDV specializes in the production of milk and dairy labels, but also has a small piece of business in the car care industry. 'This process is a big improvement from what we were doing with foil. It really competes well with existing holographic technologies, is price competitive and the coating can be laid

THE BREIT TECHNOLOGIES laminating machine that attaches to the press

HIGHLIGHTS

MAKE SURE YOU DON'T FLICK PAST ANY OF THIS LOT!

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A report from the first annual Pheonix Challenge competition

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Fifty Years of Making Flexo Stronger summarizes the 2008 FTA Annual Forum InfoFlex technical sessions

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Mike Fairley talks with Claus Nielsen of PGM Graphic Solutions

A KDV LABEL demonstrating the cast and cure production

WINNER OF EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AWARD

Earlier this year, RadTech, the Association for UV & EB Technology, awarded Breit Technologies its Emerging Technology award for its Cast & Cure innovation and special effect materials using energy curable coating.

"With the cast and cure technology, there is significant cost savings on added-value packaging and we can put an affordable upgrade on packaging for products that previously couldn't afford the added-value"

down on virtually any substrate.'

KDV is working diligently to promote its cast and cure capability to current and prospective customers. It feels the quality and cost savings found with cast and cure, will allow KDV to break into more markets: household cleaners, general food industry, holiday promotional items and even advertising agencies.

Another desirable feature of the cast and cure process is its environmental footprint. To start with, the micro-embossed film is reusable and recyclable. 'You can reuse the film up to twelve times,' says Breit president Tim Cain. 'And once it is spent, it is easy to recycle.' With other value-added processes, decorating materials can only be used once and are then thrown away, increasing the amount of waste going to a landfill.

'The elimination of metalized poly laminate on paperboard is a great aspect of cast and cure,' says Ellis Packaging's Bill McKnight. 'And the reduced package weight decreases the overall carbon footprint. Also, the application's UV process is VOC free – based on the State of California's mandate that less than one percent VOC is considered free.'

'It first caught my attention because it is an example of biomimicry,' says P&G's Paul France. 'I always look to nature for ideas of what to do and try to find ways to apply it to packaging. Cast and cure is a great example of this because it gives deflection without having to use inks or pigments. The structural elements create the interference or light distraction. Now this is smart.'

BIOMIMICRY DEFINED

Biomimicry means 'the copying or imitation of a natural phenomenon's or environment's efficiency and survival mechanisms in manufacturing processes.' A great example is the swimsuit company Speedo. It has incorporated shark-skin-inspired material into its swimsuits. According to the Biomimicry Institute, swimming speeds have seen a 3 percent increase due to the innovation. Nearly 80 percent of medal winners in the 2000 Olympics wore the 'shark-skin' suits; 13 of 15 world records that year were broken by athletes wearing the suit.

SUSTAINABILITY AT KDV

Environmental Stewardship has long been a priority for KDV Label. Below are a few actions the label printer has taken to reduce its carbon footprint:

- Waste matrix has been turned into fuel pellets since the 1990s by Pellet America
- Uses all water-based inks
- Solventless plate making with DuPont fast plates since 2002
- Eliminates processing chemicals through laser engraving
- Encourages use of Natural Kraft brown liner – saving large amounts of water
- Switched from alcohol-based (ethyl acetate) cleaning solutions to organic cleaner
- Installed energy efficient lighting

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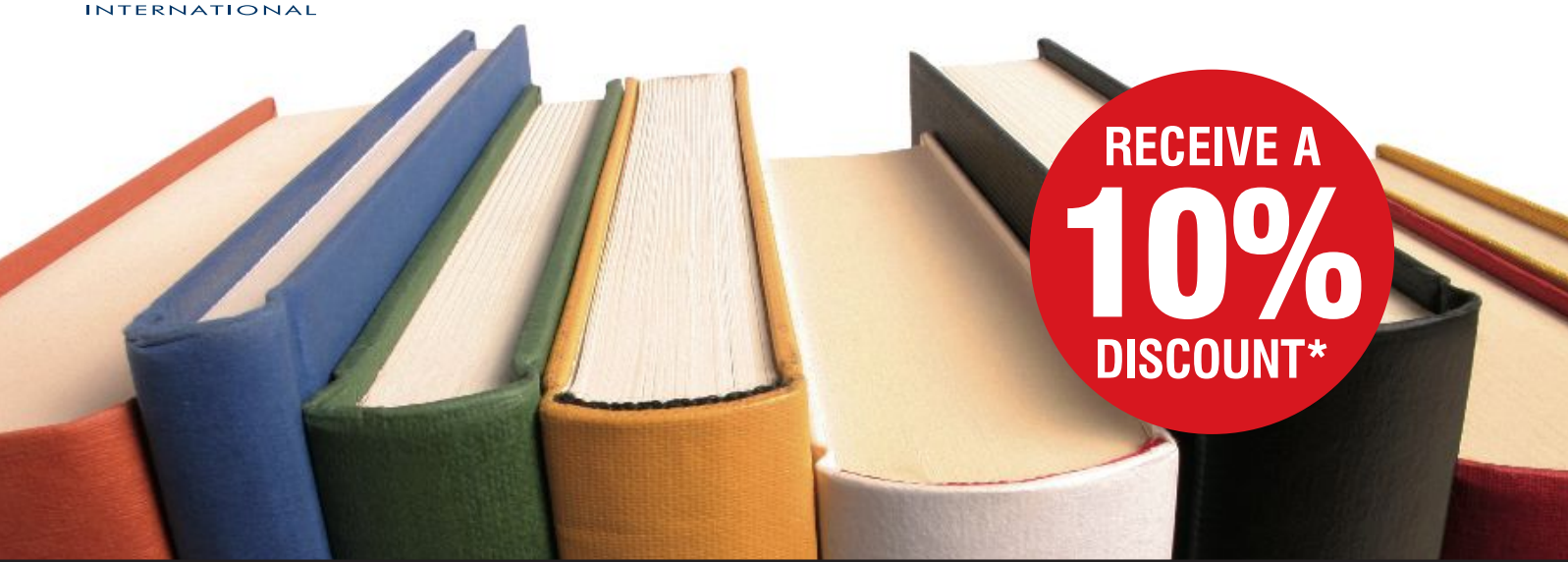

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BIG ISSUE

Question: How can label converters make money through RFID?

THE RFID LABEL MARKET may not be growing at the rate predicted in recent years, but there are niche areas where the technology is flourishing. The anticipated item-level applications have not yet materialized, but the technology is prevalent in a variety of sectors: such as ticketing, travel and supply chain management. **In the first of a new, regular series of features, we pose the question of 'how can label converters make money from RFID?' to a panel of industry experts**

MIKE FAIRLEY
Founding and contributing editor of Labels & Labeling and director of strategic development to Tarsus' Labels Group

While the RFID smart label, ticket and tag market appears to be in a relatively healthy state it is certainly not growing at the volume levels that were being forecast just a few years ago. Neither is it so far growing rapidly in some of the sectors where high growth levels were originally anticipated, such as the item-level RFID label market.

Various factors lie behind this slower-than-anticipated growth performance; not least of which has been the length of time being taken to build the necessary industry infrastructures, collaborative processes and required systems integrators.

Yet, despite these inhibiting factors, RFID is still promising much for those converters that already have – or are able to – invest wisely and strongly; not just in RFID equipment and technology but, equally importantly, in the necessary people, skills and knowledge.

Initially this has largely been converters already heavily involved in the use of barcoding in asset tracking, in pallet and case labeling, in the security and tracking of various types of goods and cargo and, interestingly, in applications where barcoding and/or magnetic striping have traditionally been used for identification in travel, traffic and ticketing. Indeed, it is in this latter area where RFID seems to have achieved its fastest and healthiest growth over the past year or two.

To a large degree, barcode converters in these sectors have had to make the necessary investments in RFID to protect and grow their business. Their main advantage over other converters is that they already understand automated technology for tracking assets and goods, for tracing cargo, for identification. They know the customers and their requirements and talk to them all the time – and therefore they have quickly identified a strong business case and investment opportunity. An essential requirement if they want to make money through RFID.

RFID is not replacing bar coding in these sectors; rather it complements, enhances and extends the label, ticket or tag capabilities for the benefit of the technology end-user. With the right technology investment, RFID chip inserting technology can not only be used for labels, but to manufacture tickets and tags as well. This can take the converter into new markets and applications (maybe on a global basis) for the future and into opportunities for business growth and, with the right investment, into higher added-value and more profitable business.

So where are the main end-user applications for RFID today? In travel and ticketing, in industry automation, in airline baggage handling, in clothing and product authentication, in pharmaceuticals, in the retail supply chain and in all kinds of media management markets. If a converter is already in any of these markets they will hopefully have made their RFID investment decisions and be experiencing business growth – and looking to make money.

What is perhaps less certain is still the rate at which RFID labels will be used for the mass-volume item-level label market of the future. Investment here maybe more difficult and uncertain to plan – but it still looks exciting in the longer term and should not stop converters investigating and planning for such future opportunities.

If a converter aims to build a global business, can create the necessary skills and knowledge base, is prepared to keep up with rapid technology development, and is able to invest wisely in manufacturing technology, then RFID is just as promising as it's always been.

JAMES STAFFORD

Head of RFID adoption, Avery Dennison, and former head of clothing RFID at UK retail outfit Marks & Spencer

The big opportunity for label converters is to spot how using RFID can improve their customers' business and then sell them labels with embedded RFID tags. Some knowledge of RFID is useful but most important is knowledge of the customer.

A good place to start looking is at any operation where both speed and accuracy are important. Speed and accuracy are normally uncomfortable bedfellows, but RFID helps you do both without compromise. Goods intake and dispatch plus inventory management are always promising areas. Many retailers are starting to use RFID in this way.

Another possibility is anywhere you want to track movement of items or equipment without the necessity of scanning barcodes, as RFID enables you to capture data out of line of sight and without human intervention. For example, the location of stored goods in a warehouse, vehicles in a yard or even newborn babies in a maternity unit.

A third area is where you want to attach data or records to a specific object without the need for a cumbersome paper trail. RFID chips can hold records of manufacturing origin, dates, and service history. If counterfeit or gray market goods are a problem RFID labels can be used to confirm authenticity.

So how do you persuade your customers that you have the answer to their problems? If you want to make money out of RFID you will need to talk to them about solutions, not technology. Avoid terms like inlays, decibels, dipoles or even Near Field Communication, which always sounds to me like two cows talking over a fence! This way your customers are likely to feel engaged rather than baffled. Think about the last time you bought a mobile phone. Did the salesman talk to you about frequency hopping, power output and the cellular network? No he talked about how much better your life would be with this new handset.

Next, try and come up with a great name for your new labeling solution. RFID is too generic – a bit like calling everything from cashmere to cotton just 'fiber'. Think about the Mobil Speedpass, London Transport's Oyster Card, M&S's Intelligent Label, France's Liber-T tolling system or Keyless entry systems on cars: all RFID examples but with names that tell you what it does rather than how it does it.

MIKAEL DAHL

Owner of Swedish converter Nordvalls and business development manager of RFID Constructors AB

My answer to the question whether label converters can make money with RFID is yes and no. We found in the early days that the hype over RFID did not always translate into profitable business opportunities. If you only supply commodity RFID labels, it is hard to add value which the end user will pay for. At Nordvalls, our answer was to launch a new company offering end-users a complete RFID service from label converting to IT integration which we could sell as a value-added proposition.

Our new venture is named RFID Constructors AB. It operates as an independent company with its own marketing and sales activities, working with partners dedicated to different parts of the RFID value chain: IT consulting, print & apply systems, handheld readers, gate antenna, and software/hardware integration. Nordvalls, of course, will supply the RFID labeling expertise, including selection of the correct inlay for the application, manufacture, printing, testing and, where necessary, programming of the labels. Our clients need only one interface to the whole industry.

We also add value by offering a service where RFID labels are pre-printed and pre-programmed for sports and other events, which are also marked with a pre-printed sequential number. This printing/encoding bureau service, called Print Shop, is an extension of our VIP service for the logistics industry.

Nordvalls is also finding ways to integrate our HP Indigo digital printing press and RFID systems. We have completed jobs from 5,000 to 50,000 RFID labels printed and laminated on the Indigo before being made into a finished RFID label on a Melzer machine. We can offer printed labels with 2D barcoding, Datamatrix sequencial numbering making a 'unique' ID for every single label and with other security solutions, track & trace and authentication features. On top of this we can then integrate an RFID inlay as well.

There is definitely potential for 'special labels', or 'branding' labels, often pre-printed or with some special feature requested. This will improve business opportunities when the market requests single item marking. It then becomes a 'natural part' of the present existing label. It has already started within some areas.Remember you will also be responsible for quality control of the RFID chips. We have seen a tremendous improvement in the quality of the inlays since the Gen1 products, when as many as 50 percent of the chips could have been defective. The problem today is the communications link between the RFID network and the company network whether the company can use the data. We are in the process of developing a platform for this. We will then be able to offer our client a complete system, a 'box' which integrate the RFID data with the main business system. It can also operate/access via internet, etc. Do not wait: do something; start today to investigate today how RFID could improve your business – it's worth it.

JAN SVOBODA
RFID sales & marketing director, Americas, UPM Raflatac

As RFID gains greater traction as the track-and-trace tool of choice and a critical optimizer of closed-loop applications, many label converters are giving this important technology a closer look. Key reasons why? These converters know that RFID can help them diversify their product offerings while keeping pace with market demands. While the investment to launch an RFID labelstock converting operation can prove daunting, with initial capital and intellectual expenditures ranging from $300,000 to upwards of $1 million USD required to evaluate, test and implement a successful solution, the rewards can be great. Despite considerable industry investment in developing RFID converting capacity in North America, market demand has not yet been filled; while companies in South America, Europe and Asia have made lower investments to date, these markets show similar promise. And if the past years' torrid growth rates are any indication of what is to come, this market will continue to expand by double digits annually for the foreseeable future.

However, label converters must think about their RFID strategy carefully before entering the market. RFID will yield the greatest spoils to those converters who can add value beyond producing blank RFID labels, which are now perceived as a commodity, much like paper or film labelstock. Those converters and printers who can create value by developing unique products or specialty services will quickly outclass industry peers. Whether it's using fixed or variable printing to create specialty products; developing unique face or adhesive materials to meet performance or industry demands; or developing special constructions, such as metal mount tags, environmentally resistant laminations or regulation-compliant materials, converters should work closely with their industry end users to develop custom solutions that meet these customers' unique requirements. Alternatively, converters can position themselves as business enablers, providing such much-needed services as pre-encoding and printing RFID tags; service bureau-type offerings including application-ready, completed tags, management of variable encoded data and distribution of advanced shipping notices; sales, leasing or operation of encoding, testing and application equipment; inventory management services on a consignment model; and systems support and integration.

Early entrants have already picked the low-hanging fruit of supplying RFID labels for cases and pallets. However, abundant high-value opportunities remain for those converters who are willing to commit to gaining the thought leadership and technical expertise required to solve complex end user challenges across a wide array of industries. And to these intrepid converters will go both high margin revenue and solid partnerships that will yield benefits for years to come.

THE BIG ISSUE

This regular feature will host a panel of experts discussing an industry issue which we pose to them. The topic for the next Big Issue will be: should environmental sustainability concerns be viewed as an opportunity or a threat by label converters? If you have a topic you'd like to be considered, or if you'd like to take part in the panel, please get in touch. The Big Issue debate will continue on www.labelsandlabeling/blog.

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OVER FOUR HUNDRED CONVERTERS and suppliers gathered in Paris to celebrate FINAT's anniversary

FINAT celebrates 50 years

ANDY THOMAS AND JAMES QUIRK report from a forward-looking anniversary congress in Paris

Over four hundred converters and suppliers gathered recently in Paris for a two-day seminar to celebrate the 50th anniversary of self-adhesive label trade association FINAT.

The Parisian back-drop provided a setting both elegant and appropriate, for it was this city that in 1958 hosted a small meeting that gave birth to the association.

From humble beginnings, FINAT has grown into the industry's most important global association, with an initial focus on Europe now broadened to around 500 members from 54 countries. Testament to this was the presence of large delegations from outside Europe: including the US – whose TLMI works closely with its European counterpart; India – where FINAT organized a business exchange program last year; and Turkey – which will host next year's FINAT congress.

The slogan 'Rendezvous with the future' underlined the conference's main theme of focusing on the issues affecting the label industry, such as the economic climate of rising oil prices and the importance of environmental sustainability. The program also included two presentations which looked back to the history of FINAT and the packaging industry respectively.

The conference was opened by the presidents of FINAT – Jan Frederick Vink of Kolibri Label, and French label association co-hosts UNFEA – Dominique Durant des Aulnois of Paragon Identification. The conference was moderated by Hans van Grieken, the corporate business innovation officer at Capgemini's Business Innovation Network, an international think-tank.

"Fifty years ago it was a different world, with no EU, no euro and less communication. The founding fathers of FINAT were visionaries"

'Fifty years ago it was a different world, with no EU, no euro and less communication,' said van Grieken. 'The founding fathers of FINAT were visionaries.'

The opening session was given by Marc Touati, president and founder of ACDEFI, which provides independent economic and business research to companies and professionals. A regular commentator of business affairs in France, Touati addressed current and future drivers and challengers for the world and national economy.

He told how twenty years ago the surge in oil prices caused worldwide recession, but reminded delegates that in the Western world is less reliant on manufacturing industries, and therefore less dependent on oil. These industries still exist, he said, but have moved to the emerging markets where labor costs are lower.

He cited the biggest threat today as not inflation, but weak growth. The emerging markets now represent 65 percent of annual global growth, with the Eurozone lagging behind. 'Economic globalization is great for the emerging markets,' he said, 'but bad for those of us in Western Europe.'

Frans Boumans of the Netherlands-based ING Bank spoke about the economic environment for the packaging industry, describing how label converters are being squeezed between rising commodity prices and the increasing bargaining power of their customers.

ABOVE: Raffaella Comunetti, Gidue; Alfredo Pollici, Notarianni; Gautam Kothari, Interlabels; Jaroslav Pristavka, ATB; Dhaval Mehta, Superlabel; Bibiana Rodriguez, Rotatek; Isidore Leiser, Stratus Packaging; Andrea Vimercati, Pilot Italia

MANS LEJUENE, FINAT secretary 1970-1997, addresses delegates on the association's history

PAST AND FUTURE

Mans Lejeune, who was FINAT's secretary general from 1970–1997 and is the father of current managing director Jules Lejeune, then outlined the history of the association from 1958, the year in which both FINAT and the EU were founded, and 'when Western European companies realized that uniting was better than fighting.'

He described the association's seminars and congresses and its tours to Japan and the US in the 1970s, as well as the signing of a contract with Tarsus, organizer of the Labelexpo Global Series and publisher of this magazine, in 1991.

Mans Lejuene also promoted a new book of more than 200 pages outlining the history of FINAT, 'United in Labels', which he co-wrote with Ron Spring, Mike Fairley and Tony White.

The book begins with the story of Stanton Avery's invention of the pressure sensitive label in 1935, and documents the history of the industry and FINAT's role therein. All living FINAT presidents since 1958 have contributed to the publication.

Robert Opie, founder of the Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising in West London, gave a presentation outlining the history of packaging. 'It's an extraordinary industry we have in front of us,' he said. 'But though we understand the excitement of the industry, the consumer sometimes struggles to appreciate the importance of packaging.

'For over 150 years, packaging has played an increasingly important role in our consumer society. Today that role is as vital as ever – but now the original need for packaging is becoming obscured by environmental issues and marketing ideas.'

He described how the social history of products is given to us through the history of packaging.

Corey Reardon, president and CEO of AWA Alexander Watson Associates, a conference organizer and consultant, gave his view of the future of decoration technologies. He predicted a downturn in global label market growth of 4 percent by 2018 due to environmental issues and the increase of flexible packaging.

The predictions of the next presenter, Labels & Labeling founder and contributing editor Mike Fairley, gave the industry a brighter outlook. Fairley said that despite the fundamental change the label industry is experiencing, with margins and profitability declining, many opportunities still exist for converters to be successful.

"I've been writing about this industry for over 30 years, and I have seen many changes and threats to the industry that some people thought couldn't be surpassed. But here we are, and I am very optimistic about the future"

'I've been writing about this industry for over 30 years, and I have seen many changes and threats to the industry that some people thought couldn't be surpassed,' he said. 'But here we are, and I am very optimistic about the future.

The key to maintaining profitability, said Fairley, is in providing brand owners with a full service, not just manufacturing. 'Label converting is not the purely manufacturing craft it used to be. Label buyers increasingly define the rules of supply, and they are looking for better service and smarter solutions.' He described the label industry as a craft-based industry in the 1960s

FINAT LAUNCHES YOUNG MANAGER'S CLUB

FINAT used the Paris Congress to launch its Young Manager's Club (above), which will provide a 'fast track' development program for junior managers looking to take leadership of their companies in the future. The need for the Young Managers' Club stems partly from the shape of the self-adhesive industry, as many small-to-medium label printers were created by founders who are now nearing retirement age and who need to ensure leadership succession for the future. Too often these firms do not have the facilities to provide outside experience for their younger managers and one of the club's functions will be to widen appreciation of what is being done across the industry.

The first members of the club are Bibiana Rodriguez of Rotatek in Spain; Els van Loo of Gevalo in Belgium; Dana Kilarska of Purgina in the Slovak Republic; Nicola Motetta of Euroadhesiv in Italy; and Gunther Schiller of Etiket Schiller in Germany.

FINAT president Jan Frederik Vink said: 'The Young Managers Club should provide a platform for first generation founders as well as second or third generation owners or managers from the label industry below the age of 40 to meet, exchange experiences, initiate common projects, study tours and exchange programs and to identify best practices in areas like succession, leadership, intercultural management, lean management and innovation.

It is hoped that the club's members will become the FINAT leaders of tomorrow.

ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: Celebrations at the launch of the Young Manager's Club

TURKEY FOR FINAT 2009

FINAT has teamed up with the Turkish Label Association (TLA) to stage its 2009 Congress in Antalya and celebrate the rapid expansion of the local organization.

The TLA was founded in 1998 with two members and grew to 12 by 2007 when Aydin Okay, owner of Canpas, joined FINAT's board. Since then membership has soared to 51. 'Our aim is 75 members by the time of the congress in Antalya,' Okay said.

One of Aydin Okay's goals is to act as a bridge to label converters in Russia and the ex-Soviet 'Stan' republics such as Uzbekistan.

The Turkish organizers have set a target of 1,000 delegates, which would make it the biggest FINAT Congress ever. The event will be held between June 10 and 13, 2009.

On December 19, 2008, FINAT and Labels & Labeling will present a mini symposium preceding the annual Awards Gala of the Turkish Label Association in Istanbul.

WORK STARTS ON NEW FINAT TRADE SURVEY

FINAT is preparing to publish a new edition of its popular End-user Market Survey and Industry Report in March next year.

Jules Lejeune, its managing director, told the anniversary congress that Dutch firm Alexander Watson Associates was starting to do the necessary market research for the report and by way of an internet poll. FINAT members were asked to suggest new features that they wish to see incorporated into what is regarded as one of the most authoritative reports published for the label printing industry.

and 1970s; a technology-based industry in the 80s and 90s; and a value solutions- and service-based industry since the turn of the century.

The first day of the conference ended with a keynote speech from Professor Ben Bensaou of renowned French business university INSEAD. He gave a superb presentation about 'value', i.e. thinking beyond innovation in products and technology. He stressed the importance of developing the individual's innovative capability and creating a collective office culture focused on innovation.

Along with a team of academics, he looked at historical examples of business innovation to uncover patterns. He found that successfully innovative companies challenged existing mentality, focused their thinking on customers and beyond to non-customers, and provided extra value without increasing costs.

'Don't let your existing assets and core competencies limit your thinking,' he said. 'What would you do if you could start from scratch?'

He cited the example of a European chain of cheap hotels. Despite entering a crowded market, the chain was able to create a niche for itself by eliminating certain aspects which the industry takes for granted: for example, a communal area and personnel available 24 hours a day. The check-in process was automated and these measures reduced costs. The hotels were positioned on highways to suit traveling salesmen and truck drivers, and provided these consumer groups highly convenient, cheap accommodation which was not being offered by traditional cheap hotels, which are often situated in city centers near train stations.

The second day of the conference kicked off with a presentation from one of France's best known global brands, L'Oreal. Packaging manager Alain Bethune explained to delegates that L'Oreal is seeking long term, win-win partnerships with its label industry suppliers, particularly as the industry comes under increased cost, competition and environmental pressures.

ENVIRONMENT

'We depend upon our suppliers, the printers and the materials manufacturers to propose new products with a better environmental profile,' said Alain Bethune. 'We now carry out regular environmental audits of our own plants and of our suppliers. Those who do not comply with our social responsibility criteria in areas like the use of solvents, we will no longer use.'

Bethune said that the EU's REACH regulations 'have clearly shown which products must be traced and got rid of.'

But any environmental approach 'must also lead to savings, so we have a financially sustainable development policy'. Bethune gave as an example the reduction of energy consumption from replacing hot foil with cold foil systems. 'At the same time cold foil manufacturers must adjust and improve these systems to reduce the waste they produce.'

L'Oreal is currently engaged in a Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) program which looks to measure the carbon footprint and energy consumption of all its packaging products.

'We are trying to see how for a given product – for example a perfume box – should the

cardboard be recycled or virgin? What is the cost analysis? The same for glass bottles. For labels, could we reduce UV energy requirements? We will ask our partners to give us figures on energy use and lifecycle of their products, so we can assess the carbon footprint of each element of our bottles.'

As part of this program L'Oreal is seeking to use suppliers located close to its filling plants, or at least in a neighboring country. 'Of course we could buy from lower cost areas of the world, but that is a short term view.'

Bethune said that L'Oreal marketeers are now more interested in promoting the environmental status of their product packaging – potentially including the label itself. 'For example on our Fructis bottle label we have enlarged the text panel where talk about our commitment to defend the environment – for example by reducing the weight of material. But we could also say something about type of label we use.'

Bethune demonstrated his point with a L'Oreal advert which showed how Fructis bottles are recycled after use. He stressed that different materials should be used for the label and the container so the density difference could be used to separate the two at L'Oreal's bottle recycling centers.

Bethune identified some possible areas for environmental solutions: 'Could we use vegetable-based UV offset inks? We could certainly use that in our ad campaigns.'

Bethune said the industry urgently needs a solution to release liner recycling. 'This is a must. We cannot accept it from an environmental point of view. Or what about more environmentally friendly liners?'

Bethune expressed doubts about the environmental benefits of biodegradable materials. 'We do not want people to think they can throw "biodegradable" bottles on the street, so even if we did use PLA we would not tell consumers. At the same time our studies show the energy cost of PLA production is out of proportion.'

DECORATION TRENDS

Bethune went on to outline the main decoration trends impacting labels. 'The most important trend is "Bling bling", towards more decoration. For example, our advertisement designers want to use gold embossing and holograms to show how clean hair reflects the sunshine.'

But the industry needs to find less expensive solutions to achieve these effects: 'Overprinting on metallic substrates and other similar decoration technologies are simply too expensive. We have to bear in mind price constraints – we can't increase prices for our products. If a decoration solution looks beautiful, but is too costly, we need to find new ways of achieving it. All the label converters in this room who have new ideas are welcome to present them to us. If we have to pay a bit more for innovation we accept that. We do not have the monopoly on ideas!'

ABOVE: Lifetime winners: A select group of founders of the pressure-sensitive label industry – Ron Spring, Mans Lejeune, Mike Fairley and Tony White – were elevated to the position of FINAT Life Honorary Members. L-R: Jean and Ron Spring, Mans and Tonny Lejeune, Jan Frederik Vink, Mike Fairley, Connie and Tony White

Another decoration trend is towards a more 'natural' look. This requires using the transparency of the bottle as part of the design, along with more delicate greens and blues with more color gradients which go to zero without a break. 'Sometimes it is our job to tell our marketers that certain effects will be a problem, for example inks opacity and registration issues in combination printing.'

Bethune and his team are always seeking new effects. 'As an example, using Braille shows our social commitment and the kind of message we want to convey through our products.'

L'Oreal is also seeing how it can use personalization. 'We are experimenting with data matrix tags which can be read with mobile phones which link to the product's website. We are also planning to print digitally in the future.' Counterfeit protection for luxury products is another area where L'Oreal is looking for solutions.

Bethune concluded that label printers need to consider how they can make L'Oreal's whole supply chain more efficient – particularly by moving towards zero defects.

SURVEY RESULTS

FINAT managing director Jules Lejeune then presented the results of FINAT's annual survey of trends in the European pressure-sensitive labelstock market.

The survey showed a crash in business confidence among Europe's label converters and industry suppliers taking hold from the middle of last year. Initial figures for Q1 2008 confirm this gloomy outlook, showing negative growth impacting Northern and Southern Europe – with the UK and Ireland hit particularly hard with at -6.8 percent. Eastern Europe sees its growth cut in half compared to last year, while Southern Europe limps forward at 1.3 percent. Overall the growth rate for all PS materials is estimated at just 0.2 percent, against a forecast growth of over 6 percent in 2007.

The 2007 figures were more encouraging. Total PS consumption hit 5.5 billion square meters – almost double the consumption measured by the first survey in 1996. Filmic roll sales continued to grow faster than paper, with a predicted sales increase of over 12 percent – more than double that of paper rolls. Filmic roll growth in Eastern Europe reached over 20 percent.

Filmic sheets are expected to show a healthy 2007 growth rate of 9.7

ABOVE: Roger Pellow, MD Tarsus Labels Group, receives an award from FINAT president Jan Frederik Vink celebrating 18 years co-operation between Labelexpo and FINAT

ABOVE: John Hickey, chairman, TLMI board of directors, accepts an award from FINAT president Jan Frederik Vink celebrating 50 years of co-operation between the world's two leading label associations

percent – reflecting at least in part the growing popularity of patch film labels – while paper sheets continue to bump along the bottom.

In terms of regions, Eastern Europe grew up to 20 percent last year, with Central Europe at 6.2 percent, the UK & Ireland 5.3 percent and Scandinavia 4.5 percent. Southern Europe yielded growth rates of just 1.2 percent.

The next presentation was by Dominique Durant des Aulnois, president of the French label association UNFEA. His figures on the French label sector shine an interesting spotlight on trends across Western European as a whole.

There are 350 dedicated PS label converters in France, together accounting for a turnover of 1 billion euros. By far the largest number (60 percent) are small, family-owned businesses with 25 employees or less. Another third of label converters are mid-sized, with 25-100 employees and 7 percent have over 100 employees. This makes the French industry well representative of the label converting industry as a whole.

Durant des Aulnois pointed out that France has the second biggest manufacturing sector in Europe, but is now suffering from the global downturn along with its competitors, with GDP growth down to 1.5 percent.

Consumption of PS labelstock in France continues to rise, however, with filmic materials growing by almost 10 percent. Converters' sales, however, grew by just one percent to 168M euro in 2007, slowing from 2.5 percent the year before.

French converters bought 77 narrow web presses last year, 17 more than in 2006. UNFEA's figures show that of the 199 new presses installed over the three years 2005-7, 40 percent were servo machines.

In terms of print processes, eleven of the 77 installations – one in seven – were digital presses: an astonishing figure. Flexo remains the most popular process, but offset, letterpress and screen also claimed a healthy slice of the market.

THE FUTURE OF FINAT

In a remarkably frank and open final working session, FINAT president Jan Frederik Vink asked delegates to consider what route FINAT should take over the next 50 years. He identified FINAT's key strengths as its representation of the whole PS supply chain, standardized test methods and its national and cultural diversity. Potential sources of weakness, however, include this very reliance on a single decoration technology in the face of the rapid growth of shrink sleeves, wraparound films and narrow web flexible packaging. At the same time FINAT lacks the resources to develop a true pan-European presence.

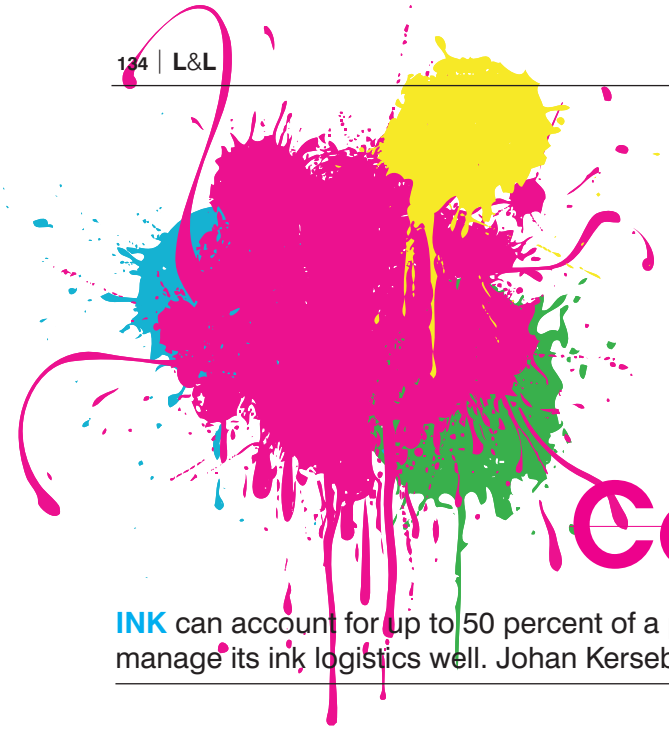
FINAT's position could also be threatened by the shift of economic gravity to developing regions such as China, India and Latin America. Environmental pressure on self-adhesive technology – particularly liner waste – is another key issue FINAT has to deal with, along with continued consolidation of suppliers and end users in the face of a fragmented converter base.

But these threats can be turned into opportunities, said Vink. With the globalization of the industry comes the need for global standards and skills, while emerging markets offer opportunities for FINAT members to grow their business. 'The new generation of European managers have a more international focus and mastery of English, the international language of business,' Vink pointed out.

In a more detailed discussion on the environment, Vink asserted that 'the label industry is lacking a sustainability agenda'. In a contribution from the floor, Mike Fairley pointed out that global end users are now demanding global environmental solutions, and suggested FINAT take the lead in bringing together the global label associations to develop a common strategy. This was overwhelmingly approved by a card vote of delegates.

Delegates voted heavily to remain an organization dedicated to self-adhesive label technology based in their core European area, but also instructed the Board to develop a strategy for FINAT to become the global authority for the sector and work to encourage national associations to support that development.

'Best stick to what we do and do it well,' confirmed Vink. 'But we have experience to offer to developing markets. At Labelexpo Asia in Shanghai it was amazing how fast things are developing there and we can certainly offer global matching possibilities.'



Controlling inks

INK can account for up to 50 percent of a printer's consumable costs, so it is vital for the print house to manage its ink logistics well. Johan Kerseboom from GSE Dispensing explains

CONTROL IS PARAMOUNT

The ideal ink logistics workflow should achieve the following:

- to provide the right color each time; ensuring perfect consistency in reproduction, whether a one-off or a multi-batch order
- to provide the right amount of ink – just the right level for the print run
- to minimize stock levels, and the burden of inventory control, with as few leftover or 'press-return' inks as possible
- to make the inks available at the right time, with as short a lead-time and as simple a supply route as possible, to avoid the threat of down-time
- to provide or acquire inks at the right cost, ultimately, to gain the fastest return on investment

The pressure on the ink mixing stage has increased greatly. More colors are needed on ever shorter printing runs. So, what are the essential features of a successful ink logistics workflow?

SPEED

Speed is vital ingredient of efficient, smooth running ink logistics. It is not simply that a production run uses several colors. They increasingly use complex colors, requiring unique recipes. Some clients of ours work with over 600 individual recipes. Slow ink formulation means production bottlenecks, with expensive presses lying idle because you cannot get the ink to the shop floor on time.

An ink dispensing system needs to make the fast calculations and have excellent flow dynamics to keep dispensing time to a minimum. In narrow-web printing situations, an effective dispensing system will dispense a recipe made from four components within four minutes – about 25 percent of the time it takes when prepared manually.

PRECISION WEIGHT DISPENSING

Label print runs consume relatively low ink volumes compared with those for other formats like corrugated board. Especially when the dispensed amounts are 5kg or under, it is vital that the precise color requirement, in exactly the right volume, is dispensed. Units on the market today that achieve this have tolerance levels as low as +/- 1g. The precision of such a system is achieved by 'intelligent' self-calibrating dispensing algorithms, which monitor a number of factors that influence the rate of ink flow, such as viscosity. The system's software makes adjustments to ensure the dispensed quantity is spot-on. Consistency in the quality of ink batches will give an increased press yield, since printed colors are 'right first time'.

EASY TO INSTALL AND HANDLE

Naturally, you want your system to be adding value to your business as quickly as possible. For label printers especially, plug-and-play systems are now available that offer easy assembly, and simple instructions, so you can be guided through the configuration process. Setting up your new system should not disturb other print house operations. Filling base-ink containers should be a simple, splash-free operation. The same counts for placing and removing ink buckets!

LOW MAINTENANCE

A system with fewer moving parts has a lower need for maintenance. Some systems have only a sliding weighing scale as a moving part, for instance. Other factors which reduce the risk of breakdown or poor performance are stainless steel valves which are easy to clean and a cleaning unit that cleans the dispense head after each dispensed batch.

POWERFUL SOFTWARE

A powerful software platform is needed to instantly carry out or recall accurate recipe calculations and provide an easy-to-use interface. With straightforward menu navigation, giving fast and fool-proof access to the right colors and volumes, operators can master the system in a matter of days. The most user-friendly packages are those which imitate the scenario of the shop floor environment as closely as possible.

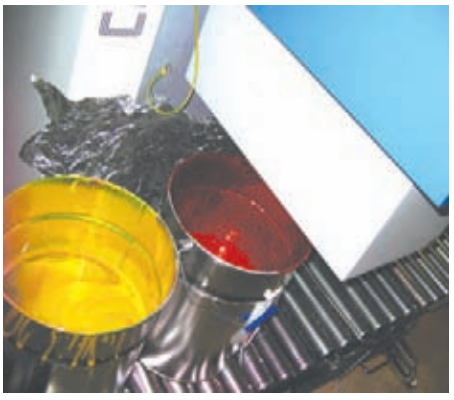
A really clever software package will offer extra flexibility to take into consideration the type of anilox used, as the cell count can have an impact on the color strength.

A software package should also be easily upgradeable.

A good software tool can carry out a number of management functions in addition to speeding up the mixing process, including real time stock control, historical data on inks used for every job, and cost control data.

IMMEDIATE REUSE OF EXCESS INKS

A most important feature is its ability to effectively reuse press-return inks. Any excess ink can be retrieved and re-entered into the system, for recall in a forthcoming recipe. Good software has no trouble taking such returns into consideration when formulating ink recipes.



INK buckets being dispensed

COLORSAT Compact dispensing bucket

COLORSAT Match

ON-LINE STOCK REPLENISHMENT

Smart software interfaces provide an automated on-line stock replenishment service. Purchase orders are generated automatically and sent via a secure Extranet connection to the ink supplier, as soon as ink stocks fall below pre-defined levels. This greatly reduces the administrative burden.

SPECIFICATION CHOICE FOR FAST RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Having the freedom to choose the specification that suits your business enables you to enjoy the optimum return on investment. A standard system, for example, enables you to achieve the most challenging recipes, exacting specifications and competitive mixing speeds, without problems. Extra benefits in a premium package could include a more sophisticated system of using multiple numerical press return inks in a new recipe, and the ability to calculate ink weights by specifying the package dimensions, for example.

SUPPORT FROM YOUR DISPENSING SOLUTION SUPPLIER

Of course, a machine is built to last and run problem-free. Even so, the support of highly trained representatives from you dispensing solution supplier, who are there to offer expert advice, training, and thorough system check-ups if needs be, offers extra peace of mind.

Other services your supplier should be offering include remote diagnostics, for immediate software support, and software upgrades as soon as they become available.

NUMEROUS BENEFITS

To sum up, a powerful ink dispensing system offers many advantages to your business:

- Higher productivity: formulation takes a matter of minutes; shortfalls on the press are avoided because the software has calculated the exact amount of ink required
- Consistency of color quality – ink recipes can be instantly recalled and identical results can be achieved. This reduces the chance of rejections
- Minimum waste – with press returns used, ink users can look at cutting ink consumption by upwards of 30 percent
- Improved logistics are a given too: if all ink is formulated in-house, the logistics path is much simpler. This helps shorten lead-times
- Lower stock levels: there is no need to make excess orders, and should there be returned inks from the press, re-use can be almost always guaranteed. Moreover, the space created can be put to productive use!
- With creation of data-histories relating to each individual job, ink components can be traced, if required. This meets the need from end-users, especially food or pharmaceutical manufacturers, who demand traceability of all packaging components. Tighter legislation requires this information in certain cases. The ink from every lot code – the number that is ascribed to the contents of a specific barrel every time it is refilled – is logged with the mixed recipe. This data helps you immediately pinpoint any ink quality problems, should they ever arise
- The printer can cost the job accurately – that in turn gives his customer confidence that the job can be done within the agreed budget.
- Space savings – an ink dispenser for label applications takes up under 2m², less than the space needed for manual mixing of inks.
- Cleaner, more presentable shop-floor – minimal human input is needed to carry out the mixing.

Above all, the printer remains in full control of the ink usage, putting his business in the best position to react flexibly.

With printers facing price pressure and the need to maintain quality and productivity, the benefits offered by efficient ink dispensing should be considered seriously.

TOP LEFT: production environment with central pipe and a lot of EM-Modules (exhausting modules) for the extraction and cutting of edge trims and matrix **TOP RIGHT:** press container with air-material-separator, main ventilator and balance ventilator outside the plant. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Josef Thor, Managing Director Matho GmbH; Right Jack Willemsz, Managing Director W&R etiketten shaking hands after finishing installation and acceptance of the system **BOTTOM LEFT:** EM-160 module on every label press, cuts the matrix and edge trim waste and extracts it through the main pipe to the press container outside.

Optimized productivity

A WASTE-HANDLING SYSTEM has helped a Dutch converter to increase productivity. James Quirk reports

W&R Etiketten, based in Tilburg, Netherlands, was faced with a common problem: how to increase productivity despite limited factory space? Expansion of the production hall was impossible, so the company's management looked for alternatives to optimize its existing space as well as improve productivity.

After a detailed evaluation of the products on the market, W&R's managing director Jack Willemsz turned to Ellwangen, Germany-based Matho – a company which develops, designs and produces customized cutting-units and exhausting systems for the label industry as well as other sectors, such as converting, food processing and packaging industries.

Willemsz purchased a CP-6000 integrated waste-handling system for ten printing machines. In the six months since the installation, a further two presses have been adapted to Matho's equipment. Due to its modular structure, this expansion was realized quickly and easily.

'As a result of implementing a central waste-handling system, combined with a high-capacity press container, the waste is exhausted directly at different production lines, chopped into small pieces and disposed through a piping system,' says Willemsz. 'As a result of integrating the new system, up to 60 minutes of working time per day could be saved at each printing machine – this time was formerly needed for the manual handling of the waste material.'

According to Willemsz, an additional advantage of the Matho system is that the tension of the winding-up of the rolls can be kept constant throughout the whole production process.

Previously, web tension had to be controlled and adjusted continuously by the staff to avoid breaking the web and downtime of the machinery.

W&R produces self-adhesive labels and foils. Foil production waste used to be exhausted by a blower and collected in a separate container, but this process has also been optimized. The whole production area is much cleaner today; the extra container for the foil waste could be removed and additional space was gained for future machinery expansion.

By using the press container, the volume of waste has been considerably reduced. Today W&R needs only 35 percent of the waste pick-up by truck as it did in the past – which of course has its added environmental benefits.

Thanks to the change of from manual processes to the machine-aided handling with a central exhausting system, W&R Etiketten has not only seen financial advantages but has also benefited from various side effects: 'The cleaner production environment leaves a lasting impression at W&R customers,' says Jack Willemsz. 'Furthermore, our staff is highly motivated because of the clean and tidy working environment: they can do their proper jobs much more effectively without being disturbed by annoying waste-handling processes.'

Willemsz also believes that the company will recoup its investment quicker than originally anticipated. 'Six months after the installation of the system, it looks like we'll make the money back much earlier than the three years we had predicted.'

The final

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR LABELS after they leave the pressroom? Barry Hunt gives a tour around the main application methods from the converter's perspective

No converter knowingly delivers rolls that are badly wound, have imperfect die cuts or may have dusty surfaces and edge nicks. Any of these faults will cause unacceptable problems at the labeling stage on customers' packaging lines. Furthermore, the larger end-users will have in place good monitoring and reporting procedures to pinpoint where the faults lay. (Which is why off-line inspection, slitting, rewinding and other finishing processes are just as important as good printing standards within a firm's total quality control program.) For the sake of their businesses, it therefore makes sense for producers to understand at least the basics of label application techniques. In fact, a lot is happening in the post production world. Many end-users are seeking to speed-up their labeling operations, and perhaps use thinner materials. The growth of film sleeving applications and changing print-and-apply techniques, including the potential of RFID printer-applicators, are also important developments.

As far as self-adhesive labels are concerned, the large variety of semi and fully-automatic machines that gather containers together and dispense labels reflect the diversity of the industry itself. Most are basic in-line or linear types. The rotary, or carousel, applicators, are slightly more complex, but run at higher speeds and usually have faster set up facilities. Both types commonly have one or more dispensing heads for labeling the front, back or around the corners of containers. Much of the differentiation among model types comes from the types and sizes of containers. This is particularly apparent with applicators made for specific purposes. Individual products may be fed to the dispensing heads by different types of rubber or metal conveyors, or sometimes large plastic worm gears. Star or diamond-shaped wheels may assist the flow with a form of buffer feeding. Electronic controllers with digital displays assist set-up procedures, while infra-red beams, photocells and/or micro-switches ensure the accurate positioning of containers. Scanning or sensing devices monitor the gap between individual die-cut labels and interrupt the web feed at the end of each label. This resets the system to receive the next start signal from the product tracing device. Other controls detect missing labels, the end of the reel or web breaks.

The actual fixing of the label is done by pulling the tensioned laminate around a sharply-angled stripper plate or beak. This peels the label's front edge away from the backing, or release liner, which is then fed under tension to a waste rewinder. Stripper plates are usually rigidly fixed, but can be sprung-loaded for side applications. Floating stripper plates with solenoid or pneumatic components allow accurate positioning. The label is positioned on the container under a uniform pressure and wiped on using rubber or foam rollers. Small cylindrical products, such as phials, can be labeled by using a drum device to roll the label from its leading edge around the container. This offers more accurate control compared with the 'flag and wrap' approach, where the label has left the backing before being rolled onto the product.

The non-contact air-blow or tamp-blow methods avoid any risk of damage to the label or product's surface, and can also label in positions that are difficult to reach. They also use an angled beak to strip away the liner, but the labels are held at a low vacuum on a honeycomb applicator grid. As the labeled area on the product passes under the grid it activates air jets, which instantly blow the label onto the container. Tamp-blow uses an applicator pad instead of a grid. A related method uses a pressure pad or plunger to fix the label in position. Here the dispensed labels are sucked onto a vacuum pad, usually on the end of a plunger, and then applied to the product when it is correctly positioned by releasing the suction. This method applies labels on any surface, as well as in recesses, at the bottom of short containers, at an angle, or on both sides simultaneously.

THE servo-driven Marathon SLA roll-fed labeler from B & H Labeling Systems

One of the latest high speed examples of this technology is the Model 3111 HS from Label-Aire, which specializes in air-blow and air-tamp applicators. The machine applies up to 1,000 labels/minute using a servo-assisted web feed of 416 ft/minute. Peel tip sensing

fix

ensures repeatable label placement accuracy. Also new is the Model 3139-15, which is a wipe-on applicator with a swing arm for labeling cartons or pallets. With this method pre-printed labels are fed from a festoon, which moves at the same speed as the product, and are brushed smoothly onto the product's surface without wrinkling.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

Using an angled plate to separate the label from the liner is a simple and effective process, but it requires that the labelstock has sufficient stiffness properties to resist bending forces. This can be an issue when end-users seek to downgauge the materials used, while operating at relatively high labeling speeds. It demands precise control over web tension and eliminating high static levels. (Arguably, this is where an informed converter can provide trouble-shooting advice.) Interestingly, one senior Unilever executive is reported as saying that he had no problem justifying the performance benefits of PSAs (within the context of dealing with release liner waste), but 'the applicator industry has to step up to the plate and do its bit' in respect of handling downgauged materials.

As in other sectors, the widespread adoption of electronically-controlled servo drives and stepper motors for all classes of applicators has brought solid performance gains. Modern applicators can label between 120 to 350 containers per minute, depending on format shapes and sizes. Some manufacturers refer to linear material lengths, which may range from 100 feet/minute (30m/minute) to 320 feet/minute (100 m/minute) depending on roll widths. A few models can achieve up to 490 feet/minute (150 m/minute).

Teknimek Engineering, a UK manufacturer of packaging machinery, claims its FastPaQ UHS (Ultra High Speed) labeling head can accurately dispense labels at around 3,000 labels/minute for 24/7 non-stop production using inline or offline applications. Combining this level of performance with any rapid acceleration and deceleration would normally increase the risk of web breaks. Co-founder Antony Altoft says it is not an issue: 'Breaks occur between the peel tip of the label and the pulling, or drive roller, which is where the tension is. Our modular FastPaq comprises a dispense unit and a loop-box unit, which provides a zero-tension supply of labels to the dispense unit. Together they form a single, compact labeling machine, which can smoothly and accurately apply labels while the line ramps from stand-still up to a top speed of 375 m/min and back again.'

Ever Elettronica, an OEM manufacturer of drive packages for labeling, packaging and other equipment, contrasts the first basic stop-start drives with today's more powerful versions. These may include PC-based systems analysis. The Italian company offers Digital Labelling Applications Setup software to complement its proprietary servo-step technology. The system is said to simplify the configuration and testing phases on applicators, such as automatic label measuring, label roll synchronization, fast label format change, mechanical parts check, and auto-management of alarms.

The wide choice of mechanical and electronic devices available to manufacturers has allowed a high degree of customization in the more specialized labeling sectors. A good example are the applicators designed for labeling pharmaceutical packaging. High manufacturing standards demand they are made from stainless steel and incorporate advanced optical character verification/recognition systems to fulfill customers' product security requirements. This includes a form of control and reporting in respect of removing rejected containers into a designated reject area.

Another specialized area which has shown enormous growth relates to the dispensing and affixing of peel-and-seal labels, extended text coupons, label-booklets

SKANEM'S LaBora print-and-apply applicator comes in four versions

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CONVERTERS AS MANUFACTURERS

Some of the larger international converting operations also operate se parate manufacturing divisions supplying standard and customized application equipment. Others act as agents or distributors for manufacturers, again selling or renting equipment to packagers and other end-users. Many integrated operations also offer consultancy services and sell consumables, such as ribbons for thermal printers, as part of a wider turnkey operation. Here are some examples.

The Swiss-based Pago Group has widened its Pagomat label and sleeve applicators to include RFID printer-applicators, pharmaceutical labelers and print-and-apply thermal printers. Pago operates several plants throughout Europe and has a branch in the USA. Rentals for short-term applications are fairly common. For example Pago UK has rented specialized modules that dispense multi-part coupons and similar labels to customers who want to try out a promotion, but at the time cannot justify the expense, yet still require a labeling method that matches the speed of their production lines.

Another large-scale integrated operation is run by Herma. The German-based group specializes in stock office and consumer labels and stickers using self-adhesive labelstocks manufactured in-house. It additionally designs and builds several ranges of roll-label applicators, such as the compact H400 dispenser module designed to run with any rotary applicator machine.

Novelprint of São Paulo in Brazil is one of South America's leading label producers and a major manufacturer of label application machines (It also manufactures self-adhesive materials, UV inks and rotary die cutters for good measure.) The NovelTech machinery division manufactures the NovelTech Speed, which can apply up to 1,000 labels/minute, and the EcoTech which applies two labels at a time. Many of the ten machines or so it sells each month have been installed by the group's label buying customers for their bottling operations, giving a worldwide user base of over 2,000 machines.

The Skanem group operates global subsidiaries that cover everything from converting to complete turnkey labeling operations. Recently Skanem Skurup introduced four versions of its LaBora print-and-apply applicators for automatic in-line labeling. The latest versions run at up to 100 labels/minute and employ larger reel diameters. The standard print engines incorporated are from Intermec and Zebra, with printers those from Sato and Datamax offered as options.

Besides extensive converting interests, Sessions of York operates a separate PSA and sleeving equipment division. It recently developed a printer laminator to complement a range of Avery thermal printers. Designed with the automotive industry in mind, the printer laminator solved the problem of labeling engine blocks after assembly, but before paint spraying for a diesel engine service provider. The process produces durable film-laminated labels that withstand heat and are protected from grease and dirt, yet allows for conventional thermal printing.

In the USA, Labeltronix, which specializes in UV flexo and digitally-printed wine and nutraceutical labels, claims to be Southern California's leading provider of labels, labeling systems and supplies. Products include a range of semi and fully automatic prime labeling applicators, including custom built models, and print and apply modules. The Orange-based company is also a major distributor for Label-Aire's blow-on applicators mentioned earlier.

Sinclair Systems International, a Californian group with a global network of subsidiaries and agencies, offers turnkey solutions in the niche world of labeling loose, bulk fruit with small price or identification labels. Seen as an economical alternative to blister packs, clamshells or other packaging, this form of labeling offers retail groups a method of promoting own-brand programs.

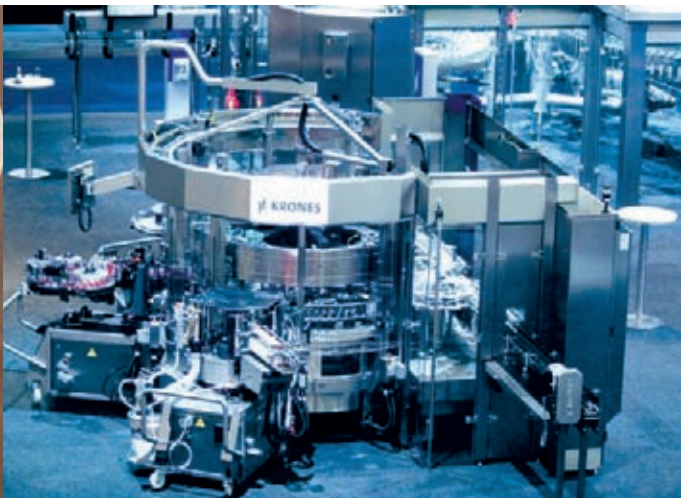
Sinclair supplies fruit packagers with its Tab-Lift labels for edible-skin fruits and Peel & Reveal for reverse-side printing of consumer or promotional information. The labels are made from thin biodegradable PE films and dispensed from Sinclair's cassette-based machines using an air-blow method. Besides EAN and UPC bar codes, the company offers GS1 Databars for monitoring sales of loose fruit scanned at the checkout.

and concertina folded labels. End-users may buy them from a variety of sources, using specially-adapted applicators or finishing lines with dispensing heads. Because these products often figure in short-term promotional campaigns, it is fairly common for packagers to rent application equipment. Initially, equipment manufacturers often remain independent of their customers' purchasing decisions, which is how Northfield Corporation, a Wisconsin-based manufacturer of continuous-feed coupon inserters operates. It encourages its customers to source their special needs from specialized converters. 'This gives our customers the flexibility to shop for the best prices,' says Brian Malzahn, technician/marketing manager. 'They are not tied to one individual who can dictate what the cost will be. We normally receive a sample of the coupon or insert for trial in our machine prior to mass production. The layout is normally determined by our customers' respective marketing or research and development divisions. The individual application of the product, for example whether the product is frozen or wet, dictates what type of adhesive and label material is used.' (Northfield also distributes CTM applicators and the FastPaQ dispenser mentioned earlier.)

ALTERNATIVE LABELING METHODS

Wet-glue labeling continues to dominate the high-volume applications in the bottling and canning sectors. Offset-printed cut paper labels offer end-users many decorative possibilities, with the hoppers or magazines also dispensing shoulder and neck-ring labels, as well as tamper-evident seals. A typical beer bottling line may include four labeling stations: two for applying body labels, one for neck labels and another for applying back labels. One or more inspection cameras check that labels are correctly positioned. Even this traditional market has seen several changes and innovations over the years, albeit for niche markets. For example, breweries and distillers have the option of using filmic cut-and-stack or patch labels made from oriented polypropylene, but using similar water-based glues as with paper labels. Transparent grades can give them a similar no-label look for premium products. Another development is to allow bottlers the flexibility of labeling all sizes of batches with conventional wet glue labels, roll-fed labels with hot-melt adhesives, or even roll-fed self-adhesive labels if required. This combination factor is featured on the APS 3 labeling station from Krones, a large and globalized supplier of turnkey food and beverage filling, labeling and palletization lines. The company also supplies the Contiroll system, which offers roll-fed wrap-around paper or film labeling with automatic splicing

WEBER'S new Model 5300, shown in twin air-tamp mode, also offers an RFID printer-applicator option



KRONES Krones' latest systems can run wet glue, roll-fed and hot melt on the same machine

for non-stop running, as well as shrink sleeving machines. Kugler-Womako is also heavily involved in the wet-glue market. It is best known for its roll-to-sheet lines with cutting, finishing and conveying systems, but also manufactures the Combina Flex series of modular wet glue applicators and wrap-around labelers.

Roll-fed labels that use fast-setting hot melt adhesives represent another form of glue-applied technology, which is dominated by B & H Labeling Systems based in California. As with wrap-around labeling, the adhesive is applied simultaneously and economically to the label's leading and trailing edges. Webs of preprinted paper or filmic labels are cut to size within the labeler and delivered to a rotating vacuum drum, over which the containers are rolled, labeled and discharged to a conveyer. B & H's latest product is the Marathon SLA, designed for the low-to-mid-speed labeling of various sizes and types of plastic containers at speeds of 50 to 250 cpm, or 450 cpm with added options.

Shrink and stretch film sleeving offer packagers of beverages, toiletries and health care products a comprehensive range of reverse-side and all-round decorative print finishes. Widespread growth, combined with the use of thinner films for more complex shaped containers, has led to a new generation of fast and flexible machines. For example, the LSA-9244 made by Fuji Astec can sleeve up to 1,000 bottles/hour, while the STS-1936 applicator handles shrink and stretch films of 30-40 microns at up to 650 bottles/hour. The new Combisleeve from Sleever International can handle small format containers from 16 to 75mm in diameter and is claimed to be the first two-in-one machine that combines sleeve positioning and shrinkage in a single compact monoblock structure. It offers combinations of hot air or IR shrinkage. Graham Labelling & Sleeving in the UK typifies the suppliers of sleeving machines and heating tunnels that originally began with PSA applicators. It also manufactures banding systems for large-volume PET and glass bottling lines, as well as dairy and yoghurt pot sleeving. Label-Aire augments its applicators with sleevers, such as the new Model 8500, which runs at up to 400 products/minute. PDC International Corp says its R Series shrink sleeve labelers are ideal for foods and beverages and can run thin gauge banding materials, including freezer-grade PVC and PET of 1.5 to 2 mils (40 to 50 micron).

PRINT AND APPLY ON DEMAND

Price-weight and print-and-apply are extremely vibrant self-adhesive labeling sectors. End-to-end coding may include combinations of small and large-character inkjet printing, as well as laser coders or markers, for product/primary packaging, secondary packaging and the final tertiary stage of labeling pallets of bottles or cartons. These are usually direct printing and/or encoding methods. The favored method of producing encoded labels is to use either direct thermal or thermal transfer printers, using rolls of plain or part-printed self-adhesive labelstocks.

Direct thermal imparts an image on a heat-sensitive surface coating. This turns selectively black when heat is directly applied through the contact apertures of an electronically-controlled thermal print head. Various grades with unprotected or top-coated surfaces are available. However, their relatively short shelf life restricts direct thermal usage to price-weight labeling of fresh or perishable products in the store or warehouse.

Thermal transfer printers fitted on semi or automatic print-and-apply labeling lines produce durable variable-data and encoded products for countless retail, warehousing and industrial applications. They combine electronically-controlled print heads with heat-sensitive thin-film ribbons,

SLEEVER International's Combisleeve for small format containers up to 75mm in diameter

NEWMAN VAL550 pharmaceutical labeler at Sopharma in Bulgaria.

which transfer the data to conventional paper or filmic label materials. Colored thermal ribbons and labelstocks allow users to customize their coding schemes to differentiate products within the logistic chain. Printers from manufacturers like Datamax, Domino, Sato, Toshiba and Zebra Technologies often allow users to remove the ribbon and print directly on thermal materials.

Some printer-applicators allow both fan-folded and roll operation for front, side or corner applications using either air-blow or tamp methods. The latest development is to combine an ultra-high frequency RFID capability with conventional thermal printing of bar codes and variable data at 203 or 300 dpi. After printing, digital information is instantly encoded on thin, UHF inlays and embedded in the label laminate. Positive verification of the encoded information prompts the application of the label. The RFID tagging of pallets and cases for track and trace applications is generally seen as the technology's fastest growing sector.

A new offering is Weber Marking Systems' RFID version of the Model 5300 printer. Proprietary SmartTrak software verifies the labels or tags applied to the top or side of cartons or loaded pallets as they move down the production line. Invalidated labels are printed with the word 'void' and rejected and retrieved before application. Users can format and design SmartTrak labels with proprietary Legitronic print-apply software, which incorporates various RFID encoding schemes. The 5300 offers six different application methods: air-blow, tamp-blow, direct-tamp, corner-wrap, swing-tamp and two label/adjacent panel printing.

Pago's new PagoSmart system uses an independent RFID module with an antenna and electronics to read/write or simply read labels, much like a bar code reader, but with a maximum touch-free 3-meter range. In a typical application, the company's Pagomat 15 and 16 applicator models dispense the PagoSmart self-adhesive labels by first pushing each label over a vacuum plate where the liner is removed, leaving the part-printed facestock to be encoded with thermally-printed data via the RFID antenna prior to affixing to the product. Label-Aire offers the Model 3138-N RFID printer-applicator based on the top-of-the-range 3138-N. Features include automatic set-up with multiple programs when changing between labels of different sizes for cartons and pallets.

The latest RFID printer-applicators may be smart, but they fall short of giving the 100 per cent accuracy demanded for labeling pharmaceutical and related health care products, says John Clayton, managing director of Newman Labelling Systems in the UK. 'There is no room for error in this business. It looks like the international drug manufacturers will continue to rely on the latest proven symbologies, such as 2D matrix codes and GS1 DataBar (formerly Reduced Space Symbology) rather than adopt RFID practices. Reliability is key and all the associated labeling and packaging systems must be technically robust.' Clayton points out that as the industry expands globally, with developing countries like India becoming large-scale producers, the international drug industry regulators are strengthening their influence over all stages of manufacturing and packaging.

LINERLESS LABELING

Several new attempts to revive interest in using linerless self-adhesive labels have appeared for decorative and print-and-apply products. Essentially they are self-wound rolls of butt-cut rectangular labels made by applying a silicone release coating on the printing surface and a hot-melt adhesive on the reverse side. The face side functions as the release surface when continuously wound. Eliminating the liner effectively doubles the quantity of labels on each roll, which reduces reel changes and cuts down on transport costs. They also help reduce the risk of web breaks and problems associated with conventional webs during high-speed applications.

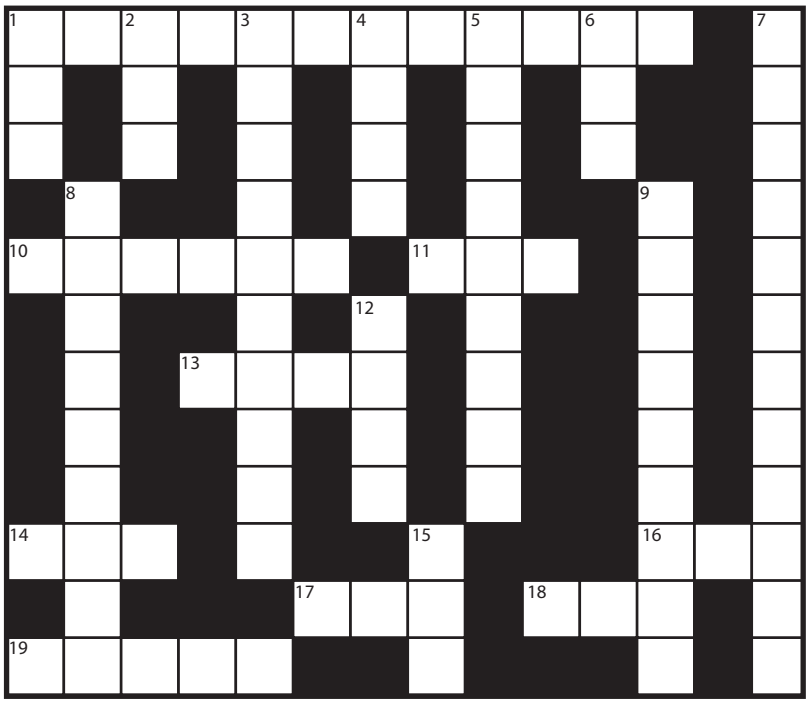
Catchpoint Ltd, a UK company based near Leeds, offers a linerless system that uses patented 'catch points' to separate each label and micro-perforations to define the label's format. Several license agreements have been, or are being negotiated, with printer-applicator manufacturers in Europe and the USA. As its website (www.catchpointlabels.com) states, AEW Delford, Herma and Label-Aire have signed up as licensees to use the Catchpoint technology to cut rectangular labels and apply them on their applicators for both decorative and thermally-printed labels. Mike Cooper, business development director, says the technology is still being developed, but prospects look good for air-blow dispensing on print-and-apply equipment, especially in the food industry: 'The system gives a perfect cut-to-print register in the thermal printer without the need to engineer cutting devices into the applicator'. Further micro-perforations developments may allow the system to process standard grade packaging films.

In April Pago introduced the Pagomat Linerless system, based on continuously winding self-adhesive labels upon themselves and cutting in the dispensing process prior to application to the product. A clear-on-clear version allows reverse-side printing to protect the surface from scuffing and to impart a high gloss effect for the printed image. Pago says the system can be readily integrated into all Pagomat labeling systems and, if required, users can combine it with conventional self-adhesive labeling in the same system.

Advanced Dynamics of Bradford in the UK has introduced a compact dispenser for linerless labels developed by Irplast in Italy and made from biaxially-oriented polypropylene film. The system is aimed at the food and drink packaging industry and uses a solventless adhesive coating that is said to 'grip', but not stick, when contact is made. The dispenser comes in three different formats for both primary and secondary packaging. The company says users can adapt and customize it to almost any packaging line for handling different product shapes.

Other companies involved in some form of linerless technology include Mectec Elektronik, a Swedish manufacturer of labeling systems, which offers a linerless version of its TT 100 print-and-apply machine with tamp/tamp-blow dispensing and a 4-inch thermal transfer head. Ravenwood Packaging, which specializes in the chilled food sector, has developed the Nobac 125 applicator for linerless labels. Domino Printing Sciences, noted for ink jet coding systems for direct printing of cases and products, now offers the M500 linerless print and apply labeler. The firm says it has developed a recyclable substrate.

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).

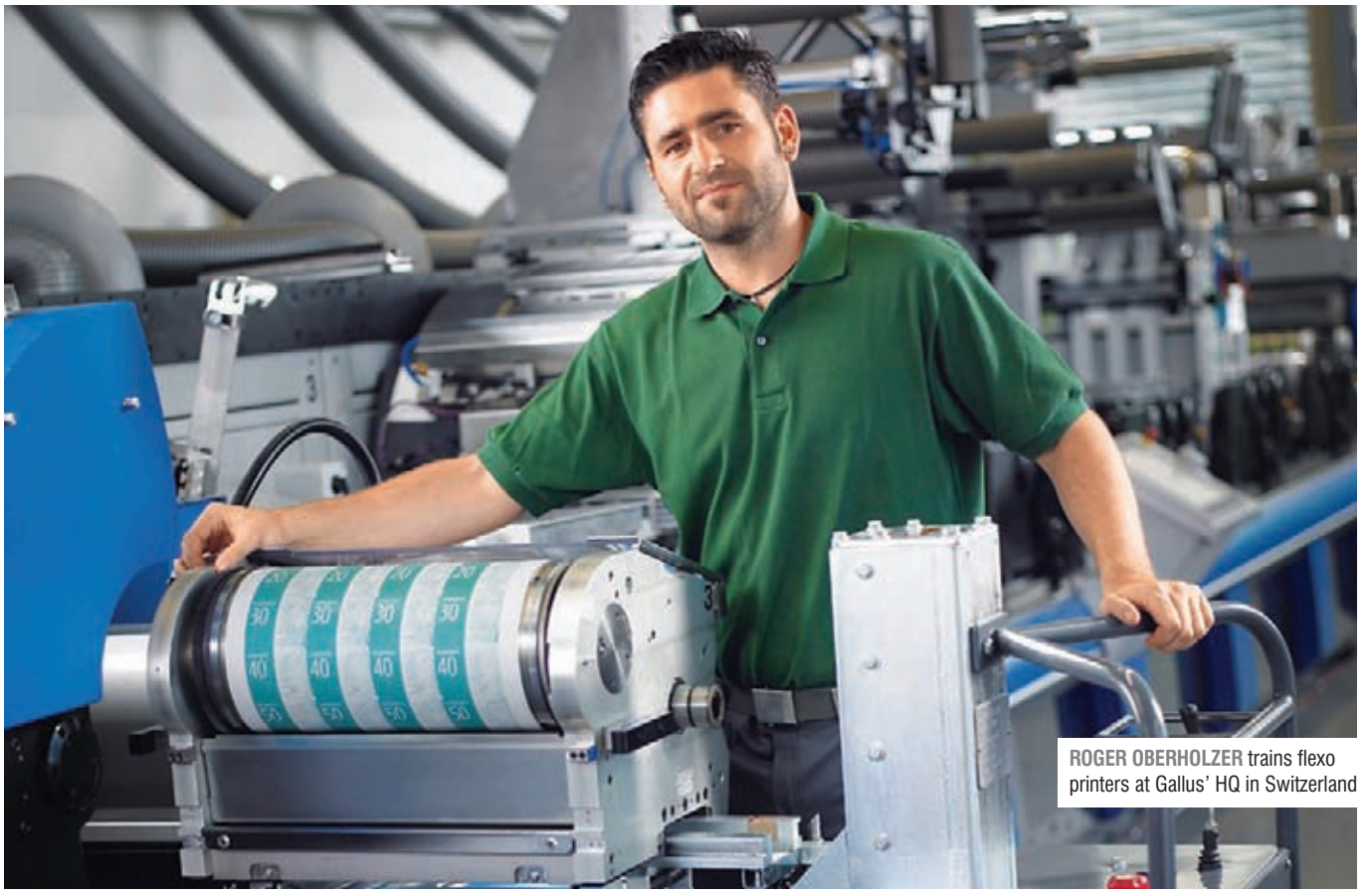
14 The acronym or abbreviation used for primary colors of light (3).

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)



ROGER OBERHOLZER trains flexo printers at Gallus' HQ in Switzerland

Optimizing flexography

ROGER OBERHOLZER, print technology trainer at Gallus, looks at the elements which make up a successful flexographic workflow

Customers in the label printing sector are looking for exceptional printing quality at the lowest possible cost – a fact that applies to all printing processes. Mechanical improvements and enhanced quality in all printing media (ink, anilox roller, adhesive tape, printing plate, printing stock etc) have given flexographic printers the means to meet even the most stringent quality requirements – which up until a short time ago had been the reserve of offset and rotogravure.

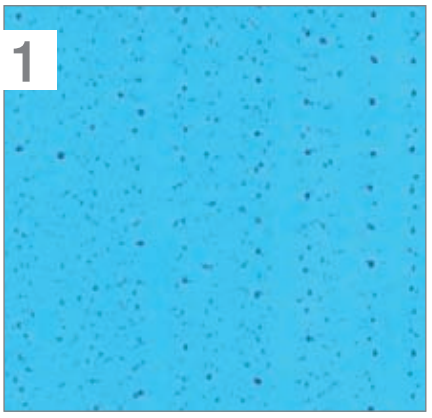
Few printers are making full use of the possibilities offered by flexographic printing. Many printshops still can tap significant potential for optimizing their print quality by just a few well-chosen measures. However, it is not just the print quality where optimizations can be achieved. Production could be made more efficient by optimizing the production flows, a factor that is directly related to job changeover times.

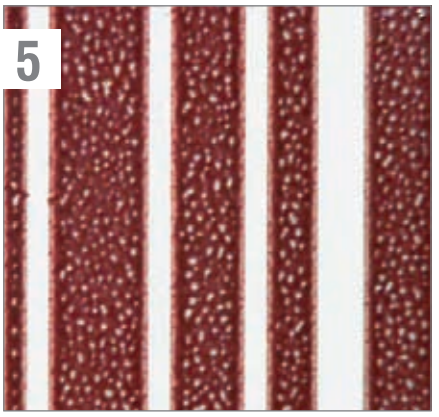
LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

'Learning by doing' is one alternative for increasing skill levels, even if not the most efficient. Inexperienced printers can very quickly gain the necessary expertise to deliver excellent quality if this know-how is passed on from experienced members of staff over the years. In contrast to highly standardized printing processes such as offset, flexographic printing in many printshops takes on a more individualized form. Efficiency can be improved considerably by defining and implementing a company wide in-house standardized flexo process. The interplay between pre-press and press and in particular the choice of materials used – for example plates, adhesive tapes or anilox rollers – has a significant impact on the result.

The following examples show the most common challenges encountered in flexographic printing. Flexographic printers throughout the world often come up against the same printing problems, which in most cases can be remedied by employing just a few simple tricks of the trade. This can be illustrated by six typical printing errors encountered in flexographic printing: (See page 149 for examples: Ink spitting; dirty screen; dust on plate; squashed plate; pin holing; cloudy screens). Such quality challenges will not occur if processes are standardized throughout the company. However, this requires a certain amount of discipline, since there are no international standardization guidelines available for flexographic printing. Once the in-house standards have been defined, they are easy to put into practice and adhere to.

"Flexographic printers throughout the world often come up against the same printing problems, which in most cases can be remedied by employing just a few simple tricks of the trade"





PRINT PROBLEM examples: 1. Ink spitting; 2. Dirty screen; 3. Dust on plate; 4.Squashed plate; 5.Pin holing; 6.Cloudy screen. 7. Uncloudy screen

EACH MINUTE COUNTS

Printing presses are an expensive investment and should therefore spend as much time doing what they are intended to do, i.e. print. Changeover and setup times should therefore be kept to a minimum. A comparison with Formula 1 illustrates this point. A single second more or less at a pit stop can make the difference between winning and losing. If the race leader loses just two seconds over his rivals during a pit stop, he will require an average of over three minutes on the track, driving flat out, to recoup these missing two seconds. Changing jobs on a printing press is no different. Every minute lost has a negative impact on the bottom line.

To keep changeover times as short as possible and thereby boost efficiency, printshops require an optimum production environment employing logical and simple procedures plus a systematic division of labor. As with pit stops in Formula 1, it is generally best if additional resources are available during the pit stop to make the changeover as fast as possible.

WORKFLOW OPTIMIZATION

Roger Oberholzer, trainer printing technology at Gallus Ferd. Rüesch's corporate headquarters in St. Gallen,

"Mechanical improvements and enhanced quality in all printing media have given f exographic printers the means to meet even the most stringent quality requirements – which up until a short time ago had been the reserve of offset and rotogravure"

says that there is great potential that can be unlocked by analyzing in-house production. Such an analysis should focus on three key areas – an evaluation of the print quality, a study of the production sequences, and an assessment of the production environment:

Print quality: The print results are analysed in detail for print errors and the overall quality is rated. Consistency must also be ensured, i.e. the analysis examines how constant the print quality remains over prolonged production periods and whether any potential exists for improvement.

Production sequences: The flow of information and material in the production scenario is analysed and examined for any inefficiencies. The analysis must examine in particular whether a systematic approach is used for the job changeover process.

Considerable information on this can be gathered from the distances walked by printing personnel, in other words how many yards or miles the printer walks each day outside the press. This is a very good indicator of just how well the printer is 'served' at the press and whether he himself is responsible for procuring all necessary printing accessories (e.g. inks, substrates, aniloxes, print cylinders etc). Another key point is the setup time required prior to the start of printing and the level of waste involved, since this is directly related to the degree of standardization.

Production environment: The production and press environment

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A TIDY WORK area and proper storage systems for plate cylinders and anilox rolls are critical elements in an efficient flexo workflow

must be examined to ensure an optimum flow of materials. The work area on and around the press must allow efficient working and the working environment around the press must be equipped with the necessary printing accessories to deliver minimum changeover times.

The prime focus of workflow optimization is to reduce job changeover times to the max. The potential that exists to make savings is immense. Just reducing average changeover times by five minutes per job can enable the printshop to handle several hundred more jobs each year. This in turn cuts the time required for return on investment significantly, in some cases by up to two years and more depending on the level of investment. Besides its known range of products, Gallus has been focusing in the last years on building up a global team for print application and workflow trainings. Now, Gallus has become a partner in supporting label printers to achieve this potential.

INSTALLATIONS ROUND UP

SECOND XEIKON 330 LABEL PRESS FOR CS LABELS

CS Labels Limited, formerly known as CS Creative Screenprint, Willenhall, West Midlands, UK, has installed its second Xeikon 330 label press, just thirteen months after the first machine. Both presses have now been configured to run to reel, with the company's existing finishing station now used as an offline device for both presses. 'The move into digital printing has undoubtedly changed the shape of our business,' said Simon Smith, Managing Director of CS Labels. 'We were able to fill the capacity offered by the first press within just nine months, and by the end of 2007 it already represented 35 percent of our turnover. After a full evaluation of the possibilities, including revisiting competitive machine solutions, we decided that the best way forward would be to purchase a second Xeikon unit.'

MULLER MARTINI HELPS SPANISH CONVERTER EXPAND PRODUCT OFFERING

The new Alprinta 74 web offset press from Muller Martini has helped TGB S.A. in Capellades near Barcelona to extend the range of its products due to the machine's wider web of 740mm. TGB took a year to evaluate the new investment. According to managing director Manuel Bartrolí, in addition to its high speed, print quality and easy operation, the Alprinta 74 has another key advantage: 'The 740mm web width allows us to manufacture an even wider variety of products. This means that TGB can produce shrink-wrap sleeves and labels for bottles, lottery tickets and scratch cards in addition to direct mailing products.'

ABG SUPPORTS WATERMILL PRESS EXPANSION

AB Graphic International has supplied West Yorkshire, UK-based Watermill Press with an Omega 410 label converting line complete with Vectra turret rewinder and fan folder.

Digital Summit plans revealed

GERMARK'S factory in Barcelona hosted discussions about next year's Digital Label Summit

Meeting at Spanish converter Germark's facility in Barcelona on July 10, the steering committee for the Digital Label Summit that will take place on March 24-25 2009 at the Rey Juan Carlos Hotel, Barcelona, reviewed the background, outline conference, speaker and panel sessions for this new event, as well as proposals for the delegate marketing, table-top exhibition and key sponsorship opportunities.

Hosted by Iban Cid, director general of Germark, and attended by key industry suppliers from EskoArtwork and Manter to HP Indigo, the committee studied a detailed Summit presentation by Mike Fairley and Roger Pellow.

Suggestions and ideas put forward by the committee will now be incorporated into an up-dated program and event schedule and placed on the Summit website (www.digitalsummit.com) and into advanced publicity.

Up to 300 label converters from around the world are expected to attend the event, as well as all the main digital materials, technology and systems suppliers, leading brand owners, and some key design and marketing organizations.

Sessions at the Digital Label Summit will look at global trends, key markets and applications for digital, what brand owners require from digital printing, advances in paper and film substrates for digital printing, developments in toner, ink-jet and thermal printing technologies, combining digital and conventional printing in the converting plant, the selling, marketing and profitability of digital printing, and the role of digital technologies in brand protection. Break-out sessions will highlight digital design to print workflow, integration with MIS, developments in digital print finishing and digital die-cutting, and standards, inspection, color matching, testing and performance.

In the run-up to the Summit it is also proposed to undertake a comprehensive 'Global Trends in Digital Printing' survey of converters, with the results being presented during the event and through a printed report.

Clemson University announces Spring 2009 program

Clemson University's department of graphic communication's industry training center, PrintCon, and the new Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics, have announced their Fall 2008-Spring 2009 event program.

New seminars include brand color management, seven color process printing, digital proofing for packaging, and a G7T workshop.

Brand Color Management, October 1-2: This seminar brings together a group of consumer product companies, separators, vendors, and printers to discuss quality brand color management programs, and discuss the challenges of developing and evolving a color management system as technology rapidly changes. The program has

hands-on sessions to evaluate color tolerances with human vision, understand color across substrates, and to manage expectations throughout the supply chain.

Seven Color Process Printing, March 17-18: Key industry contributors and Clemson faculty have developed a targeted seminar covering principles and practices of expanded gamut printing methods for packaging, including technological opportunities and challenges as well as business infrastructure and expectations. Content is delivered in presentations, hands-on breakout sessions and networking events. Sample sessions include, 'Why 7-color Process for your Packaging', 'Defining Ink Sets and Process Limitations', 'Keys to Successful Commercialization', 'Press Side Color Builds Versus Spot Colors', and a 'Selective Gamut Expansion Workshop'.

Digital Proofing for Packaging, April 28-30: This seminar presents the challenges, opportunities, key proofing indicators, and essential questions for evaluating proofing solutions, verifying and communicating contract proof accuracy, and managing color across printers and customers. Leading proofing vendors 'set-up-shop' for hands-on attendee sessions in a round robin format. Attendees walk away understanding the value of a color controlled proof, available proofing systems and technologies, and current solutions and limitations for contract package proofing. Monitor proofing and virtual prototyping are also introduced in this 2.5-day seminar.

Flexographic process color symposium, October 15-17: This symposium is ideal for those new to printing process color or who wish to expand their understanding of color reproduction. Participants gain an in-depth understanding of press characterization, the fundamentals of color measurement, and the application of process color in the production environment. Hands-on breakouts include densitometry, spectrophotometry and press-side color evaluation. This symposium is co-sponsored each spring and fall by the Foundation of Flexographic Technical Association (FFTA).

Detailed outlines of the events, along with location and registration information is available online at clemson.edu/sonoco_institute or by request at sperry2@clemson.edu.

UV faces new challenges

UV suppliers are meeting the challenges of new substrates and energy efficiency. Andy Thomas reports

Historically, European label converters were the main pioneers of UV technology, while the US was primarily a water-based flexo market. Today that situation has changed, with L&L surveys showing North American converters taking up UV flexo at a faster rate than Europe. UV curing is an expensive fixed cost for a label converter, not just in terms of energy used, but in lamp replacements and downtime. So with energy costs spiraling upwards, efficiency of UV systems is an area of key interest globally.

The challenge for suppliers of UV curing systems has been to design lower-powered lamp and power supply systems that still give adequate UV yields. Five years ago most air-cooled systems ran with 200 W/cm lamps, and many still do. But lamp output has gradually been reduced, first to 160 W/cm, with now to140 W/cm for the same cure strength. A recent example covered by L&L is the curing systems on UK-based SA Labels' Ultraflex press, where all the print heads and cold foiling units are fitted with IST's MBS-5 UV curing system. Using the company's URS reflector technology makes it possible to use 140 W/cm lamps and achieve the same level of cure as 200 W/cm lamps with conventional reflectors, without compromising press speed or effectiveness of cure.

This press also provides a good example of how modern power supplies operate to adjust curing power to press speed and substrate type. The Ultraflex curing system is powered by IST's latest ELC electronic supply units. Standby power requirements are low, and their extended adjustment range means that the optimum lamp profile can be chosen according to the job requirements – avoiding distortion of sensitive substrates even at low press speeds.

IST Metz managing director Dirk Jägers says the optional ELC units typify the future of UV curing control: 'The units don't require large cabinets and are in fact compact enough to be incorporated into the press design. This is what manufacturers like Gallus, Gidue and others are doing for their new presses. Besides saving floor space, they also allow operators to ramp up the lamp's output in a stepless manner at levels of between 60 W/cm and 140 W/cm relative to the printing speed.'

These electronic units are certainly more expensive than the ballast type of power supply, but they are more energy efficient during printing and press standby periods. Combined with lower wattage lamps they should also extend lamp life.

GEW's e-Brick electronic power supply unit has now completely replaced its transformer and choke- powered systems, using square-wave technology to drive more UV from the lamp while consuming less input power than a conventionally powered lamp. GEW says the e-System saves 30 percent in energy consumption, while delivering 20 percent more energy output than the older technology. Measured in terms of reduction in CO2 emissions, GEW calculates that, collectively, printers running its e-Brick have reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 4,800 tonnes. This would amount to a saving of some $2m.

Dr Hönle's EPS electronic power supply delivers an output of 7.2 kW, which is adjustable between 30 and 100 percent. Linking two units gives a power output up to 12 kW. They are designed to increase the efficiency of the company's Uvaprint ACM and Uvaprint HP models, which have ACM (Advanced Cold Mirror) reflectors to reduce substrate temperatures.

COOLER UV

One of the main trends in narrow and mid-web converting today is the move towards printing unsupported, extensible films. This is potentially a problem for UV systems, since around one third of the output of a UV lamp is heat in the infra-red part of the spectrum. This is not a particular problem when curing robust laminate materials, but when curing films which tend to extend when heated – making register almost impossible to maintain – it is a different story.

UV systems suppliers have responded by designing reflectors which deflect and absorb heat using dichroic, or cold mirror, lamp reflectors, made from specially coated polished glass or aluminum.

In a recent analysis of 'cool' UV curing, L&L technical editor Barry Hunt noted that air cooling the heat sinks in the lamp housing is sufficient to dissipate unwanted IR energy on most narrow webs up to around 440 mm wide, depending on the types of substrates used. 'On wider reel and sheet-fed presses a combination of air and water cooling methods is usually sufficient, while for converting unsupported films integrated chill rollers are used to control web temperatures.'

GEW's latest heat management system, AirFilm, is claimed to permit the processing of a wide range of heat-sensitive materials without the need for water-cooled rollers. AirFilm puts static heat-conductive rollers immediately adjacent to the UV lamp-head on the press, directing air through the inner cores of the roller, so removing the heat. While the company still offers water-cooled systems, it says that in many cases AirFilm offers an alternative that does not require the installation of plumbing, pumps and a refrigeration unit.

One of the first Airfilm installations was part of an eight lamp

GEW'S e-Brick electronic power supply unit has now completely replaced its transformer and choke - powered systems

UV INKJET DRIVES LED

Interest in LED as an alternative to conventional UV mercury lamps is growing with the need to cure the new generation of UV-inkjet imaging systems. LED has a lower energy consumption than mercury-based lamp systems, a claimed ten times longer lifetime, no ozone generation and lower cooling requirements. Its compact size allows for easy integration and it comes equipped with an instant on/off functionality that eliminates energy consumption during machine stops. It has the potential to reduce the environmental and health and safety concerns in some applications and also to cure heat sensitive substrates without the need for additional cooling hardware.

SunJet, the inkjet ink division of Sun Chemical, announced at drupa the development of new ink chemistry specifically designed for curing under exposure to UV light from LED sources. In laboratory tests, line speeds in single pass inkjet applications have exceeded 100m (300ft) per minute.

SunJet was one of the first ink companies to recognize the potential benefits to customers of inks which have the ability to part cure or 'pin' with UV LED lamp exposure in scanning head systems. As lamp technology has advanced and higher power lamps have been demonstrated, SunJet has managed to produce graphics inks which fully cure with LED UV exposure.

'We have seen full cure of ink films, including surface cure, in 12 micron ink films when using 365nm and 395nm wavelength lamps,' reported SunJet UV ink development specialist, Hartley Selman. 'We can demonstrate full curing with energy doses of 30mJ/cm2 and below which allows the system to effectively run faster, which is what our customer base is demanding if LED curing is to become a reality. We have achieved adhesion to PVC, hard plastics and metals with these inks, so they are functional.'

Peter Saunders, sales and marketing manager, added: 'Our ink chemists have been able to increase cure speed significantly and apply the speed increases to other SunJet ink families. Increased line speed on this scale really widens the scope of LED curing as a method of drying inkjet films. We see application in coding and marking, digital label production, wide format graphics and in variable data printing on plastic smart cards.'

Atlantic Zeiser is now onto its second generation of LED UV curing technology, and will demonstrate its Smartcure technology at Labelexpo Americas. The company's ink program is optimized for inkjet/LED curing systems, with systems for non-absorbent substrates, security, spot and process color inks.

AN IST MBS-5 LAMP operating at 140 w/cm generates the same curing power as older 200 w/cm systems

upgrade to a flexo press at UK converter Systems Labelling. 'Because of the heat sensitive nature of many of the substrates we print and convert the selection of a UV system with good heat management was essential,' commented Vernon Pearce, Systems Labelling engineering manager. 'We can now print on plastic and other filmic products that were previously impossible, giving us the potential to explore new markets. We had considered a water-cooled UV system with chill rollers, but felt this to be prohibitive, as it requires a refrigeration unit and piping as well frequent maintenance and space. The solution that was developed with GEW's on site support was to incorporate air cooled rollers and this works extremely well.'

With narrow web converters becoming more interested in printing flexible packaging with UV-cured inks, a range of factors need to be considered. One of the side effects of UV curing is that airborne oxygen inhibits the formation of free radicals. This can cause incomplete crosslinking on the ink or coating's surface and give an unacceptable odor. Uncured monomers and photoinitiators can migrate through film and carton board to contaminate the contents. This is obviously unacceptable for direct food packaging, as well as some labeling of beauty products and children's toys. Cationic UV inks offer a highly specialized solution, which is identified more with wide-web CI flexo presses.

A more appropriate method is to adopt gas inerting technology to purge the lamp housing with nitrogen or a similar gas to create an inert atmosphere..

Benefits include having the capability to process a wide variety of substrates, better chemical resistance and adhesion, faster cure speeds, thinner coating weights, lower photoinitiator levels, increased production speeds, reduced energy consumption and more consistent curing.

Either carbon dioxide or, more usually, nitrogen can be used to displace oxygen from the curing chamber, and gas can be delivered in compressed or liquid form. Excluding oxygen significantly improves cross-linking and hence cure rate, without changes to the ink or varnish and curing speeds can be increased between two and four times.

It is not only in food contact applications that inert curing is of interest. GEW recently completed a series of tests with a European

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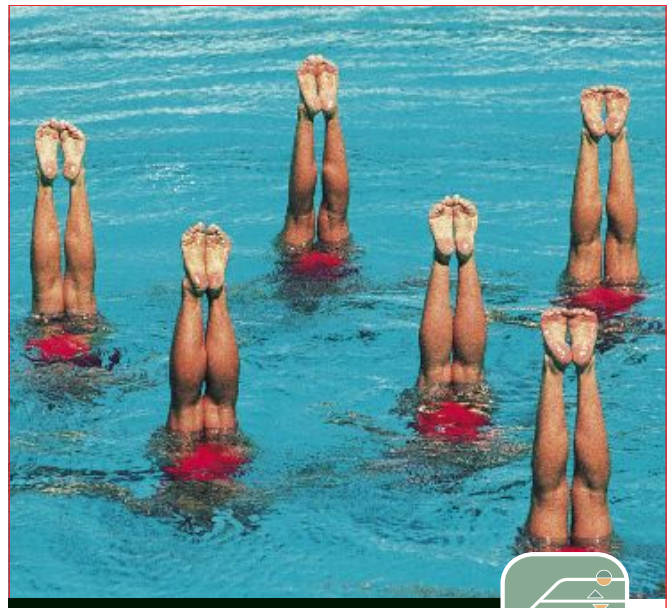

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food processing and packaging equipment manufacturer to demonstrate how cross-linking on a coating was improved by passing it through the company's nitrogen curing unit.

'Cross-linking was critical to product performance for thermal transfer printing on a varnished label where incomplete curing of the coating leads to clogging of the print heads in the application process,' says Malcolm Rae, GEW MD. 'The results clearly showed the effect on cure of increasing lamp power and reducing oxygen concentrations.'

Inerting trials were carried out on CI presses, which cured at four times the speed of conventional systems on base white inks, curing at over 400m/min and at lower power levels to achieve full cure on thermo-sensitive materials without the use of water-cooled chill rollers.

The trials also demonstrated the benefits of reduced levels of photoinitiators, addressing the issues of initiator migration and odor essential for food industry compatibility, and reducing ink costs. 'Curing of screen and gravure inks under inert atmosphere significantly improves consistency and cross-linking qualities,' concludes Malcolm Rae.

In addition, the gases can be recycled, ozone extraction is not required and lamp housings are cooled at a lower level.

GEW's latest inert offering is its e-System Inert atmosphere line for the narrow web market, intended for curing inks and coatings on filmic substrates such as in-mold, shrink and stretch sleeves for food packaging. Other suppliers offering basically similar nitrogen inerting systems for PSAs and substrate coatings include IST with the BLK-U, Print Concept with UV-Inert, while Prime UV Systems in Illinois also offers this technology. The version from Dr Hönle is fitted to an Uvaprint system with Advanced Cold Mirror technology, but uses CO2 instead of nitrogen as the inerting gas. The objective of reducing UV energy to cure inks and coatings with reduced levels of photoinitiators remains the same. A continuous inerting regulation system keeps gas consumption to a minimum.

FDA APPROVAL

Interest in UV-curing of flexible packaging films will certainly be increased with the news that the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has for the first time approved the starting elements of UV or electronic beam formulations for direct food contact. Food Contact Notification (FCN) 772 clears UV or EB cured formulations for use as coatings or components of coatings – both including inks – on polymeric substrates, paper and paperboard, metal substrates, or as a component in adhesives.

The FDA was lobbied on FCN772 by the Food Notification Alliance, a sub-group of RadTech USA consisting of leading chemical industries and packaging manufacturers along with Gidue, representing labels and flexible packaging press manufacturers. The alliance was established in 2004.

'The FCN772 clearance dramatically changes the perspectives of packaging and label printing press manufacturers,' commented Gidue president Federico d'Annunzio. 'This achievement discredits a number of false beliefs connected with UV curing. It is immediately clear which benefits will be introduced in the packaging printing

THE DR HONLE/TESA UV dosage measuring strips and reader

environment, a sector where traditionally tight and strict rules are applied for indirect food contact.'

Continued d'Annunzio: 'This is the first time that a regulation institution defines measurable threshold values under which the use of UV technology for food packaging is allowed. UV technology is now restored to its strategic role within the packaging industry, in opposition to water or solvent-based technologies.'

The Alliance is now waiting for European Institutions to evaluate the UV/EB food contact data.

MEASURING UV

One of the key factors in running an efficient UV curing system is the ability to measure lamp output. This is important not only as a diagnostic tool to ensure inks and coatings are being properly cured, but also to ensure that lamps do not require changing or cleaning. Measurement should be regularly carried out to ensure that lamp power levels are not ramped up higher than necessary – which does not do the press any good either.

Various electronic diagnostic tools are available, including probes linked to UV meters for measuring spectral outputs, or UV dosage rates. One of the longest established third-party devices is the portable and programmable Sola-Check spectroradiometric system from UK-based Solatell.

Dr Hönle offers a very different approach with its UVscan system, which measures the UV dosage at the web's surface using photochromic measurement strips made by tesa. IST offers the UMS-2 portable UV measuring unit. Backed by its FLC fast-change lamps, it is said to facilitate systematic lamp changes and reduce production downtimes. The relatively new Italian systems manufacturer, UV Ray, offers 'Plug and Cure' electronic cards, while its Teleset system can wirelessly calibrate, monitor and control a UV system from a remote location.

GEW recently launched its SeeCure, on-line UV monitoring system, which is fully integrated into the e-Brick control system. An electronic sensor is built into the lamp head that receives a combined output of UV light from the reflector and directly from the lamp, thus ensuring the total UV incidence on the web is monitored. Information is displayed on a color touch screen.

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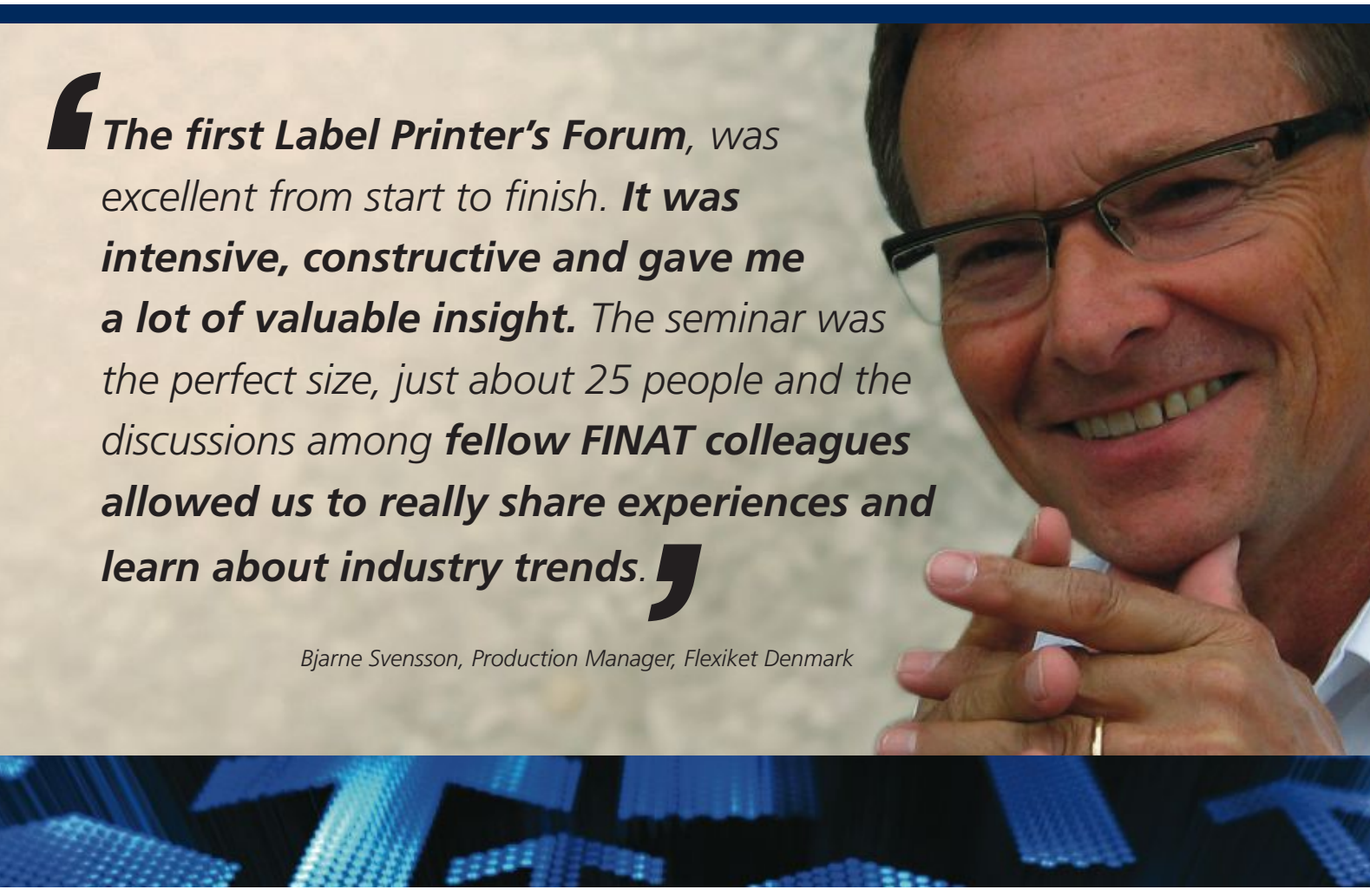

*"**The first Label Printer's Forum**, was excellent from start to finish. **It was intensive, constructive and gave me a lot of valuable insight.** The seminar was the perfect size, just about 25 people and the discussions among **fellow FINAT colleagues allowed us to really share experiences and learn about industry trends.**"*

Bjarne Svensson, Production Manager, Flexiket Denmark

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Dunwoody students victorious

CHRISTIAN R. BONAWANDT, editor of FLEXO Magazine, the official publication of Flexographic Technical Association (FTA) and its Foundation (FFTA), reports from the first Annual Pheonix Challenge competition

A year's work culminated into eight 20-minute presentations at the First Annual Phoenix Challenge College competition. At FFTA Forum 2007 in Montréal, QC, Canada, a simple concept was unveiled: devise a packaging solution for a new healthy energy drink that will allow it to compete with existing brands. The final projects were unveiled the day before FFTA Forum 2008. Competing were students from:

- Appalachian State University (Boone, NC)
- California Polytechnic State University (San Louis Obispo, CA)
- Central Piedmont Community College (Charlotte, NC)
- Dunwoody College of Technology (Minneapolis, MN)
- Pennsylvania College of Technology (Williamsport, PA)
- Ryerson University (Toronto, ON, Canada)
- University of Central Missouri (Warrensburg, MO)
- University of Wisconsin – Stout (Menomonie, WI)

During FFTA's Awards Banquet four schools were revealed as winners of five trophies. The grand prize for Overall Excellence went to the team Dunwoody College of Technology: Brian Taubert, Aaron Fraher, Paul Visscher, Steven Miller, and Brendan Larson.

California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) earned the Excellence in Graphics Award, while University of Central Missouri received the prize for Excellence in Execution. Students from Appalachian State University walked away with two trophies, one of Excellence in Research and another for Excellence in Concept.

Bettylyn Krafft, chairman of the Phoenix Challenge Foundation, said, 'Their presentations were all wonderful and it was great to see such a high level of professionalism. I am already looking forward to seeing many of the students back next year. It looks like we will have at least 60 students in 2009.'

NATURAL RUSH

On a scale of one to 10, this product is an 11. At least, that was the gimmick behind the brand name for Dunwoody's fictional energy drink. The students arrived at the name, and many other of the components such as colors through market research, competitor analysis, original surveys of more than 800 people and focus groups. These surveys were conducted on the streets of Minneapolis, on the college campus, as well as vial email to reach a broader and larger audience. According to Taubert, extensive research into the competition was also critical.

THE TEAM from Dunwoody earned the top prize at the College Phoenix Challenge. Flanked by FTA's Joe Tuccitto (far left) and Phoenix Challenge Foundation Chairman Bettylyn Krafft (far right) are Shawn Oetjen (instructor) Aaron Fraher, Brendan Larson, Steven Miller, Brian Taubert, Paul Visscher, and Tomas Herold (instructor)

Fraher explained, 'we compared colors and messages that each major brand used.' His team went with a mellow theme, tied it in well with the concept of a healthier drink, and added the Natural Rush slogan. For the package design, Fraher said it had to communicate three things: 'This is healthy, natural and earth-friendly.' Larson added that the logo had to be unique in order to achieve immediate recognition. The final design included both symbols and letters. 'The overall look of the finished product expresses its individuality,' said Larson. 'We formed focus groups to test the power of the logo. Then considered what could be done to improve its effectiveness.'

The team did the same with the label layout. They concocted targeted marketing campaigns using a combination of techniques, but relying heavily on viral marketing.

For the actual printed labels, Visscher insisted, 'We spent two weeks calibrating all of the devices to ensure we got the same color from all of them.' The group produced two labels – one of an 8oz bottle and another for a 20oz bottle. They also created a paper airplane promotion on a digital press and used a wide format printer to make a poster.

All of these devices had to be color managed to match each other. Miller said, 'Color management involved three steps – calibration, characterization, and conversion/final run. We really needed to control our variables.' The group worked to optimize the press, printed densitometric calibration forms, and held everything to FIRST specs. 'We started off printing the 8oz label because it had the smallest color gamut of all

TAKING TWO AWARDS (Excellence in Research and Concept) was the team from Appalachian State University: Michelle Surerus (instructor), Erin O'Bryant, Kierston Kahrs, Natalie Kirkley, Meghan Wagner, Lindsay Hopkins and Tracy Chavis

the devices that were going to be used.'

CHANGE AND ADAPT

The team at Appalachian State – Kierston Kahrs, Lindsay Hopkins, Erin O'Bryant, Tracy Chavis, Natalie Kirkley and Meghan Wagner – didn't just create a packaging solution; they took the next step, and created the actual drink. Their drink's name is Evolve.

'Europe and Asia have been experimenting with different vitamins since the 1960s,' said Wagner. 'Sales of energy drinks are expected to reach $39.2 billion by 2010.' Her team researched in great detail the target audience for energy drinks: young adults and teens ranging from ages 14 to 25; gamers, hip-hoppers, and people who play extreme sports; and people who are on the go and live fast-paced life styles.

'Primary packaging for energy drinks has typically been metal cans with bright colors,' said Kahrs. 'Evolving implies progression. More than 50 percent of people polled were concerned about the environment.' The team claimed that the label itself was completely edible. The secondary packaging is also bio-degradable, and the use of soy-based inks adds to the sustainability element.

NIMBLE SPRY

The team at Cal Poly conducted a series of surveys polling people, mainly aged 17 to 25, on a variety of topics from what influences them to buy energy drinks to the affect of various container shapes and materials. The team of students: Nisse Noble, Brenae Costa, Deirdre Miller, Cassie Barth and Aaron Kroeger named their drink Spry to imply 'lively and nimble'.

Costa indicated that plastic seemed the way to go, but much debate arose over PET (polyester) versus PLA (polylatic acid). PLA plastic is bio-degradable, she noted, but only if it is not mixed in with other plastics, and it has to be temperature controlled at all times. The group ultimately went with PET, and designed a prototype in Adobe Illustrator, which was sent to the Industrial Technologies Dept to make an actual bottle.

CLOSER TO HOME

Taking a unique position, students from University of Central Missouri presented their solution for a small, regionally branded energy drink. The team of Sarah Bates, Danielle Coakley, and Nick Martin spoke to judges, noting that fellow student Samantha Blackwell was not able to attend the event.

ABOVE TOP: students from Cal Poly took the award for Excellence in Graphics: (left to right) Cassie Barth, Nisse Noble, Deirdre Miller, Brenae Costa, and Aaron Kroeger with instructor Malcolm Kief. **ABOVE BOTTOM:** University of Central Missouri's team took the award for Excellence in Execution: (left to right) Danielle Coakley, Nick Martin, and Sarah Bates with instructor Mark Rankin

'Our solution is Mule Fuel,' Bates said.

Like those from other schools, Bates and her teammates researched the demographics of typical drinks. 'The age group that they are targeting is 15 to 25 and largely male. Our student body, however, is 57 percent female and 43 percent male, which means we need to try to target more women.'

Preliminary designs included red and black, and incorporated variations of the school mascot, a mule. Martin stated, 'Using this research, we got together and addressed five points: container size and shape, the color association, the product name, slogans and catchphrases, and a logo.'

To differentiate from other drinks, the group chose an aluminum bottle. Coakley told judges, 'Normally aluminum cans are direct printed. CCL Label, which provided the containers you see before you, said that direct printing aluminum is not cost effective for less than 100,000 units. Since this is a regionally marketed brand, we figured we'd stay under that number.' As such, they went with a clear film pressure-sensitive label for graphics.

The team turned to FIRST to create their UPC code, and the FDA to ensure accurate nutrition facts. Color management was done using monitor calibration and a Pantone swatch book. 'To get the densities we wanted, we were required to use a 440 anilox on the black and 550 on our Pantone 200.'

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THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOR CONSISTENCY

TOM KERCHISS, managing director of sample preparation specialist RK Print Coat Instruments, looks at the importance of color consistency and proofing in the label industry

Brand owners are faced with a variety of challenges – from increasing global competition and shrinking margins, to the battle for retail shelf space and the fickleness of consumers. While product manufacturers can develop new products or revamp existing ones, brand owners and marketers look to packaging and labeling as a means to enhance brand credibility, motivate purchase and encourage both loyalty and repeat sales. More often than not, in the mind of the consumer, there is little separation between package and product – the pack and label are all part of the brand identity equation.

Packaging has graduated from its most basic of functions – protection and preservation – and now plays a key role as a brand identifier. Consumers look to packaging and labeling for clues about the product inside. More than simply displaying product name and a logo, a package or label surface is a combination of color imagery and messaging that – if used wisely – carries an assurance of quality, integrity and all of the core values of the brand. Color and graphical content should connect emotionally with the target audience, their lifestyle, tastes and values.

There is a known link between the emotive power of color and image of a brand. Color is a cue to composition: it's the first thing we as humans register when assessing anything and it is a powerful communication tool, especially in a retail environment when hundreds of products compete for the attention of the browsing consumer. For these reasons, marketing departments devote considerable time and energy when making color selection. Understandably they're annoyed and disappointed when a color reproduced by the printer doesn't turn out as expected.

Color can affect a person in a positive, neutral or negative manner, and these principles can help provide a positive effect for many types of graphics. Color is more than just 'Theatre': the way in which not only individuals but also different cultures interpret color influences the sale of various products. In some cultures colors are considered masculine and feminine, and because of regional climates people may be attracted towards warm or cool colors. In the United States, for example, certain colors have common meanings. McDonalds and other fast food outlets opt for bright reds and yellow. Known to encourage fast eating and quick table turnover, yellow (happy and warm) and red (stimulating and associated with speed) are also popular colors for snack food packaging. Red is of course associated with danger – eating too quick and too much, so marketers use this color sparingly, i.e., spot color.

Color can give clues to flavor and edibility. The exception is blue. Blue conveys trust, authority and reliability; it is, however, seldom used for food packaging for it is regarded as an appetite suppressor: a cool and emotionally detached color.

It is worth noting that for products other than food blue is arguably the best color for global branding, because it has many positive associations for many cultures, age groups and the different genders. Up until now we have looked at the importance of color and selection from a brand owner, marketer and designer's point of view; let us now turn our attention to reproducing color in the pressroom.

"There is a known link between the emotive power of color and image of a brand. Color is a cue to composition: it's the first thing we as humans register when assessing anything and it is a powerful communication too"

Most print producers would agree that reproducing color – run after run – is often challenging due to the many variables to contend with. The customer can communicate the color or colors desired in a number of ways. He/she may provide a sample: one printed by a competitor using a different print process from the one that's going to be used; he/she may refer to a Pantone color swatch or provide numerical data. Regardless of the method, a printer needs a guide to what the customer wants, a color standard to work from.

The process of matching ink color can involve weighing and blending ink bases, making ink drawdown with a hand held proofing device, printing the color at the press, making color adjustments and comparing color – visually and/or by color

RK Print's factory in Herts, UK

measurement. Varying from pressroom to pressroom each process has set procedures and steps. But the goals are essentially the same: to provide a product that is consistent in color – vital in global branding, when a product may be printed with a different message and in a different language in different countries, but where color must remain constant.

"Printers must never lose sight of the fact that they always need to prove to their print buying customers that they deserve the business – the only way to do this is through product consistency"

Sometimes though, even when we use the same ink color formulation or the very same ink that was left over from an earlier run, a given color doesn't always match. This may be for a number of reasons: it may be to do with some element associated with the press; if it's flexo it may be to do with anilox geometry, variations in substrate texture or simply the fact that different substrate suppliers are being used. It may even be that a different parameter has been introduced, i.e., an overprint coating, either modified or omitted.

Variations in color cause downtime while inks are adjusted, resulting in vast quantities of waste, downtime and loss of production, all of which impact on profitability. Print producers must therefore ever be on the alert to ways that fine tune color matching and other operations in order that profitability and productivity levels remain at their highest. At the same time printers must never lose sight of the fact that they always need to prove to their print buying customers that they deserve the business – the only way to do this is through product consistency and this is made easier if processes are regulated, documented and standardized so that variables are minimized.

One way to limit process variables is if the ink producer, the printer and other suppliers use identical systems and equipment for the preparation of color samples, color matching and for determining printability. If all users are using the same procedures to obtain results, color matching and other process parameters then inconsistencies are minimized. Any issues that may arise with substrate/ink interaction, for example, can be highlighted, resolved or a workaround solution provided, for the most part off-press rather than on-press.

Resolving issues off-press provides obvious advantages. For one thing, adjusting colors on press is generally at the expense of press time and that's not good. Equally a printer charged with printing on an unfamiliar material will be none too pleased if desired results are unobtainable due to the fact that material characteristics and properties don't meet print process expectations. If, however, a material or consumable (ink, coating, varnish) producer has been trialed on the same color communication technology as everyone else in the process and/or manufacturing chain – risk of failure or disappointment is diminished, morale is boosted and workflow is optimized.

THE FLEXIPROOF SYSTEM
from RK Print

A range of color communication devices are now available, many of which incorporating process critical components. For example, the bench top FlexiProof includes banded anilox rolls and doctor blade, and for UV flexo inks the FlexiProof UV incorporates a miniaturized UV curing system for proofing and curing inline. Major ink manufacturers as well as producers of aseptic packaging with satellite printing plants in different countries around the world opt for this type of system, primarily in order that results obtained in a North American plant will be mirrored in a plant in Uzbekistan or Pakistan.

Standardization obviously involves the use not only of test and monitoring equipment that enables a plant manager in one area to prove to another somewhere else that results are reproducible, but the use of other disciplines in order to convey information. Top of the list comes documentation, all steps in a process; especially new jobs need to be documented in a meaningful way.

Print managers, pre-press personnel, press operators and others need to develop a method of communication, logging settings, formulation changes, etc, a system of communication that can be adopted and regularly used. And that is the crux of the matter: organizations must become disciplined in logging information on their processes; operators must recognize the importance of monitoring and logging process settings – not treat it simply as the latest management fad. For without a method of measuring and monitoring your processes – how can you hope to ultimately control your processes and achieve a degree of standardization?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Tom Kerchiss is managing director of sample preparation system and print/coat/laminating technology specialist RK Print Coat Instruments Ltd. The company, which won an Innovator in Pre-Press Award for its Flexiproof system, supplies printing ink manufacturers, both large and small, as well as printers, converters and other businesses with color communication devices for all of the major print disciplines.

the press

THE plastic electronics industry's first printed RFID labels are set to launch, reports Gareth Beavis, contributing editor to Plastics Electronics magazine

PolyIC has launched the first printed RFID labels, taking us into a new era where traceability and other functions can be added to any product, from passports to packs of chewing gum.

The tags are by no means the finished article in terms of memory, but they will provide end-users with an alternative to silicon-based RFID tags, which are comparatively complicated and expensive to make, and barcodes, which, though cheap, are limited to basic stock control.

PolyIC is a German joint venture between microelectronics company Siemens and hot-stamping firm Leonhard Kurz. The company's printed ID labels have caught the attention of many industries. Food and drink brand owners and retailers that are keen to lay their hands on cost-efficient product ID technology may have to wait until the tags are more advanced, but PolyIC's aggressive development strategy could have them ready for these markets by 2010.

Wolfgang Mildner, MD at PolyIC, has great ambitions for printed RFID and his company. He says: 'We want to get electronics to a place where there was no electronics before; to enable new applications for them.'

The tags work on a 13.56MHz frequency and are printed onto a PET film on a roll-to-roll system. Once printed, the tags will be attached to labels that can be applied to goods.

Manufacturing miles of tags a week isn't the only option for PolyIC. Mildner will consider licensing out the technology. He claims some manufacturers will simply be able to integrate the tag printing system into existing production lines, rather than having to buy the tags separately and incorporate them into products. This would bring additional revenue to PolyIC, and provide more data about how the tag will react in different production environments.

TIMING

PolyIC's reputation has increased as the plastic electronics industry has grown. The potential for a multi- million euro industry is well known, but somebody has to make the first move. PolyIC's aim, to be the first to market with a printed RFID label is a bold one, as the technology could serve as a guinea pig for this embryonic market and many observers are keen to see how the labels perform in their first commercial application.

Maybe there is never the perfect time to take a risk, but PolyIC is relying on the strength of its technology and plans to create an entirely new market around it.

Previously, Philips Research, in the Netherlands, was PolyIC's closest rival in the race to develop and commercialize printed RFID. In January 2007 Philips claimed to have designed the first printed RFID chip, but PolyIC

counter-claimed it had released the first back in October 2006.

Mildner explains: 'For a small company like us, it is definitely important that we define ourselves by technology leadership. The people who collaborate with us should trust that they are working with a leader in the field.

But Philips Research has since dropped out of the race to commercialize printed RFID even though it had reached what appeared to observers to be an advanced stage of development.

Leo Warmerdam, previously senior director of Philips Research and now director at Philips spin-out NXP Semiconductor, says: 'The plastic RFID market is not mature enough for us yet, so we are prioritizing other technologies at the moment. The relevance of plastic electronics is not as important to Philips.'

Other companies still involved in organic RFID tag development seem to be taking more of a back seat. This could be a sign that they may share the same concerns as Philips. In October 2006 paper conglomerate Weyerhaeuser must have decided that the plastic RFID technology being developed by US start-up OrganicID was promising, because it bought the company. The subsidiary, or its parent, is yet to announce trials or launch dates for the technology, though Weyerhaeuser did reveal at RFID Journal Live in April 2008 that it is working with printed memory developer Thin Film Electronics, in Sweden, and US brand owner Kimberly-Clark. And California-based ORFID Corporation, which is working with BASF Future Business on the development and commercialization of printable organic electronic devices for use in RFID tags, display transistors and devices has not released any recent information on customers or commercialization plans.

Motorola, another large company often linked with the printed RFID market, also has no plans to release a printed RFID chip. Andreas Schaller, R&D director at Motorola's Germany base, says: 'We want to make sure printed electronics get to the same level as standard electronics today. We are not becoming an RFID printing company, rather a centre for high-quality printed electronics.'

Apart from developing the technology, Mildner says PolyIC has already lined up customers that will begin using the technology in 2008/2009. 'We have talked with a lot of companies about applying RFID to their products. It's not only the retailers we talked to; also the product manufacturers that will maybe use the technology in different applications, such as brand protection.

'In different industries, from high- to low-value, you see counterfeit goods. [Simple] RFID can do quite a good job to protect brands from these; I don't see a question mark behind the technology.'

PROJECTS

Mildner wants to keep PolyIC foremost in everyone's minds. With a multi-million euro industry at stake, organic electronics companies would do well to get a strong brand established in advance.

Though efforts to make his company synonymous with RFID could prove a risky move, Mildner believes in the technology. The lack of commercial competition hasn't forced PolyIC to reconsider its business model. 'We are looking to test our tag in real applications,' says Mildner. 'We want to find out the best place to bring it to market, because sometimes the most obvious use is actually the best use.'

PolyIC is taking part in a number of projects to help it keep in touch with end-users' industries and test its technology. One of these is Prisma (which stands for Printed Smart RFID Labels), designed to test printed RFID in real-time applications. The German government's Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) is backing the three-year project which will end in the second half of 2008. PolyIC is leading the consortium. The company is using Prisma, along with other pilots with potential customers, to learn how printed RFID will function in real-time applications and deal with any teething problems the trials may throw up for printed RFID.

The Prisma partners are in public transport, documentation and technology manufacture. Bartsch, a Germany-based ticket manufacturer, is integrating PolyIC's printed RFID device into tickets that are trialing in train and bus services in Europe. Bundesdruckerei, a security document supplier, located in Germany, is another firm integrating them into customs documents and smart cards for security passes. The first printed low cost organic tickets developed by the Prisma project were trialed in September 2007.

In early 2008 PolyIC, along with BASF, Evonik Industries, Elantas Beck and Siemens, joined forces in another BMBF-sponsored project, called Madrix, to advance the development of high-performance printable RFID tags. Several universities and research institutes are also involved in Madrix.

PolyIC is leading the consortium in the three-year project. The total investment sum amounts to some 15 million euros, with the BMBF contributing around 8 million euros. The project is funded as part of the BMBF's 5th Framework Program: Key Technologies

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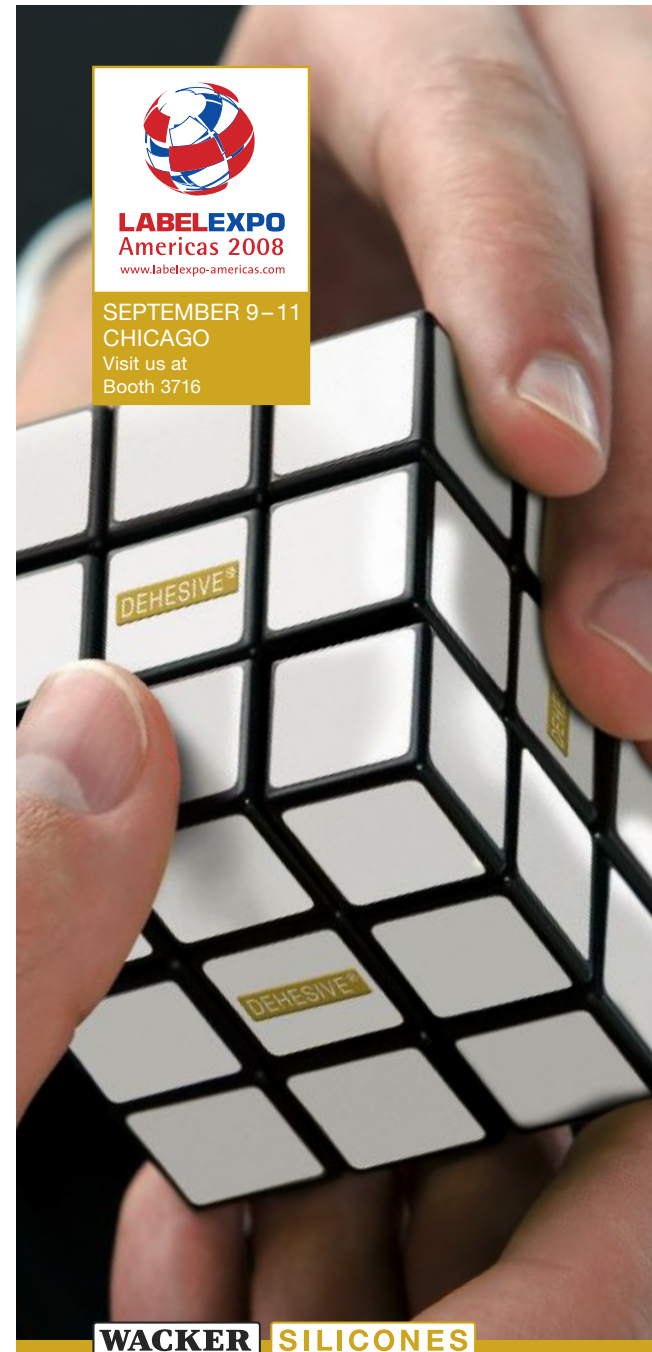

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PolyIC is dealing with the issues of component characterization, process development and setting up demonstrators. BASF, Evonik Industries and Elantas Beck will supply new materials to produce semiconductors and insulators for use in electronic circuits. Siemens is developing new real-time visual print inspection processes for quality control in the printing process.

But it's not been all good news in the trials. German airline Lufthansa, an early partner in the Prisma project, trialed printed RFID tags in its baggage handling system and other applications, but pulled out, reportedly citing concerns over the safety of the RFID system as the reason for its withdrawal. Though a setback, Mildner's take is characteristically positive. '[Lufthansa pulling out] was good proof that there has to be a correct expectation of possibilities with this type of project. It was better to stop in the early part and not later as it is a long term thing.'

The absence of Lufthansa hasn't caused too many problems to the Prisma trials. However, if Bartsch and Bundesdruckerei decide to pull out, or throw up any more negativity, then PolyIC will have to react quickly to keep its plans on track. The success of Prisma is important to PolyIC; such a high profile field test of the printed tags will provide the proof that printed RFID can work as a commercial application outside of the lab.

COMPANY HISTORY

PolyIC was set up in November 2003 as a joint venture between Siemens and Leonhard Kurz. '[Siemens and Leonhard Kurz] are not just financial shareholders, they have a strategic interest as well,' says Milder. 'They don't just want to see their investment working in the right way; they also have an interest in their own business too.'

PolyIC's showroom is testament to Siemens' interest. Tucked away at the bottom of a cabinet is a Siemens RFID reader – a new and ubiquitous RFID tag would allow Siemens to develop a range of new readers to cater for the market. As a software developer, a connection to RFID would see Siemens as an early leader in these new markets. Readers and interrogators are required for any type of tags so Siemens could reap the rewards of spinning out a company in this area.

Printing is a declining industry, as machines, inks and other materials become a commodity in an overcrowded market. Printing businesses, from equipment makers to inks producers, are looking to diversify as many plastic electronics firms are tailoring printing and R2R machines to produce new devices. Organic electronics, with its high-growth potential and comparatively high margins, is a very compelling market. PolyIC represents a chance for Leonhard Kurz to keep up with a rapidly evolving industry. Eventually Leonhard Kurz could sell the printing equipment, rather than producing the tags in-house, with printers placed into existing lines, simplifying manufacture and reducing cost.

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

ORFID US-based spin-out set up in 2003 by VCs, RFID manufacturers and the University of California. Orfid is developing a new organic transistor to replace the conventional silicon semiconductor transistor technology and bring down the cost of RFID tags. The company intends to develop printed RFID tags, though no date has been set to begin production. Orfid has stated it intends to work with Wal-Mart, a retailer with a public interest in RFID.

OrganicID US technology developer set up in 2003. Taken over by paper manufacturer Weyerhaeuser in October 2006 to further commercialisation of printed RFID. Has shown working samples of printed RFID circuits, but hasn't set any dates for full production to begin.

Philips Research Began working with polymer electronics in mid 1990s. Demonstrated 13.56MHz printed RFID tag in 2006 which it claimed was world's first (a claim disputed by PolyIC). Developed working protoypes, but has since cancelled its RFID programme since spinning off its Semiconductor business as NXP.

BEYOND SILICON

Despite losing a high-profile partner in Lufthansa, Prisma is still providing an important platform that PolyIC can use to develop its technology. Trialing the tags in real-life applications has helped to the mitigate risk involved in launching a new technology: technical problems can be identified early, while enlightening industry outsiders and potential customers to how the tags can be used. PolyIC's role on Madrix project is crucial too as there are no other companies in Germany, let alone Europe, that have invested so much in printed RFID labels.

For any company, moving into printed RFID is heading into unchartered waters: there are no case studies to draw or learn from, no mistakes to avoid. Being the first to market with printed RFID could mean triumph or failure for PolyIC, depending on the performance and acceptance of the technology over the next few years. But if any company has a strong chance of making printed RFID a commercial success, it may be PolyIC.

This feature was first published in +Plastic ELECTRONICS (+PE) magazine. Published six times a year, +PE provides business and market strategies for organic and printable electronics. The magazine's website is www.plusplasticelectronics.com; and editor-in-chief Sara Ver-Bruggen can be contacted at sara.ver-bruggen@pira-international.com

Short run specialist

ALLEN Datagraph Systems offers a comprehensive solution for short-run label production, reports Danielle Jerschefske

CUTTING station in the ADSI system

At last year's Labelexpo Europe, Allen Datagraph Systems (ADSI), headquartered in Derry, New Hampshire, exhibited for the first time. Since then, the company has garnered two new European installations and expects to have more orders with the advent of Labelexpo Americas.

This small manufacturing company of 40 employees offers a wide array of products outside of the label printing industry, such as tombstone blasting equipment and industrial and sign-making cutters. But well over one quarter of its business is accounted for by the label market, where its principal offering is a short run digital labeling system, including finishing in rolls or sheets.

'Within our small company, we have a need for various labels,' says Michael Elliott, president. 'So we asked ourselves, what do people do when they want a short run of labels? I believed that there were a lot of people out there like us, a small manufacturer of myriad products, who had to make compromises to get the labels that they needed. At the time, there was not an effective solution.' To that end, ADSI now produces its own labels on its equipment in-house. And, right now, about fifty percent of ADSI's label division customers are end users.

With their Digital Label Systems (DSL) solution based around an Epson color engine, ADSI users are able to print 8-color digital labels at up to 1,000 labels per hour. The Epson inkjet cartridges offer droplets down to 3.5 picoliter which increases both resolution and speed. Elliott says, 'Our customers print anywhere from 100-10,000 labels on the DLS, but the average is around 3-5,000 per run.' It is able to print both papers and film between 1-10 mil, uses standard 250 ft rolls, and with resolutions up to 2880 x 1440dpi.

Offered as a turn key solution within the DLS system, the Digital Finishing System (DFS) is a roll-to-roll converting system that is capable of lamination, die cutting, slitting, waste removal and rewind. It runs at speeds up to 3,000 labels per hour and is capable of supporting up to four DLS printer units. One highlight of the technology is its ability to cut at multiple depths in the same run. Therefore, if alternating labels have perforations and multi-layers, the computer driven system is able to complete the task in the same cut file. 'For instance,' Elliott says, 'customers are able to cut through to do drop outs when needed.'

It is also possible to adjust the length of a run within the same file, which allows for total customization by the user. 'We have customers that print different kits of labels, for cars let's say, that will have various shapes, cut at different depths with distinctive run lengths. Maybe one has twenty while the next is fifteen.'

In addition, the DFS provides print to cut registration with optical registration that is able to match multiple marks for the most accurate cut. It is able to locate the die line by finding the marks, allowing the machine to scale the cut of the label. At the same time, it knows the right size of the label as it is pre-programmed into the computer system.

'If the printing is off, the computer knows what size the label is programmed to be,' explains Elliott. 'It therefore, in essence, re-sizes the die of the label to adjust for press movement and still produces the quality outcome that is expected.'

The ADSI system is a versatile unit that does not require dies or plates. 'It is truly labels on demand with the ability to cut any shape and produce any colors,' Elliott says.

THE ADSI finishing system

INC. 5000 IN 2007

Each year Inc. magazine recognizes the fastest-growing privately-held companies in the United States. Last year, Allen Datagraph Systems was awarded a place on the list. 'By being a part of this monumental achievement, your company represents not only the future of business but also the future of our country,' says Loren Feldman, editor, Inc. 'I commend you on achieving such noteworthy success and recognize the tireless energy and steadfast commitment that went into building your company into what it is today.'

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THE SPM-340LR press from Smooth Machinery

Hagmaier's Smooth investment

GERMAN CONVERTER Hagmaier Etiketten has purchased an intermittent letterpress from Smooth Machinery, and may follow it with the Taiwanese company's latest development: a semi-rotary offset press. James Quirk reports

Hagmaier Etiketten, based in Münsingen, 60km from Stuttgart, purchased a semi-rotary letterpress from Smooth Machinery earlier in the year – the latest in the German converter's line of machinery from the Far East.

The company also has machines from Link, Shiki and Lintec, and Thomas Hagmaier, joint director with his brother Werner, believes there has been great evolution in press manufacturing in the Far East. 'A few years ago, a company would tend to offer only one kind of machine. Now, they often have a variety of technologies and can manufacture according to your needs.'

Smooth Machinery is a case in point. The company has installed its SPM-340LR letterpress at Hagmaier Etiketten, and has developed a water-based offset press to be launched shortly (see 'Offset development' boxout).

'A lot of European companies will take the easy route and buy locally,' says Thomas Hagmaier. 'People might think there is a problem with language and access to spare parts, for example. Buying machines from the Far East does require more effort – you need to take a leap of faith and have an adventurous spirit. But it has been very rewarding. I trust the people I work with and the technology is advanced.'

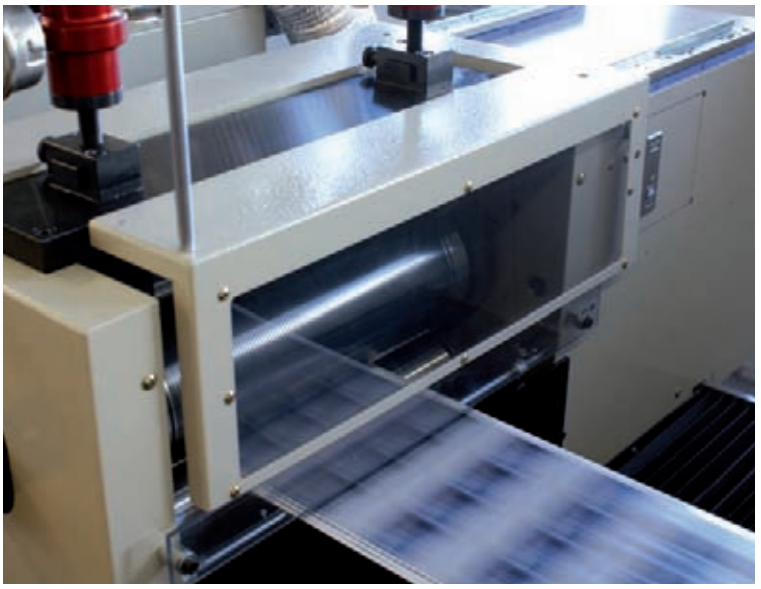
"Buying machines from the Far East does require more effort – you need to take a leap of faith and have an adventurous spirit. But it has been very rewarding. I trust the people I work with and the technology is advanced"

Smooth's shaftless letterpress machine comes in two models: the 340mm, bought by Hagmaier, has over 30 installations since its launch four years ago; the 270mm version, introduced seven years ago, has over 50. The presses have been sold to over 30 countries throughout Asia, Europe, the US and Latin America.

'We started with semi-rotary technology seven years ago with a different supplier,' says Thomas Hagmaier. 'But when we discovered Smooth Machinery, we were amazed. The printing is very automatic and the machine is very advanced. There are so many options that can be added.

'We don't want to produce large quantities of labels – we prefer to concentrate on specialty products. This is the reason we are interested in semi-rotary technology.'

Transport and textile applications are Hagmaier Etiketten's biggest markets, accounting for around 70 percent of its business. The company also produces labels and tags for warehouse pallets, while nearby slopes provide a big market for PET ski passes. Its 4,000 square meter facility, expanded seven years ago, houses 15 printing and die-cutting machines. Alongside the equipment from the Far East are a Vectra and Omega from AB Graphic and laser die-



TWO BECOME ONE

Smooth Machinery has developed an on-line reciprocal system and dancer-controlled web buffer which allows two presses to operate as one machine.

The system can be used where, for example, a job requires 12-14 color stations and the alternative is an expensive rotary combination machine. In operation, two Smooth Machinery presses would be placed end to end, allowing the web to run continuously through both. To avoid the problem of differing speeds and registration between the presses, the on-line reciprocal system allows one operator to control machine speed and stop-start on both presses simultaneously.

cutting machines from Italian companies Prati and Cartes. Hagmaier Etiketten employs around 50 people and produces 7-8 million square meters of labels and tags per year.

'For our size of printer, it is important to have the right machine for the right job,' says Hagmaier. 'This press is ideal for small and medium jobs because of the very fast changeover – it is so fast it is almost comparable to a digital press. In one day we can change between up to ten jobs. It allows reverse printing at great speed with good registration. It is very rare to find a semi-rotary press that can print 310mm repeat lengths.

'We think that these machines are the future, because whereas 5,000 labels are faster printed on digital, jobs of 10,000-20,000 labels are quicker on a semi-rotary machine. Digital, of course, is also very expensive.'

Hagmaier Etiketten's SPM-340LR has five color stations and two of rotary die cutting. It prints at 65m/min at full rotary or 40m/min at intermittent, and can switch between the two.

The machine is very automated. Independent motors control plate cylinders – which can be changed at the push of a button – registration and the ink keys, which allows independent adjustment of ink levels.

Digital registration allows for higher precision. 'If you need a 10 micron movement, how can you do it manually?' says Jim Tien, sales manager for Smooth Machinery. A second pass scanner allows the registration to be replicated. 'We can not only move the scanner to match the web, we can also move the web to match the scanner,' explains Tien. 'This is an advantage because with a second pass it is harder to achieve the same registration as in the first pass. So we can automatically repeat the same registration.'

OFFSET DEVELOPMENT

Smooth Machinery has developed a water-based offset press to add to its range of letterpress machines. The machine will be launched next month, and will be shown at Labelexpo Europe next year. 'Many of our customers have requested that we produce an offset machine,' reports Smooth Machinery's director Frank Lo. 'We have been developing it for three years, and have cooperated and shared technology with our Japanese partner Fuji. Our supplier partners have been preparing for offset for many years, the background is in place.'

The machine can contain five offset units, plus UV flexo varnish and magnetic rotary die-cutting stations. With a maximum web width of 450mm (17 inches) and printing at 12,000 impressions per hour, the press has independent, multiple digital servo-drives to secure print registration. With fully automatic web tension control, the machine is suited to label, card, ticket and tag converting, as well as A3 paper and A4 booklet printing. Options include hot stamping, embossing, perforating, laminating, silkscreen, slitting and sheeting.

Sales manager Jim Tien is confident that Smooth Machinery's letterpress expertise stands the company in good stead for entry into offset technology. 'Much of the offset you see is in the sheetfed market, but this is very complicated for anything but the simplest of labels. You need lots of different machines for coating, die-cutting etc. But reel-fed semi-rotary offset gives the possibility of just one machine. Intermittent job change means that size is no longer an issue for offset. Job change is quick, and the advantages are similar to an intermittent letterpress.'

Thought the machine will be water-based, waterless will be available if the customer requests it. Tien admits that an equal number of clients are interested in the two forms, but prefers to concentrate on the core of the machine as opposed to a multitude of options: 'Offset is offset,' he says. 'There won't be lots of functions for show. Many companies like to have a press which can switch between offset and letterpress, between water-based and waterless. But the important thing is to concentrate on quality and simplicity. Water-based offset will be the standard – it is a more natural technology and offers more security.' Thomas Hagmaier calls offset 'the next step', and admits that the company is interested in Smooth Machinery's development. 'You could see at Labelexpo Europe in 2007 the growth in the offset market, and at the next event there will be even more.'

A job memory system stores previous settings indefinitely, so, even a year later, a job can be exactly replicated. The Smooth Machinery unwinder, with a 1,000mm diameter roll, is equipped with an automatic breaking system for tension control. 'Almost every aspect of our machine is controlled by a computer,' says Tien.

The Hagmaier brothers have been impressed with

L-R: Jim Tien and Frank Lo of Smooth Machinery; Werner and Thomas Hagmaier of Hagmaier Etiketten

THE FINAT CONNECTION

Thomas Hagmaier has been a member of the FINAT board for three years, and has introduced Smooth Machinery to the organization too: the Taiwanese company joined in December last year.

'Thomas taught us the importance of being a member of FINAT,' says Smooth Machinery's Jim Tien. 'Being part of it helps to build our reputation and credibility. It forces us to reach a certain level of quality and service. We want to get market information and learn about trends. FINAT members will also learn about us. We are proud to be a member.'

Thomas Hagmaier fervently believes in the importance of a global organization that can connect the label industry worldwide. He is upset at his country's poor quantity of members, and cites the popularity of local association VSKE. 'FINAT does a lot of good work, but the German people don't seem to realize it. We are now a global community, which cannot be taken care of by a local organization. You need something like FINAT to bring it all together.

'The information we get from our meetings and seminars is fantastic. I talk from other printers from around the world, and can talk about things that I am unable to with German companies because we are competition.'

Hagmaier Etiketten took part in FINAT's India converter exchange last year. 'It was very interesting,' reports Thomas Hagmaier. 'You have to open your mind to new countries and markets: exposure to them can allow you to spot trends earlier. You learn many things that are useful for the future.'

the machine: 'It is new for a press in this price range to have a scanner on every station,' says Werner Hagmaier, while his brother Thomas admits: 'We're sure it won't be the last Smooth Machinery press we buy.'

The machine is one of two recent Hagmaier Etiketten purchases: the other being a 2-color press from Link Label. 'On our 4-color machine we were printing many 2-color jobs, so this frees up our 4-color press,' says Thomas Hagmaier.

The company remains dedicated to letterpress machinery. Flexo is regarded by Thomas Hagmaier as an American technology, which, though useful for certain applications, is of no interest to his company. The company was unable to make money through digital printing and recently sold its Xeikon press.

'People like to buy very fast machines,' he says, 'but not everyone wants to print five million labels. That's why we believe the future is in short and medium runs, and there aren't so many companies catering to this market.'

Hagmaier Etiketten places a great deal of importance on the work environment and the training of young staff. 'We are a family-run business,' says Thomas Hagmaier, 'so the workers are part of that family. We always have a lot of apprentices so we can educate them and keep them with us. The label industry requires increasingly fast reaction times, so an educated workforce is essential.'

Given its presence in the apparel market, it is no surprise that Hagmaier Etiketten has prepared itself for RFID technology. 'We are RFID capable,' says Thomas Hagmaier. 'It is coming, but very slowly. It is like digital printing – before it arrived, everyone was talking about it replacing conventional printing. But it doesn't replace; it is a different option. RFID is the same. There are other ways.'

FAMILY MATTERS

Smooth Machinery's president Kim Lo is the elder brother of the president of fellow Taiwanese press manufacturer Labelmen. The pair worked together at Labelmen, before Kim Lo left to found Smooth Machinery 30 years ago. There is an unwritten agreement between the companies not to compete with the same technology: so Smooth is dedicated to intermittent; Labelmen to full rotary.

HAGMAIER LAUNCHES INTERESTING SMART LABELS

Hagmaier Etiketten has recently introduced a patented smart label which detects magnetic influence. The label changes color under exposure to a magnetic field: something which can destroy an RFID label. The company claims the development to be the first time magnetic manipulation can be shown on a label.

Also new is a gravity indicator label, which will alert the user if a box has been dropped. The product is deemed ideal for pallets of electronic equipment, for example. The two products have been developed simultaneously and are designed to complement each other.

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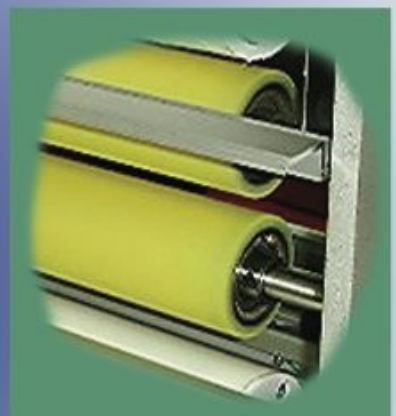

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MICROKLEAN

Making flexo STRONGER

FIFTY Years of Making Flexo Stronger summarizes the 2008 FTA Annual Forum InfoFlex technical sessions, reports Danielle Jerschefske

This year marks the Flexographic Technical Association's golden anniversary. At its Annual Forum held in Dallas, Texas, earlier this year, its members had the chance to celebrate this significant milestone, as forum chair Scott Gilbert and vice-chair Mark Mazur pulled together an action-packed couple of days.

EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES

The emerging technologies session gave attendees a chance to see what innovations are available to help CPGs deliver high quality packaged products faster than ever before. Timothy Gotsick, from MacDermid Printing Solutions, discussed his company's CTP technology for flexo.

The industry has experienced a decrease in plate processing time with the transition from analog to digital, said Gotsick, but this still requires two steps: mask ablation and UV exposure, before plate processing.

The goal is to reach a single step, he said. 'For this we must combine imaging and exposure, convert a digital signal to a relief element, and lower the power requirements.'

Direct Write plate processing requires less energy and no mass or phase changes. This is still a technology in progress, but will be available soon, said Gotsick.

Next to present was John S. Locke representing DuPont Imaging Technologies. Locke presented his studies on the impact of surface structure on flexographic print properties. He discussed the importance of both system and plate parameters, in addition to surface topography. 'Surface structure can increase density, increase uniformity and reduce dot gain, which greatly impacts print performance,' he said.

DuPont and Sun Chemical combined forces, with Rick Marsh and Bob Mullen presenting test results explaining what type of tape works best with each type of plate, i.e. solvent or thermal, and which one gives the best results when paired with EB inks.

Both density and dot gain were measured and ink lay down and dot contact were inspected. The study found that, with hard plates, process printing could be done with both hard and soft tapes. But, when printing with soft and medium hard plates, it is best to use soft tapes. In their ink to plate study, they found that there is improved print quality and less ink build up when alcohol-based inks are used.

Wrapping up the presentations was Gail Wong, General Mills production pre-press manager, who spoke about what the CPG giant needs from the flexo industry. Wong stressed the importance of following on-press guidelines and managing the process closely. And, as a bit of a warning, she told the mostly North American audience, 'be aware that offshore competition is doing it, and doing it well.' General Mills expects strong graphic support from printers and accurate labeling to prevent package recall. In the future, the company wants to see more industry standardization from printer-to-printer and plant-to-plant, improved quality and further innovations.

FLEXO 101

A highlight of the Flexo 101 session was the presentation by the Flint group titled The Evolution of Printing Inks and Future Demands. 'With new packaging – re-sealable, microwavable, breathable and shrink – ink requirements have changed and the industry has had to develop balanced chemistries to increase the quality of graphics to compete with offset and gravure,' said Carl Hartz. Ink companies have therefore formulated more versatile resins to adhere to the latest films and have created formulas capable of running at faster speeds. But, Hartz said, correct ink selection requires 'you to have standardized communication to define the customer's printing requirements before going to press.'

The ink metering system: anilox rollers and doctor blades, was a presentation given by Smurfit-Stone Preprint and

Allison Systems Corporation. Presenters Donnie Gramlich and Jean Jackson told their listeners how imperative it is to meter ink during the printing process in order to deliver a consistent amount for predictable color and quality.

'The contact angle of the doctor blade is important,' they said. 'It should usually be about 30 to 40 degrees. A flat blade footprint can result in anilox surface ink.' When the angle is not consistently documented, it can lead to irregularities in the printing process, such as anilox wear, inconsistent print and footprints. The blade angle should never be less than 15 degrees.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Mark Andy's director of product management, Jeff Feltz, looked at whether printers should invest in new or used equipment, or upgrade and/or optimize the current environment. 'To maximize current machinery, converters can implement lean manufacturing techniques and streamline workflow,' Feltz said. This is a low cost option, but it does not advance capabilities.

Upgrading equipment is another cost-effective option that can increase capacity and sales revenue as well as increase the opportunity to break into new markets; however, the full potential may not be realized on older equipment. The benefits realized from investing in new equipment are substantial, Feltz explained, including decreased costs and increased productivity. New machinery can be built to a specific configuration and labor can be reduced. New machinery does require a substantial investment and the ability to adapt quickly, but ROI should be significant.

The final option for new investment is used equipment, which has a lower cost, but usually requires modifications and more maintenance.

As combination printing continues to grow, Denny McGee, from MPS America, explained the difference between the various configurations – platform, rail, dedicated, retrofitted. He said, 'with servo drives, combination printing increases profitability and productivity, reduces waste, and has shorter changeovers. Effective combination printing can meet customer needs now and in the future, add value to products and produce outstanding quality.'

GENERAL MILLS WINS FTA'S AWARD

General Mills is a winner of the FTA's President's Award this year, marking the association's first recognition of a winning team rather than an individual.

Each year the Flexographic Technical Association (FTA), at its Annual Forum, recognizes individuals within the flexographic community who have voluntarily contributed their time to the advancement of the industry. These winners need also to have had a positive effect on the FTA and its membership.

However, a first this year, one of the President's Award winners is not an individual, but rather the General Mills Brand Design Pre-press Operations team led by Gail Wong, General Mills production pre-press manager.

General Mills, the fifth largest food company in the world with $3.1 billion in sales outside the US alone, was so excited about its recognition for pushing the flexographic industry forward, that it hosted a special ceremony at its headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota to celebrate the achievement with its entire pre-press team and partners.

EXCELLENCE IN FLEXOGRAPHY AWARDS

Seventy-three companies emerged to share 147 prizes in the FTA's 2008 Excellence in Flexography Awards competition. By count, 50 gold medals, 49 silver medals, 42 bronze medals and six special achievement awards were bestowed. Nearly 650 print samples were sorted, reviewed and ranked according to the challenges undertaken and the printers' abilities to overcome them. Judging took place in Dallas in February, and winners were displayed on-site at Forum. Four entries within the narrow to mid-web industry took Best of Shows in their respective categories:

- Mid web: Jergens Skincare Tri- Pack – Label Technology Inc
- Narrow web: Nestle Hot Chocolate Label – FTA South Africa on behalf of Roll On Labels Ltd
- Folding carton: Kellogg's Croco Pops Jumbos Carton – FTA South Africa on behalf of Golden Era Group
- Graphic design: Whoppers Sno-Balls 10 oz. Bag – William Fox Munroe Inc

R.R. Donnelly's Barry Thompson, a narrow web judge, remarked on the smooth transitions throughout the Nestle Hot Chocolate label. 'The highlights are really clean and the printer does not have build-up in there. It's an excellent demonstration of process control. The printer didn't give itself any leeway.'

FASTER, BETTER, CHEAPER

The session on CTP set-up and plate manufacturing, delivered by Bob McVey of GMF Flexo Prepress, educated listeners on the importance of file matching when receiving files remotely. Since there currently is not an industry standard used for imaging, and there are so many variables within the process, regular measurements should always be taken. McVey said, 'Specifications and tolerances should be documented so the target site may be replicated. Once this is done, complete an on-site audit. Image your non-calibrated file, and using their equipment, measure the mask, the plate and the thickness and relief of both.' He then gave helpful pointers for matching data if the test results had different numbers.

Detecting and Managing Print Defect was another informative presentation given by John Thome from BST Pro Mark. Thome addressed the causes of common print inconsistencies, going through the issues of repetitive hickeys

HOWARD B. VREELAND, JR. ENTERS HALL OF FAME

The FTA named Howard B. Vreeland Jr, of Anderson & Vreeland Inc., the 2008 and 46th inductee to its Hall of Fame.

For the past 35 years, Howie has been actively involved in FTA and other graphics arts associations. He has been a frequent speaker at FTA/FFTA workshops, roadshows, conferences and annual forums.

Howie has been active as an FTA judge, and on the Project Evaluation and Flexo in High School committees. In 1992, Howie was elected to the FTA's board of directors, where he filled a three-year term. That year, he was elected to the Foundation's board of trustees and two years into his tenure he was elected chairman.

and streaks, variable color issues and the random bug on the web, while at the same time, informing listeners of the technology available to prevent and detect these problems. 'Define your strategy for process management and quality control and understand the differences in inspection technology and the strengths and weaknesses of each.' He believes that 100% inspection has finally come of age.

FIRST AND FQC

The FTA's own technical director, Bill Pope, talked with attendees about how to measure color on film. The FQC project was set up by a group of FTA supplier members to test the measurement of color on transparent and translucent substrates. Pope explained that its objective is 'to provide information and a draft measurement protocol for consideration as a standard for CGATS and ISO.' He evaluated important backing material characteristics like opacity and diffuse reflecting. Pope said, 'Certain optical properties impact the color measurements. Always use backing material and take its opacity into account.'

Jay Sperry, from Clemson University, provided listeners with an in-depth look at how to evaluate methods to achieve the G7 near neutral calibration curve. Sperry shared the results of tests completed at the school. Three sets of process color ink sets and companies were selected and six different substrates were chosen. Trials were completed on a 1200 / 2.0 anilox with digital plates and medium density cushion tape. Custom CMYK test charts were used to create six separate profiles. The study proved that with regular calibration techniques, flexo comes very close to matching the GRACoL 2006 ICC dataset.

SUSTAINABILITY

Dan Collins, Pliant Packaging, presented his views on sustainability with substrates. He addressed bio-films and told the audience that the industry must innovate to reach the targets that CPGs are beginning to require. Collins reviewed various films against sustainability's 6Rs – reduce, reuse, recycle, remove, revenue, renew – such as printable sealant, multi-layer films and shrink. He evaluated how each meets some of these values in accordance with the Wal-Mart Packaging Scorecard. In conclusion, Collins said, 'there are very obvious opportunities for brand owners, manufacturers and distributors to reduce the amount of packaging through film technology.'

Sustainability Factors for Ink Packaging was addressed by Sun Chemical's Martin Spatz. Spatz evaluated how market drivers have changed the way that Sun Chemical views packaging inks. 'There is a lot of potential to look at cradle-to-cradle attributes,' he said. 'We must look at the raw material attributes, manufacturing process and logistics.' The bio-degradability of inks must also be tackled so that inks do not adversely impact plant growth. Spatz concluded that 'work is needed to increase bio-based content or use of more naturally derivative materials in inks.'

CPG COOPERATES WITH TRADE ASSOCIATION

A decade ago, the Flexographic Image Reproduction Specifications and Tolerances (FIRST) standard was created by the FTA to help end the frustration of individualized specifications. With a lack of industry-wide standards, members took the initiative to create some. They went directly to their CPGs for input before creating a common set of guidelines to better streamline production. The FIRST mission is to help printers understand their customers' graphic requirements for reproduction and translate their aesthetic requirements into specifications for each facet of the flexographic printing processes.,

General Mills immediately embraced FIRST. It began by strengthening relationships throughout its supply chain, encouraging communication between its international printers, prepress house, several designers and its in-house photo studio. And perhaps most significantly, the CPG worked very closely with the FTA to enhance this team element.

Mark Cisternino, FTA president said, 'The work between General Mills and its partners will set an example for others in the marketplace. The FTA is so excited about this milestone.'

By implementing FIRST, General Mills has been able to produce consistently printable flexible packaging files with an automated workflow.

Wong said, 'We require agility, speed to market, predictability and uncompromised quality. We all have worked hard to get our packaging to look as good as it does.'

Cherie Handberg-Davis, operations manager for the General Mills Brand Design group, explained that all General Mills product photography is taken with the print process in mind. Its designers link up with the prepress house so that they design a package that can actually be printed. And each of General Mills' flexographic print partners applies the FIRST standards throughout the printing process. A monthly progress report returns to the CPG to help them regularly evaluate the workflow.

FLEXOSTAR MINI – the new narrow web version of the Flexo Star direct laser engraving machines from Lead Lasers launched at drupa 2008

Second hand advantage

MIKE Fairley talks with Claus Nielsen of PGM Graphic Solutions about the role of pre-owned machinery and a range of new equipment the company is selling

Investing in additional production capacity is one of the key decisions that converters have to make on a periodic basis. It involves the preparation of a business or investment plan that reviews markets and applications for the equipment to be purchased, what print process or processes are required, what added-value options are needed, the power, space and installation requirements and, of course, what budget is necessary to acquire, install and run the machine.

While the end result of this review of requirements and budgets may be a new label press, the answer might equally well be a pre-owned machine, particularly if it needs to be adapted for special application purposes or requires an innovative add-on solution, such as a booklet or hologram application. In such cases, a pre-owned, refurbished and specially modified press might prove to be a more cost-effective answer for the converter.

The challenge is then to find the company or people that can help with the detailed research, investigation and review, that have knowledge of the particular application know-how required, that can advice on the sourcing of special application technology and equipment, and can provide the necessary pre-owned machinery, refurbishing and re-building expertise.

Certainly this was the basis for the formation of the PGM Graphic Solutions company some eighteen months ago. 'Our initial aim from the beginning,' says managing director Claus Nielsen, 'was to establish a global market platform for buyers and sellers of pre-owned Gallus and Arsoma machinery. That we have successfully achieved, supplemented by many new and exciting developments to complement the existing PGM portfolio of products and services.'

Today, PGM is fully established in the buying and selling of sale of pre-owned Gallus and Arsoma label printing and converting machines; it buys and re-sells flexo, letterpress, offset and screen process models; undertake all aspects of servicing – from machinery moves and installations, to preventative maintenance, trouble shooting and application advice – provides re-builds and refurbishment of presses for special customer applications; has established agencies for a range of new label industry products; as well as offering specialized consultancy services for converters looking to move into new markets and applications.

But then it is perhaps not too surprising that the company has been a success in its chosen market. Claus Nielsen has over 20 years experience in the narrow web label industry; five years as international sales manager for Nilpeter A/S and 13 years as the founder and managing director of Gallus-Group UK Ltd. With that kind of background he has a pretty good understanding of just what can be achieved on some of the best engineered label press machinery in the world. Combine that with co-operative ventures and agencies with other specialized manufacturers and suppliers to the narrow-web sector, and you can provide a unique service to converters.

Re-building, refurbishments, and special application solutions, for example, are undertaken in co-operation with PGM's business partner, ATIQS in Germany, with whom PGM has now established a unique cooperation agreement – being an integral part of their core business concept.

CLAUS Nielsen, MD, PGM

ATIQS itself has a longstanding reputation as a highly competent specialist company involved in refurbishing and rebuilding narrow web machines (including Nilpeter) and further, it has a range of its own designed specialist add-on products for narrow web presses, such as the Regitron automatic register system, the BF-200/320 Booklet solution, hologram application, and more. All these special application units can also be integrated into pre-owned Gallus/Arsoma machines supplied by PGM.

'Pre-owned machines already exist explains Claus Nielsen, 'and generally cost a good deal less, are more readily available and being "re-cycled" are more friendly to the environment, both from the manufacturing point of view as well as the users. From that base, the various press add-ons and automatic register solutions can easily be incorporated as required.

'When refurbishing and repairing pre-owned Gallus and Arsoma presses ATIQS guarantees upon request that only original spare parts are used and, depending on the level of refurbishment, they can offer up to 12 months warranty. At the highest level, we clean the machines, treat the surfaces, and provide a total refurbishment with warranty, modernization and optimization – including all print and acceptance tests. Further, in cooperation with ATIQS, we offer to carry out machine extensions, conversion of water based flexo machines to fully UV-flexo etc.

'In cooperation with our business partners SMO in Oschersleben in Germany, we are also selling and servicing new ancillary equipment for the narrow-web industry that is being designed by SMO, especially the newly-designed EDM200, the first-ever designed semi-rotary UV-flexo machine, built for short-run work, primarily as an overprinting machine.' This machine is one-color, but is equipped with a very precise insetting register control system, allowing any number of re-pass of the web, in perfect register with pre-print and pre-die-cut webs.'

SMO EDM200 intermittent flexo press

With a very small footprint, this new machine generates practically no waste during set-up and job changes. Fully servo operated, it works with sleeve technology for both print cylinders and anilox rollers. Existing flexo printers therefore have the advantage of maintaining their existing pre-press workflow and choice of plate material, etc, so as to match their main production and, due to the sleeve technology, they can run seamless printing as well.

'Apart from working in co-operation with SMO,' adds Nielsen, 'we have designed our own range of tailor-made tool transport trolleys for the transport of clean tools to press from the storage, and dirty tools from press to the wash-down area, as well as rotary screen stencils, inks, etc. In particular, our own-design trolleys complement the range of FlexoWash anilox roll, parts, stencil and sleeve and plate cleaning and washing machines – for which PGM are exclusive UK/Ireland distributors.'

Other UK/Ireland agencies provided through PGM today include Troika Quality Instruments, who have a range of products for the narrow-web sector, which include anilox roll measuring equipment AniCam, the FlexoCam and LithoCam dotmeters, as well as equipment for checking the quality of plates, films and printed copy.

Chambered doctor blade systems and UV flexo printing units are available through PGM's distributorship with Flexo Art, Sweden, while PGM is also an independent sales agent for Lead Lasers in Holland, offering pre-press solutions for flexo plates and sleeves, letterpress plates, dry-offset plates and relief embossing tools.

'Outside of Gallus and Arsoma presses,' added Claus Nielsen, 'we will handle other prime pre-owned press brands on request. This now includes Rotatek presses, for which we have just established a pre-owned machine agreement with the company. We have also recently become a member of the British organization, BUPMSA (British Used Printing Machinery Suppliers) – and we were represented at the booth of BUPMSA during the recent drupa exhibition.'

Concerning service, PGM has entered a cooperation agreement with NETS (Nelson Electrotechnical Services) and TQM (Tony Quinn Mechanical Services) and are thus able to offer both electrical and mechanical service with specialized Gallus/Arsoma expertise.

'The combination of PGM and its various business partners' means that we can offer converters a serious alternative to buying new machines,' says Claus Nielsen. 'We mainly operate within the narrow web industry for special application areas that fall in the labels, ticket, tag, flexible packaging, shrink sleeve and folding carton sectors, and have pre-owned Arsoma flexo machines as our primary platform. Having said that, we will work with other machine brands as required by our customers.

'At the end of the day, we strive to offer converters cost effective ideas and equipment for those areas where added-value can be achieved, where machine down-time can be reduced and where quality and repeatability can be optimized.'

Which converter today can say that those requirements are not part of their ongoing investment plan?

2008

LABELEXPO RETURNS TO CHICAGO THIS SEPTEMBER ANDY THOMAS, JAMES QUIRK, DANIELLE JERSCHEFSKE, MIKE FAIRLEY AND BARRY HUNT GIVE AN ANALYSIS OF WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR AT LABELEXPO AMERICAS 2008, PLUS A COMPREHENSIVE PREVIEW OF THE PRODUCTS THAT WILL BE ON DISPLAY

Labelexpo returns to Chicago this September with a host of new features. Hall F will feature The Digital Printing Experience – a pavilion dedicated to digital developments. Companies such as HP Indigo, Xeikon, Epson, Sun Chemical and EFI will showcase their latest products, and visitors will be able to see live demonstrations of the different technologies in action.

Since around a quarter of US label converters also produce flexible packaging, Labelexpo Americas will feature a dedicated Converting and Finishing Pavilion. Previous show figures indicated a 50 percent increase in attendance from flexible packaging and folding carton suppliers, and more than half of the top 25 dedicated flexible packaging converters have already visited Labelexpo Americas in the past.

The Smart Label Zone is enlarged this year, and visitors will be able to see emerging trends in RFID and smart label technology, anti-counterfeiting and brand protection.

With environmental sustainability an increasingly important topic for the label industry, a new Gather on the Green pavilion will host a number of companies showcasing environmentally friendly solutions.

"The principal attraction of the event remains the chance to see where press technology is heading **– AND THIS SHOW DOES NOT DISAPPOINT"**

As previously, Labelexpo Americas 2008 will feature a conference organized in collaboration with TLMI. The program will look at the current trends in both local and global markets and highlight areas for potential growth and development. It will cover security and brand protection, environmental issues and relevant legislation, managing in an uncertain economy, latest trends in technologies and the pressroom of the future.

Labelexpo Americas will also feature the prestigious Label Industry Global Awards, now in their fifth year. The awards recognize and celebrate excellence in printing and labeling. Representatives from the industry were invited to vote, and the winners' names will be revealed at a gala dinner on the opening day of the show.

GLOBAL LAUNCH FOR NEW PRESSES

ANDY THOMAS

Along with all the futuristic technologies on show at Labelexpo Americas, the principal attraction of the event remains the chance to see where press technology is heading – and this show does not disappoint.

Both Mark Andy and Nilpeter will debut new machines. Mark Andy will launch its Comco C1 ProGlide, which the company says combines 'the best of the film and package printing attributes of the legendary ProGlide with all the new electronic features of the I-Drive functionality that was developed for the C2'. Mark Andy also launches the fully servo-driven versions of its established XP5000 and 2200 presses

Nilpeter launches a flexo press line called FG to sit beside its FA and FB lines. The FG press on show will be a 13 inch machine, fully servo-driven and designed from the ground up to print using sleeves.

Gallus, meanwhile, shows for the first time fully rotary die cutting on its TCS-250 offset press.

Labelexpo Americas also traditionally allows North American converters to see for the first time presses launched in Europe the year before, and again, there is much to see.

Omet will show for the first time outside Europe its X-Flex press, winner of the FTA Innovation Award 2008. The 8-color X-Flex on show has a 430mm web width and features Omet's Vision-1 automatic inspection system, along with integrated printing unit and cooling drum for printing filmic substrates. Chicago will also be the first North American showing for the VaryFlex F1, in a 10-color configuration with 530mm web width and also incorporating Vision-1.

MPS will show its EFhybrid flexo press, which allows converters to print from the original steel printing cylinders or from exchangeable mandrel-bodies for mounting sleeves, along with its new Lean Inking system.

Codimag shows for the first time in the US its Aniflo anilox inking system for offset presses. The company will run a 420mm (16in) wide machine configured with seven offset units, followed by screen, hot foil and flexo coating units.

The show will see a major emphasis on increasing productivity, with Martin Automatic, for example, introducing its compact MLS splicer, designed to mount above new or existing narrow web presses, where it automatically unwinds and splices film laminate webs.

In terms of ancillary equipment, an interesting development is Kammann's new modular flat screen web printing module, designed to allow integration with any narrow web printing press. The module supports hot melt, UV, or standard screen inks, and incorporates a standard flat screen mesh made of polyester with an aluminum frame. The company will demonstrate the module on an offset/screen/foil/flexo combination press at the show.

There will also be much of interest for wet glue sheetfed label converters with the news that – for the first time at any global Labelexpo show – Heidelberg will be exhibiting alongside its specialist finishing division Polar-Mohr.

Other highlights will include the latest developments in automated on-press inspection systems, linking backwards to PDF master files, and forward to slitter-rewinder control – with the potential to eliminate the need for cameras on the rewinder.

DIGITAL LABEL EXPERIENCE EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS

Labelexpo Americas will feature a dedicated area for label converters, designers and brand owners to learn about the latest developments in digital printing. How does digital live side by side with a flexo printing operation? How can you find profitable opportunities to expand your business?

These questions will be addressed by a series of free daily briefings held in the Digital Label Experience area. Visitors will hear from printers, brand owners and suppliers how these technologies are being used to increase efficiency and profitability through the supply chain. There will be two 40-minute panel sessions a day, each followed by a 20 minute Q&A. The sessions will be moderated by industry guru Mike Fairley, L&L editor Andy Thomas, L&L deputy editor James Quirk and L&L North American reporter Danielle Jerschefske.

DAY ONE, TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 9

- Advances in Digital Printing Technology: the panel will include specialists in dry toner, liquid toner and inkjet technology
- 'Best of both worlds' – managing flexo and digital side by side: Elisha Tropper, T3 Associates and Jay Dollries, president of Innovative Labeling Solutions

DAY TWO, WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 10

- Digital label production – a positive impact on supply chain management: this panel will include Joe Tentahagen, marketing director, Nosco and another major brand owner
- Digital printing in brand protection

DAY THREE, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 11

- Applications and markets for digital printing: panel to include Randy Duhaime, Dion Labels, and Maui Chai, Flexible Technologies

It is not necessary to register, but as seats for these informal seminars will be limited, make a note to turn up early. Please continue to check the L&L website (www.labelsandlabeling.com) for up-to-date details on speakers and timings.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 09

09:30 - 11:00

Feature presentation: Opportunities and challenges in the North American label markets

- Analysis of the American economies: GDP and per capita statistics
- Examination of label performance: sales growth & profitability of converters
- What are the key barriers to growth?
- Where and how is new business being secured?

Speaker: Dean Scarborough, Avery Dennison, president & CEO

11:15 - 12:45

Option 1: Managing in an uncertain economy

Maximizing your potential in the current climate

- Marketing's impact on sales growth
- Sales management strategies to increase sales in any economy
- M&A as a growth vehicle for converters

Speakers:
Lisa Contini, Synergy Sales Training, founder
Mike Falco, Topflight Corporation, president
Elisha Tropper, Coda Resources

Option 2: Pressroom of the future

Finding direction in the future of label converting

- Next steps with label materials; paper & films
- 'Image to print' – what can we expect from the future
- The 'value-added' of converting solutions

14:00 - 15:30

Option 1: Increasing your potential through successful management

- Hiring good people
- Effective employee training
- How to retain good employees

Speaker: Mike Falco, Topflight Corporation, president

Option 2: Digital printing: what's next?

- Exploring the growth trends/markets of digital printing
- New innovations in dry toner printing
- Ongoing evolution of inkjet printing
- Current and evolving markets for liquid toner

Speaker: Jeff Wettersten, North American Digital – Sun

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

09:30 - 11:00

Feature Presentation: Understanding the global market to ensure growth and increased profitability

- The industry as a global market
- How the main regions and countries compare – North and Latin America, Europe, India, Japan and South East Asia
- Strategies for growth, diversification and improved profitability
- Working together to solve global challenges for industry growth

Speaker: Mike Fairley

11:15 - 12:45

Option 1: Environment

Sustainability: cradle to cradle packaging for value and profit

- Trends in sustainable packaging that affect the pressure sensitive business
- Ecologically designed packaging for breakthrough innovation
- Going beyond compliance in sustainable packaging
- Impact of the Wal-Mart scorecard on consumer goods companies and the resulting affect on converters/printers/suppliers
- Impact of packaging on printing, inks, and converting of materials
- Recycling, reusing, reducing packaging waste, particularly PS waste

Speakers:
Daniel Brown, Boise, director of marketing
Calvin Frost, Channeled Resources Group, CEO
Phil Guillery, Tropical Forest Trust, consultant
Patrick Moschitto, Victoria's Secret Beauty, director of packaging development
Kevin Rinehart, Avery Dennison, Fasson Roll North America, market segment leader (sustainability)

Option 2: Trends for non-pressure sensitive applications
Shrink sleeve – get involved with a consistent growth market

- Growth opportunities/press developments
- A converter's perspective for entering a non-traditional labeling market
- Technical considerations from pre-press to inks to finishing

Speakers:
Dan Lacey, Artwork Systems, VP of sales
Bob Scherer, Century Marketing, vice president
Terie Syme, Prestige Label, operations manager
Terry Trexler, Gallus Inc., product manager

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 CONTINUED.

14:00 - 15:30

Option 1: Case study: putting sustainability into practice at Wal-Mart

Speaker: Karen Eshleman, Wal-Mart PMDC
Marty Vavra, Wal-Mart PMDC, labels product manager

Option 2: Considering expansion into the flexible packaging market

- Advancements in flexo presses, inks, adhesives and other technologies
- Why should you be considering this strong growth market?
- Case study: converter shares experience of adding flexible packaging to a PS label business
- Technical considerations and what the future may bring

Speakers:
Dan Doherty, Prairie State Graphics, VP of operations/owner
Mark Gillis, global sales director, Print & Nonwovens Converting PCMC
B Ramalingam, Henkel, technical director

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

09:30 - 11:00

Security and brand protection day feature presentation: part one

Counterfeiting and product safety

- Battle against product fraud (strategies, tools and tactics)
- Brand and consumers protection
- Underwriters Laboratories' reports of engagements against wrong-doers around the world

Feature presentation: part two

Brand integrity – a holistic view to the role and suitability of smart labels & packaging

- HP's proven ecosystem strategies to reduce counterfeit share
- Useful perspectives in product, service and solution design

Speakers:
Jim Colby, HP, global packaging manager
Andrew N. Vourlos, Underwriters Laboratories Inc, program manager

11:10 - 12:30

Product and solution design: end-buyer experience, substrates and pre-press

- End-buyer experience: product authentication and product traceability
- Ways for converters and printers to offer a vital and valuable service to their customers?
- Substrates: latest authentication innovations, additives and coatings
- Graphic design & pre-press: solutions for key smart label & packaging functionalities

Speakers:
Roger Buck, Appleton, business development manager
Dr Elliott Grant, YottaMark, chief marketing officer
Deborah Hutcheson, Agfa, senior marketing manager

13:00 - 14:15

Product and solution design: analog/digital printing and converting

- Numerous options and key considerations for conventional printing (offset, flexographic, sheet or roll fed...) to print variable features
- Various uses and configurations for digital printing: electrophotostatic, inkjet, thermal transfer, etc. to identify, locate and terminate a product diversion source
- Overview of key smart label and packaging solution features

Speakers:
Raymond Dickinson, HP
Dennis McLaughlin, Nutec Systems, Inc, director of engineering & technical sales
Steve Powell, Kodak, GM of security solutions
Sean E. Skelly, EFI, Jetrion Industrial Inkjet Systems, director of marketing and service
Jeffrey Strahl, H.W. Sands Corp., vice president

14:20 - 15:30

Converter panel of excellence

- Leading converters will share their insights and experiences with peers
- As with all sessions, a moderator will facilitate a Q&A period

Panelists:
Lori Campbell, The Label Printers
Narendra Srivatsa, Cortegra

THE A-Z OF LABELEXPO AMERICAS

AS EVER, there are plenty of new product launches to look out for at this year's Labelexpo Americas. Labels & Labeling rounds up some of the products which will be on display

3M

3M Performance Label Materials with Structured Adhesive is aimed at helping converters escape from bubble trouble caused from entrapment, or outgassing. Unique microchannels throughout the structured adhesive allow air to flow freely between the label adhesive and substrate. Hand-applied labels go on smoothly and remain there permanently without bubbles or wrinkles. Even when labels are used on injection-molded plastic parts, bubbles that form from plastic outgassing can be smoothed to retain a neat graphic appearance.

AB Graphic International

AB Graphic International will feature the latest developments in its range of label converting lines.

The company will re-launch its newly upgraded Sabre Extreme system for non-stop label cutting through laser from electronic file download to finished product and exhibit an Omega SR1300 slitter inspection rewinder with fleyeVision electronic, print face camera inspection system.

Also on show from its range of Vectra turret rewinders will be an ECTR 1300 with hot melt core and tail gluing, and an STR1300 with automatic take-off conveyer. Both models will be linked to Omega converting lines, one of which will be equipped with a FleyeVision print machine. An Omega Ti 150 for offline integration of RFID/EAS and Whirlwind automatic stringing machine for tags and labels complement the exhibits.

Two Omega Digicon Series 2 label converting lines for digitally printed webs will be demonstrated, one of which will be shown equipped with hot foil blocking laminating and screen-printing units. Also featuring will be a Flytec 100 with area scan and new Color tile software from HP for security applications such as barcoding etc.

Allen Datagraph

Allen Datagraph Systems is introducing its latest innovation in label cutting technology featuring 50 feet per minute line speed designed for use with today's faster, more advanced print engines. Capabilities include a 24 inch roll diameter, variable frame lengths from 2" to 10", automatic lamination, die cutting and stripping combined within a package that utilizes minimal floor space. The company's automatic Smart Mark registration system, coupled with automatic web guidance, insures registration accuracy and error-free tracking. The system is available in 10" and 16" widths to accommodate virtually any label print engine.

Amagic Foils

Amagic Foils will display its new 'Koldfoil InvisaSeam' low visibility shim rainbow coldfoil. Printers can now apply rainbow cold foil without those unsightly shim lines, says the company. Amagic's 'Koldfoil' formulations are available for the cure-tru or conventional cold foil printing process.

Apex Group

The Apex Group of Companies introduces its Genetic Transfer Technology, a development for manufacturing the company's UniCorr, UniFlex and UniCoat metering rolls.

The new surface material and metering structure represent a completely different system to ceramic coatings and line/cm: one roll will cover the print options of a number of different traditional anilox screens and a smoother, denser lay of inks on solid areas is a consequence, says the company. Cleaning characteristics are also said to have

FACTS FROM 2 YEARS AGO

Number of visitors:	13,256
Number of exhibitors:	434
Number of countries represented	88

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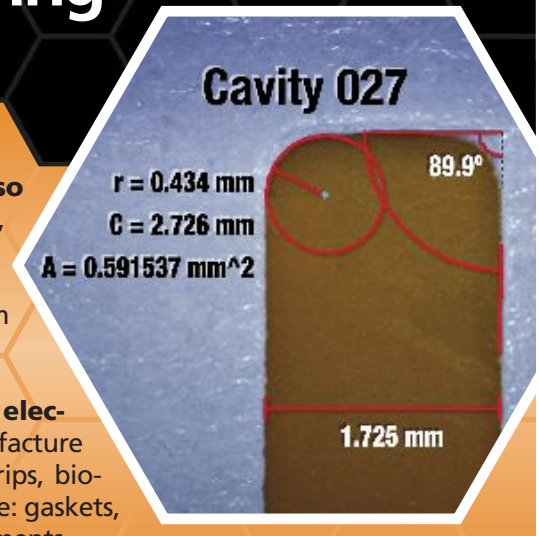

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"See us at Labelexpo booth 1045." Sarkis Kumjian, GME Founder

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improved.

Apex also launches a new company dedicated to the label sector, Apex UnFli, along with an anilox roll named UniFli (Uni-Fast Light Innovative. This lightweight anilox roll has a body construction of anodized aluminum, which is said to be a durable and accurate as steel.

The company has also developed RFID carriers to identify its rolls, storing information on screen/volume specifications and date of production, to special data such as date of installation, cleaning cycles and lifetime.

Aquaf ex

Aquaflex will show two working presses: a 28in, 6-color FPC and an 8-color 16.5in ELS.

Armor

Armor, a supplier of thermal transfer ribbon technology, will introduce a new standard wax grade – AWR 6 – at Labelexpo Americas. It is adapted to print on the market leading facestocks, and is said to be suited to economical applications.

In addition, Armor will present its complete product offering at the event, including a comprehensive range of ribbons, and reveal news of its new subsidiary, Armor Brasil. The company is also a part of the 'Gather on the Green' area of the show.

Atlantic Zeiser

Atlantic Zeiser introduces to the US market its Omega 36 HD and Omega 210 high resolution inkjet printing systems, and an LED UV curing solution.

The Omega 36 HD printer can be installed on web or sheet-fed applications and has a resolution of 720 dpi. The Omega 210 increases print width to 210 mm and adds dedicated black and spot color inks. Both systems print on a wide variety of substrates.

Smarcure is Atlantic Zeiser's second generation LED UV curing system. LED has a lower energy consumption than mercury-based lamp systems, a claimed ten times longer lifetime, no ozone generation and lower cooling requirements. Its compact size allows for easy integration and it comes equipped with an instant on/off functionality that eliminates energy consumption during machine stops. Atlantic Zeiser's ink program is optimized for inkjet/LED curing systems, with systems for non-absorbent substrates, security, spot and process color inks.

Avery Dennison

The Fasson Roll North America division of Avery Dennison Corporation has added three new eco-friendly products to its wine portfolio. Converters and end users can now select from coated, uncoated and specialty papers, clear-on-clear and metalized films, digitally topcoated papers and new eco-friendly recyclable products.

The new additions, Fasson Estate Label #10 Recycled, Fasson Classic Crest Recycled Solar White and Fasson Matte Litho Recycled, join ten other eco-friendly products and adhesives currently available through the division. These new wine portfolio facesheet offerings are made from 30 percent post consumer waste (PCW) with FSC certification, meaning they use fibers previously used by consumers that have been turned into paper. These facesheets are paired with a 1.2 mil PET recyclable liner and Fasson S100R, a wash-away adhesive that allows consumers or recyclers to cleanly remove labels from bottles after immersing them in water hotter than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Fasson Estate Label #10 Recycled,

Fasson Classic Crest Recycled Solar White and Fasson Matte Litho Recycled complement the company's existing Fasson Tree-Free offering. These products are stocked in regional distribution centers and some are available through Fasson Exact or Fasson Ready Width service programs. These service programs help converters by providing them with the exact roll widths required. The programs cut costs by reducing scrap, lowering inventory costs, reducing freight and improving operational efficiencies, all of which have a positive impact on the environment.

Avery Dennison Paxar

Avery Dennison Paxar launches its Snap 600 RFID printer for apparel labels. The machine runs at speeds of up to 305mm/second and can produce care labels on coated fabric or woven satins, variable data tickets (including pricing and barcodes), self-adhesive labels and variable data transfers for 'tag-free' labeling.

"Any converter looking to the future of their business will undoubtedly find much to evaluate"

AVT

AVT will demonstrate an 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 introduces an 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.

Also on display will be the PrintFlow SQL Database Module, which archives job information including defects, defect location, master and defect images and job quality statistics.

INDUSTRY CHANGE TO BE KEY FOCUS FOR VISITORS TO LABELEXPO AMERICAS

MIKE FAIRLEY

There can be little doubt that the label industry is undergoing a period of significant change. It's being driven forward by supplier technological innovation; pulled forward by changing global retail group and brand owner requirements; and regularly challenged to meet new environmental and 'green' demands. It is undoubtedly these three key areas of change that should be a major focus of visitor interest at Labelexpo Americas.

In terms of technological innovation, the Labelexpo visitor will probably have most to see and understand in the whole world of digital technology – from pre-press, color and proofing advances from the likes of EskoArtwork and Enfocus, through a whole range of new workflow enhancements, to the latest developments in digital printing and imaging.

This later area alone will see new, higher speed, higher performance, advances in digital presses from Xeikon and HP Indigo, as well as key innovations in high-resolution digital inkjet presses that may well revolutionize much of the long-term future of label printing. With digital presses already expected to make up as much as 20 percent of all new narrow web label press installations within the next five years or so, digital printing exhibitors will surely be a 'must see' attraction.

Having said that, exhibitors with more conventional mechanical label press technology continue to fight back against the potential offered by digital presses and many will be offering enhanced, quicker-changeover or higher-performance flexo, UV flexo, offset, screen and combination press solutions for those converters not yet wishing to move to digital printing.

'Green' issues will also be well to the fore at Labelexpo, both in the exhibition areas and in the conference sessions. Helpfully, a 'Gather on the Green' initiative at Labelexpo Americas will be showcasing green and sustainable technology solutions and will provide, for the first time, a dedicated show area to promote the latest in green and sustainable technology, as well as the benefits and opportunities of 'going green'.

One other key area for converters interested in 'Smart' and higher added-value solutions will be those exhibitors showcasing new developments in RFID smart labels, in smart-active labels and in smart-intelligent labels – including some of the new innovations beginning to come through from nano-coatings and nano-materials. Developments that may well change the potential for labels in brand protection, in the medical and hospital fields and in the freshness and performance of foods.

Any converter looking to the future of their business will undoubtedly find much to evaluate in these various areas of the Labelexpo Americas show.

Beta LaserMike

Beta LaserMike, a manufacturer of precision measurement and control systems, will exhibit its new LaserSpeed 8000 gauge. The LaserSpeed 8000-3 non-contact length and speed measurement gauge uses a proven technology called Laser Doppler Velocimetry to accurately measure the length and speed of any moving product or surface to an accuracy of +/- 0.05 percent or better. On part length measurement, accuracies of +/- 0.02 percent are attainable. The new LS8000-3 adds Ethernet communication, configurable I/O and larger receiving optics. This makes it even easier to integrate LS8000-3 into any control or monitoring system.

The LaserSpeed Series of measurement gauges were designed to be drop in replacements for any type of mechanical tachometer. They have proven to provide a typical return on investment of less than two months. Savings are achieved through increased accuracy, reduced scrap, less product give-away, reduction of charge backs from short rolls or lengths and reduced maintenance/calibration costs (i.e. improved uptime).

bielomatik

bielomatik launches in North America the RF-LoopTag – a chip module which will allow converters to manufacturer smart labels without the need for exact positioning of the chip. The silicon chip is placed onto a secondary broadband antenna which can be applied closer to the main antenna than is possible with other systems, says the company. The main antenna is made of aluminum foil instead of the usual copper.

Brewer UV Systems

Brewer UV Systems introduces its fourth generation rotary reflectory lamphousing assembly and ninth overall generation of upgraded designs. This is said to be built as rigidly as the press and is simple and reliable with one moving part. 'R4' uses half of the parts of the previous generation. There are three design size families to fit any press requirement. Brewer's 'iceman' cold curing package enables UV curing for the most temperature sensitive films and papers.

The company also introduces its fourth generation 'instant-start, instant hot-restart' UV system which is shutterless and contains no moving parts in the lamphousings. In all its UV systems, the company uses no electronic assemblies which cannot be serviced or replaced in a few years.

BST Pro Mark

BST Pro Mark says it will show 'the most exciting group of new products in the company's 30 year history'. The company will launch products in inspection systems, web guiding, color management, web width monitoring and in-line register control:

The new Super HandyScan 4000 features a high resolution digital camera, Virtual Repeat Technology, a graphic user interface, touchscreen image navigation, 100% scan, Combi-Scan and optional in-line color monitoring an job recipe save.

The Shark 4000 LeX is now available for webs up to 80 inches and speeds up to 2200 fpm. Systems feature a graphic touch screen user interface, wizzard style job set up, black & white or color line scan cameras, defect archiving and reporting, work flow link, and in-line inspection of the master PDF file against the actual print.

A complete line of plug and play web guiding systems for narrow web applications, using the new ekr500 controller, ultrasonic or infrared sensors, optional splice tables, will also be on display. Available in standard sizes designed to easily drop into existing machines with minimal effort.

CLS Pro 600 is a new technology for guiding of continuous or broken printed lines, contrast or web edges. This guiding device uses automatic LED lighting and a color CCD camera that provides laser guided precision.

The new register control system AR4000 is designed for offset and in-line flexo presses. Ultra compact CCD camera package with intelligent image processing ensures perfect control of color-to-color register, front to back control and color-to-cut or perforation and color-to laquer or varnish on Flexo presses.

The system requires a minimual number of cameras (sensing heads) and uses small 0.5mm dots, so that an 8-color job requires only 32mm of space in machine direction. It can be used on a variety of substrates, including reflective materials. Graphic user interface simplifies operation and minimizes set-up.

ISM – In-Line Spectral Measurement provides spectral measurement and density of the colors measured in line at press speeds up to 3900 fpm.

Used on 'seamer' machines that make sleeves, ProSleeve uses unique camera technology to monitor the finished lay flat size of sleeves to a tolerance of ±0.1mm, and alerts the operator whenever the actual measured size exceeds the set quality thresholds. A new optional reporting module is now availabel to generate roll labels, roll reports and job reports.

cab

cab Produkttechnik GmbH of Karlsruhe, Germany, has increased the possible applications for its Mach4 thermal printer. Along with the standard operation using a power supply, the printer is now available with a powerful rechargeable battery option. It provides the full functionality of a thermal printer without being tied to a power source. With the use of a cab W-LAN card, the printer can work off a network to print label applications anywhere. The new optional cutter for the Mach4 enables new possibilities in label handling after printing in the mobile environment.

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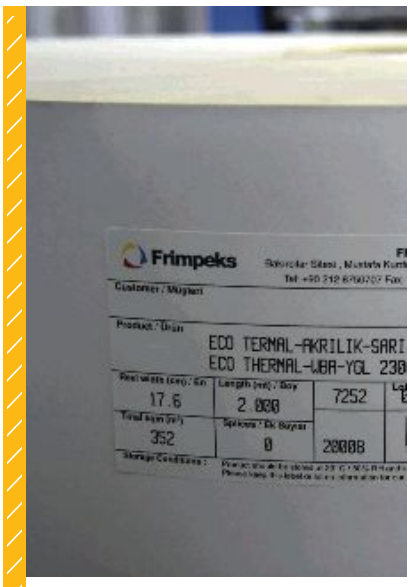

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Types For Web Fed Narrow Web Presses:

- **CF2.2** Holographic Cold Foils
- **CF3.0** Cold Foils
- **CF4.1** Over-printable Cold Foils

Types For Sheet Fed Offset Presses:

- **CF5.0** Designed for high speed sheet fed offset presses

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Channeled Resources

Channeled Resources Group (CRG) and Distant Village have partnered to produce 'Pure Labels' – which the companies say is 'arguably the world's most sustainable labelstock'. Economically disadvantaged people in remote parts of the world realize a livelihood collecting raw materials, such as banana leaves and wild grasses, which are sent to local paper mills and made into treeless paper. CRG has the treeless paper coated with an eco-friendly adhesive, either compostable and/or recyclable, and provides a refurbished release paper to complete the labelstock structure. CRG offers to complete the 'cradle to cradle' lifecycle of the product by collecting liner waste from the end user and recycling it.

A product's 'sustainability' is measured by its environmental, social, and economic viability. Pure Labels make a positive impact in all three areas. Byproducts from renewable resources replace trees to make paper. Social and economic responsibility is exercised in non-exploitative business practices that create jobs and improve the lives of impoverished people.

Channeled Resources Group is also implementing a nationwide Liner Recycling Program to provide an environmentally-friendly alternative to land filling used release liner. Estimates are that the pressure sensitive industry contributes more than one billion pounds of liner waste into US landfills every year. Only 4 percent of release liner gets recycled. It is a key component of CRG's environmental solution – product is reused until it must be reprocessed and made into new product. Label converters who participate in this program add value to the products and service that they provide customers. They are exercising environmental responsibility in addressing the waste issue that the label creates. As little as a single skid, weighing approximately 1,000 lbs, is all that is required to take advantage of this service. The only cost involved is the freight cost to the nearest center. Centers will be opened in public warehouse facilities in areas where a need has been identified. Presently, centers exist in northern California and central Wisconsin.

Chesnut Engineering

Chesnut Engineering will display its new Flexi Print '400' – a combination flexo, gravure and screen press.

The company has installed its gravure stations onto flexo presses for many years, and used this expertise in the development of Flexi Print. The servo-driven press is capable of running solvent gravure and UV inks together, as well as solvent type metallic inks.

Equipped with in-line lamination, die-cutting, rotary screen and hot/cold foil stamping, along with the ability to print light weight unsupported film, the Flexi Print is well suited to the production of pressure sensitive labels.

The press is designed for easy access with quick change components which are individually removable. Impression and anilox rolls are equipped with individual adjustments, while the flexo plate, anilox roll and gravure cylinders are all servo driven. The Flexi Print can incorporate any number of configurations in addition to flexo and gravure including rotary screen, hot and cold foil stamping.

Codimag

Codimag shows for the first time in the US its Aniflo anilox inking system for offset presses. The company shows a 420mm (16in) wide machine configured with seven offset units, followed by screen, hot foil and flexo coating units.

Compose System

Compose System, a developer of pre-press workflow and color proofing solutions, will present at Labelexpo Americas 2008 its latest innovations in pre-press and production workflow systems as well as a wide range of new features for narrow web and digital printing applications.

Key product highlights include updated releases of the company's Express FlexoFlow solutions, new features in its Express RIP product range, solutions for its streamlined production workflow systems, as well as new version 2 release for GapFinder, a narrow web printing application.

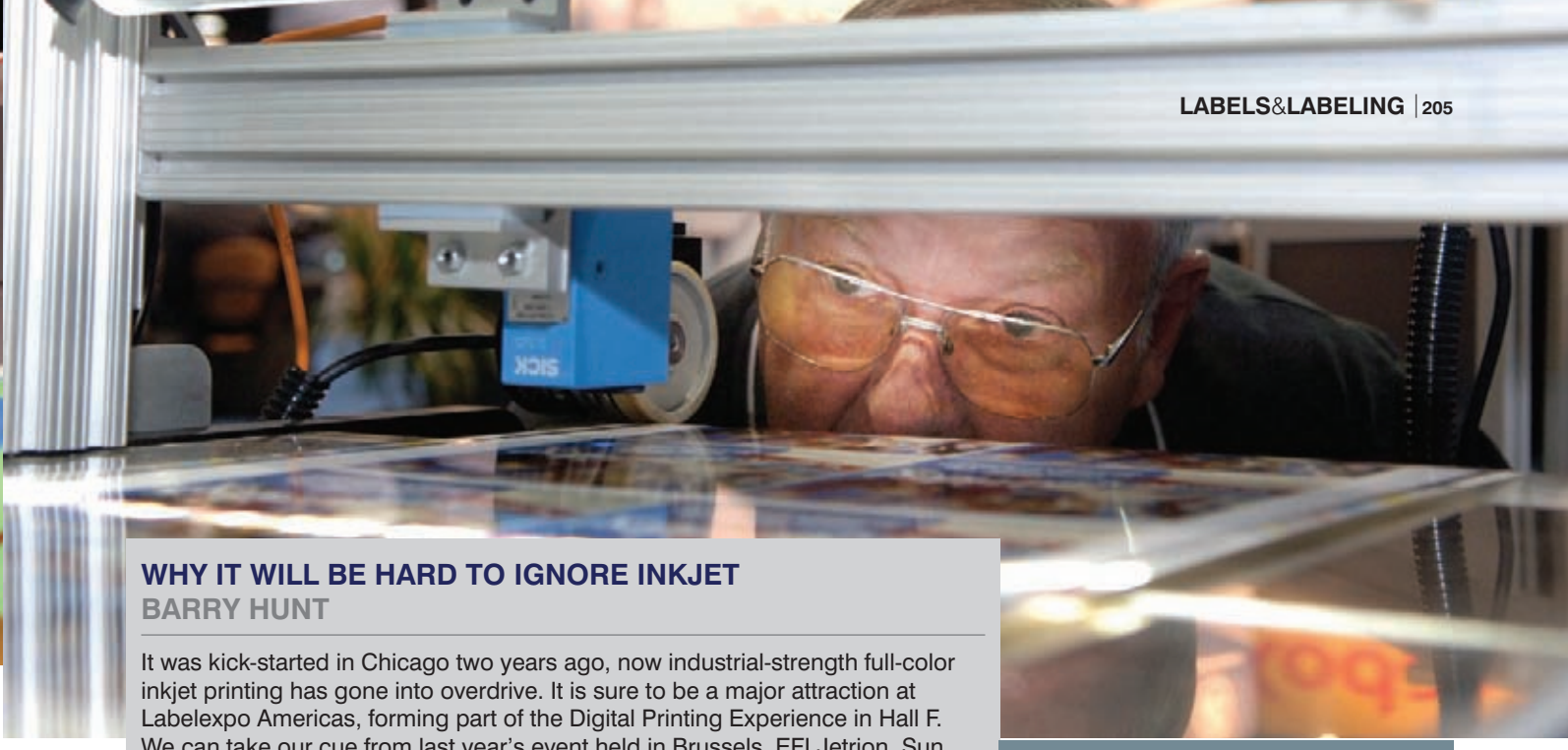
Compose IS Optimizer, a fully integrated ink optimization workflow module, is based on Alwan's CMYK Optimizer technology. IS Optimizer operates within an automated production workflow and optimizes ink consumption and significantly reduces ink wastage; it also guarantees proof to press matching.

A highlight will be the new release of FlexoFlow, a simple production workflow system tailored to the needs of the flexographic and packaging market. This workflow solution includes specific flexographic and packaging modules such as the BoxPro, hybrid screening, Star Proof and Plate Controller.

GapFinder V2 streamlines existing workflows for the traditional narrow web printing market. Now in version 2, it was specifically developed to provide significant production benefits to traditional narrow web printers, and was previously only available through the company's OEM partner.

CRC Information Systems

CRC provides business management software created specifically for the label industry. Its latest solution, Nucleus, includes fully customizable dashboards,



WHY IT WILL BE HARD TO IGNORE INKJET

BARRY HUNT

It was kick-started in Chicago two years ago, now industrial-strength full-color inkjet printing has gone into overdrive. It is sure to be a major attraction at Labelexpo Americas, forming part of the Digital Printing Experience in Hall F. We can take our cue from last year's event held in Brussels. EFI Jetrion, Sun Chemical's SolarJet division, Nilpeter/Caslon, Impika Solutions and printhead supremo Xaar are among those giving a reprise of ongoing developments. More recently, the dozen or so inkjet exhibits at drupa in Germany gave further proof of the technology's ascendancy.

Take for example Heidelberg's surprise launch of the Linoprint module. It has the potential to provide multi-color digital printing on conventional label presses or integration within packaging lines. (Expect to eventually hear news of a project involving presses from part-owned Gallus.) Also new was the DSI (Digital System Integration) module, which is Stork Prints' first drop-on-demand inkjet system for narrow web presses and platforms. Dainippon Screen showed a compact single-pass 600 dpi printhead, while Atlantic Zeiser introduced the Omega 36 HD print engine for overprinting on offline devices, including rewinders. Other companies with good track records, notably Konica Minolta, Seiko Epson, Mimaki Engineering and Xennia, are lining up similar industrial monochrome and color projects with specialized partners.

Nobody can say to what degree the latest inkjet technology will impact on our industry. One thing is certain, converters cannot ignore it. All this follows some significant advances in piezo, drop-on-demand printheads. Crucially, when stitched together they form a web-wide print array for single-pass printing as part of a hybrid flexo or offset application, or a stand-alone roll-fed platform with production speeds of roughly 70-110 ft/minute. Modern grayscale-enabled printheads can now produce reasonable color quality for selected applications, as well as high resolution variable data and encoding. They can operate with either conventional or cationic UV-curable inks and/or coatings and print on a wide range of substrates. Technicalities aside, this form of digital printing accords with the spirit, or zeitgeist, of today's global labeling markets, with their accent on flexibility and shorter runs. The jury may be out as to inkjet's likely impact as a valuable revenue earner, but Labelexpo Americas will provide the best possible inside track on the various options that are now available.

"Nobody can say to what degree the latest inkjet technology will impact on our industry. One thing is certain, converters cannot ignore it"

industry specific job estimating, extensive management reports, fully integrated browser-based CRM, easy-to-use navigation, extensive accounting tools, drag-and-drop production scheduling, comprehensive inventory management and complete e-commerce suite.

Nucleus brings the user critical information quickly by providing informative dashboards. Pie charts, bar charts, colors, gauges, all provide 'at a glance' alerts to executives, production managers, sales managers, chief financial officers, and other key people in the company. Graphic displays of actual vs. estimated, scheduled vs. actual, hot job status, AR aging, and dozens of other key metrics can be instantly reviewed, assessed, and acted upon. Users have the ability to drill into key data to instantly access the details they need in order to make decisions. Dashboards are fully customizable, giving users the ability to arrange their workspace to their personal preference, as well as add or remove graphics at will.

Nucleus introduces browser-based Contact Relationship Management, encompassing customers, prospects, and vendors. This comprehensive suite of software gives customers the ability to exercise control over sales data and processes while building customer loyalty and improving the productivity of sales and customer service representatives. The ability to create activity-based sales plans, combine contacts into relevant marketing groups, and measure the effectiveness of marketing campaigns are just a few of its features.

CTC International

CTC will demonstrate its latest glueless rewind technology, automatic butt splicing, automatic matrix winding, as well as introduce a new 'value' turret rewinder at Labelexpo Americas.

Dover Flexo Electronics

Dover Flexo Electronics (DFE), a manufacturer of web tension control equipment, is showcasing several new products at Labelexpo Americas.

The NW narrow web tension transducer is a cantilevered narrow web tension-sensing idler roll with an optional built-in LED tension display and a 0-to-10VDC output. It is now available in a range of roll diameters and lengths.

The iAmp2 Inline Tension Transducer Amplifier is an iPod-sized device that boosts the low level tension signal input from a DFE tension transducer and puts out an isolated 0-to-10 Vdc web tension signal for use by a PLC, drive or other control electronics.

The TI17C tension interface amplifies the tension signal output from transducers for connection to a PLC, drive, or controller. It includes the Quik-Cal

push-button zero and calibration feature for fast, simple setup.

WebHandler3 tension controller is a closed-loop controller in a small, user-friendly package. The WebHandler3 delivers automatic, full-featured digital tension control with an uncomplicated touch-panel interface.

Drent Goebel and IST Metz

Drent Goebel Energy Sciences Inc, (ESI) and IST Metz UV will show the results of a project which demonstrate a range of new curing technologies. ESI's EZCure EB unit was specially developed for the VSOP, while IST Metz uses its BLK-5 lamp with an inert curing system. Air Liquide supplies nitrogen for both systems. The system is optimized for printing on film for wrap-around labels, shrink-sleeve labels, flexible packaging and board for folding cartons.

EFI Jetrion

EFI Jetrion will display its 4000 full color inkjet system. The machine can run at speeds of up to 100 feet per minute (30.5 meters per minute) at more than 1000 dpi with grayscale technology.

The Jetrion 4000 features up to 8.4" printhead technology with web widths of up to 12", and uses the company's advanced 4- or 6-color UV ink sets.

Erhardt + Leimer

Erhardt + Leimer will display its latest illumination system – TubeLight. Providing totally diffused light for the Nyscan system, it allows inspection of printed webs with foil decoration, embossing and metalized substrates – especially suited to wine labels and other challenging features like holographic images.

Complimenting TubeLight is Nyscan's graphical user prompting. E+L's method for job configuration boosts operator productivity by requiring just a few mouse clicks. Changes in inspection sensitivity can be made any time during production via simple slide controls. Changes are logged to meet your customer's ever-higher quality standards.

Also on display will be the company's new digital camera system – Elscan OMS 4. Elscan is based on E+L's own digital camera technology. The system integrates two cameras which allows the display of the complete repeat while keeping an eye on the registration mark, for example. The company describes this as web monitoring with a 'picture in picture' function.

The Elscan navigation is user friendly and simple. The operator uses the repeat overview display to select any area at any desired zoom level. The selected area will be displayed next on the screen. A digital zoom will allow magnification of up to 50 times.

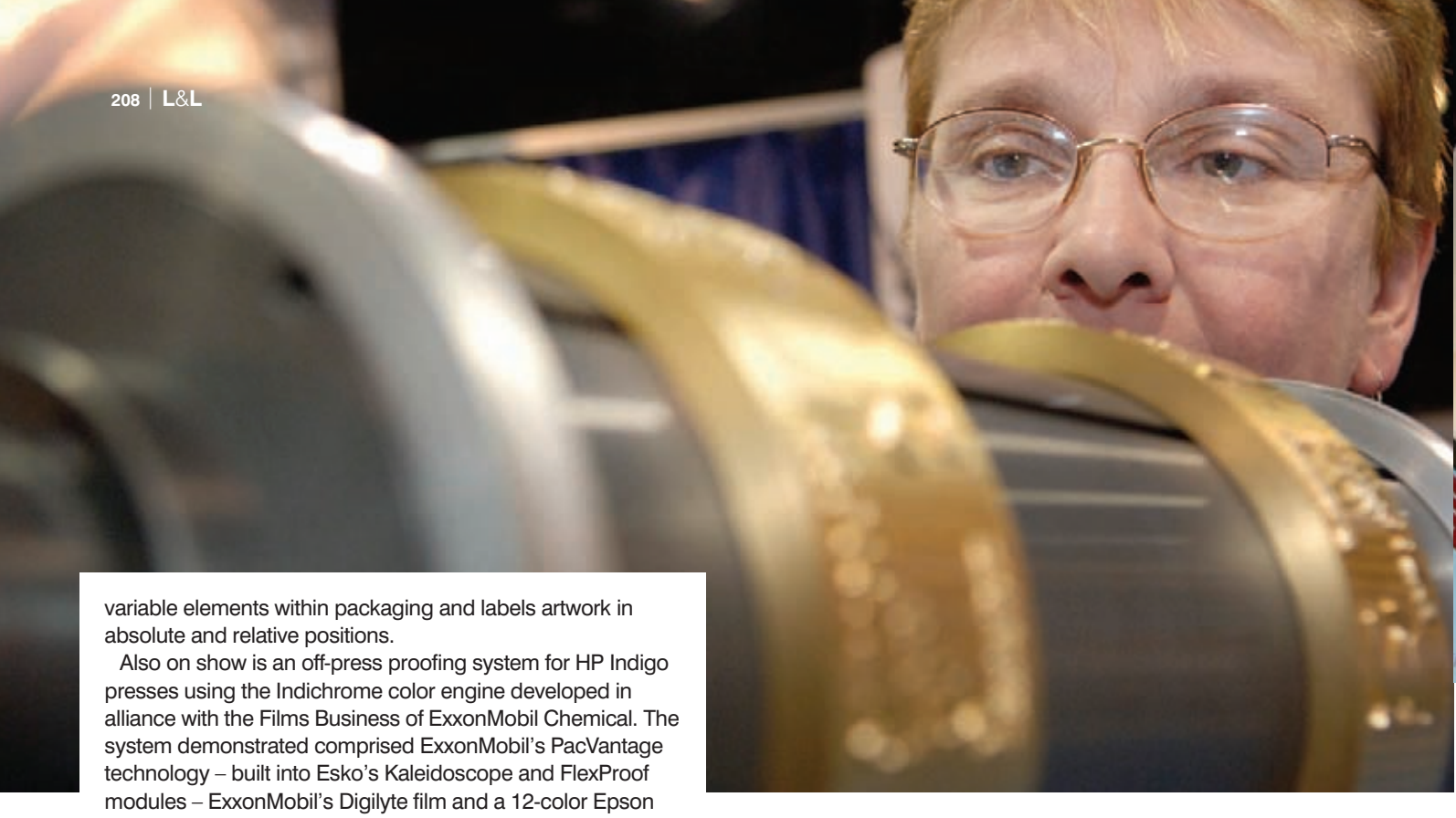
Another innovation is the new strobe lighting. The homogeneous illumination is especially effective on highly reflective surfaces.

Elscan is available in a manual and a motorized version. It is upgradeable and includes features like image stabilization, print screen and display of the last 16 images. An optional color monitoring feature can be added to any system configuration.

EskoArtwork

EskoArtwork announces 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.

Also on show is 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.

DuPont Packaging Graphics and EskoArtwork will also announce the US launch of a system to image and process cylinders in the round. The Cyrel Digital Imager (CDI) Advance Cantilever was developed to image large format sleeves – and optionally conventional sheet plates. DuPont has also developed its Cyrel Fast round solution for thermal processing the Cyrel Fast round sleeves.

EskoArtwork also launches a fully automated imaging-to-finishing system based around a CDI Spark 4260 Auto, capable of fully-automated plate loading, imaging, and unloading in combination with an integrated Inline UV Main Exposure and Back Exposure unit and Cyrel Fast thermal processor.

Evonik

Evonik Goldschmidt Corporation will introduce the environmentally-friendly qualities of its UV-curable silicones at Labelexpo Americas, highlighting their energy savings benefits and the recyclability of filmic release liner into molded parts.

The company will also participate in the 'Gather on the Green' showcase displaying the many unique qualities of their highly green and sustainable technology for their UV-curable release liners.

Evonik will highlight two of its UV curable silicone release systems, the TEGO RC Silicone Acrylates and TEGO RC Epoxy Silicones. The two technologies are cold curing, energy efficient and solvent-free.

A distinct advantage of TEGO RC Silicones is a change in the substrate (liner) from paper (glassine or SCK, that is currently thrown away) to film Bi-Oriented Poly Propylene (BOPP). The UV silicones can be applied to very thin recyclable films due to their cold curing technology.

Other environmental benefits of TEGO RC Silicones on BOPP are that it reduces waste by 55 percent, the siliconized film can be regranulated and reshaped and the BOPP coupled with recycling saves primary energy and reduces emissions. The silicones provide a cost-savings when using BOPP in combination with UV curing silicones. The silicones diminished thickness allows for the production of more labels and less handling and logistic costs decrease set-up times.

In addition Evonik will also provide information regarding improvements in its cationic technology. The company's new cationic polymer TEGO RC1401, Premium release silicone is said to provide improved release performance for standard release applications and lower release values for rubber based adhesives.

Likewise, its new cationic TEGO PC1466, Cationic photocatalyst offers a better curing performance for higher line speeds and reduced post-cure effect, improved properties for inline processes and better handling and mixing because of its lower viscosity.

These free radical silicone products can be used for self-adhesive labels, self-adhesive tapes, self-adhesive graphic arts and as a release liner for all applications.

EXFO Life Sciences and Industrial Division

EXFO Life Sciences and Industrial Division will launch its Excelerate product line, aimed at helping integrators achieve superb print quality on their equipment through innovative UV curing solutions. The foundation of this product line is the Excelerate PIN-100.

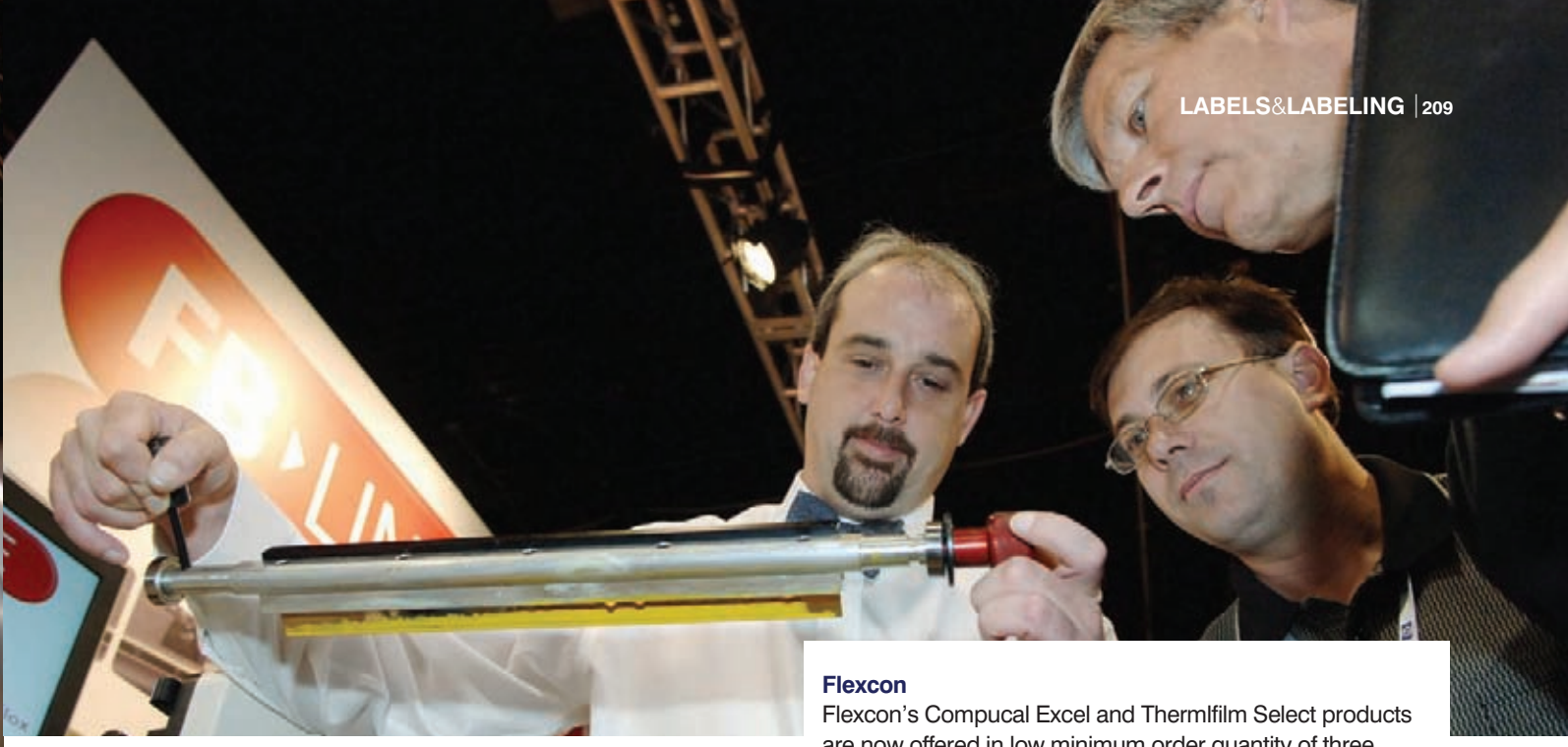
The Excelerate PIN-100 is a new approach to inkjet, single-pass, UV ink pinning enhancing print quality at high speeds and affordable results for the medium-to-short run digital label printing businesses.

UV Pinning, when used immediately after ink jetting, will enhance the management of the drop size and image integrity, thus minimizing mixed ink colors, providing the highest possible image quality with the sharpest color rendering.

'Printing machines that incorporate the Excelerate PIN-100 will produce high quality printed labels found on the likes of various consumer-favorite products such as beverages, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals,' said the company in a statement.

EyeC

German company EyeC will display offline and inline web inspection systems. The company's offline inspection system, Proofiler, verifies against the customer proof. 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 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.

The company's ProofRunner inline inspection system 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.

ExxonMobil Chemical

ExxonMobil Chemical will promote its Label-Lyte PSL film, which is said to provide striking, cost-effective labels for eye-catching branding. Thanks to a new proprietary top coat technology it offers 'off-the-press' ink adhesion – which reduces off-spec ink adhesion risks – and allows maximum press speed to be used. In addition, Label-Lyte PSL film brings a more dynamic graphic look, 'no curl' features and better durability, including moisture resistance.

For digital printers, ExxonMobil Chemical joined forces with EskoArtwork and Avery Dennison to deliver a breakthrough in color control for digital printing technologies. EskoArtwork software with PacVantage technology delivers a proof-to-press match which is color-guaranteed when the design is printed on ExxonMobil Chemical Digilyte PSL films. Taking proofing off the press is an effective way to enhance predictability, boost productivity, and offer color-guaranteed prints to your customers.

Faustel

Faustel, designer and manufacturer of custom web processing equipment for the converting industry, will be on hand to discuss applications involving PSA or release continuous web coating applications and will have brochures and photographs available to illustrate the needed equipment. Details of Faustel's Technology Center, used to define and develop equipment and/or specifications, will also be available.

Flexcon

Flexcon's Compucal Excel and Thermlfilm Select products are now offered in low minimum order quantity of three 1,668' pre-slit rolls, available in 4-1/2" and 6" slit widths in both matte and gloss topcoats on 3" cores. These roll dimensions are a complement to standard thermal transfer printers and ribbon sizes allowing for less change-over interruptions during printing.

DPM CVE is a UV resistant velvet embossed polyolefin film overlaminate for outdoor durable labels. DPM CVE offers the velvet textured finish and performance of traditional polycarbonate overlaminates at a lower cost, says the company. The UV resistance of the polyolefin film and acrylic adhesive prevents fading of printed graphics and improves outdoor durability for up to two years.

The newest addition to Flexcon's DPM line with a rigid film and premium adhesive is designed to facilitate bubble-free label graphics for narrow web label applications. The design of DPM Aply 1000 provides excellent surface smoothness, making it ideal for achieving optimum label graphics. It is ideal for durable goods label applications such as brand identification labels and safety/hazard/instructional labels.

Flexcon also introduces the newest additions to its Reflectamark Series. Reflectamark FMG is a fleet marking grade glass bead coated reflective cast vinyl film that offers seven-year outdoor durability. It is ideal for reflective vehicle graphic applications that require conformability and permanence. Reflectamark PG is a promotional grade glass bead coated reflective polyester film that offers two-year outdoor durability. It is ideal for use with long-range bar code scanning, durable reflective stickers, emblems, promotional labels, or short-term safety signs.

Flexcon's Reflectamark product line comprises a versatile series that meets the ever-increasing market for reflective films to address safety in low light environments. The products feature industry-proven glass bead coated reflective technology. All Reflectamark products offer excellent chemical and scratch resistance, and come with a high-performance permanent adhesive that bonds well to ABS, low surface energy plastics, aluminum, and stainless steel surfaces.

Flexcon V-778 adhesive is a permanent pressure sensitive acrylic adhesive that is ideal for use with thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) materials. It has been recently tested with a range of TPOs and polyolefin alloy materials from LyondellBasell Industries, and it has been shown to exhibit excellent adhesion and durability.

Flint Group

Flint Narrow Web will introduce a number of new products including water-based flexo inks using renewable soy resin technology. Meeting Soy Seal approval, these inks are claimed to provide great printability, good color strength and press stability. CombiScreen are VOC-free inks available in Pantone base colors designed for combination printing and can be used on all types of substrates. A newly formulated Flexocure Ebony provides a high-intensity UV flexo black while Flexocure Ivory is demonstrated as an alternative to UV screen whites.

The Flint Group Flexographic Products division demonstrates its nyloflex infinity technology for manufacturing endless printing forms, as well as the ready-to-image photopolymer sleeves nyloflex ITR Thin and nyloflex ITR Classic. nyloflex ITR sleeves are seamless printing forms incorporating a LAMS layer ready for digital imaging. A new nyloflex plate developed for UV printing also received its debut.

Franklin International

In its Covinax 210, Franklin Adhesives & Polymers, a division of Franklin International, has a solution for label manufacturers seeking the characteristics of a water-based pressure-sensitive adhesive with the high transparency typically offered only in a solvent-based formula. Unlike other water-based pressure sensitive adhesives, Covinax 210, an acrylic polymer-based formula, offers optical clarity and can be used on any application that requires a transparent adhesive. At the same time, it offers all the advantages of a water-based formula, including high coating speed.

Furthermore, Covinax 210 adheres to – and easily lifts from – diverse surfaces. This 'ultra-removable' adhesive is said to perform as well as a removable tape or label on most surfaces, including paper, glass, metal and plastics. It can be used for a wide range of packaging and products, from CD case labels to temporary appliance labels. Covinax 210 also is FDA compliant for use with most food and drug packaging.

Fujifilm

CodeStream is a new laser marking technology that provides tamper resistant marks on labeling and packaging substrates for recording variable data, including complex codes.

CodeStream is applied during the printing process as a transparent coating. It can be placed anywhere on the label or package in preparation for activation by low power, high speed laser energy to create a high density mark.

Fujifilm developed CodeStream as an alternative to other product marking technologies including thermal transfer, inkjet, and laser ablation. CodeStream marking is fast and clean without producing airborne particulates, solvent release, or consumable waste.

Gallus

Gallus will demonstrate the Gallus Digital Experience on its stand, beginning with the RCS 330, which the company says is the only fully integrated servo press in the world. Jobs can be changed over with virtually no waste and without the need to stop the web, thanks to the integration of digital servo motors and an on board

control system.

The digital experience will move from flexo to offset on the Gallus TCS 250 press which will feature for the first time a rotary die cutting offered as an option. The Gallus EM 280 will produce a multi-layered brand protection job including Gallus Screeny, and will feature for the first time a servo infeed and outfeed system. The press will be located on the Kurz Booth yet digitally connected to the main operations center on the Gallus booth.

The Gallus Digital Experience continues with the new Gallus Digital Screeny that uses digital laser technology, from EskoArtwork, to produce plates without the need for films and integrates into your current or future digital workflow.

General Metal Engraving

General Metal Engraving has introduced a new line of dies that are so precise, the company says it is necessary to use a microscope to analyze the cut.

GME also offers independent ISO/IEC 17025:2005 measuring, statistical analysis, and 220x zoom full-color images. Its fully hardened dies have achieved a Cpk rating of over 3.00 on a .14 mm range.

GME's dies can be designed to create an array of products and custom fabricated solutions. In the medical field its rotary tooling can be used to manufacture advanced wound care, electrodes, diagnostic test strips, bio-sensors and clean labels. Other electronics end products include: gaskets, name plates, insulators, acoustic components and island placements.

Using advanced steels also avoids the use of toxic chemicals in the manufacturing process. General Metal Engraving claims to be the only major die-maker not to contaminate the environment with toxic chrome or photo chemicals.

GEW

Reducing the carbon footprint is the theme of the GEW stand at this year's Labelexpo Americas where it will feature its e-System range of UV lamp heads with energy saving electronic power supplies that offer the combined benefits of more UV output, low running costs and reduced CO2 emissions.

The company will also introduce its new e-System Inert atmosphere line for the narrow web market for curing inks and coatings on filmic substrates such as in-mold, shrink and stretch sleeves for food packaging. The 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.

The exhibits will be complete with SeeCure, on-line UV monitoring through touch screen, a fully integrated UV lamp output monitoring system that runs with the latest generation of GEW's e-Brick controls. This product allows continuous monitoring of all lamps in a system. Information is displayed on a color touch screen making its operation simple and reliable for the operator. An electronic sensor is built into the lamp head that receives a combined output of UV light from the reflector and directly from the lamp, thus ensuring the UV incident on the web is monitored.

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INTELLIGENT SOLUTIONS ON SHOW IN SMART LABEL ZONE

JAMES QUIRK

The expanded Smart Label Zone at Labelexpo Americas represents an excellent opportunity for label converters to learn about recent developments in RFID and other smart technologies.

Though not growing at the rate forecasted by many industry commentators a few years ago, RFID is establishing itself in various niche areas, including supply chain management, ticketing and travel, to name just a few. This slow uptake doesn't detract from the host of opportunities available to the converter willing to invest in both the equipment and expertise required.

Perhaps the most significant RFID announcement of Labelexpo Europe 2007 was bielomatik's RF-LoopTag, which will make its US debut in September. The development allows converters to manufacture smart labels without the need for exact chip positioning, while the main antenna is made of aluminum foil instead of the usual copper, which reduces costs.

Elsewhere, a variety of production and insertion systems will also be on display, as well as the latest generation inlays. With brand protection and security one of the biggest growth areas in labeling technology, expect a host of anti-counterfeit solutions aimed at protecting your products. Tamper-evident materials, color-changing inks and security holograms will all be on display at the show.

The adoption of smart technologies in the label sector is happening gradually. But when you look at some of the initiatives currently being developed by companies in our industry – such as smart dust, nanocodes and even nanocoatings that can make paper waterproof – there can be little doubt of the impact that smart solutions will have in the coming years. As ever, Labelexpo is the best place to get a glimpse of what's to come.

"RFID's slow uptake doesn't detract from the host of opportunities available to the converter willing to invest in both the equipment and expertise required"

Gidue

Gidue will use Labelexpo Americas to show the US printing industry its recent technological developments, from offset to flexo, through silkscreen, cold foil, hot stamping, lamination, embossing and die-cutting.

The new Universal Platform on the Xpannd hybrid press offers the possibility to interchange the RSI and Flower flexo process head. The Xpannd combination presses have been recently certified by the German Institution SID. Other technology that will be shown includes the latest hot stamping technology and the Intelligent Register 2.0, which uses cameras placed on each printing station.

A print module from the company's Athena press, equipped with Stork sleeves, will be displayed at Stork's booth.

Gombau

Gombau Group recently launched a new product named PGB – a high-tech siliconized liner which the company claims will 'break converting and automatic labeling limits'.

PGB is a white polyolefin blended siliconized liner, claimed to show 'an extremely high tearing resistance'. PGB is especially suitable for the production of 'no label look' labels as it features an increased smoothness of siliconized face, which builds upon the levels of transparency found in Gombau's adhesives.

Gombau Group insists that with the PGB it has the answer to the headache of existing limitations in both label converting and automatic labeling: particularly referring to the persistent problems of transversal web sliding, due to low grip offered by traditional clear-on-clear material, as well as elongation of filmic liners that makes it hard to release a final label of good quality. This new PGB product, according to the Gombau Group, allows for the manufacturing of high quality 'no label look' labels with the same simplicity as with other standard PSA material. This is due to its avoidance of web elongation and web sliding. These properties also enhance the automatic labeling ability of the product.

Graymills

Graymills launches 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.

GATHER ON THE GREEN AT LABELEXPO AMERICAS

DANIELLE JERSCHEFSKE

We will most certainly see a higher number of exhibitors than ever before promoting Green and sustainable products at Labelexpo Americas. Greener business practices are here to stay in the printing industry – so now, more than ever before, converters must have access to the industry's top Green products. Because of this, new to Labelexpo this year is the 'Gather on the Green' pavilion. Sponsored by Kodak, it is a dedicated area for attendees to see an overview of products in the area of environmental sustainability.

It is just as vital for printers to take factors such as waste production and reduction, carbon footprint, emissions, energy reduction and recyclability into consideration when investing in new equipment, as they would account for cost and quality characteristics.

Printers will see the new Lean Inking System by MPS and should check out cabTechnologies' EnergyStar rated thermal printers. Attendees will be interested in the e-brick series UV curing systems by GEW that significantly reduce energy and CO2 emissions; as well as Unilux' Pocket Pixel LED strobe light that does not emit dangerous gases into the atmosphere.

Avery Dennison will showcase its Fasson eco-sensitive wine products and service programs; Green Bay Packaging will promote its recycled content substrates with Recycling Compatible Adhesives (RCAs), and Channeled Resources will introduce its PureLabel as well as promote its liner recycling services.

On the second day of the show, the conference is purely dedicated to the topic of sustainability. A panel of industry experts, including the director of packaging development for Victoria's Secret Beauty, will discuss cradle to cradle packaging for value and profit. The panelists will offer their views on the trends of sustainable packaging and the impact they believe it has on the pressure sensitive industry.

It will be followed by a second presentation from two Wal-Mart printing house representatives who will talk about its recycling program success, and what initiatives it has implemented to adhere to the company's scorecard. All converters that need solutions and answers to their Green problems and questions will find relief at Labelexpo Americas this year.

"Greener business practices are here to stay, so now, more than ever before, converters must have access to the industry's top Green products"

Green Bay Packaging

Green Bay Packaging will introduce new paper facestocks manufactured with post-consumer fibers. The new facestocks keep waste from landfills and limit the use of virgin fibers.

Green Bay Packaging will offer several prime label facers using post-consumer fibers without sacrificing printability and strength. All are claimed to offer smooth print surfaces and excellent die cutting and stripping.

In addition, these facestocks can be combined with the Green Bay Packaging's Recycling Compatible Adhesives and Natural Kraft Unbleached Liner to create environmentally sensitive label structures. Other adhesives and liners can also be used with the recycled content facers to create structures designed to address specific application needs.

Green Bay Packaging offers several reduced-impact facestocks, including the R60SG, a creamy-white 60# semi-gloss with 20 percent post-consumer waste, and the R54SG, a blue-white 54# semi-gloss with 30 percent post-consumer waste. For those wanting a matte-finish, it offers a 60# matte litho, R60ML, with 30 percent post-consumer waste.

Two facestocks are available for variable imprinting applications. For thermal transfer printing, there is the R10TT, a 40# facer with 10 percent post-consumer waste. R60LJ is a sheet designed for laser and inkjet applications. It is made from 100 percent post-consumer fibers.

GSE

GSE will show the latest version of its Colorsat Compact automated ink dispenser. Solvent and water-based ink recipes, in batches of up to 20kg are dispensed 'on-demand', in as little as two and a half minutes, to an accuracy of 1g. The new version offers any number of base ink containers between 12 and 32 components. The company also demonstrates the latest version of its proprietary IMS (Ink Management Software), which powers the ink dispensing systems.

Hanita Coatings

Hanita Coatings, supplier of topcoated filmic face materials to the labelstock industry, will unveil a range of brand-id films 'watermarked' with a novel anti-counterfeit feature. These identity-enhancing films are manufactured using a proprietary process to imprint the coatings with a customized logo or message, providing additional security identification to the label.

The watermarked logo can either be overt or discrete, on clear, white, matte and metalized 50 micron polyester film, and is printable by conventional and thermal transfer print processes.

Hanita's new Watermark films will be showcased alongside a vast selection of PET films topcoated for printing by conventional or digitalized systems, including several dozen types of tamper-evident security face stocks. These void films feature new security developments such as total transparency, destructible print, and unresealable color change.

The Hanita team will also be showing solutions for RFID, including pure copper antennas and films optimized for printing by conductive inks.

Heidelberg USA

Heidelberg USA and Polar-Mohr will be displaying a Polar DC-M High-Die punch, die cutting various shaped labels produced at medium to high volume runs. Additionally, a cutting system that includes a Polar 92XT cutter with the new Polar BS-23 Bander will be running square cut labels, banded together with either plastic or paper, in-line at medium to high volumes. All Heidelberg information will be available from pre-press, press and post-press regarding label manufacturing and printing on all format sizes.

Honle UV America

Honle UV America will display its UV Scan Kit for testing UV output levels during the production run.

The UV Scan Kit can help converters minimize production waste while increasing print quality and process reliability, says the company. 'Simply remove a UV strip from its package and place it onto your web substrate with the sticky side down through your UV unit. Remove the UV strip from the substrate and place it into the UV Scan Meter. Now you have an accurate reading of the UV output with minimal press down time,' said the company in a statement.

HP Indigo

HP Indigo will show the latest in its series of digital label and packaging presses, the ws6000, which was launched at drupa earlier in the year.

The new HP Indigo ws6000 digital press is aimed at longer-run, higher-volume work, and is claimed to offer twice the productivity of its predecessors. It addresses jobs up to approximately 4,000 linear meters (13,000 linear feet), and is said to offer total cost of ownership advantages for converters producing more than 300,000 linear meters per month. It complements the ws4500 press targeted at customers with monthly volumes of 150,000-300,000 linear meters.

The ws6000 prints at 30 meters (100 feet) per minute in four colors, and can print up to seven colors on a broad range of materials, including thin flexible packaging substrates from 12 microns (0.5 points) and folding carton media up to 450 microns (18 points), as well as label and shrink sleeve media.

The press' repeat length of 980mm (38.58 inches) permits greater productivity and drives even lower costs per label.

IGT

IGT's F1 flexo tester will be fitted with a driven anilox roller, making it possible to ink the anilox rollers separately from the inking of the printing forme. The velocity of the anilox rollers is adjustable, allowing the anilox cells to be more easily filled depending on the ink type. The F1-UV device is now also fitted with the driven anilox roller.

Also on the IGT stand will be the GST 2 camera system for evaluating Heliotests or mottle tests immediately after printing, with results appearing on screen after a couple of seconds. The test results and scan data can be saved and used as the basis for further analysis.

Iimak

Iimak will launch its newest thermal transfer ribbon – NetResin IQ – for use in near edge printers and coders. Iimak will also be featuring other thermal transfer ribbons at the show.

Net Resin IQ, used primarily for date, price, lot, and barcoding, is a resin ribbon that Iimak says delivers maximum durability and chemical resistance in the most extreme environments. It offers 'excellent' heat resistance, making it ideal for applications that require sterilization. With print speeds up to 12 ips, Net Resin IQ is compatible with most near edge printers and coders such as TEC, Markem SmartDate, and VideoJet DataFlex.

Innovia Films

Innovia Films will be showcasing its full portfolio of grades suitable for label applications at Labelexpo Americas.

This will include the latest developments in its range of biaxially oriented polypropylene (BOPP) label facestock films – Rayoface CZDI and WZDI – ideal for demanding applications on flexible containers such as squeezable shampoo bottles and shower products, and Rayofoil MCPA – improved metalized, top coated BOPP label facestock film.

A recent addition to the range of BOPP films for variable information printing is Rayoface WTR – a white pigmented film giving optimal processing efficiencies for fast, high speed conversion and printing. Innovia Films has expanded its range of biodegradable and compostable label facestock films for pressure sensitive applications. NatureFlex NVLW is a white cellulose film based on sustainable wood-pulp. The film has been certified to both the American (ASTM D6400) and European (EN13432) norms and can be disposed of in home and industrial composting environments.

NatureFlex NVLW is stiffer and more oriented than many biopolymers currently on the market, making it ideal for labeling.

Jalema

Jalema, a provider of large format filing solutions to the graphics industry and AEC environments, will demonstrate its new Grip Strip for organizing and displaying important documents of all sizes such as proofs, print samples, blueprints, maps and general office documents.

The Grip Strip is used in conference rooms, inspection stations, demo facilities, production areas, job sites and anywhere that paper copies are being produced or displayed.

The Grip Strip can be mounted to any wall with double-sided tape or mounting brackets. It comes in four sizes to accommodate most small and large sheets of paper. The gripping mechanism allows the user to insert and remove one sheet or several sheets at a time.

Jinda Company

Jinda Company Limited specializes in customized hologram for security and promotional purposes. A label cannot be duplicated if various kinds of anti-counterfeit technologies are comprised. This label, made by a 6C + 2C rotary letter press printing machine, is a good example. The logo 'DVD', in the middle, is cold stamped with the holographic cold-stamping foils, which is self-developed and made by Jinda Company Limited.

Up to now, such foils can only be made by a few numbers of companies around the world. Applying the OVI screen-printing technology at the upper left corner, color can be seen from blue to purple with different angles. Using the laser embossing technology, sequential numbers can be embossed on the surface of the dark color ink, which is equivalent to those ink-jet numbers shown on the lower left corner. To further increase the difficulty to counterfeit, the company use lasers to cut some special edges. By using the screen printing and coating technology, the pattern of 'Genuine' will be left on the products once the label is peeling off.

J M HEAFORD

Manufacturer of plate mounters J M Heaford Limited will exhibit machines from its wide range of models covering both cylinders and sleeves. The company manufactures mounters, mounter proofers, plate testers, flexo proof presses and gravure proof presses. On show for the first time will be a brand new video system backed by a PC with image recording features. The machines will all feature the recently introduced 'through the lens' LED register mark illumination aid.

Kammann

Kammann launches a modular flat screen web printing module, designed to allow integration with any narrow web printing press. The module supports hot melt, UV, or standard screen inks, and incorporates a standard flat screen mesh made of polyester with an aluminum frame. The company will demonstrate the module on an offset/screen/foil/flexo combination press at the show.

Keene Technology

Keene Technology will display its KR series turret rewinder. With its multi spindle turret configuration, the KR allows the line to run continuously, without the need to stop to offload finished rolls or load empty cores. When the winding roll reaches the desired diameter or linear count, the KR automatically transfers the running web to the empty core in position. The pneumatic spindles automatically inflate and deflate based on their position in the cycle. The finished roll is removed and empty cores are added – all without stopping the line.

At the heart of the KR's winding performance are servo motors. The KR allows adjustment to the winding tension and taper to match the job's specific requirements.

PLC control allows the programming of individual job set-ups. All operating parameters are accessed by the way of the east to navigate interface.

Kocher + Beck

Kocher + Beck introduces a new light-weight flexo plate cylinder, which the company says offers a 60 percent saving in weight. Also shown will be a new version of the company's Gap Master system – the IC, which can be inserted directly into the cutting unit.

Kocher + Beck also displays a new sheet cutter – offering rotary die cutting for small run printed sheets. Benefits are said to include adjustment of sheet angle to compensate for possible print error; cutting and creasing in one step; and quick set-up times due to use of magnetic cylinder and flexible dies.

Kodak

Kodak will display its Flexcel NX Digital Flexographic System, previewed earlier and commercially available for the first time at drupa 2008.

Operating on a wide range of substrates – including paper, flexible film, foil, labelstock and folding cartons – the integrated Flexcel NX Digital Flexographic System includes the Kodak Flexcel NX Laminator, Flexcel NXH Digital Flexographic Plates, Flexcel NX 830 Thermal Imaging Layer, Trendsetter NX Mid or Narrow Imager, Squarespot Imaging Technology and Prinergy Workflow System for Packaging.

Because the thermal imaging layer is laminated directly to the plate, there is no issue with oxygen attack, enabling

the formation of stable, full amplitude, flat top dots on the plate. Also, this process helps ensure that plates do not plug with ink as quickly as on other plates, so press uptime is increased and highlight dots and subtle gradations are consistently reproduced for all applications.

KOR Engineering

KOR Engineering demonstrate two new inspection rewinders at the show: a 10" VRO pharmaceutical inspection rewinder and a 26" FW5 film inspection slitter rewinder with automated roll handling. In addition the new the 34" MW1 mid web film rewinder will also be showcased at the booth.

These three machines address growing market segments including pharmaceutical labels with variable data, high volume filmic labels and unsupported films for bottle wrap, shrink film and standing pouch applications.

Mactac

Mactac Printing Products is announcing its new eco-aware product line, Bloom, to help customers ensure that paper products originating from managed forests are handled appropriately throughout the supply chain. The Bloom product line includes eight environmentally friendly facestocks, ranging from 100 percent to 30 percent post consumer waste (PCW) as well as two Earthfirst polylactic acid (PLA) prime films. Most Bloom products are customizable, depending on the final application.

Mactac Printing Products is helping printers using Indigo presses achieve optimal cost and production efficiencies with the introduction of its new Indie line of certified stocks. The new line, specially engineered for Indigo press technology, has been independently tested and certified by the Rochester Institute of Technology. Available in a variety of finishes that include semi- and high-gloss, matte and bright silver, the new Indie product line is ideal for a variety of small-run applications.

Mark Andy

Mark Andy will launch the Comco C1 ProGlide – which the company says combines the best attributes of the ProGlide and the latest in print technology to produce a productive and efficient press for the flexible packaging and high-end label markets. The press will feature a UV curing system from UVT and will run live demonstrations daily.

Mark Andy will exhibit a range of other narrow and mid-web printing equipment and technology from its Mark Andy and Comco press ranges, as well as a Mark Andy VSR slitter/rewinder, and UVT UV curing systems. Live press demonstrations will include cold and hot foil, embossing, debossing, variable data printing, and screen printing.

The Mark Andy XP5000 press on show is the new shaftless, full-servo design. It will be joined by the newly redesigned 2200 press featuring end-to-end servo technology. Both presses will feature UV curing systems from UVT, and run live demonstrations daily. In addition, the VSR300 slitter/rewinder will be demonstrated.

PowerSmart is UVT's space saving power supply for the industry, and with its reduced footprint and convenient cassette replacement, is the most flexible power supply available. UVT chill technology, featured on Comco and Mark Andy presses, will demonstrate effective curing of unsupported, thin film substrates. Live demonstrations of the presses and UVT systems will be held daily.

Martin Automatic

Martin Automatic, manufacturer of automated web splicing and rewinding technology, will introduce its new MLS splicer at Labelexpo Americas.

The MLS is a compact splicer, designed to mount above new or existing narrow web presses, where it automatically unwinds and splices film laminate webs.

Visitors to the Martin stand will be able to watch demonstrations of a variety of non stop splicers and rewinders running a range of widths and substrates.

Melzer

The SL-400LT high speed four-track machine with an output of up to 24,000 e-luggage tags an hour will be equipped with the Melzer inline selection system for 100 percent controlled products.

Mimaki Engineering

Mimaki Engineering has entered the label market with its new IPH-300L single pass digital inkjet press, which achieves print speeds of up to 12.5 m/min or 3000 sheets/h when printing A4 in 600 x 600 dpi resolution.

It features a print width of up to 30cm and employs Mimaki's UV technology. It uses Mimaki's UV curable inks in four colors (CMYK) and piezo electronic inkjet heads. These inks are

VOC- and ozone free. The IPH-300L automatically performs periodical head cleaning to ensure all print heads are in immaculate condition for optimum print quality. It can produce even higher quality with the superfine high resolution of 600 x 1200 dpi.

The IPH-300L label print control system consists of a controller incorporating Mimaki's RIP and color management system, which equalizes color differences between the calibrated print heads automatically.

MPS

MPS introduces the EFhybrid, its latest solution in print sleeves technology. The EFhybrid takes both print sleeves as well as plate rollers instantly. MPS will show several other press solutions inclusive offset and gravure. Converting presses are available now up to 26 inches.

The new Lean Inking system for flexo will be demonstrated.

Muhlbauer

Muhlbauer promotes its IL 15000 smart label insertion line for the insertion of wet RFID inlays into existing standard labels.

The machine is aimed at recent-entry RFID label manufacturers, and its key benefits are said to be its high process stability, ease of operation and a maximum processing speed of 60m/min.

Combined with the company's CL 15000 converting line, which converts dry inlays into RFID labels; and its Test Line TL 15000, which provides electrical and optical testing of RFID labels, the IL 15000 completes the company's portfolio for the converting industry.

Muller Martini

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. Muller Martini show print examples from its Alprinta series, which now includes a new UV flexo printing and laminating tower.

Nastar

Nastar will exhibit its Linerless Temporary Adhesive and Bonding Solution. The Bonding Solution is applied on press via a plate, turning the Temporary Adhesive into one with permanent characteristics. Apply bonding solution on to base pressure sensitive material and laminate Linerless Temporary Adhesive PS material on top to create a hinge label, extended content label, or label on label product. The top ply with Temporary Adhesive removes and to the point where the bonding solution was applied to the base material. Content can be added to a label without increasing its size.

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.

ROTATEK LAUNCHES VARIABLE SLEEVE PRESS

Rotatek is exhibiting at Labelexpo Americas after showing what was generally regarded as one of the big machinery innovations at drupa 2008. That show saw the global introduction of the Universal Press, Rotatek's new offset hybrid press, featuring patented lightweight interchangeable sleeves with bearers. The variable repeat is obtained by changing only the plate and blanket sleeve, so the web is not broken and it is an extremely easy and quick system to change. The machine comes in a print width of 520mm with variable repeat from 400mm to 820mm and printing at speeds up to 350m/min with UV or EB curing.

The new sleeve technology was developed together with Rossini, and the press also features fully automatic inking control, automatic register, high resolution video and in-line densitometer.

The machine can print substrates from 12 microns to 400gsm materials including polyester, BOPP, PVC, PET, self-adhesive materials and cartonboard up to 400 gsm.

In demonstrations it took less than 20 minutes to change substrate and print process from reel-to-reel to reel-to-sheet.

The servo-driven press can be configured with offset, flexo, silkscreen, cold stamping, embossing and die-cutting stations. At drupa the press was demonstrated printing 28 micron BOPP with cold foil and flexo, then cartonboard with cold foil and flexo reel-to-sheet. Also on the stand was the Brava hybrid rotary offset press which can be switched to semi-rotary wet offset mode using technology patented by Rotatek. The servo-driven press it designed to run self-adhesive labels or folding cartons in both short and long runs in the high quality cosmetics, food, winery, spirits and pharmaceutical sectors. Print width is 420mm and speed up to 70m/min in semi-rotary mode and 150mm/min in rotary.

ROTATEK'S Universal press received its debut at drupa earlier this year

Nilpeter
Nilpeter will launch its FG-Line flexo press at Labelexpo Americas. The machine is dedicated to printing sleeves, is fully servo-driven and comes in a 13 inch web width. Also on display will be the FB-line (FB-3300 servo) and FA-line (FA-4) with the company's Caslon inkjet unit.

Nu Tech Coatings
Nu Tech Coatings will introduce the newest product from the company's plate cylinder coatings line, the PEC HD.

The patented PEC HD, like the standard PEC coating, eliminates two major variables in the flexographic printing process: the removal of cushion sticky back tape, and impression setting of the plate to the substrate. The company's polymers are applied in .375 inch thickness to the radius of a newly manufactured or existing plate cylinder.

The print results achieved with the PED HD are claimed to substantially diminish or remove the frequency and amplitude of banding or gear marking on narrow and mid web flexo presses, while reducing waste, increasing yields, and providing predictable, high quality print on unsupported thin films and other high hold out substrates.

Omet
Omet will be exhibiting two presses at Labelexpo Americas. Winner of the FTA Innovation Award 2008, the new Omet X-Flex's features include reduced set up times and low waste levels. Its new Vision-1 automatic inspection system assures tight register control and guarantees top print quality at 200 m/min. With its integrated printing unit and cooling drum, the X-Flex offers quick and easy job changeovers.

Also on display will be the Varyflex-F1, a press for flexo, rotogravure, screen and offset printing, with hot and cold foil and holograms all produced in-line on any material from thin plastic film to carton. Sleeve print technology combined with gearless drive makes the Varyflex-F1 a flexible production system, capable of top quality at high speed, with rapid changeovers and much reduced waste levels thanks to the Vision-1 register system.

Omnova
NovaCryl pressure sensitive adhesives from Omnova Solutions meet FDA standards to be utilized in adhesives and coatings intended for indirect food contact applications. The full line of NovaCryl water-based, acrylic PSAs comply with FDA 21 CFR 175.105 and may be used in applications that include posters, craft stickers, temporary labels, promotional offerings and food packaging.

NovaCryl PSAs offer a wide spectrum of adhesion, from easy removal to permanent hold. The easy-to-remove products feature low adhesion build, especially on glass, and clean removal from most surfaces.

Primarc
An interesting new development from Primarc is the smartUV lamp. Using RFID technology, smartUV lamps acquire data providing press and maintenance professionals with unmatched monitoring and control capability. They confirm the correct lamp is installed insuring that a printer loses no time in unnecessary refits. Run conditions are also monitored and controlled insuring that substandard lamps do not affect rates of production and quality of cure. smartUV lamps are protected by patent-pending applications.

Printers are encouraged to contact their press or OEM curing system manufacturer to ask how smartUV lamps can be added to their operations.

Provident Group / Troika Systems
Provident Group will debut the Webscan TruCheck USB 2D barcode verifier. The compact unit measures data matrix, QR and the GS1 DataBar family (formerly known as RSS-14) to ISO:15415 print quality standards. The system is said to be easy to use and the graphical feedback facilitates isolating problem areas in a barcode.

Partner company Troika Systems will show its Flexo Plate II Print dot measurement system for the first time in the US at Labelexpo Americas.

Plate II Print measures dot sizes on film/masks, flexo printing plates and printed copy. Dot gain curves are generated in seconds on any tonal scale. Printed dot size can be compared to original fingerprint on a single graph.

Rayven
Rayven will display its diverse lines of release liners and coated products, including a new 48 gauge (ultra-slim) PET release liner. This narrow width slit product is available in large diameter rolls. Also on show will be an economical pressure sensitive adhesive for films, as well as inkjet papers and other adhesive coated products aimed at the label market.

Recyl
Recyl, a first-time exhibitor at Labelexpo Americas, will present its range of cleaning machines and other cleaning products for the flexo label industry.

New products include Recyl Clean Bio, an anilox weekly maintenance product, and Quick Wash multi-clean agent for washing machines. Cleaners for water-based and UV-based inks will also be on display. Amongst the cleaning machines that will be displayed are the Flate Plate Cleaner 45 and the Simplex 60 and 80 – dedicated to narrow web cleaning.

Ricoh
Ricoh has launched a direct thermal synthetic product – the 140LES – aimed at hospital environments.

The 140LES displays a high quality resolution at multiple print speeds (from 2 to 10 inches per second). In addition, the enhanced resolution combined with environmental and heat resistance makes the product a versatile material for any application, but specifically for hospital environments. The 140LES is recommended for applications such as food, industrial warehouse, airline industry and healthcare.

Ritrama Group
Ritrama manufactures a full line of pressure-sensitive film label stocks for the prime, beverage, heath & beauty and OEM markets. The company will display its full range of products such as traditional and specialty films with print enhancing topcoats, engineered solvent and water-based adhesives, with a variety of paper or film liners. Also available are pressure-sensitive specialty papers for security, wine, and boutique food markets. Ritrama has recently announced plans to expand its converting, inventory and logistics in the US to better serve the market.

RK Print
Sample preparation specialist RK Print displays 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.

Rogers Corporation
Rogers Corporation's R/bak SA 3000 Series of cushion mounting materials for flexographic printing applications will be prominent at the company's booth at Labelexpo Americas.

Rogers' R/bak SA3000 Series of cushion mounting tapes now come with improved handling features. The SA 3000 Series comprises three levels of compressibility to accommodate the full range of flexographic printing applications – from process work to combination jobs as well as line and solid work.

SA 3000 Series products combine Rogers' open-cell urethane cushion technology and specially developed acrylic adhesives in a product construction that is designed to handle easily while providing excellent printing results. SA 3000 Cushion Mounting Materials contribute to improved operating printing performance through faster start-ups, higher line speeds and fewer press adjustments while providing award-winning results.

Rotoflex
Rotoflex demonstrates 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.

RotoMetrics
RotoMetrics will display its RD250 machine-finished dies, recommended for pressure-sensitive, multi-level or metal-to-metal applications, and its newly designed air-assist probe assembly. Also on show will be the company's UniFlex embossing. RotoMetrics will promote its revamped website, now available in multiple languages. Additionally, RotoMetrics will display a comprehensive line of rotary dies and accessories, including flexible dies, magnetic cylinders, CNC and EDM solid dies, print cylinders, specialty dies, sheeters, hot stamping and embossing tools, pressure gauging systems and more.

Scantech Automation
Scantech shows its Printrack LR converting, inspection and finishing system, capable of producing 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 re-registered die-cutting.

Schober

Schober demonstrates its RSM 520 rotary die cutting machine for converting in-mold labels. The machine converts pre-printed OPP IML rolls, PE coated paper and composite materials. Delivery options include Autostack, magazine stack and star wheel delivery for processing IML 50μ foil.

Smag

New from Smag is an off-line priming solution for webs intended for HP Indigo presses. With integrated IR/hot air UV drying, the unit can treat films down to 30 microns. The company also shows its Galaxie Digital press with unwinder, flat bed screen print station, semi-rotary hotfoil, semi-rotary die-cutting and converting section, along with a Comet Digital finishing unit with flexo, cold foiling, semi-rotary die-cutting, and converting section.

Sohn

Sohn shows 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 is also on display.

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. The Illinois-based company has also announced a partnership with EFI Jetronics to supply digital die cutting for the Jetrion 4000 color inkjet printer.

Stork Prints Group

The Stork Prints Group unveils its first drop on demand inkjet system for narrow web applications.

The company demonstrates its new DSI (Digital System Integration) module, powered by contactless Piezo technology. The inclusion of the DSI module offers the freedom to switch between dedicated digital and hybrid-process printing production runs without needing to change presses or reels. Printing speeds are up to 35 meters per minute.The DSI module is compatible with a wide variety of conventional labelstocks, including digital pretreated brands such as Xeikon and HP, as well as PP, PE and PET uncoated formats. Furthermore, the Prints Group has developed a dedicated range of narrow web UV inkjet inks for the new module, which are said to offer excellent adhesion, color space density and dot-sharpness. Stork Prints also shows its complete RotaPlate mesh program, while affiliate company, AKL Flexotechnik, shows a range of flexo consumable products including conventional sleeves for plate mounting, seamless-endless photopolymer printing formes and Opitiflex thin sleeve and adapter technology.

Sun Chemical

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

Tailored Solutions

Tailored Solutions, the producer of Label Traxx print business software for flexographic narrow web converters and printers, has introduced Version 5.2 of its Label Traxx software. Tailored Solutions Label Traxx Version 5.2 incorporates more than 25 new features and enhancements.

Among the new features available in LabelTraxx Version 5.2 are: full support for HP Indigo label presses – users can now quickly calculate digital press parameters and graphically view the process crossover point between flexo and digital; press capacity planning – a new report enables managers to quickly review the current scheduled load on each press, including hours, days and costs assigned to each press backlog; flatbed and rotary presses – Label Traxx 5.2 now accommodates rotary press stations and flatbed die cutters,

in addition to the popular narrow web machines used by most users; 'Find similar' search capability – users can now search project schedules to quickly identify jobs with similar setups, thus minimizing makereadies.

tesa

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

tesa UV-Strips combine 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.

Tharo Systems

The new Tharo PA2000t label printer/applicator is an accessory for the Tharo H-400/H-600 series of thermal/thermal transfer barcode label printers. The Tharo PA2000t label printer/applicator is said to offer quick setup and changeover for applying labels to the top or side of varying height or width products.

The PA2000t features a smaller footprint, 15" wide x 32" tall x 30" long, than other printer/applicators, with a remote front panel for easy access, regardless of the orientation of the applicator. It has an all-metal cabinet and is made to last with time-tested components. The heavy-duty cylinder will withstand high stress in side labeling, with minimal deflection, when using a conveyor.

With or without a computer attached, the PA2000t is automatic or semi-automatic; has the ability to apply labels from 2" x 1" to 4.5" x 8" in size, using the 6" wide printer, labels as large as 6" x 8" can be accommodated. The PA2000t can apply up to 58 labels per minute depending on printer used, label size and height of product.

Tools & Production

Tools & Production will display its range male/female rotary punching equipment for flexo and rotogravure presses.

Tools & Production reports a recent increase in requirements for the clean and successful punching of tickets, tags, and labels, particularly for the tea, transportation, and retail industries. T&P's punching equipment is designed to punch holes to match press speeds and to provide a method for removal of the waste punched pieces. Units can be provided for press mounted platforms or designed as drop-in units for the die station.

Union Chemicar America

Union Chemicar America (UCA) has recently expanded its Near-Edge Ribbon product offering to meet the needs of the rapidly growing flexible packaging thermal transfer printing market. Its product line-up includes the following package printing solutions: US770 high speed wax/resin; US760 high durability wax/resin; UH710 high speed/high durability wax/resin; and US550 super premium durability resin.

These formulas are designed for reliable and high-speed Near-Edge printing performance on printers such as Markem Smartdate, OpenDate, TEC, Avery, Bell Mark, Norwood, and VideoJet.

Univacco

Univacco introduces two new products, cold foil CF5.0 for high speed offset press and seamless holographic foils. Cold Foil CF5.0 is designed to work with conventional glue, and allows sheets to be run at speeds of more than 10,000 sheets/hour. Seamless holographic foils will help printers increase process efficiency and decrease the waste of semi-finished printing.

UPM Raf atac

UPM Raflatac, which recently commissioned its new film production plant in the US, showcases its full range of products, including filmic labelstock for the home and personal care, beverage, and oil industries. New products in this area include the Raflex Plus film label material, aimed at high-quality personal care applications requiring good conformability; and Raflatube, a labelstock for squeezable tubes. UPM Raflatac has introduced Fast Face, an ordering program for non-adhesive products. The program meets a critical market gap by enabling labelstock converters to receive lower volume, custom-slit orders of select non-adhesive products in the rapid delivery time cycles that support their business requirements. These products can be used for a wide array of important industry applications such as tags, tickets, business forms, coupons, point-of-sale materials and folding cartons.

While labelstock converters have traditionally waited weeks or even months for deliveries of small volume non-adhesive product orders, they will now be able to operate at the speed-of-market with Fast Face.

Uviterno

Uviterno launches two UV radiation heads. The SRK-A4, is an air-cooled radiation head, and SRK-B4, a combined air-/water-cooled radiation head, both designed to meet the requirements of rotative as well as intermittent narrow web printing machines with a print width

of 21“. Both the enhanced lamp and reflector geometry and the protective quartz plate with new high-tech coating (WSF-T1) form part of the standard equipment. The heat-absorbing filter (WSF-T1) contributes to reducing the temperature of the substrate. The transmission efficiency of the UV dose is also improved thanks to this special coating technology.

Xaar

Xaar reports that while it cannot reveal details until the opening of the show, a leading manufacturer will hold the worldwide launch of a new Xaar 1001-enabled digital label printer at Labelexpo Americas. Other companies will also be demonstrating the Xaar 1001 in action at the show. Following its successful debut at Interpack and drupa in May, JF Machines launches its narrow web press into the North American market. Additionally, EFI shows the Jetrion 4000 while Nilpeter displays its Caslon module.

The ‘industrial strength’ Xaar 1001 is a variable drop (grayscale) printhead featuring Xaar’s patented Hybrid Side-Shooter platform with TF Technology. These patented technologies combine to produce dynamically variable drop sizes essential for fine detail and readable small text as well as smooth tones reliably and consistently in single-pass applications. In addition to the Xaar 1001, Xaar will present its full range of printheads designed to enable manufacturers and integrators to match the best model for their specific needs.

The company’s XaarDOT (Drop Optimization Technology) capability enables the production of variable-sized drops. XaarDOT flexibility gives users the ability to select drop size or resolution depending upon the application, image quality and substrate. Fine drops are important for close viewing, such as labels, while larger droplets are perfect for distance viewing, such as large format displays.

Xeikon

Xeikon will unveil to the US market its new digital color label press, the 3300, which was launched this year at drupa. The machine offers 1200 dpi at 4 bits per spot. With a top speed of 19.2 m/min (63.0 ft/min) it is claimed to be the fastest digital 5-color label press on the market, particularly suited for short to medium print runs and just-in-time jobs.

The Xeikon 3300 is standard-equipped with five color stations, i.e. four for the standard process colors while the fifth allows the use of spot colors as well as opaque white and special security toner. The Xeikon 3300 runs on Xeikon FA toner which combines the benefits of chemically produced toner with the performance of traditionally produced toner and is FDA-approved for use in certain food contact applications. It can print on scalable widths and a wide range of substrates from all sorts of self-adhesive films including co-extruded film, to unsupported film, paper, transparent and opaque foils, and paperboard with weights ranging from 40 to 350 gsm (27 lb text to 122 lb cover). The dry toner electrophotography imaging process enables the use of conventional substrates without coating or pre-treatment.

With a duty cycle of 700,000 meters per month (2,300,000 ft/month), the Xeikon 3300 is designed to operate 24 hours a day if needed. It features full rotary printing technology, which enables printing at rated engine speed regardless the size of the labels, allowing the maintaining of maximum productivity. The positioning of the labels can be adjusted to meet finishing equipment requirements and labels with variable formats and sizes can be printed in the same run, increasing productivity while reducing waste and costs.

The Xeikon 3300 comes with the latest generation of Xeikon’s X-800 digital front-end, which enables the implementation of fully automated workflows in any production environment. Xeikon will also promote its ‘Do-the-benchmark’ initiative, which allows visitor’s to the company’s website to get real proof of the Xeikon 3300’s capabilities. Choose your own substrate and upload your own files to be printed on the machine.

Zeller+Gmelin

Zeller+Gmelin’s Nuvaflex 32 Series’ fused bond strength allows for stress levels approaching 80 percent total shrinkage. In the heat-sealing of shrink sleeves, the 32s exhibit no cracking, flaking or scratch off. Free radical chemistry allows for highly pigmented, free flowing, fast curing inks. Additional enhancements include dense, clean pigmentations, low odor, wet-look gloss, silicone and wax free for high end trapping and laminations.

Additional reporting by David Southall

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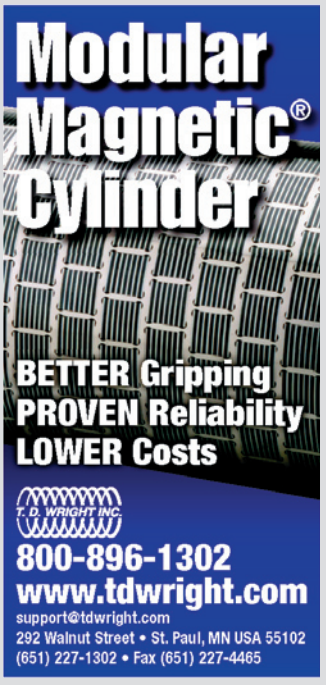

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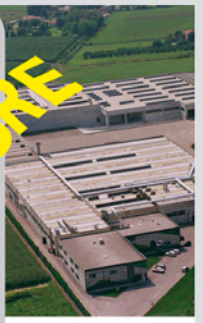

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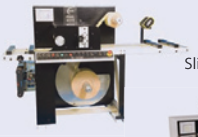

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CORPORATE CULTURE

5 steps to build a winning corporate culture

BY leadership expert, Dr Gary Bradt

If I asked your employees, 'What's it like to work at your company? What kind of place is it?' their answers would largely describe your company culture. How would your employees answer? Would you like what you heard? If not, a leader's responsibility is to change it. Some leadership teams attempt to create culture by acting as wordsmiths, spending untold hours carefully crafting vision, mission and values statements. That's unfortunate, because in the end culture is not created by words plastered on the wall or carried around on laminated cards, but rather culture is defined by actions on the ground.

It's what leaders do: what they inspect, what they reject and what they reward that ultimately shapes company culture.

It's not that words don't have a place in creating culture; they most certainly do. But a winning culture is defined by words so simple and basic a child can grasp them easily, and an executive can explain them quickly.

And, in a winning culture, a leader's words and actions are aligned. What leaders say accurately reflects the way things are. In a losing culture, words and actions are misaligned. 'Happy talk' masks dysfunctional behavior.

A winning company culture is simple and emphasizes three areas: serving the customer, growing the business and developing employees. A losing culture is confusing and complex, places customer needs behind those of the company, and emphasizes personal gain over team achievement.

Culture can be consciously created by company leadership, and should be. Below are five steps that will help you consciously create or redefine your company culture. Remember, complexity equals confusion. If your culture is easy to describe, it will be easy to create.

1. **Define 3-4 guiding principles that define who you are as an organization.**

2. **Use the principles to guide every business discussion and decision going forward.**

3. **Build the principles into all your people performance and management systems.**

4. **Create a 2-3 day leadership development experience that reinforces the behaviors and values consistent with the principles, and insist all senior leaders attend.**

5. **Expect resistance, but stay the course with passion and patience.**

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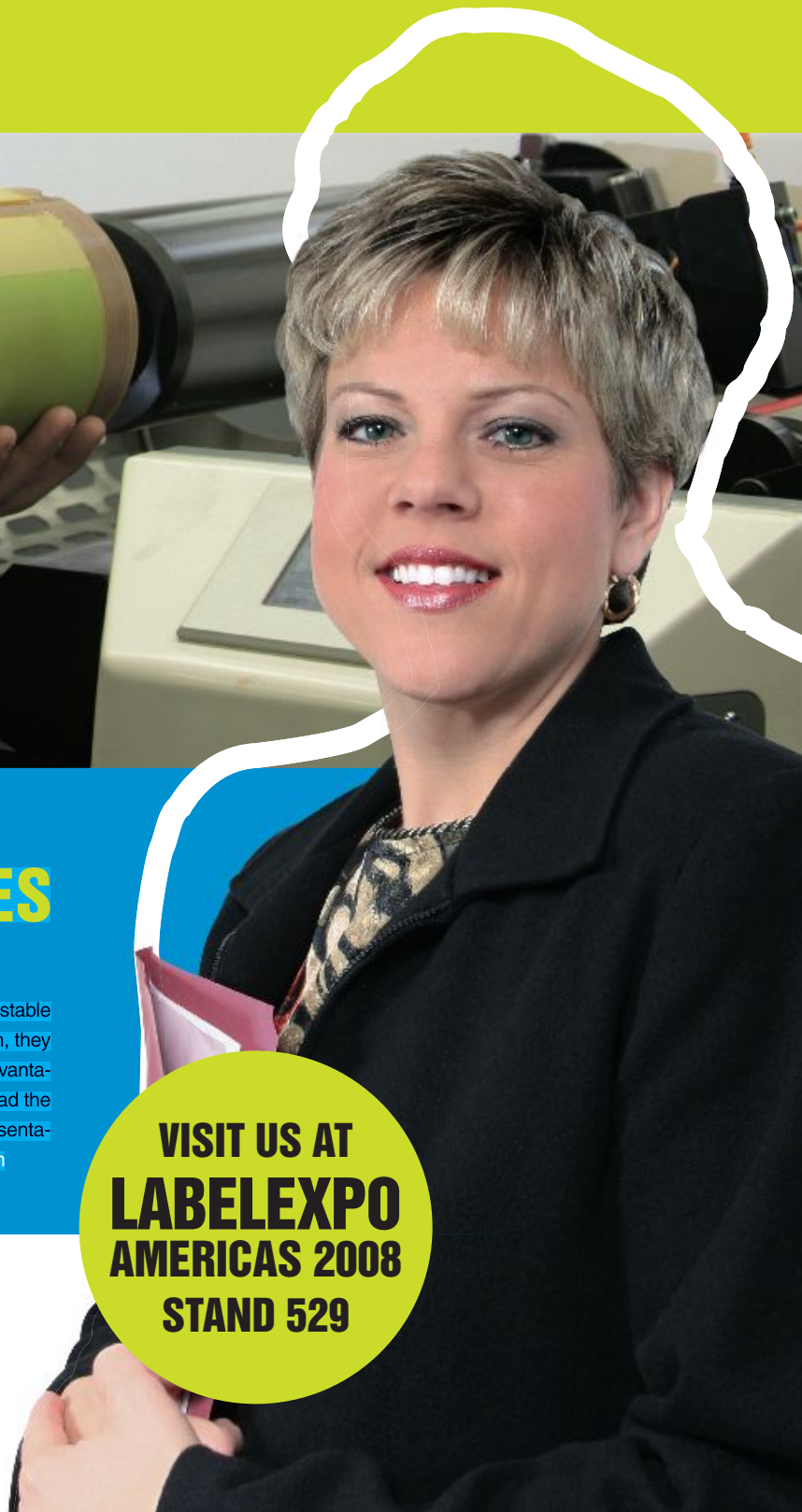

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