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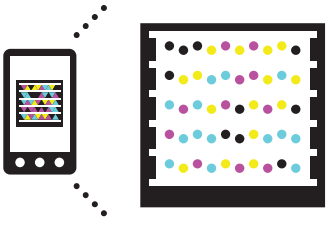

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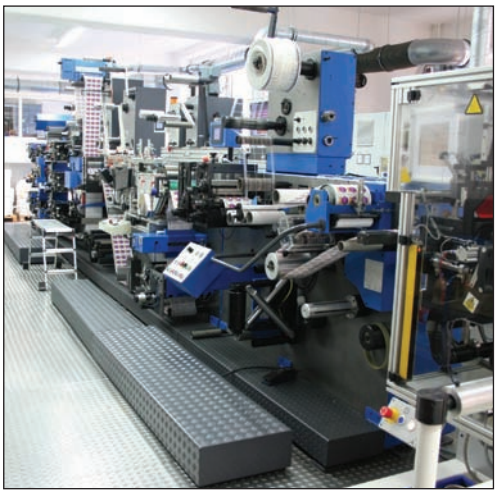

FEATURES

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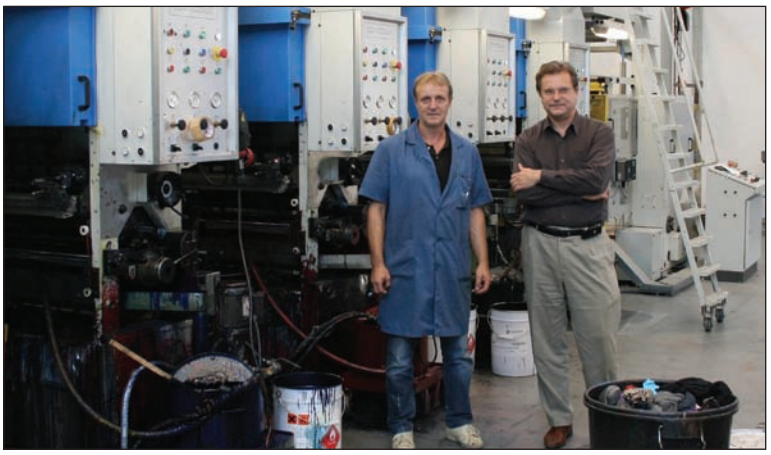

REGULARS

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

As we come to the end of 2010 it is interesting to look at global mega trends.

It seems clear that the label industry is fast emerging from the global economic crisis which hit rock bottom in 2009, although this recovery is taking place at different rates in different regions.

The 'developing' markets of India and China were to a large extent insulated from the worst effects of the global crisis by high (if reduced) levels of domestic demand, and are now showing the highest rates of global growth in all labels categories.

In Latin America, converters are buying equipment at the top end of the market, as was demonstrated at Labelexpo Americas exhibition in Chicago in September. The regional forecast is for up to 5 percent compound growth up to 2014, which should continue to drive capital investment.

The US and European economies were badly hit by the global downturn and are slowly clawing back lost ground. Although Eastern Europe saw its label industry growth rates knocked back in 2008-9, the region is moving back towards more robust growth figures. Central and Western European growth is being driven by the German economy, and although uncertainty remains over the economic frailty of some Euro-zone economies, a return to growth is predicted.

The US economy had returned to growth figures of around 2 percent by Q3 2010 with confidence slowly seeping back into the economy, and this was again reflected at Labelexpo Americas where press manufacturers in particular reported strong interest in capital investment from US converters.

For a more detailed look at all these trends, see the reports by our global team of editors in the 2011 Yearbook.

From myself, and all the L&L team, we wish you a successful year and hope to see you at the two Labelexpo shows in 2011 in Brussels and Shanghai.

ANDY THOMAS
GROUP MANAGING EDITOR
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L&L ISSUE 6

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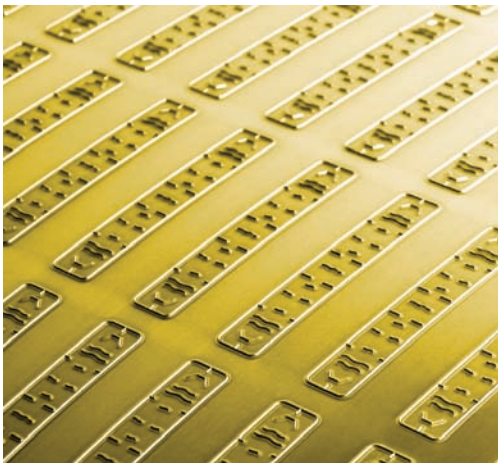

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NEWS

THE INSIDER

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

ETI CREATES PS RESEARCH DIVISION

ETI Converting Equipment has created a pressure sensitive product development division. Headed by Frederic La Brie, COO, the division is equipped with a laboratory for developing and testing PS label products.

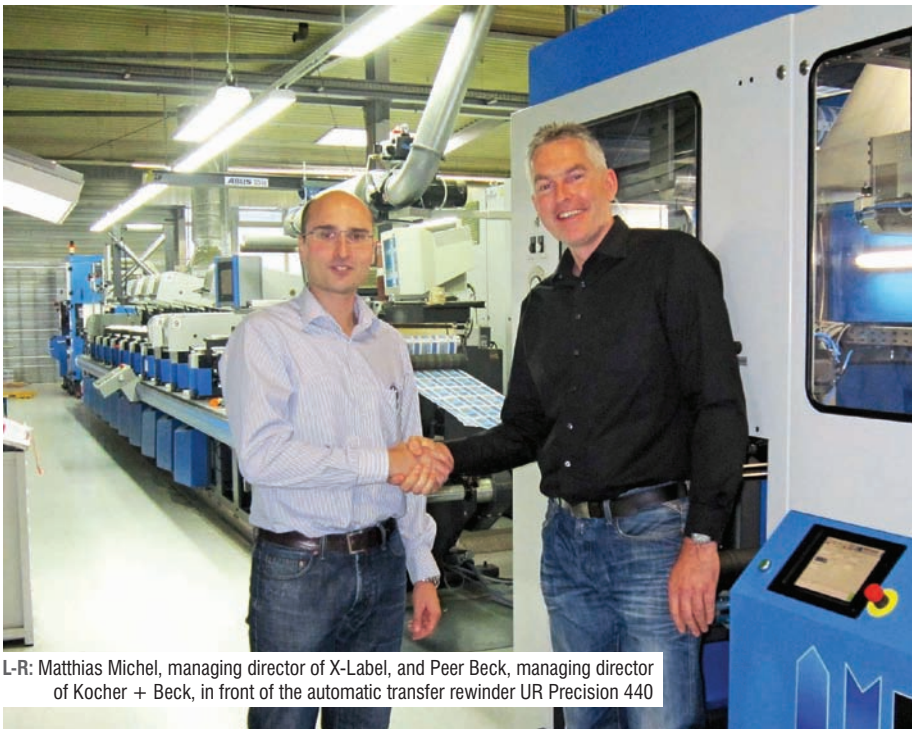
'ETI brings a turnkey solution to label printers: the equipment, the raw materials, the know-how, the QC and now the product development are all important for a successful vertical integration,' explained Frederic La Brie. 'We must respond to our customers, who, by acquiring ETI machines, want to differentiate themselves by producing innovative products while increasing savings made with the ETI technology.'

EDALE APPOINTS GERMAN DISTRIBUTOR

Edale has appointed Grafitech as its exclusive distributor in Germany. The UK-based press manufacturer says the deal will help it penetrate more of the European market.

Bernhard Grob, Edale's export sales director, said: 'Grafitech are a well-established and trusted company in Germany and we are delighted that they have chosen to represent Edale.'

Grafitech recently participated at the Druck + Form trade show in Germany on October 14-17, where the company represented Edale and its range of narrow web flexo presses and converting equipment.



L-R: Matthias Michel, managing director of X-Label, and Peer Beck, managing director of Kocher + Beck, in front of the automatic transfer rewinder UR Precision 440

K&B MAKES DEBUT AS WINDING EQUIPMENT SUPPLIER

Kocher + Beck has begun the development of nonstop winding equipment and has completed its first installation at German converter X-Label. According to a statement, the new technology 'will grow to become another mainstay for the company', the core business of which is the manufacture of dies and tooling for the narrow web industry.

Custom machine engineering is a well-established division at Kocher + Beck. Initially driven by customer requests, it soon commanded a permanent role within the group of companies.

Peer Beck, managing director of Kocher + Beck, believes that market entry into winding technology, based on German engineering and the use of state-of-the-art drive and control components, is an inevitable adaptation to the new generation of printing presses. 'In particular the trend on a broader variety of material spectra, as well as the processing of very delicate unsupported films, represents constantly growing requirements to the winding process,' he said. 'Kocher + Beck has responded with a mix of highly innovative engineering and an ultra-modern drive concept.'

The installation at X-Label is the first step towards an official market launch of the new UR Precision series. The fully automatic transfer unwinder and rewinder, UR Precision 440, is coupled with a Gallus EM 410 press line and predominantly runs, in addition to unsupported film materials greater than 20 μ and self-adhesive labelstock, tube laminates in a three-shift non-stop production. Up to 75 fully automatic roll changes per day are reported to be taking place in a 12-minute pulse.

Matthias Michel, managing director at X-Label, said: 'The productivity increase shown by the Kocher + Beck equipment is instantaneously recognizable and comes just at the right moment to cope with the rapidly growing demand for tube laminate. The amount of stops at our roll-slitters has been reduced to a minimum and in turn boosted the total output at this part of the process as well.'

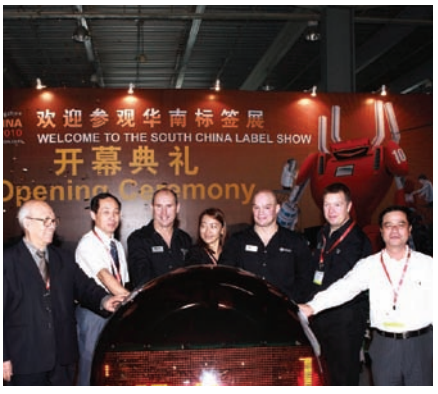
Several more non-stop unwinders and rewinders are currently being built at Kocher + Beck and will go into operation before the end of the year.

'The initial success of the first installation, together with the positive feedback from our customer base, has encouraged us to promptly take the next step of introduction to the market,' said Peer Beck.

A key networking event for Chinese converters

XEIKON launched its 3500 press into China

THE keynote was delivered by Ilkka Ylipoti, VP Asia Pacific of UPM Raflatac



OPENING ceremony, L-R Mr Wu Wen Xiang, PTAC; Mr Du Zhen Lin, Shenzhen Anti-fake Association; Roger Pellow, Yvette Hu, John Davy, Andy Thomas, Tarsus; Mr Kong Huan, Ji- Guang Dong Printing Association

SOUTH CHINA LABEL SHOW ATTRACTS 4,000 VISITORS

LABEL Show in South China set to become regular event

The first South China Label Show welcomed 4,021 visitors to the event, held in Guangzhou. The majority of visitors came from China, with others arriving from India, Malaysia and the Asia Pacific region. There was also a large Japanese delegation led by local magazine Label Shimbun.

The three-day show boasted 90 exhibitors, 16 working presses and a large number of other machinery units. Xeikon displayed its new 3500 digital press for the first time in China at the event.

Twelve conference sessions ran alongside the show. The keynote presentation, delivered by Roger Pellow, managing director of the Labelexpo Global Series, and Ilkka Ylipoti, VP Asia Pacific of UPM Raflatac, looked at global trends and opportunities in the industry and the current position of the Chinese printing market.

Following the success of the show, the Labelexpo Global Series has announced that it will return to Guangzhou in 2012.

Roger Pellow said: 'I am very happy with the first edition of the show. The label industry in China is constantly evolving and is one of the most exciting segments of the printing industry. We were pleased to provide a platform for visitors and exhibitors to meet, network and do business and look forward to seeing the industry again at Labelexpo Asia, November 29 to December 2 2011.'

KEN Kisner, president of INX Digital

INX SETS UP INKJET CONSULTANCY

Inx International Ink and Inx Digital International have introduced a program, called Evolve, to help converters move into digital printing with industrial inkjet systems. Evolve operates on a number of levels from consultation through to technology and ink system development.

'Digital technologies such as our CP100 UV cylindrical printer can help them expand their portfolios, giving (converters) some new capabilities to develop niche markets,' says Rick Clendenning, president and CEO of Inx International.

'Our expertise is in ink, but we have developed software and machinery for specialty applications and we can make customized inks to meet our customers' needs.'

Added Ken Kisner, president of Inx Digital International, 'Our expertise is in ink, but we have developed software and machinery for specialty applications and we can make customized inks to meet our customers' needs.'

Inx Digital produces inks and coatings designed for every type of digital printer and print-head technology. This includes solvent, UV-curable, UV LED-curable, aqueous, and thermal and oil piezo inks. For short-run digital prototype packaging and production, the Evolve program was recently used to introduce the NW100, a new high-speed, single-pass UV LED-curing narrow web printer at Labelexpo Americas 2010 and the new MD1000 UV flatbed printer at Graph Expo.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

UPM FITNESS CHALLENGE BOOSTS YOUTH CHARITIES

UPM Raflatac is donating 50,000 euros through a global exercise campaign for the well-being of children and youths. The biggest individual sums will be donated to childhood cancer charities Candlelighters association and Ellie's Fund in Scarborough, UK, and the association ELER (5,000 euros) in Nancy, France, which helps children through intensive care. The donations will reach 13 countries.

The Every Body Counts exercise campaign inspired over 1,300 employees worldwide, over half of UPM Raflatac's personnel, to take regular exercises to earn points for their teams.

'The Everybody Counts program has been a great success. Over 1,300 participants exercised for an amazing total of over 40,000 hours. In addition to improving personal fitness the aim was to build team spirit and well-being at the workplace. And of course, one of the main sources of inspiration for all the participants was the possibility to help children and youth in need,' said Jussi Vanhanen, president, UPM Raflatac.

JOHN WATSON: high value spirits specialist adds PS capability

KEY WET LABEL CONVERTER INVESTS IN PS

High value wet glue label specialist, Glasgow-based John Watson is moving into self-adhesive label production with the purchase of the UK's first Gallus RCS 330 offset combination press. The ten unit Gallus press, which will also be the longest of its kind in the UK, will enable John Watson to produce self adhesive labels for its customers in the spirits industry.

'We predominantly print for the Scottish Whisky industry, which traditionally has meant wet labels,' says Robert McLachlan, joint managing director at John Watson. 'However, pressure sensitive labels are becoming easier to apply and can have much more intricate designs. A few of our clients' major brands are being redeveloped and want to move over to this process for these reasons. By investing in the Gallus RCS 330 press we will be able to support them and can also offer PSL capability to new customers.'

The new Gallus RCS 330 ten unit offset combination press will join the world's longest B2 15 unit sheetfed Heidelberg press.

'In today's market it is important to be able to offer customers as many options as possible so we need to be capable of both processes in order to be in business for tomorrow,' continues Robert McLachlan.

SCHREINER WINS TLMI INNOVATION AWARD

Schreiner MediPharm, a Germany-based global provider of specialty pharmaceutical labels, has won a TLMI (Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute) award for its Pharma-Comb SL label.

The Pharma-Comb SL label delivers convenience and ease-of-use for multi-dose medications. After opening the upper label, the detachable label parts underneath automatically 'rise' for easy and efficient peel-off. Even when wearing gloves, healthcare personnel can easily detach the upright, self-lifting label parts and apply them to filled,disposable syringes.

Schreiner MediPharm's Pharma-Comb SL label won first place in the flat screen printing category at the 33rd annual TLMI awards competition.

'We are very proud of the Pharma-Comb SL label,' said Gene Dul, president of Schreiner MediPharm. 'It is an innovative, easy-to-use product that provides enhanced convenience and safety to the healthcare industry and we are delighted that it was recognized by the TLMI.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

GRAFOTRONIC APPOINTS MATIK AS US AGENT

Sweden-based Grafotronic has signed a distribution agreement with Matik for sales and service of its label finishing machines in USA and Canada.

Matik, with its head office in West Hartford and a sales facility in Cincinnati, supplies a broad range of printing, converting and packaging equipment to the industry.

'It is of key importance for Grafotronic to have the right partner entering the US and Canadian markets. Matik, with their professional approach and European experience focusing on the label market, is a perfect partner for Grafotronic,' said Mats Marklund managing director for Grafotronic.

ROTOMETRICS OPENS TECHNOLOGY CENTER

RotoMetrics has opened a new Converting Technology Center. Located at the company's world headquarters facility near St. Louis, Missouri, the Converting Technology Center spans 2,000 square feet (186 square meters) and provides visitors with live demonstrations of the company's most advanced die cutting and modular processing equipment. Additionally, the area serves as a research and development center for the industry's technology leader.

NEWS

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

ATLAS COMPLETES MBO FROM BOBST GROUP

Atlas Converting Equipment, based in Bedford, UK, has been sold by Bobst Group in a management buy-out (MBO) transaction. The new directors and shareholders of Atlas Converting Equipment are Stephen Darlington (chairman), Alan Johnson (managing director), Stan Braycotton (sales director) and Tom Walker (finance director). The existing Atlas management team will continue to manage and co-ordinate the company's global operations.

The acquisition includes the dedicated Atlas sales and customer service operations in both Charlotte, North Carolina, USA, and Shanghai, China.

Atlas Converting Equipment, with its brands Atlas and Titan, supplies slitting and rewinding equipment to the film and flexible materials markets with an installation base in excess of 3,500 machines in over 80 countries.

ROTOFLEX OPENS NEW R&D CENTER IN TORONTO

Rotoflex has moved its inspection rewinder equipment research and development team into a new technology center. Still located in the Toronto area, the new location includes office space as well as a laboratory and testing area. The new facility's information technology network will be supported by Agile project management architecture and include design software like ProE 3D, Eagle and others.

The move is an extension of recent technology launches, including the Genesis advanced control system and the updated Vericut digital finishing machine. Rotoflex has also added six newly appointed design engineers and technical experts focusing on controls, electrical design, aftermarket technical support and product management.

PHARMA INDUSTRY URGED TO FIGHT COUNTERFEITERS

UP TO 25 PERCENT of medicines consumed in some developing countries are counterfeit, and more needs to be done to counter the problem, says leading trade body

The trade body representing the global holographic industry says the pharmaceutical industry 'has to do a lot more' in tackling counterfeit medicines.

The International Hologram Manufacturers Association (IHMA) was commenting on a joint survey by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) and Pfizer which highlighted concerns among pharmacists over the global problem of counterfeit medicines.

It revealed almost two thirds (63 percent) of 2,000 community, retail and hospital pharmacists surveyed in Europe, the US and Australia believe current policies and technology are insufficient to deal with counterfeit medicines.

Sixty-one percent of those surveyed also said that the prevalence of counterfeit medication is a serious issue in their country.

The IHMA says that statistics paint an alarming picture when it comes to pharmaceutical counterfeiting not only in developing markets but also mature sectors.

The WHO estimates that up to 25 percent of the medicines consumed in some developing countries are counterfeit or substandard and that annual earnings from the global sales of fake and substandard medicines are over USD $32 billion.

Examples of good practice include Malaysia, which specified the Meditag serialized hologram label for all registered medicines – traditional and western – which has helped the Ministry of Health inspectors to detect unauthorized and counterfeit product.

'The evolving anti-counterfeiting role of holograms lies in their ability to combine authentication with detection,' said Ian Lancaster, IHMA general secretary. 'And sometimes pack enhancement, as Rodotex GmbH has shown with its packaging for Vitamin C+Kollagen in Indonesia.'

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NEWS

STUDY EXAMINES LED INSPECTION OPTIONS

Vision inspection systems with actively cooled light-emitting diode (LED) lighting technology are more likely to deliver enhanced inspection image quality at lower operational costs than those using alternative light options, according to a new white paper by researchers at QuadTech, a manufacturer of press control technology.

Authors Tim Bergin, John Cusack and Kris DeSmet compared the image representation of foil and paperboard products when illuminated by two sources of LED, tungsten halogen and fluorescent light forms. LED-illuminated images showed both mid-tone gray foil and white overprinted samples appeared smooth and visually accurate. In both cases there was neither compromise in inspection settings nor distortion.

LED is a semiconductor light source. When switched on, electrons recombine with holes within the device, releasing energy in the form of photons. Optical components reflect and shape the radiation pattern, resulting in bright light.

Of the three lighting options, LED was found to have optimum white light output of 6,700 kelvin, resulting in display of true-to-life colors. Furthermore, RGB Color proportions can be adjusted resulting in a white light source with adjustable temperature. LEDs last up to 100,000 hours, compared with 3,000 for fluorescent and under 700 for tungsten halogen.

The paper examines the relationship between LED performance and temperature. The most important aspects of LED light design are stable light intensity and color temperature. Prolonged heat and higher ambient temperature accelerate the degradation rate of the device, resulting in decreased output. For instance, reducing a white LED from 100 deg C to 45 deg C boosts output by 25 percent.

Only temperature-controlled LED lighting, achieved with active (liquid) cooling, can create the repeatable conditions to utilize a reusable Golden Template and accurately monitor color algorithms, says the White Paper. Active cooling, therefore, ensures stability of light intensity and safeguards against color changes during print runs and from one print run to the next.

LED technology has advanced considerably since it was developed in the early 1960s. Early LEDs emitted only low-intensity red light and were used primarily as indicator lamps for many devices. Today, LED technology cuts across the visible, ultraviolet and infrared wavelengths, and is featured in numerous applications from building lighting to high-definition televisions.

FINAT HONORS WORLD LABEL AWARD WINNERS

Seven members of self-adhesive label association Finat have won World Label Awards, including Dow Industries, Skanem Hobro, Marzek Etiketten, Tapp Technologies, Skanem Newcastle, Schreiner Group and Royston Labels. Six others received honorable mention awards. Marzek Etiketten from Austria was the label converter that won the most awards. .

The judging for the World Label Awards was held in September, before the opening of the Labelexpo Americas. The entries came from label associations across the globe: in addition to Finat (Europe), entrees represented contributions from TLMI, JFLP, Latma and Salma.

'I believe that it is the competitive environment between the different countries and the high demands of their customers throughout Europe which spurs the printers on to raise their sights with regard to good printing practices,' says Andrea Vimercati, president of Finat. 'We most definitely will highlight the Finat World Label Award winners during our next Finat congress which is being held in Sicily in June 2011.'

NEWS IN BRIEF

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

SMOOTH PLACES OFFSET IN TURKEY

Smooth Machinery has sold its first SPM-4500R shaftless intermittent offset machine to a Turkish converter. 'State of the art offset litho printing quality is the aim for all label printers. However the investment for the machine itself is still on the higher side if compared to the other printing methods, and Smooth wants to improve this situation,' said Jim Tien at Smooth Machinery.

The SPM-4500R has what Smooth claims is the biggest printing area – 430 x 410 mm – of any web-fed intermittent offset press. The press configuration is 5-offset + 1 flexo + 1 rotary die station. It incorporates an auto-positioning and registration system, 500 job memories and second pass scanner system. The jumbo unwinder can take rolls up to 1,000 mm reel diameter with a 76 mm core diameter, equaling approximately 4,500 meter long web rolls. The HMI touch panels are in multiple languages including Turkish, German and English. A full report will appear in a later edition of L&L.

MONDI COMPLETES US LINER ACQUISITION

Mondi Akrosil has completed the previously announced deal with Nitto Americas regarding the latter's facility, which will be named Mondi Pleasant Prairie, in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin.

The new facility strengthens Mondi´s offering for specialized release liner in North America, says CEO Thomas K. Schäbinger: 'This investment benefits our customers as we significantly enhance our overall production portfolio and allows us to offer further print capabilities for hygiene and film.'

Mondi Pleasant Prairie adds nearly 450 million square meters of capacity and provides ample room for expansion. Now with three release liner facilities in Wisconsin and Ohio, Mondi says that it continues to optimize synergies between the plants, while at the same time shortening development cycles thanks to improved focus on individual technical expertise in each plant.

ESKOARTWORK OPENS OFFICE IN TURKEY

EskoArtwork has opened an office in Istanbul, Turkey. The new venture is being headed up by Mustafa Salur, who joined the company in September as sales manager for the country. He will also provide additional support to local distribution channels in Turkey.

NEWS

THE INSIDER

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

TORRASPAPEL OPENS PORTUGUESE CUSTOMER CENTER

Torraspapel, part of the Lecta Group, has presented its Portuguese distribution clients with two new tools aimed at offering them continuous improvements in service and processes.

With its new Customer Service Center, Torraspapel Portugal is now able to respond to customers using a modern CRM platform for more effective, personalized service. Customers can now carry out their normal day-to-day operations with Torraspapel – from speaking with a sales manager to asking technical questions or requesting a sample – more quickly through a single contact number.

The renewed Torraspapel Portugal website will facilitate customers' access to product information, allowing them to easily locate what they need and purchase it on an updated e-commerce platform. The website also offers searches for certified and recycled products as well as the possibility of downloading each paper's certifications on demand.

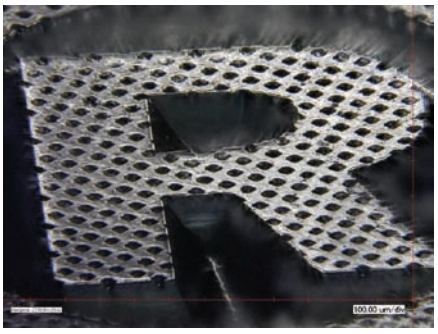
UK CONVERTER SETS UP COMMERCIAL REPRO OPERATION

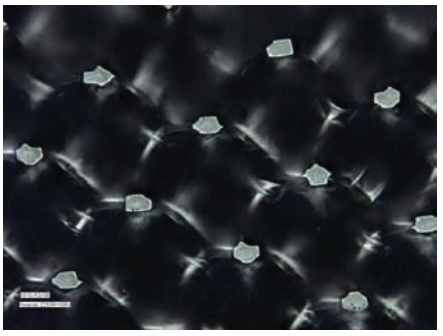
Exeter, UK-based label and packaging converter James Townsend & Sons has launched an in-house pre-press department, Think Repro, as a separate reprographics company. The company has also installed a Roland VersaUV LEC-330 which, linked to its GMG color management workflow, enables it to offer color accurate proofs on any substrate.

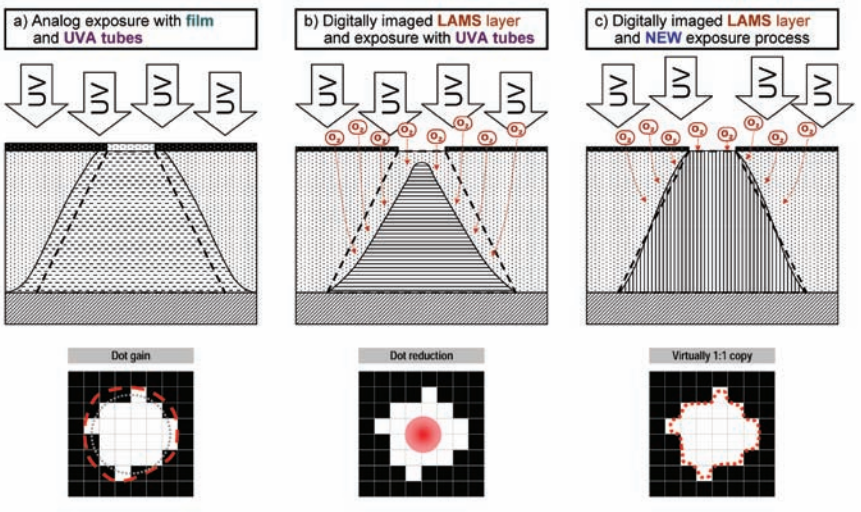
'We have been using several GMG products for some time, including ColorProof, InkOptimizer and PrintControl,' said pre-press manager Kristian Wells. 'We are very happy with the performance of all the products, so when it came to looking at new proofing equipment, it was vital for us that GMG was driving the front end.'

James Townsend already had a Digital Cromalin system, which is capable of producing a white ink using toner, but Wells felt that this did not give enough control. 'We needed a cost-effective solution that was simple to use, an inkjet proofer that was able to print white ink and to cope with all our material, including clear film and metallic substrates,' he said.

Think Repro will specialize in artwork, proofing and the production of prototypes for the packaging industry.







FLINT INTRODUCES NEW EXPOSURE TECHNOLOGY

CLAIMS innovative approach to achieving flat top dots

Flint Group Flexographic Products has demonstrated impressive print results achieved with its new nyloflex NExT exposure technology at a symposium in Stuttgart, Germany.

The company said its nyloflex NExT high output UV technology is able to generate 'unique element shapes with precisely reproduced surfaces, commonly known as flat top dots, providing all the benefits linked to this structure: increased tonal range along with an optimised surface texture to greatly improve ink lay down and solid ink density.'

The processes currently used to produce a plate with a flat top profile are designed to prevent oxygen exchange between ambient air and the photopolymerisable layer during the exposure step, either by blocking it at the plate surface with barrier films or by displacing the oxygen with inert gases.

nyloflex NExT exposure technology does not require the use of inert gases, and there are no processing steps added to the standard digital plate workflow, such as film or negative film lamination.

The nyloflex NExT process can easily be integrated in existing digital plate workflows, says Flint. The only change required with the nyloflex NExT process is the addition of an advanced high energy UV light source, which accelerates the polymerisation in the image areas so much, that the competitive termination reaction with oxygen becomes insignificant. In combination with a standard UV tube, a virtual 1-1 reproduction from the LAMS image onto the plate is accomplished, says Flint. The company is also claiming that nyloflex NexT exposed plates demonstrate advantages on press, such as improvements in impression latitude and reduction of gear marking.

The new Flint Group UV technology is planed to be commercially available in 2011.

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

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Søren Ringbo
Manager, Digital Products, Nilpeter A/S

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

L-R: Milan Moscaritolo, Mary Gervais and Mike Theriault of Toray, and Calvin Frost of Channeled Resources Group

TORAY PLASTICS RECEIVES TLMI ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

Toray Plastics (America) has received the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute's (TLMI) 2010 Environmental Leadership Award. The award, presented at the TLMI Annual Meeting in October, recognizes TLMI members that have consistently demonstrated a commitment to progressive environmental practices across a range of areas, including solid-waste reduction, recycling, waste or energy recovery, and the implementation of new 'clean' technology and/or processes and an education program.

Toray competed against 26 other companies for one of two awards presented this year. An independent panel of judges from peer organizations selected Toray for the Technical Innovation Category. Milan Moscaritolo, director of sales and marketing, Lumirror Polyester Film Division, accepted the award on Toray's behalf. Toray Plastics (America) is a manufacturer of polypropylene, polyester and bio-based films for packaging and industrial applications. Toray's label materials include Lumirror clear and metalized polyester films and Ecodear bio-based films made from renewable resources.

In 2004 Toray launched a sustainability initiative which has greatly improved its environmental profile and now saves the company 29 million gallons of water, 8.5 million KWHs of electricity, and 10.1 billion BTUs annually. Operational innovations have also contributed to zero landfill waste. In 2011, Toray will begin construction on a solar farm at its headquarters in Kingstown, Rhode Island. TLMI cited Toray as a company that has focused on energy conservation, the reduction of solid waste to landfills, water conservation, and a commitment to the use of future technologies that include solar and wind turbines.

TORRASPAPEL EXPANDS PRODUCTS IN GREEN AUDIT

Following the publication of 'Paper Profile' statements for its coated and uncoated papers, Torraspapel, part of the Lecta Group, has extended its environmental credentials by providing the same information for its specialty coated papers – metalized, carbonless copy, thermal and cast.

'Transparent communication as well as reduction of the environmental footprint of its operations is fundamental to Torraspapel's environmental policy,' said the company in a statement. 'As proof of this, the company makes the "Paper Profile" statement available to its customers containing vital information about its products: composition, key environmental parameters – emissions to air and water, solid waste landfill and consumption of purchased electricity – and environmental management and wood procurement certifications.'

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

THE LATEST NEWS FOCUSED ON SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

UPM RAFLATAC POLISH PLANT GAINS ISO 14001

UPM Raflatac has received ISO 14001:2004 Environmental Management Systems certification for its labelstock manufacturing facility in Wrocław, Poland. The certification represents a significant step toward achieving one of the company's major goals for its facilities worldwide: developing Environmental Management Systems (EMS) which operate in accordance with an internationally recognized standard.

In addition to the ISO 14001 certificate, the Wroclaw facility has also been granted PEFC and FSC chain of custody certificates for its manufacture of labelstock. Having a chain of custody for PEFC and FSC guarantees that the wood pulp used in a product is from sustainably managed certified forests.

'These certifications clearly prove our responsibility to the environment,' said Marta Małasiewicz, health, safety and environment manager, UPM Raflatac Poland. 'Our customers know that we are actively minimizing the environmental impacts of our company's operations, products and services. This shows in our choice of raw materials, and internally through reduced waste and high energy efficiency.' The ISO 14001 accreditation includes the manufacture and slitting of self-adhesive paper and film labelstock. The factory will be reassessed annually to ensure that it is achieving its targets and continuously improving its environmental performance. ISO 14001 certification requires that an organization identifies and controls the environmental aspects and impacts of its activities, products or services, continually improves its environmental performance, and implements a systematic approach to setting and measuring the achievement of its environmental objectives and targets. The certificate is awarded by the British Standards Institution (BSI).

EPSON JOINS DOW JONES SUSTAINABILITY INDEX

Seiko Epson Corporation has been selected for the third time as a component company of the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index (DJSI World) and the Dow Jones Sustainability Asia Pacific Index (DJSI Asia Pacific), both leading indicators for socially responsible investment. The international stock indices, jointly developed by the American company Dow Jones and Switzerland's SAM (Sustainable Asset Management) Group, assess companies around the world based on economic, environmental and social perspectives, and select those with the best future prospects for achieving sustainability.

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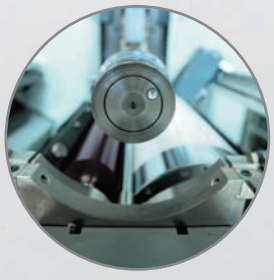

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** Compared to GIDUE existing product lines

NEW PRODUCTS

1 KWH PLAST
OXYGEN-BARRIER IML FILMS

KWH Plast has launched a range of oxygen-barrier IML films. The company has combined its expertise in in-mold labeling and packaging films with special properties such as oxygen barriers. Oxygen barrier properties can be attained by using special polymers such as Ethylene Vinyl Alcohol (EvOH).

'The challenge of producing any IML film is to control the static film properties, to ensure film flatness and to have the right mechanical properties for a smooth printing process,' said the company in a statement. 'KWH Plast has been successful in attaining these properties, first with standard cast IML films and now with seven-layer oxygen-barrier IML films.'

The new range is aimed at providing the industry with lighter weight, injection-molded packaging as an alternative to tin cans and glass jars. Existing injection-molded packaging can be upgraded to barrier-packaging. Some restrictions apply: the package design and the injection-molding equipment must allow for the use of an IML label covering the whole package.

The Oxygen Transmission Rate (OTR) of films developed by KWH Plast ranges from 1 to 3 cc/m2*d (23 deg C, 65 percent RH). These are typical values needed to ensure the required shelf-life of most foodstuffs, says the company.

The company reports that the performance of its oxygen-barrier IML films is comparable to its standard cast IML film, with good anti-static properties allowing for a smooth printing process. Tests reportedly show positive results with different PP raw materials, while good bonding means that the label can't be peeled off after injection-molding.

2 ROLAND DG/FLEXCON
WIDE FORMAT PS BOPP MATERIALS

Roland DG Corp and Flexcon have partnered to bring users of Roland's VersaUV LEC series of UV-LED wide-format inkjet printer/cutters a pressure-sensitive polypropylene media for labeling applications.

'VersaUV is ideal for short-run label production and now Flexcon has tailored its popular Flexmark polypropylene label media for the VersaUV's unique dimensions and contour cutting capabilities,' said Andrew Oransky, director of product management for Roland DGA Corp. 'Roland inkjet printer/cutters print and contour cut designs all on one device, allowing professionals to create labels in any shape through one seamless workflow.'

Winner of DPI and EDP awards and, most recently, the 2010 Label Industry Global Award for New Innovation, the Roland VersaUV inkjet printer/cutter goes beyond CMYK and white inks to offer clear coat which can be layered into unique textures and patterns for embossing and varnishing effects. VersaUV allows the production of custom short-run labels as well as unique packaging prototypes on a wide range of substrates.

'We have taken high quality, pressure-sensitive polypropylene face media and married it to a customized, stay flat release liner that allows users to die cut and perforate label designs right on the VersaUV without additional finishing equipment,' said Rick Harris, product manager of the Product Branding Business Team for Flexcon. 'Flexmark polypropylene media – PP20CPLEC (2.0 mil clear); PP23WPLEC (2.3 mil white); and MPP20SPLEC (2.0 mil metalized silver) – is available in 30 inch wide rolls to fit all three VersaUV models. Flexmark polypropylene images well in a variety of print modes to create labels with beautiful effects such as embossing and printing with white inks.'

3 MICHELMAN
HIGH SPEED COATINGS FOR HP WS6000

Michelman has introduced DigiPrime 6029, the latest addition to its line of primers and overprint varnishes for use with HP Indigo presses. The new primer is designed specifically for the demands of high-speed printing on the HP Indigo WS6000 label and package printing digital press.

DigiPrime 6029 is an HP-approved product claimed to produce superior ink transfer, ink adhesion and rub resistance on embossed and heavily textured, pressure-sensitive paper label stock. It is non-blocking and moisture resistant, and is backward compatible with older model Indigo presses. It also provides 'excellent' performance on polyethylene labelstock on the WS6000 press.

Unlike other commercial primers for Indigo presses which are formulated entirely from petrochemical derivatives, says the company, 48 percent of the active (solid) raw material in DigiPrime 6029 comes from renewable sources. It is solvent free, odorless and repulpable.

MACTAC/BEMIS
LOW-GAUGE CO-EX PE-PP FILM

Mactac and Bemis have launched U Coex, a low-gauge universal film for self-adhesive labeling applications. The proprietary film is the result of a joint development between the flexible packaging division of Bemis and Mactac, a member of the Bemis Group.

The co-extruded PE-PP film is said to combine the benefits of a PE film – squeezability – and those of a PP film – high level of clarity and a good rigidity for ease of application.

The 55-micron U Coex film allow printers to print 25 percent more labels compared to a 85-micron PE film on a roll of the same diameter, say the companies. For a roll of the same size, printers and end-users will also reduce their waste by up to 25 percent per square meter. Roll weight is also reduced by 25 percent compared with a standard PE film.

Applications include labels for personal care, cosmetics, detergents, home care, pharmaceuticals and food products.

4 EDELMANN GRAPHICS
STAR-PRINT PRESS

Edelmann Graphics showed the first press from its new Star-Print range at an open house at its facility in Beerfelden, Germany. The machine on display was delivered to a customer outside Germany; another press is currently in construction.

The Star-Print press from Edelmann, best known for its web offset printing machines, can produce flexible packaging, folding carton and labels such as shrink sleeves, wraparound and in-mold.

The press uses hydraulically fixed offset sleeves with bearer rings technology developed specifically for the new machines. The sleeve system itself is packed in an insert cassette, allowing the press to be equipped with additional technology, including flexo, gravure and screen printing inserts as an open platform version. The machine is available with three web widths – 52 cm, 76 cm and 92 cm – and size variability of 610 mm to 1,118 mm.

CHECKPOINT SYSTEMS
ENHANCED PERFORMANCE EAS LABELS

Checkpoint Systems, a global supplier of shrink management, merchandise visibility and apparel labeling products for the retail industry and its supply chain, has launched its newest RF label series in its Enhanced Performance (EP) Electronic Article Surveillance (EAS) label range: a first-of-its-kind, clear label for placement over a barcode without jeopardizing barcode scanning. Claimed by the company to be a first of its kind, it is also said to be the smallest size EAS label available for protecting small, thin, un-carded cosmetics and other high-value merchandise.

EP Clear labels are a visual deterrent to theft and have been proven in retailers' pilot studies to reduce pilferage by more than 15 percent. The high-theft product category of health and beauty is one of the key areas to benefit from these new RF label circuits, as the labels are small in size and can protect items often targeted by thieves such as cosmetics, perfumes and other small merchandise.

'Checkpoint is the first company to achieve the technological breakthrough of manufacturing a label that will not degrade branding or interfere with packaging design, while allowing cashiers to scan product barcodes through the EP Clear label at checkout,' said the company in a statement. 'Until now, the technology made manufacturing an EAS label this small with a large, clear viewing window very difficult.'

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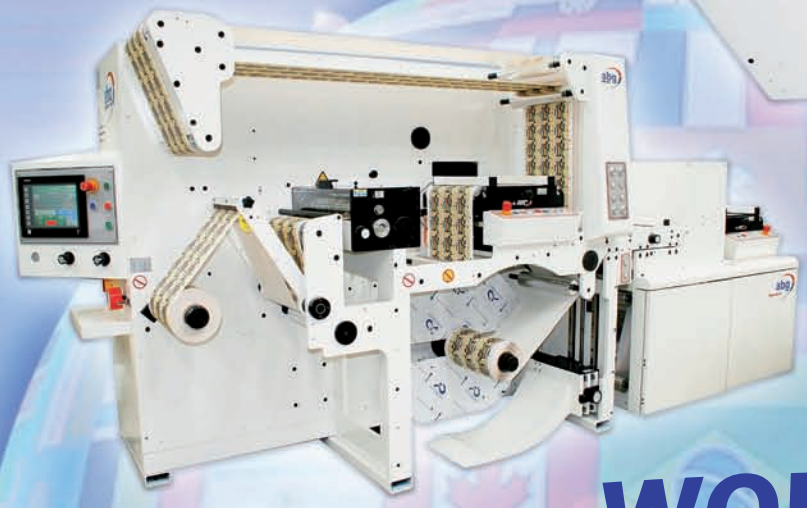

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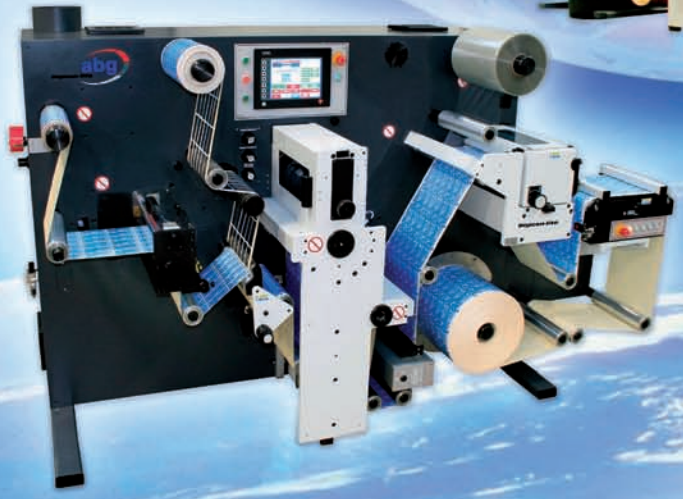

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INSTALLATIONS

ALBERT DASS, chairman of Springfield Solutions, with the company's second HP WS6000

L-R: Sergio Villa, area manager for Omet in Turkey; Naim Yavuz; Marco Calcagni, Omet sales director

SPRINGFIELD SOLUTIONS
HP INDIGO WS 6000

Hull, UK-based converter Springfield Solutions has installed its second HP Indigo WS6000 digital press, making it the first company in the country to operate two of the machines.

Commented Albert Dass, chairman, Springfield Solutions, 'The efficiency and speed of the WS6000 relative to its predecessors made our investment decision for a second press remarkably easy. Our make-readies are even better than before, our print speeds have doubled, preventative maintenance is easier and the machine has a low environmental impact versus anything that we have used before. It ticks a lot of boxes.

'When it comes to opportunities for innovation in the packaging sector, the development of digital print production is critical,' continues Dass. HP's constant advancements in digital print technology provide us with the means to drive our business forward and maintain our forward-thinking approach to packaging decoration.'

COMMERCIAL LABEL PRODUCTS
XEIKON 3300

Cheshire, UK-based converter Commercial Label Products has installed a Xeikon 3300 digital label press. The now offers the three main different types of digital label printing: dry toner, liquid toner and inkjet.

Nigel Painton, managing director of Commercial Label Products, said: '(The Xeikon press) offers a number of benefits: the ability to produce an excellent solid white is certainly very impressive; as is the fact that the machine doesn't slow down when adding extra colors into the mix. There are also no complications when running multiple sorts, which is a great productivity boost when short run is the order of the day.' Painton cites as a further advantage the food safety standards provided by Xeikon production equipment.

The modern suite of digital machinery sits alongside traditional label production equipment such as flexographic, foil blocking and semi-rotary letterpress. 'Each technology has its place in the market,' continued Painton. 'It is common for more than one technology to be employed on our label orders. Our foil blocking machinery, for example, is busier now than ever before, foiling, embossing and die-cutting digitally printed labels.'

DILEK ETIKET (LABEL)
OMET X-FLEX

The first X-Flex installation in Turkey has been completed at Dilek Etiket (Label) in Istanbul, where an open house was organized with the cooperation of Naim Yavuz, Omet's local distributor, and the customer. To demonstrate the capabilities of the new press, three different label jobs, each with eight colors, were printed at the open house, and drew keen interest from the Turkish label converters who attended. The X-Flex's patented Vision control system can set up the press in four minutes including changing material, colors and plates.

Aydın Adanur, chairman of board of Dilek Etiket, who installed his company's first Omet, a VaryFlex line in 2004, stated: 'We decided to install an Omet because we trusted Naim Yavuz and respected his understanding and expertise in the label business. The Omet gave our sales a real boost by improving the quality of our labels. This was all the evidence we needed to choose Omet for our third flexo press.'

Omet sales director Marco Calcagni told Adanur, 'We are very grateful to you for allowing us to hold this X-Flex open house at your premises following the great success we enjoyed when we launched the VaryFlex 430 machine here back in 2004. It is generous of you to open your doors to the whole industry.' Naim Yavuz said the market for labels in Turkey continues to grow very quickly, despite the global economic crisis.

ROTAKETT AB
GALLUS RCS330

Rotakett AB is the first Scandinavian label converter to purchase a Gallus RCS 330. The press will be installed at the company's plant in Helsingborg, Sweden, at the end of the year.

'The Gallus RCS 330 has a larger web width, delivers shorter set-up and production times, boasts both longitudinal and cross registers, and offers much greater flexibility,' said Jim Bågesjö, sales and marketing manager at Rotakett.

The Gallus RCS 330 is designed for combination printing; in Rotakett's case, this means UV flexo and screen printing. With direct servo drives for all key settings and a web width of 330 mm, the press combines hot foil embossing, cold foil printing, die-cutting, varnishing and lamination in a single pass.

INSTALLATIONS

LABELINK
GRAFOTRONIC 280

Labelink, a converter based in Toronto, Canada, has installed the country's first Grafotronic finishing machine for slitting and die-cutting of blank labels.

The machine was bought off the stand at Labelexpo Americas 2010 in Chicago. Grafotronic's managing director Mats Marklund said: 'We are proud being a supplier to a company like Labelink that targets ambitious growth, fast and friendly service with a large social commitment. Labelink is being recognized as the fastest printer in the flexo industry and the new Grafotronic machine will support and service their business for many years to come.' The Grafotronic 280 (11 inch) die-cutting machine is built for production of blank labels and operates at speeds of more than 200 m/min (600 ft/min).

THE LABEL MAKERS
DIGICON SERIES 2

The Label Makers has installed a Digicon Series 2 label converting line for digitally printed webs at The Label Makers, based in Bradford, UK. The order was placed during the recent Labelexpo Americas exhibition and includes flat bed hot foiling, cold foiling, embossing, a screen module and two UV flexo units. 'The combination of digital printing and the Digicon finishing line means we can truly satisfy customer requirements for premium quality short-run work at competitive rates,' commented The Label Makers' managing director David Webster. 'The market is requiring greater flexibility from its supply base with shorter and variable print runs and our investment in the Digicon converting system means we have the facility to deliver the expectations of our customers irrespective of run length.' The Digicon 2, combined with the company's new Xeikon digital press, expands the range of label printing processes offered by The Label Makers, which already include flexography, lithography, letterpress and silk screen production.

'We are delighted to have been the supplier of choice for this new venture into digital label printing and concluding the sale during Labelexpo Americas was especially satisfying,' added Mark Hyde of AB Graphic International.

MCCRACKEN
AQUAFLEX PRESS

US converter McCracken Label Company, based in Chicago, Illinois, has purchased its fourth Aquaflex press, an ELS (Electronic Line Shaft) 16.5" 8-color servo printing machine.

'We already own several Aquaflex presses which perform well for us,' said John Coaker, owner of McCracken Label Company. 'When we decided to diversify into film markets, the Aquaflex ELS was a perfect choice due to its superior registration and low-waste capabilities.' Mac Rosenbaum, vice president of sales, US and Canada, for Aquaflex at PCMC, said: 'Customers such as McCracken Label Company are excellent relationships for PCMC-Aquaflex as they see the value in our technology and use that technology to grow their businesses; hence this additional order of a customized Aquaflex ELS press.'

THE LABEL MAKERS managing director David Webster with the new Digicon

BAUMGARTEN SOURCES ROTOCONTROL REWINDER

Brazilian label converter Baumgarten has invested in a RSC 540 slitter rewinder inspection machine from Rotocontrol. The order was placed through Forpack, the German company's local distributor the region.

Baumgarten selected the RSC 540mm web width machine to run production of normal labelstock and unsupported film. The equipment's operator-friendly console and a preference for a German-engineered finishing machine were cited as motivations behind the purchase.

Ronaldo Baumgarten Jr, managing director of Baumgarten, commented: 'Baumgarten is committed to technological partnerships with renowned equipment suppliers. After seeing a demo of a Rotocontrol machine at Labelexpo Americas, we were convinced their innovative technology would benefit our production needs and provide the latest high quality finishing machine.

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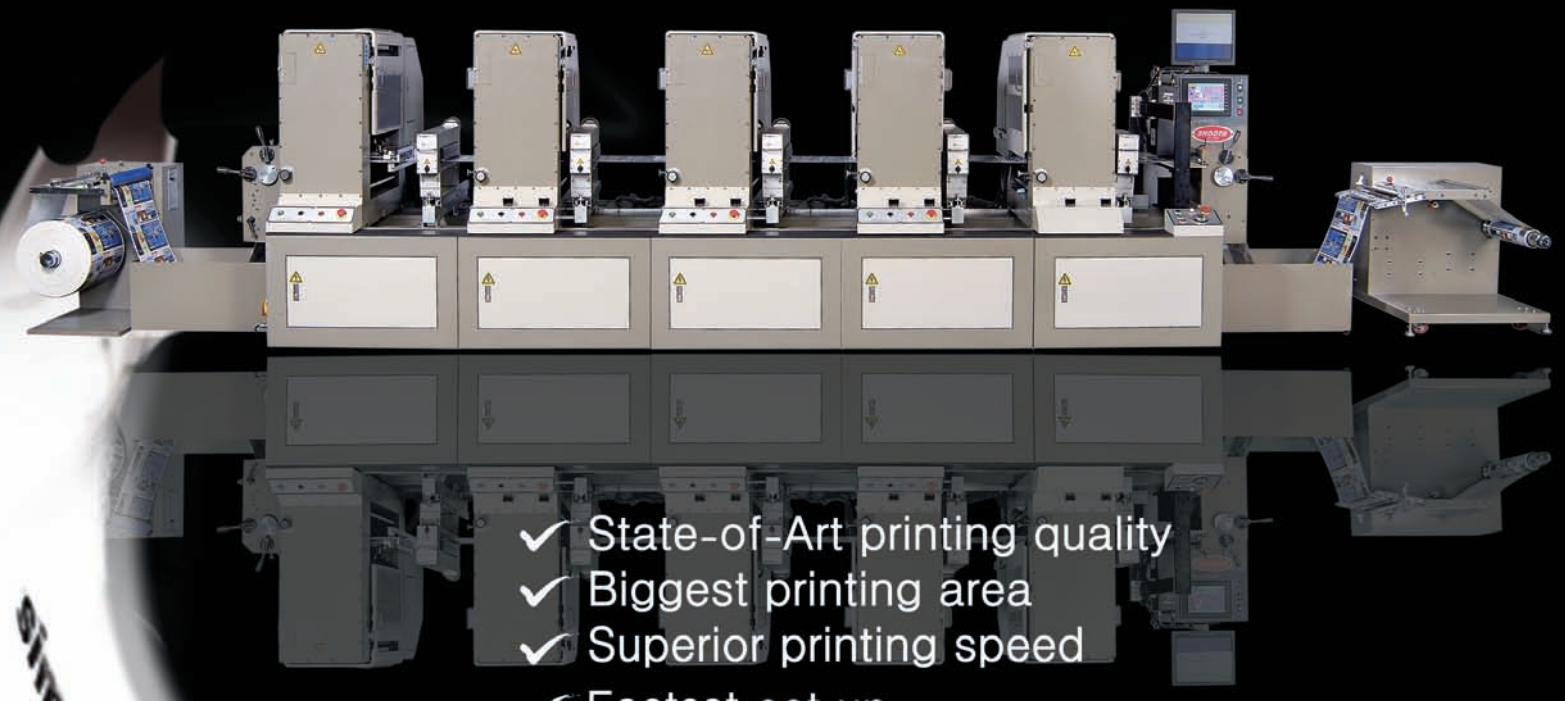

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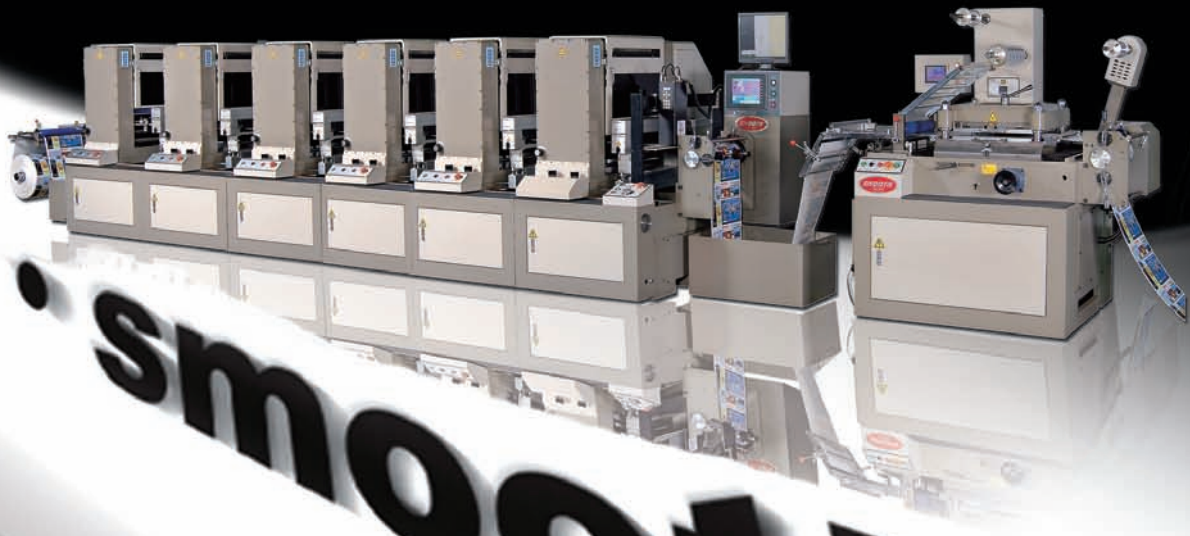

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Pour Yourself Another Cup of Optimism

BOB CRONIN at the Open Approach sees cause for optimism following a Labelexpo in Chicago brimming with new tools and technologies and a flurry of interest in the mergers and acquisitions sector

Optimism. It's the belief that the most positive outcome will result from an action. It's the metaphor of having the glass half-full, rather than half-empty. Moreover, it's an essential part of every business's foundation and a critical factor in its success.

Perhaps it's been a while since you heard the word. But be prepared. In the label industry at least, it's coming back in fashion.

Like every showing, this year's Labelexpo bubbled over with the next generation of tools, technologies, and processes that will propel our great industry forward. It was also resplendent with that other ingredient essential to advancement – optimism. Whether it was the excitement on the faces of buyers able to make that growth-driving equipment purchase or the conversations about the bounce-back in strategic pricing, the mood here was clearly different from the recent expos of our cousins in Print.

Success is fueled by attitude, and if what was seen at Labelexpo is reproduced in action, direction, and results, we have a bright future. The optimistic attitude seen on the floor was contagious, and everyone was starting to see better days.

The first step in change is awareness, and the sentiment at Labelexpo underscores our great future potential. Attendees – and label companies at large – need to determine how to turn that potential into reality.

In the world of mergers & acquisitions, our optimism is fueling our progress. Thanks to the consummation of recent transactions, the industry is seeing signs of revival and the beginnings of a new, fertile landscape. Capacity is being reduced, and some struggling companies have realized defeat. Newly formed enterprises are taking shape – both small and large – and in every prime segment, there are new/enhanced (translation: Bionic Man/Woman) players that promise to take the industry by storm. Still others are divesting components or exiting specific arenas to focus on the areas that are most vibrant and vital. Indeed, such is often the result of buy/sell/merge activity.

In talking with Labelexpo attendees who had interest in M&A, they wanted to understand the process so they could be more secure in their action plan. On the sell side, the interest was on how to maximize the return on the investment they had made over many years. On the buy side, owners were curious about finding the right targets. Both, however, no longer felt the restrictions they have in past years. They felt they could – and should – do something, and believed there could be a great return from their effort.

M&A remains a critical strategy in today's climate, laying claim as the quickest, most affordable, most realistic, and most tried-and-true mechanism for achieving the differentiators, capabilities, and potential to ensure accelerated and consistent growth. There are (almost) always ways to get deals done, but the most important element in your success is having the optimism to start looking at your possibilities.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

Company A is an $8m provider of labels to the packaged food market. The company has been in business for 10+ years, achieving a steady 7 percent annual growth rate, despite the economy. With needed equipment and personnel investments, this growth provides for a 14 percent adjusted EBITDA ratio, placing it smack in the middle of the average Label company performance situation.

Investing in certain equipment, Company A can realize an additional 10 percent sales gain alongside a 15 percent boost in profitability. But because of the learning curve, employee training, and customer awareness factor, this benefit won't be realized for 24–36 months.

Small neighboring provider Company B specializes in PS labels and shrink-sleeve packaging, with some large customers in the beverage venue. Sales are just $3m annually, but the

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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company has state-of-the-art equipment and exceptional labeling aptitude, in addition to in-house design and diecutting abilities. With no external sales staff, Company B's growth is stagnant, relying on repeat business and customer referrals. Profitability is just $200K, putting today's enterprise market value at just $700K. Company B profits are narrowing further due to current customers' hard-line negotiation mentality. Months away from closure, Company B may appear a bad investment.

Yet, Company A's acquisition of Company B could be a good thing for both. With manufacturing locations on both the east and west coasts, visibility in beverage labeling could put Company A in position to compete for a new $2m of the domestic beverage labeling market. Its capabilities in food packaging will be a key consideration for winning over Company B's clients, and its environmental certifications give the new entity credence where the small Company B was lacking. An examination of synergies and sales possibilities puts Company A/B in a position to capture a total $20m in sales and 17 percent in EBITDA, upon successful integration.

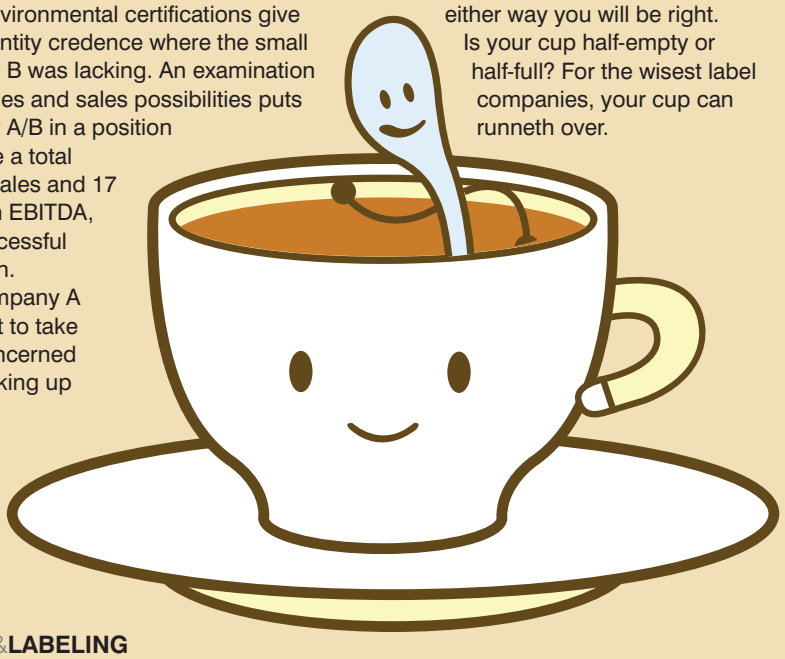
Yet, Company A is hesitant to take a risk, concerned about locking up cash in the pressing economy. It also wonders whether Company B will get even cheaper soon or perhaps just go out of business. Having never made an acquisition, ownership is also concerned about the integration process and time, and having the resources to back them.

This type of gridlock happens every day. For as many companies that execute M&A deals, ten times as many walk away – missing the potential operational, strategic, and financial rewards. Having seen this occur on numerous occasions, I can tell you these missed opportunities often have greater implications. Timing is key, and perfect fits don't come around every day. Moreover, an acquisition passed on by one company can often become a super-force for a prime competitor.

Just as optimism is fueling acceleration for the industry, it is what will make the difference in a successful M&A move. Owners have great reason to be judicious, but a fresh, positive outlook could herald in a value-generating transformation. We have much to be happy about with the state of our industry. As Labelexpo attendees attested, our customers continue to show their belief in labels and are contributing to the rapid growth of numerous segments. Now, it's your turn to channel this optimism into actions that support enhanced growth.

Whether you choose M&A, a new sales strategy, an alliance, a key equipment purchase, or other initiative, your maximum outcome starts with a strong, unwavering sense of optimism that can carry it through.

The power of positive thinking isn't just a trite, feel-good phrase. It's typically the precursor to great accomplishment. Henry Ford once said whether you believe you will succeed or you will fail, either way you will be right. Is your cup half-empty or half-full? For the wisest label companies, your cup can runneth over.



HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

GULF PRINT & PACK CONFIRMS LEADING SUPPLIERS

Gulf Print & Pack, organized by the Labelexpo Global Series, has confirmed the participation of a number of leading industry suppliers at the show taking place in Dubai in March 2011. Canon, Emirates Trans Graphics, Océ and Ali Al Hashemi will all have a large presence at the event, the leading commercial and package printing exhibition in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Ayman Aly, production print product manager at Canon Middle East, said: 'Gulf Print & Pack has become a major milestone event for the Middle East print industry and one that Canon Middle East eagerly anticipates. This year, Canon's attention will be focused on leveraging innovations in the imagePress range which are designed to further streamline printing process for professional printers.' Gulf Print & Pack also has support from Indevco Group, Al Dana Binding, Color Bit ME, Kodak, Unilux and Ferrostaal amongst other companies. Three road shows will be run at the beginning of the year to promote the event, the dates of which are yet to be confirmed.

Lina Alousta, show director for Gulf Print & Pack, said: 'The event will provide a recognized platform for sales and new leads, whilst a strong educational influence during the show will offer up to date information and the opportunity to share ideas. This will prove extremely valuable to all those converters and manufacturers who will be attending Gulf Print & Pack. Dubai is the perfect location for the commercial and package printing businesses to network and generate new business in the Middle East region. With such a developing population in the country there are huge opportunities for this market to grow successfully. We are looking forward to welcoming the industry to the show next March.'

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Dual coating

HERMA has launched its first label material using the company's ground-breaking dual adhesive multi-layer curtain coating technology. Andy Thomas reports on a product which optimizes both adhesion and die cut properties

German specialist laminator Herma is manufacturing a new generation of label materials incorporating two adhesive layers with different, but complementary properties. Herma's curtain coating plant was designed from the outset with two die slots to allow two adhesive layers to be applied simultaneously – something which had not been attempted before. 'As far as we are aware, we are currently the only ones to do this on an industrial scale,' says Herma managing director Dr Thomas Baumgärtner. 'We can use the technology to modify specific converting and adhesive properties, and these can be adapted independently of each other.'

The first commercial product to incorporate the dual multi-layer curtain coating technology is HERMAperfectCut, which has a second layer between a proven 62X dispersion adhesive and the label material. This layer 'breaks down' faster and thus facilitates the die-cutting operation during label production.

'Our tests show that die-cutting pressure can be reduced by around 20 percent,' says Dr Baumgärtner. 'This avoids cutting into the substrate, reduces die-cutter wear and enhances the performance of the production machines. In addition, cohesion – the internal force that holds together the adhesive layer – has been significantly increased, resulting in reduced adhesive bleed. At the same time, the highly beneficial bonding properties of the adhesive used are retained.'

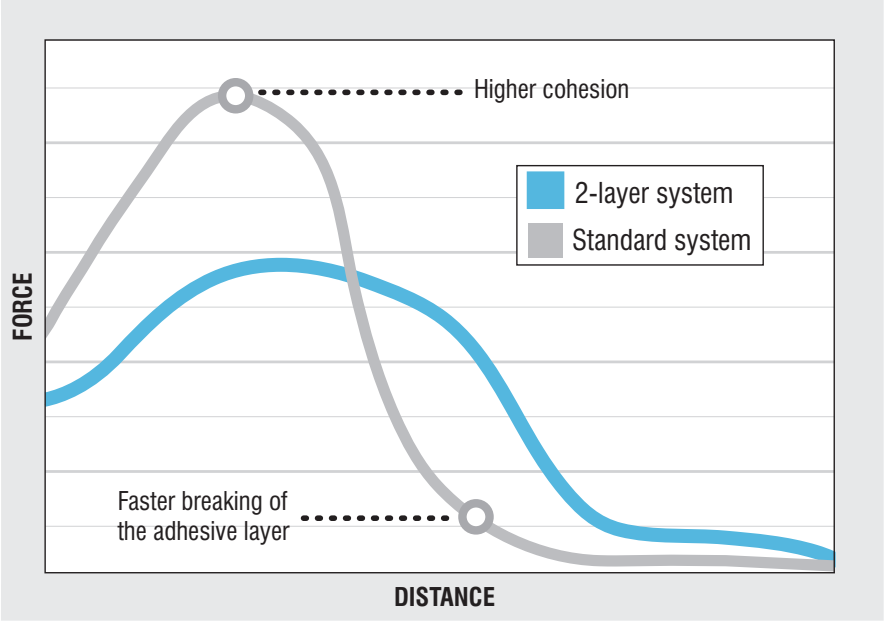
HERMAperfectCut dual multi-layer technology is currently available on PE and PP films, since these pose the greatest challenges for label production, according to Dr Baumgärtner. 'The more complex and irregular the shape of the die-cut label, the more telling the advantages. Cosmetics and body care products are consequently a typical area of application.'

HERMAperfectCut will be available initially as a white glossy or transparent standard PE film, and as white glossy or transparent PE and PP films with a special surface treatment for better printability.

Developing the dual multi-layer adhesive technology posed significant technology challenges for Herma engineers. 'The crucial question was, what happens when we combine two different adhesives – not just on our machine, but also permanently in the adhesive material and later in the label?', recalls Dr Baumgärtner. 'With this in mind, we repeatedly varied the formulations slightly and made specific modifications so as to rule out repulsion and mixing reactions. We then subjected ready coated material to forced – that is to say simulated - ageing at 40 degrees Celsius in our climate chambers. In parallel we also stored the material under 'normal' conditions and in real time. The results in each case were clear: even over a prolonged period the second layer does not cross into the label material or through the actual adhesive towards the labeled surface. This is extremely important because for labels in the pharmaceutical sector, for instance, it is strictly prescribed that only a specific, exactly defined adhesive comes in contact with the substrate. In addition, the adhesive properties must remain unchanged in the course of time. This we can guarantee.'

The early trials were carried out in close co-operation with adhesive supplier BASF and coating plant manufacturer Polytype. Having both development and production at the Filderstadt site was a clear advantage, since the design of the plant could be influenced by this ongoing R&D work. Dr Baumgärtner says HERMAperfectCut will be followed by other new products using the dual multi-layer technology. 'It is important to stress that these are not 'specialty' products, but part of our standard product range. It will not cost the customer any more than our standard products.'

TABLE showing comparison of a standard adhesive with an optimized 2-layer adhesive



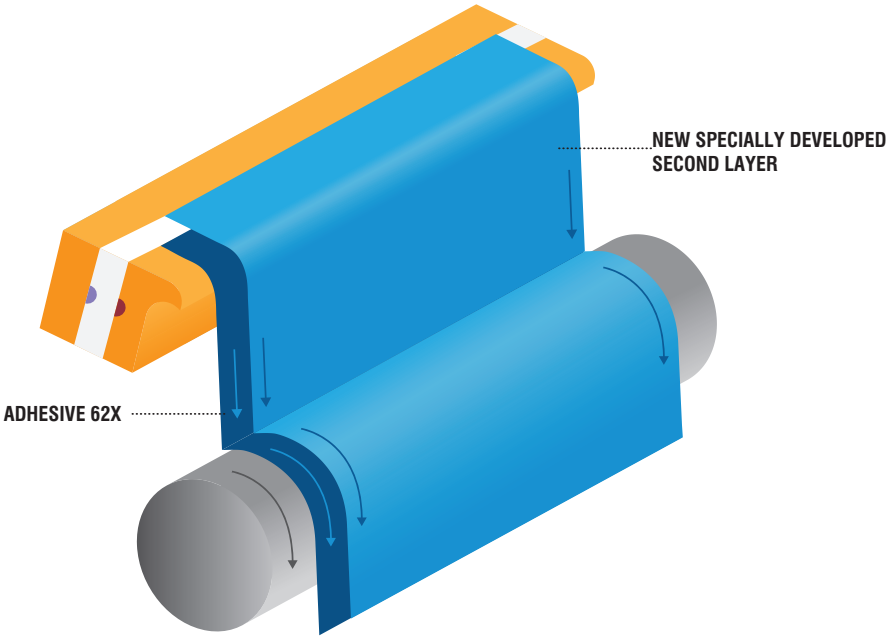
BUSINESS UPDATE

Herma saw business bounce back in Q4 2009 from the worst of the global recession, recording a growth rate of 20 percent. Comparable growth looks set to continue through Q3 2010.

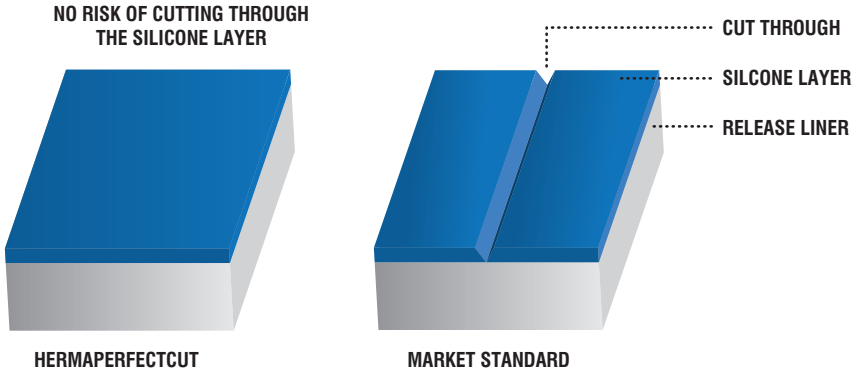
This year finds Herma in the middle of an ambitious investment program, which, the company hopes, will help it double turnover over the next six years.

A 10m Euro project to build a fully automated packing hall in the company's adhesive material production plant at Filderstadt is due for completion by Summer 2011. The new hall will be 61

SCHEMATIC DEPICTION OF HERMAPERFECT: an already proven dispersion adhesive is applied from nozzle 1 (dark blue), a specially developed second layer is released from nozzle 2



CUTTING INTO THE RELEASE LINER IS AVOIDED: because the die-cutting pressure can be reduced by 20 percent, the silicone layer (blue) suffers hardly any damage



metres wide, 20 meters deep and up to five meters high. It will be built in front of the machine hall with its striking cambered roof, which was opened in 2008. The existing outer wall will be taken down at ground floor level once the new building has been completed. 'Thereafter, three slitting machines and the new packing line will be positioned practically in a single large hall and can be optimally interconnected with intelligent conveyor systems,' Dr Baumgärtner explains. The whole packaging system will be manned by just two operators.

In total, Herma will have invested more than 45 million euros in the space of four years in this production division. Depending on capacity utilization, the entire coating plant should create up to 70 new jobs and is seen by the company as cementing its decision to remain a German-based operation rather than shift production to the developing world. 'It is also a commitment to our customers that we can meet their future needs,' says Dr Baumgärtner.

'We are positioning ourselves as an alternative to the Big Two in Europe, particularly in our core Central Europe market. But we do not aim to compete on volume or price.' Herma's aim is to be producing up to 850 sq meters a year.

The company's business proposition rests very much on developing specialist commodity products with additional benefits and superior properties – and this does involve a willingness to invest heavily in R&D. 'Developing HERMAperfect multi-layer technology meant we took a high business risk,' concedes Dr Baumgärtner. 'But identifying such opportunities for innovation and weighing them up swiftly against the risks is one of our major strengths.'

Indeed, so confident is Herma in its hard won curtain coating expertise, that it has halved the tolerances it guarantees for standard adhesive coatings from +/- 3 grams to +/-1.5 grams - without modifying the amount of adhesive supplied. The guarantee applies to products produced at both of its coating plants.

DR Thomas Baumgärtner, Herma md, and the new dual adhesive coating head

HOESSEIN HADAOUI and Ton Jacobs, joint owners of Telrol in front of a one of the company's fleet of MPS EF UV flexo presses

Telrol sets the pace

ONE OF EUROPE'S biggest and most efficient label converters is looking to make its mark on the world stage. Andy Thomas reports

Dutch-based labels powerhouse Telrol works for some of the biggest names in global retailing, but up to now has kept a relatively low public profile. This is set to change, according to joint owners Ton Jacobs and Hoessein Hadaoui, as the company moves to position itself as a major global player in market sectors from fresh foods to pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

With a turnover of approximately €30m and projected sales growth of 40 percent in 2011, Telrol claims to be the biggest label converter by volume in Holland and the Benelux. In June 2009, the company acquired Peha Labels from CCL – located literally next door to its Almere plant – and undertook a €10m capital spending program, completely refurbishing the building in just three months and investing heavily in MPS press technology. Telrol retained the services of Peter Maaskant, the hugely experienced managing director of the former CCL operation.

Telrol's label converting operations are organized in the Labelmakers Group, each of whose members act as a center of excellence for different market sectors.

Telrol itself specializes in food, fresh produce and retail, recently achieving BRC/IOP food hygiene certification. The Peha operation concentrates heavily on pharma and cosmetics labels, including a secure working area which doubles as a security labels operation. Labelpoint supplies retail labeling systems including thermal transfer printers and consumables, barcoding systems and enterprise software, and the Biolabel division supplies (PLA) biodegradable labels which conform to the EU's EN13432 composting standard.

The Labelmakers Group, including two logistics plants, employs 170 people and runs 43 machines across a total floor area of 26,500 sq meters. Telrol even has its own tool making plant capable of manufacturing high spec cylinders and gears.

What sets Telrol apart from so many of its competitors is the expertise of its customer service representatives. 'We do not employ sales people, we employ consultants who are experts in their field. Our sales are what comes in through the door,' says Hoessein Hadaoui. 'If they deal with fruit, for example, they will know where strawberries come from, where and how they are grown and how they are stored and distributed. It is the same if you deal with poultry, fish or any other fresh product.'

GLOBAL REACH

Market trends in the fresh food and retail sectors are now pushing Telrol to extend its reach further into Europe and Africa, where the company is now looking for partners. 'The world is definitely getting smaller and we need to be present in countries like Spain, Italy, France, Egypt, Kenya and Morocco,' says Hoessein Hadaoui.

'The major retailers are looking to get fresh produce into their stores faster and more cheaply. Instead of us providing labels to contract packing houses, they want us to help the farmers pack their own produce.'

When L&L visited Telrol, Hadaoui had just returned from Egypt on a project to advise a farmers' co-operative on automating their packaging operation. 'There were 500 people doing the packaging by hand. They needed an automated label applicator and they need a new range of labels suitable for automated application,' says Hadaoui.

'If they want to supply the big supermarkets in Europe, they just have to invest in new software and labeling systems which pack the right product for the right location. We are now sending millions of direct thermal or thermal transfer labels a year to this one site.'

In an important new trend, retail groups

THE MPS EF PRESSES are organized in banks of two, manned by a three-strong team

are now looking to eliminate labels altogether on fresh food products which have a known weight. 'They want to wrap fresh produce and print the weight on the film rather than adding price-weigh labels,' explains Hoessein Hadaoui. 'This is already being done by some major UK retailers – for example flow packs of tomatoes at Asda, where all the nutritional and weight information is printed on the film.'

Some of Telrol's biggest customers have promised to support the converter in making this transition over the next two years, and the company is considering adding a web offset capability to handle films as well as carton sleeves.

'Our label business will always exist, but in the future we want to supply our customers with the whole package, whatever the format or print process required,' says Ton Jacobs.

'We will have a lot to learn about printing on materials like gas barrier films, including issues of ink migration and how these films stretch on the press. But with our customers' support we see great opportunities in these areas.'

Telrol's MPS UV flexo presses have been specified with chill rolls and heat management packages. 'We already use the MPS presses for film, and the quality is fantastic, for example when you are reverse printing,' says Jacobs.

PRINT TECHNOLOGY

Telrol is MPS' biggest Dutch customer, with eight Effective Flexo (EF) presses in both 330mm and 410mm web widths and in configurations between 5- and 9-colors. On the 8- and 9-color machines, Telrol's expert operators can make ready on the non-printing stations while the rest of the press is running. Unlike line shaft machines, servo control allows print units to be started up and shut down independently of the press line.

The presses are organized with three operators for each pair of machines, with one operator moving to whichever press is making ready.

PEHA Labels was acquired from CCL in June 2009

Telrol is also a major user of Gallus presses, including three EM280s, four EM410s and one 8-color EM510 with turret rewinder. When the Peha plant was acquired, Telrol inherited four older letterpress machines, which were soon joined by four fully loaded MPS EF 410 presses when the plant was refurbished. The company still uses its R200 letterpress machines – 9-colors plus three screen units and hot foil – for complex cosmetics labels.

Matrix waste is taken away by a factory-wide suction system supplied by Matho, which links each press to ducts which transport the waste to a skip outside the building.

In January 2010 Telrol moved into digital printing for the first time with a Xeikon 3300 with an off-line Digicon finishing unit. After Labelexpo Americas, Telrol took delivery of an EFI Jetrion 4830 inkjet press.

Off-line finishing systems include five Grafotronic rewinders fitted with inspection cameras, as well as FIT blank label converting systems. The cameras take their 'master image' from the approved PDF file via the CERM MIS (see below). A 'roll report' is sent to the rewinder after the defective images have been verified and the rewinder stops automatically at each defective label.

LEAN WORKING – well organized cylinder storage and delivery systems. Note also hoists (red bars) for moving heavy tooling to the press and Matho matrix removal ducting

SUPER-LEAN

Telrol's highly complex production operation is controlled by an extremely advanced implementation of a management information system (MIS) from CERM. Telrol employs three staff full time to work on process management issues, now including real-time planning and machine monitoring.

'We invested a lot of time building a model of what we want to achieve and making sure people have the tools to use it. This is important – you must take your people with you,' stresses Hoessein Hadaoui.

The planning system deals with 1,000 orders a week and work is normally planned for 2-3 days in advance.

The company uses a 'train network' analogy to describe the workflow. Jobs – 'trains' – run either on the fast or slow track depending on the priority assigned to them. Each job is scheduled to stop at a number of stations – pre-press, plate making, ink mixing, plate mounting, printing and finishing. At each station the CERM MIS gives operators information on what jobs are coming down the track, their priority and what operations need to be carried out.

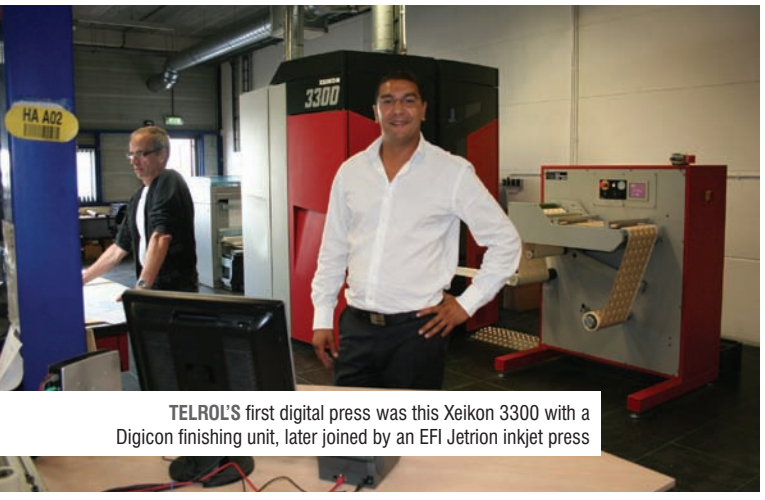
THE REWINDER/INSPECTION area, where Telrol plans major new investment

Machine monitoring is a recent implementation. 'We can see in real time which machines are running, how fast they are running and the costs of each machine,' enthuses Ton Jacobs. 'This works together with the roll materials tracking module which gives every roll a unique code which stays with it from goods-in through the plant. The system 'knows' how many meters are on the roll and counts down from when the press starts running. If the press stops before the end of the roll, the system notes how much material is left, and prints out a label with the new length.'

The CERM MIS has also expanded its reach outwards to Telrol's customers, who can log in securely and see the production and stock status of their labels along with a full technical specification. The CERM system even connects to Telrol's GPS-enabled transport fleet. Click on a truck on screen and you can see what time it is due to arrive – 'some customers want to know whether their labels will arrive at 9am or 11am,' says Hoessein Hadaoui.

The next major investment will be a fully automated materials handling warehouse, which will pick and transport rolls of material to the production floor, and move finished rolls back into storage or dispatch.

Given the rapid growth of Telrol over the last few years, this company is clearly one to watch, both on the European and the wider world stage.



TELROL'S first digital press was this Xeikon 3300 with a Digicon finishing unit, later joined by an EFI Jetrion inkjet press

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Fritz Votteler, lathe department manager, Kocher+Beck employee since 1996

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Optical codes the right way

IN THE FIRST OF TWO ARTICLES, Wilfried Weigelt at REA Elektronik explains how optical codes need to be designed with the limitations of the target printing system in mind to ensure error-free reading at high speed

Optical codes can be defined as bar codes, matrix codes, 'stacked' codes and colored matrix codes which are scanned by an optical system, be it laser, CCD or image-based scanning system.

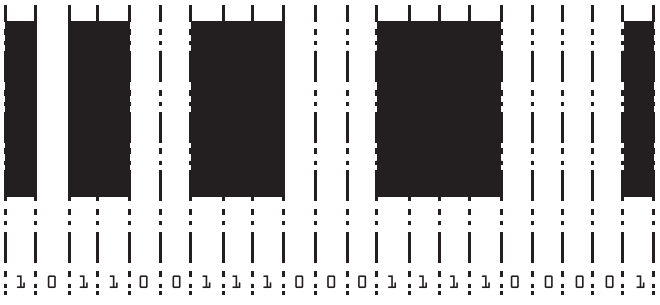
Optical code scan rates on high volume applications can reach 99 percent efficiency, but to achieve this target, perfect optical code quality is required. This requires a high degree of control from code creation and design to final print. At the same time, code reading technology needs to be properly designed to fit the characteristics of the optical code. Otherwise even perfectly printed optical codes will fail to read. The purpose of this article is to describe how to design and originate barcodes which will print to the highest standards on both conventional and desktop on demand printing systems.

BINARY CODE REPRESENTATION

Information stored in an optical code might include article numbers, lot, serials, best before use dates, weights, volumes, zip codes and more. The first requirement is to accurately encode this information.

A binary representation system is used to represent the optical code graphics as data. A sequence of binary digits consisting of 1 (dark) and 0 (light) represent the elements of an optical code. Each digit is the width of a bar or a space, and the sequence defines the bar/space structure of the optical code. The example below, for example, represents the sequence 10110011100011110000 1

DIAGRAM: Conversion of binary data into bars and spaces



This scheme is used by more recent symbologies like Code 128 or Code 93. Older symbologies (Code 39, 2/5interleaved, Codabar) work in a similar way. The difference is that later symbologies use four or more different bar widths, while older symbologies use only two different bar and space widths. Because the relationship between narrow and wide bars (or spaces) is variable, the older symbologies also require information about the relationship between the two bar widths, which is called Ratio.

PRINT SYSTEMS

This sequence of digits has to be converted into graphics – for conventional printing - or print commands for on-demand systems. In this article we will concentrate on originating optical codes for conventional print processes – flexography, offset or gravure for example – where the image carrier is a plate or cylinder. In the next article we look at the requirements for typical on-demand label printers, such as direct thermal or thermal transfer printer types.

These different print systems require different methods of data processing to achieve precisely printed optical codes.

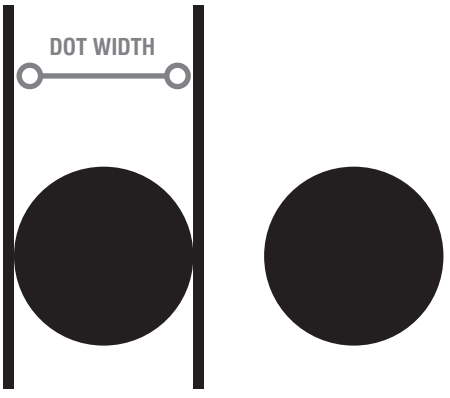
PRINT ACCURACY

An graphics design system which changes and resizes images and print data will also change bar widths and bar positions as well as matrix cell sizes and position. Because the shape of the optical code appears to be identical, these changes in details will not always be seen. So we need specialist software specifically developed to take care of optical codes.

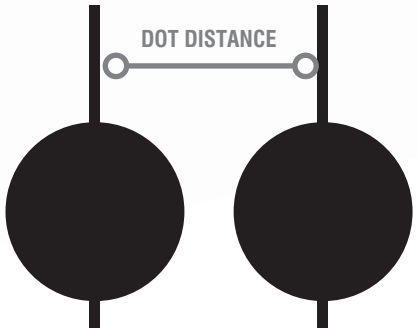
To avoid a loss of print accuracy when translating the abstract representation of an optical code into the real print image, the following points are of importance:

1. Printer resolution
2. Printer dot distances
3. Dot geometry
4. Changed dot size caused by absorbent or non-absorbent substrates
5. Dot overlapping on the print system
6. Print gain (dot gain) or print loss

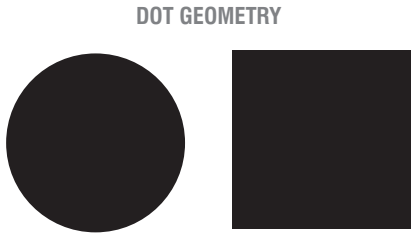
1. Printer resolution defines the size of the printed dots.



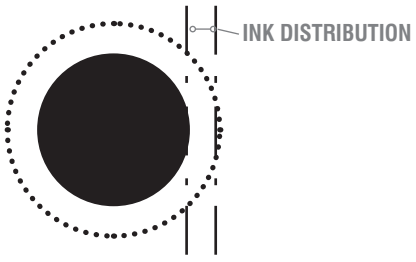
2. Dot distances define the distance between dots



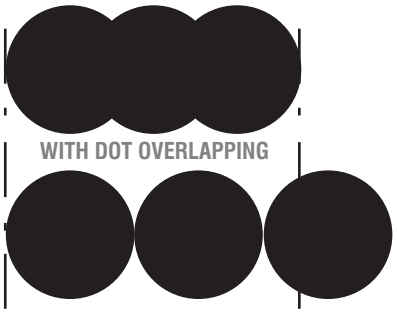
3. The dot geometry can be a circle or a square



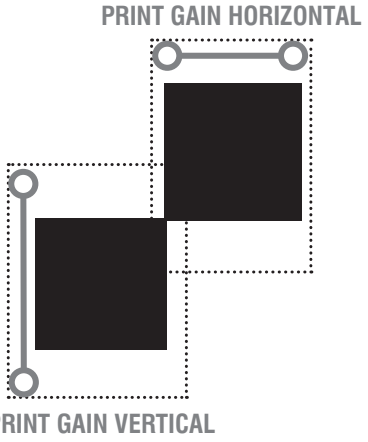
4. The dot size changes if ink is distributed on the substrate or absorbed by the substrate. The dot size is increased by this effect but not the dot distance.



5. Dot overlapping is used by print systems working with round or irregular shaped dots to avoid irregular edges.. Without dot overlapping, dot size and dot distance are identical. With dot overlapping, dot size and dot distance are different.



6. Print gain, or dot gain, is an effect which appears in traditional mass print processes like flexography, rotogravure or offset. Single elements like bars will be printed wider than they have been designed. A print loss can appear if white spaces are printed on a black substrate. This appears as print loss because print gain or loss is typically defined in relation to the dark bars or elements.



The extent of these effects depends on print process and substrate. Optimized print results can be achieved only if all effects are known and compensated in the design phase.

WORKFLOW IN CLASSICAL MASS PRINT PROCESSES

Mass print processes work with fast machines at high volumes and use a plate or cylinder as the image carrier. The print layout and optical code are first created in a graphic design system and the film master or CTP plate are then produced by machines with a specific resolution.

At a typical pre-press resolution of 2540dpi, one dot is 10μm wide. The bars and spaces, or the matrix cell sizes, are sized in increments of this resolution dot size. If 'in-between' resolutions are used, an interpolation process is required to change the optical code elements to the correct sizes. Such interpolation should be avoided if we want to achieve an accurate print.

Additionally these print processes exhibit print gain. Print gain compensation is called bar width reduction (BWR) because it is usually the bars which are printed. If spaces are printed, a bar width increase (BWI) is required because print gain increases space widths and decreases bar widths.

Where Bar width correction (BWC) is used, a negative value indicates a bar width reduction and a positive value a bar width increase.

Final resolution of the printed media must be known and recognized. The same is true for print gain. If an optical code is created once and then scaled several times, each scaling reduces the final accuracy. This is avoided by creating an optical code master once in the required size - and creating it again if another size is needed.

To make things worse, print gain and print accuracy depend on print direction. A bar code with a 'picket fence' orientation can typically be printed more accurately than a ladder orientated bar code.

In the case of 2-dimensional codes like DataMatrix, print gain needs always to be recognized in both axes. Most times, one value for bar width reduction is used as a compromise. But if print accuracy demands are very high, print gain needs to be compensated individually for each axis.

To define quality in pre press the international standard ISO/IEC 15421 is available. This standard defines quality requirements for master films. Meanwhile, master films are being replaced more and more by Computer-to-Plate (CTP) techniques. The standard is still useable because the definition of master film quality describes indirectly the requirements of the graphical data used to image a digital plate.

VECTOR GRAPHICS

Vector graphics are resolution independent and need much less computer memory than a bitmap. A square, for example, is simply a definition of the lines and positions instead of bitmap dots.

But the advantages of vector graphics end when the graphic comes to be printed. The vector graphics needs to be converted to a bitmap or to several bitmaps (one for each color).

This conversion needs to be loss free, and this works only if, in the vector graphics package, bar and matrix code elements have been created in sizes which can be converted loss free to the bitmap resolution being used for CTP or Master Film creation.

In conclusion, for conventional printing processes, the complete process - starting with the design – must recognize the characteristics and limitations of the steps required to manufacture the printing plate or cylinder, and without distorting the data. Errors in this process are a very common reason for badly printed optical codes.

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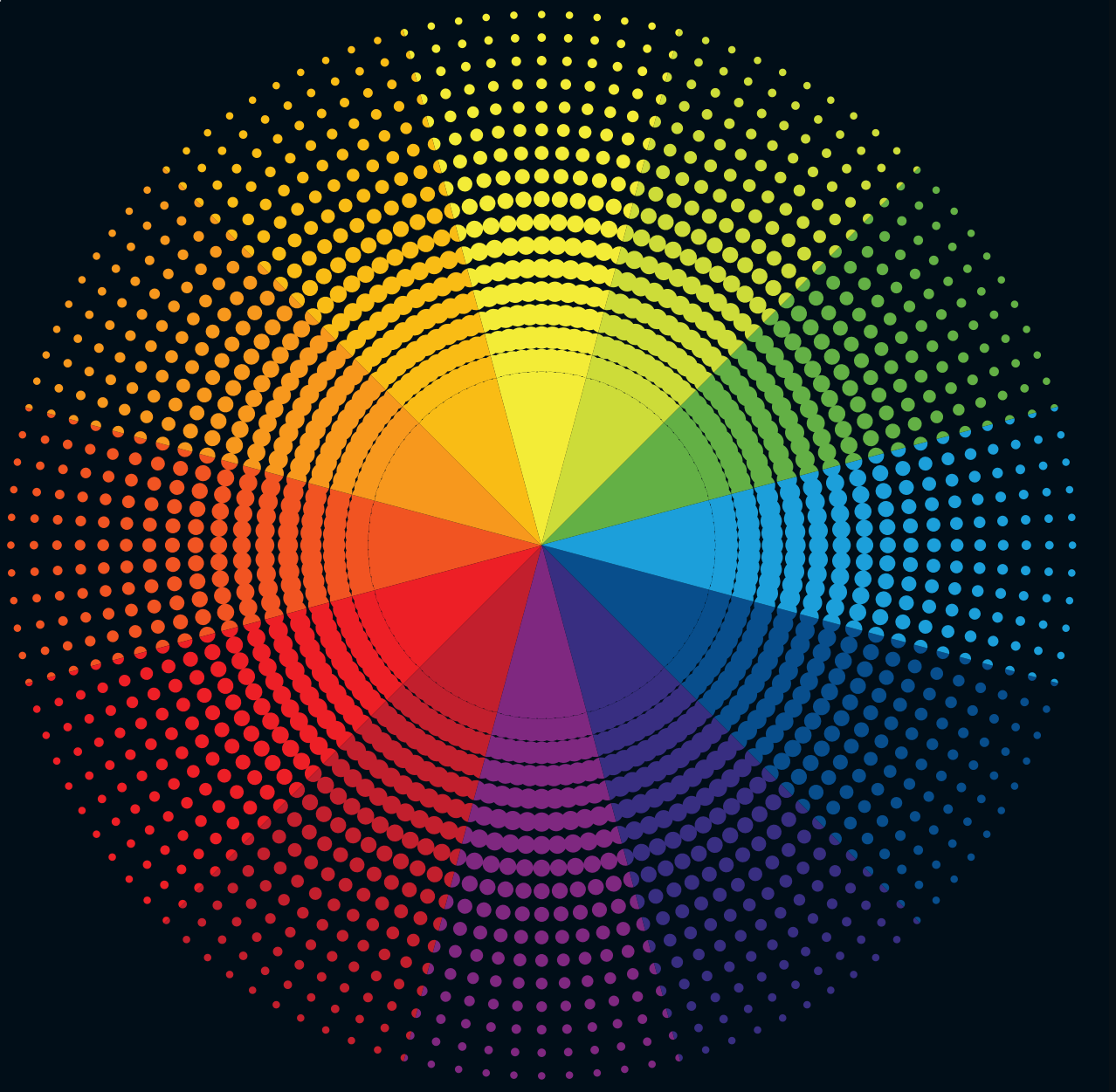

Keeping control

PROCESS CONTROL was the key theme at the recent FTA Great Lakes Group meeting, which looked in depth at color measurement, automated parameter storage on press and new dot structures on digital plates. David Lanska reports

On a night when a monstrous record-breaking windstorm swept the country, hurricane force winds tore trees out by their roots, ripped roofs from homes and put semi trucks onto their sides. While nature seemed out of control, the presentations at the October meeting of the FTA Great Lakes Group (GLG) focused on the importance of keeping the flexo process in control.

Fitting, then, that the meeting was held at Quad Tech in Sussex, Wisconsin. Quad Tech engineers and manufactures 100 percent print inspection and defect detection systems capable of speeds up to 3500 fpm, color control and verification systems utilizing true spectrophotometer response and color-to-color registration systems that control registration laterally and in the web direction.

Attendees had the opportunity to tour Quad Tech's facility and see demonstrations of a wide array of inspection and control solutions in action. The Quad Tech designed inspection system canvases the entire web, makes an overall template they refer to as a 'golden master', and performs delta E color monitoring for deviation through the print run using color line scan technology. This process creates a map of the roll with position data for detected defects. This information is passed on to the waste management system connected to the slitter/rewinder, which automatically rewinds to the position where defects are located. At the conclusion of the tour, the technical presentations began.

COLOR CONTROL

A major objective in printing is control of color. In order to control color, you have to be able to measure it. But what is important to measure and why? Which tool(s) provide the full range of information needed to produce repeatable color? According to John Seymore, (introduced as 'the Mad

WITH the FTA Great Lakes meeting held at Halloween, a spooky, but festive atmosphere prevailed

Scientist'), paint manufacturers have a way of identifying color. They might call it 'strawberry rhubarb'. Consumers may pick out a color swatch and decide they want their front room painted in such a color. Unfortunately, there is not a 'strawberry rhubarbometer' that can be used to quantify and verify that color.

For flexo printers, there needs to be a way to identify and communicate color more scientifically. As a result, several methods and measurement instruments have been developed that allow us to measure such things as RGB values, spectral data, density and CIELAB values. But which is best and why? John contends that what we should measure is CIELAB values.

CIELAB refers to a set of three numbers we can use to uniquely identify color numerically. L*A*B* values represent a position in color space. CIELAB is important because it provides a standard for representing color that the printer and print buyer can agree upon.

While RGB values can help measure deviation from a standard and assure that Delta E values are staying in tolerance, there are issues with RGB measurement technology. RGB values are measured with an RGB camera. RGB cameras produced by different manufacturers and even different cameras from the same manufacturer can have a different spectral response. In other words, they all see color differently. More importantly, they respond to color differently than the human eye. A different spectral response to the same color is known as metamorism.

When it comes to measuring density, the effect of metamorism is even worse. Densitometers measure density, but have a very different response to color than the human eye. In addition, densitometers are less sensitive or 'color blind' to certain ranges of the light spectrum. As a result, ink density may be correct when the color is not.

Densitometers were designed to look at (receive a spectral response from) three channels: cyan, magenta and yellow. That would not be a problem if all printers printed with was those three colors, but much of flexo printing is done with specialty colors. To print accurately with the entire range of colors represented on the pages of a Pantone book, you would need a different densitometer engineered with a channel calibrated for each color you are printing.

A colorimeter has sensors that respond similarly to color as the human eye and is capable of obtaining CIELAB values.

Spectral data is obtained from spectrophotometers. A spectrophotometer has many more channels that each provide response to a narrow range of color. By applying a mathematical formula to the data produced by these channels, you can simulate the response of any of the color quantifiers including CIELAB values. This makes spectrophotometers by far the most versatile of the color measurement instruments.

In short, for those wanting a means to control color and have a predictable, measurable, quantifiable and meaningful way to represent it, you need an instrument that 'sees' color the way a human eye does.

DEMONSTRATION of Quad Tech color control system

AUTOMATIC PRESS CONTROL

To have precise control over the placement of color, it is critical to have proper registration and impression. While in the past, these adjustments were eyeballed on inexpensive, unsophisticated presses, precise ink placement control requires these processes be automated. As a result, equipment engineers developed sophisticated software and hardware solutions to monitor and self-adjust on-the-fly to maintain precise control over the mechanical variables that affect color placement.

In his presentation, Denny McGee, president of MPS America, (Denny McGhoul for purposes of this event), talked about how automation and servo technology in particular, reduces waste, improves print quality, increases output, drastically reduces make-ready time, and reduces unnecessary wear and tear on press components. Modern label presses utilize the application of servo technology to provide stable web transport and consistent registration through the entire operating range of press speeds.

While older presses often had multiple mechanical adjustment points, the addition of servo control to the print heads at each press station ensures precise control of the impression between anilox and plate. Information

FTA delegates received in-depth briefings on the latest technical developments in press control and platemaking

programmed into the control system about various parameters for the job – including printing plates, sticky-back thickness, and web thickness – provides a digital baseline which can be recalled to eliminate manual operator adjustment on repeat jobs.

With automatic print control, the machine essentially sets itself up. Print sleeves reinstalled in the machine are automatically rotated into an ideal registration position. Then the machine adjusts for proper impression. As it starts to print, a camera system verifies and fine-tunes registration in the web direction either mark-to-mark or mark to cylinder. A separate servo adjusts lateral registration, while another one yet adjusts for the specific web thickness of the job. Because the impression cylinder (on the MPS press) free-idles, it matches the speed of the plate to that of the web, eliminating some of the problems label printers have experienced with banding and marking, particularly with pastel tints at high plate screens.

The MPS press machine is controlled from the keypad or an 'I-control' knob (a multiple adjustment dial), which lights up to indicate if the machine is in set-up or run mode. The control system monitors press functions providing real-time feedback to the operator and notifying them of any problems as they arise so they can be promptly addressed and corrected. This reduces waste and increases productivity against a wide range of market applications.

REPRODUCTION CONTROL

While control of the mechanical functions of the press is extremely important, where the rubber hits the road is at the tops of the plate dots. Here it is critical to control dot geometry and dot size in order to control dot gain. According to Dave Recchia, senior printing process specialist for MacDermid Printing Solutions, the conversion from analog to digital technologies has produced tremendous results, but better yet is a plate architecture that combines the best attributes of both.

With this new process the plate dots have flat tops similar to analog, but a more column-like profile characteristic of digital plates. The flat tops provide consistent impression surface requiring less impression. The result is longer plate life and reproducible highlights at higher line screens along with an extended grayscale range. The tubular wall profile is less susceptible to impression-induced gain, and does not cause increased gain as the plates wear.

A side benefit from the flat plate tops and reduced impression is a tremendous improvement in reducing horizontal banding in fluted stock over analog or conventional digital plates. By better controlling the dot size from the peaks to valleys of the flutes, the consistency of the print is significantly enhanced.

A conventional digital plate requires a bump curve (7 percent in the mask translates to 1 percent tonal range in the plate). The bump compresses the remaining grayscale, limiting the overall tonal range available to print. A hybrid plate process results in a 1:1 ask to plate reproduction, which removes variability from the imaging process and eliminates the bump curve step from the process workflow.

FTA GREAT LAKES GROUP

As each speaker spoke something resonated throughout the building, but it was not the wind. An overriding theme emerged like a ghost ship coming out of the fog: control; controlling the dot structure on plates, controlling mechanical attributes of the press including registration and impression, and controlling color. Needless to say, the Great Lakes Group was blown away by the technical content of the meeting.

With Halloween just a few days away, the meeting room had a festive, if not spooky atmosphere provided courtesy of a variety of ghoulish figures and ghostly images. With food and refreshments sponsored by Package Printing Converting Technologies and Solutions (PPCTS) and a decorated cake from D.J. Lanska & Associates, the meeting was a combination of technical conference, networking event and holiday party.

FTA Great Lakes Group meetings are open to all printers, suppliers and consumer product companies. There is no fee to join the group, but there is a charge to attend the meetings. Typically, FTA members pay $10, non-members pay $20. Students and faculty in graphic arts programs are free. Meeting proceeds go to support the FFTA scholarship fund.

Meetings take place at host sites, which can be printers, suppliers or educational institutions roughly from Chicago to Green Bay, WI. Tours provided by the host sites enhance the educational value of the meetings. Sponsors provide food and refreshments for the meetings. Anyone interested in participating as a host site, speaker or meeting sponsor is encouraged to email david.lanska@yahoo.com.

Information about upcoming events is posted on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. The GLG also has a fan page on Facebook and a group on LinkedIn. (a subgroup of the FTA Linkedin group).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Lanska is the FTA Great Lakes group chairman, President of D.J. Lanska & Associates LLC, and author of the book, Common Sense Flexography: a user's guide to improved pressroom productivity. A near thirty year veteran of the flexo industry, he is currently seeking a position in the flexo printing industry that will benefit from his sales experience, marketing education and technical abilities. He can be reached at 262-677-9219 or david.lanska@yahoo.com.

Find out more about the success story of the Gallus ECS 340 and why it's simply essential for labelprinters. Further information is available at www.Gallus-ECS-340.com.

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Global Green Awards

AS SUSTAINABILITY becomes a core element across the labels supply chain, Danielle Jerschefske assesses the importance the Global Green awards presented at Labelexpo Americas 2010

The second annual Global Green Award competition, held at the Gather on the Green area at Labelexpo Americas, offered label converters ideas, as well as hardware and software solutions to reduce the environmental impact of their business.

'Green' continues to be an important factor in consumers' buying decisions. The 2010 ImagePower Green Brands Survey conducted by global communications group WPP revealed that 'over 60 percent of consumers said that they prefer to purchase from environmentally responsible companies. And, while cost is still a barrier, the 2010 data indicates that the majority of consumers plan to spend the same or more money on Green products in the coming year, with more than 70 percent of consumers in China, India and Brazil saying they will spend more.'

Against this background the judges reviewed a wide range of submissions for the Global Green awards, and evaluated them in terms of sustainability -- pollution reduction/prevention; environmental leadership; economic effectiveness; relevance to the industry; responsible sourcing; and potential for industry advancement.

Participants included suppliers critical to each facet of label manufacturing and the total life-cycle of a label. Materials development and testing, label production management, end user waste recycling & recovery consultation, and consumer education are all areas where the label industry can find ways to reduce not only its own, but also its customers' environmental footprint.

2010 WINNER: CHANNELED RESOURCES GROUP

Channeled Resources Group (CRG) was selected as the 2010 winner of the Global Green Award because the company is 'making a global contribution to reducing the environmental impact of label production,' according to one judge.

CRG has contracted to supply matrix waste to Greenwood Fuel in Green Bay, Wisconsin, to turn into energy pellets. The pellets produce similar BTUs as coal and burn cleaner.

The program will assist converters and coater/laminators with the logistical issues of delivering their waste to Greenwood Fuel locations and divert this waste from landfill. While the solution is only economically and environmentally viable for converters within 300 miles of Greenwood Fuel locations in Wisconsin – and soon Cincinnati, Ohio – plans are set for continued expansion.

CRG president Cindy White said, 'Given our knowledge, we can quickly have an impact helping gather this material and keep it from the landfill. The waste generated by label stock is enormous. Finally there is a place for matrix waste beside the landfill. We need to find alternatives to coal and oil – here is one.'

In addition to this new partnership, CRG has found a way to re-utilize the silicone coated paper left after a pressure sensitive label is applied at the contract packager/brand owner level. The material is converted into de-siliconized pulp (DSP) that can be used by the paper industry. To date CRG has run 1,000 tons; it has a goal to run 20,000 tons annually by 2015.

The global consumption of PS label release liner is approximately 1.4m tons. North America and Europe are estimated to each produce around 450,000 tons of paper base for silicone coating. Less than 8 percent of liner waste is recycled globally and maybe 10 percent in the Western World; this recycle rate has to improve. According to the Leading Futurists (The future of packaging on p. 32 of L&L issue 2 2010 – @ packfutur), recycle rates within the industry will be expected to reach 80-90 percent in the next few years.

'The P&Gs, L'Oreals, Sara Lees who apply millions of labels per month have been landfilling this material,' says Cindy White. 'They now have a solution for their bi-product, thus providing converters with an edge if they bring the idea to the large users of PSA. Looking at the Walmart and P&G Sustainability Scorecard, this is one way of providing a recycling benefit.'

In the case of matrix waste and liner recovery, the key to closing the loop is education. Converters must be aware of the availability of DSP in the market. If they stipulate the use of DSP in liner and facestock materials it will force more paper mills to increase production. Secondly, converters must understand the value of bringing such solutions to their customers. They must enlighten brand owners to

CPGs EVALUATE THEIR SUPPLIERS

Retailers are now demanding environmental transparency from their suppliers. Every last detail is being combed through: packaging weight, recyclability, home-use effects (such as water consumption required for detergent effectiveness), raw materials sourcing, distribution chain emissions and overall environmental footprint measured by a given scale.

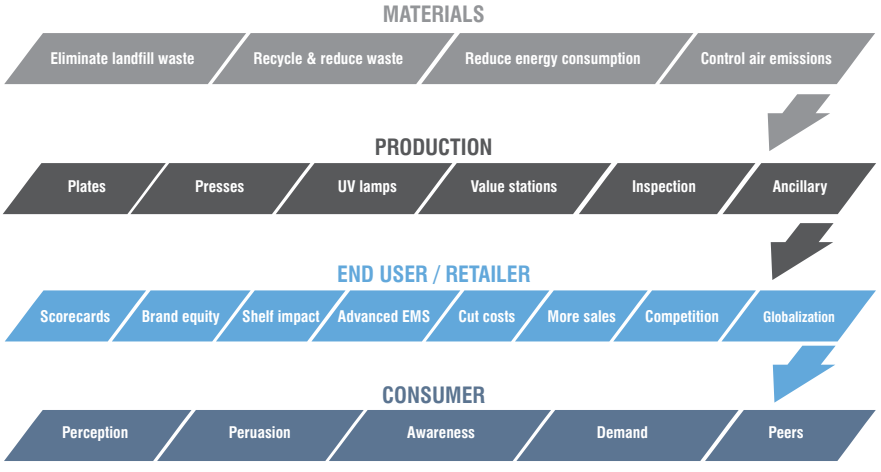
The results can be seen in initiatives like Procter & Gamble's Supplier Sustainability Index introduced in early 2010, initially rolling it out to 400 of its suppliers. Soon to be introduced to the rest of its supply chain, this index requests information about energy and water usage, waste to landfill and potential waste that is recycled, reused or recovered.

The Sustainable Packaging Coalition, meanwhile, has adopted the Labeling for Recovery Project in an effort to assist the packaging industry in meeting more stringent end user requirements. The system is using the UK's On Pack Recycling Label (OPRL) as a model. The project is developing a standardized system for package labels to alleviate consumer confusion and increase the recycle rate and reach of packaging materials.

An interesting software tool, called Compass, now allows designers to assess the environmental impacts of their package designs using a life-cycle approach. Compass evaluates information in four main categories: life cycle metrics, packaging attributes, emission metrics and life cycle phases. These cover issues such as consumption of water and other limited resources, recycled versus virgin content materials, greenhouse gas emissions and product distribution. The Compass measurements were developed using the SPC definition of sustainable packaging following ISO 14044 guidelines. It currently has data sets for the US, Canada and Europe.

Meanwhile, it has been reported that the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has revised its Green Guides for the first time in twelve years, drastically curtailing the 'Greenwash' words marketers use to describe the environmental impact of their products' packaging. The new guide will more precisely define terms such as recyclable, compostable, biodegradable and more. They're to be revealed by the end of 2010.

SUSTAINABILITY FORMS ITS OWN COMPLEX ECO-SYSTEM



the possibilities, and encourage rapid adoption.

MATERIALS

Evonik Goldschmidt promoted the environmentally friendly qualities of its UV-curable silicones, highlighting the energy saving benefits. Evonik's 'cold curing' Tego RC Silicones can be applied to BOPP film liners, and Evonik says BOPP has a low carbon footprint compared to glassine. BOPP release liners are 100 percent recyclable and brand owners can recover expenses normally incurred for paying for disposal.

Evonik says its silicone technology provides instant cure with no heat stress on the substrate. AET Films touted its new RE OPP film, where 10-20 percent of the content is post consumer recycled waste. The film supplier is actively working to increase the market demand for PCR materials to similar levels as PET and HDPE. The RE OPP film has similar performance to virgin OPP, though PCR content material is not approved for direct food contact.

Avery Dennison talked about some of its company-wide sustainability initiatives. It is FSC chain of custody certified, LIFE certified, and offers a line of Fasson Tree Free and PCW (post-consumer waste) wine label materials. It introduced its ThinStream material that is 50 percent thinner than the industry standard PET liner. Plastic Suppliers entered its EarthFirst PLA brand of films, which are wholly corn-based and compostable to ASTM D6400 and DIN EN 13432 standards in the US and Europe respectively. The biopolymer is made from the 'near carbon neutral polymer' Ingeo. The supplier introduced EarthFirst R*PLA films containing a minimum of 60 percent post-industrial recycled material.

PRODUCTION

Alphasonics promoted the environmental benefits of its AS1000 automated parts washer that utilizes on board flocculation. This device effectively removes UV and water-based ink pigment from waste wash water. In the case of water-based inks, it makes the waste suitable for direct drain disposal. For UV inks, the flocculated material can be compressed to create a smaller volume of overall waste. The company's figures show an annual savings in landfill of around $5000 for an average label printer.

Gallus asked the judges to evaluate its new Gallus ECS 340 flexographic press made of granite rock. The design of the press, first introduced at Labelexpo Europe 2009, offers a web path of just 11 meters and fast changeover print units, claimed to reduce the amount of waste produced per job by as much as 70 percent. The company estimates this to be equivalent to a reduction of around 10 tons of waste annually.

The ECS 340 uses 'demand-based' UV lamps that use 10 percent less energy than comparable systems. Further energy reduction can be realized when the UV system is used in conjunction with the presses' central cooling system.

GEW was the 2009 winner of the first annual Global Green Award. This year the company promoted its e-Brick UV curing system, claimed to reduce running power by 30 percent when compared to choke and transformer systems and to decrease CO2 emissions by 30 percent, all while extending lamp life. The supplier has calculated its customers have saved $11.8M in energy costs and reduced carbon emissions by 39,300 tons between May 2005 and February 2010.

Xeikon, manufacturer of toner-based digital printing presses, submitted details of its new QA-I Toners. Punchgraphix, the Xeikon parent company, made it a corporate goal to reduce the amount of energy used and waste produced at its Xeikon brand toner production plant in Belgium. This directive has also helped the company comply with the EU's Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) initiative.

The new toner system minimizes the use of energy, organic solvents and process water. All the energy used in the plant is contracted from renewable sources. Punch has reduced overall toner waste

THE WINNER OF THE GREEN AWARD, sponsored by Xeikon, was Channeled Resources

at the plant by fifty percent; any toner waste is recovered and combined with wood pulp to be used as energy to fuel manufacturing operations for the cement industry. The company says that the new formulation also increases production output by 2.5 times.

The toner bottles used in the Xeikon digital presses are made of recyclable high-density polyethylene (HDPE) and the inks are safe for food contact as per US FDA requirements.

Xeikon has already earned a number of awards for its sustainable initiatives, including the Environmental Belgian Award for sustainable product development and the Ingede organization's recognition of the de-inkability of Xeikon's toner.

END USER

Armor promoted its AWR 470 SolFree thermal transfer ribbons that are coated without the use of solvents, saving 365g of CO2 per standard industry roll. The ribbons are comparable in price to competitive options and the company's employees are no longer exposed to harmful chemicals in production.

As retailers are the primary users of thermal transfer printers, this product allows them to reduce their own environmental footprint. But they need to be informed that these kinds of options are available.

CERTIFICATIONS

Among the bewildering array of environmental paper certification programs which have sprung up recently, the industry needs to remain focused on the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Forestry Stewardship Council and the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. As more forests are certified, the price differential with standard paper products should diminish.

The US Green Building Coucil's LEEDs certification program has also experienced enormous growth in 2008-2010. A number of converting operations throughout the US have earned various levels of LEEDs certification. Retrofitting manufacturing facilities to reduce energy and water usage is extremely popular.

At Labelexpo Americas, North America's premier labels trade organization, the Tag and Label Manufacturer's Institute, was heavily promoting Project LIFE, a certifiable Environmental Management System directed at label converters. By the end of 2010 TLMI will have over 20 active members certified. Project LIFE follows in-line with ISO 14001 certification.

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GRAFICON press with booklet maker

Agile converting

WITH THE GERMAN ECONOMY recovering quickly from recession, smaller, more agile converters like Papier Schaefer are reaping the rewards of investment in leading edge technology. Andy Thomas reports

Papier Schaefer, based in Weinheim, near Heidelberg in Germany, is an excellent example of a small, agile converter, which takes full advantage of opportunities to add value to its customers' operations.

The company was founded as a commercial printing operation by the grandfather of the current owner, Juergen Schaefer. In 1976 Papier Schaefer moved into pressure-sensitive label production with a Gallus A160 flexo press. Two years after Juergen's father took over the business in 1984, the company moved into UV letterpress with a 6-color Gallus R160B.

Juergen Schaefer came into the family business in 2000, and in 2001 strengthened its flexo operations with a 6-color Gallus EM280 UV flexo combination press. These machines were augmented with an ABG Omega 330 blank label converting machine. The company today employs 20 people, up from 14 in 2006.

Papier Schaefer operates across a wide range of markets, including transport and logistics, food, household and chemicals, but only where it can add significant value.

This was the motivation behind the purchase of two 'very special' Graficon presses, with the first machine installed in 2008.

The first Graficon press, intended primarily for booklet label production, was a 7-color machine with cold foil, varnish, booklet making section and servo-controlled die stations. Pre-printed booklets are applied in register to a pre-printed web and over-laminated (gluing is available as a option), all running at up to 500 booklets a minute. The press is equipped with a second web and turner bar for additional flexibility.

The booklets are printed and folded on Schaefer's own offset press, which is ideal for short runs and rapid response to customer requirements. The top floor of the print shop where the booklet printing operation is located has a secure entry system.

The second Graficon press is equipped to convert double layer labels, typically for products like auto oil and chemicals. The top web path carries a pre-printed web, which is applied in register with the lower web after printing.

For promotional labels the company can print on the adhesive, so when a panel is torn off the label, a promotional message is revealed.

The press is fitted out with a cold foil unit, and a flexo unit can be inserted at any letterpress position – for example to coat silicone for special constructions.

PRE-PRESS

Papier Schaefer has a comprehensive in-house pre-press operation. The company uses an EskoArtwork Sprint CTP unit to image digital letterpress plates – coated with a black ablation layer – digital flexo and digital offset plates. The plate processor is a Dantex AQF 500F water wash system.

The print results achieved with digital

SCHAEFER'S second Graficon press with ABG turret rewinder

letterpress plates printed on the Graficon presses are extraordinary, including extremely fine text reversed out of four colors. Using stochastic screening techniques it is possible to achieve 'fade to zero' vignette effects without the hard line characteristic of analogue letterpress plates. Highlight detail is also retained to a high degree. 'We are using the same LPI letterpress as we use for offset,' says Juergen Schaefer.

Responsiveness to changing customer requirements is a key element of Papier Schaefer's business philosophy. It undertakes design projects for clients and recently invested in a 1600mm wide DG Roland VersaCamm inkjet-plotter. The machine will print both metallics and opaque white, making it capable of a wide range of special effects. The digital press is used for a wide range of 'customer service' applications which complement Schaefer's wider business, including posters, point-of-sale materials, business cards and short runs of die-cut label sheets.

An Epson Pro 4880 inkjet handles color-accurate proofing and for ultra-fast turnaround work the company runs a Xerox DocuColor. 'We act as consultants with our customers,' says Juergen. 'The customer comes here for acceptance of the job, and we can make corrections up to the last minute, giving the customer great flexibility.'

Papier Schaefer is proud of its 'green' credentials and Juergen Schaefer is personally committed to running a sustainable operation. The company has an EMAS environmental excellence certificate and its energy saving initiatives include LED lights which have reduced energy consumption from 2,000 to 800 watts. 'The certification has been good for the company but has also saved us a lot of money.' Other projects include looking at recyclable liners. 'Raflatac has a scheme where they will buy plastic liners back,' notes Schaefer.

With a strengthening German economy at its back, Papier Schaefer is well positioned for future growth. Most encouragingly, Juergen Schaefer's daughter is showing a great interest in joining the business after completing her college degree and an apprenticeship at a nearby label converting company. Her skills in English will be particularly valuable, as brands like Unilever now insist all business is done in English, wherever the company operates.

"Using stochastic screening techniques it is possible to achieve 'fade to zero' vignette effects without the hard line characteristic of analogue letterpress plates. Highlight detail is also retained to a high degree. 'We are using the same LPI letterpress as we use for offset,' says Juergen Schaefer."

SPECIALIST REBUILDS

Graficon has made a strong business out of refurbishing Gallus R160B and R200B letterpress machines. Once a press has been stripped down and rebuilt, it is effectively a new machine. The servo unwind incorporates web guide and ultrasonic sensor for transparent materials, web cleaner and corona treater. The press can be customized with various configurations of UV letterpress units with inter-station lamps, UV flexo with chambered doctor blades, rotary screen and laminating units. The letterpress units are equipped with AP adjustable zonal ink duct blades.

To handle thin, heat-sensitive films, Papier Schaefer's presses are additionally equipped with an IST-supplied UV curing system with chill rollers. The air-cooled varnish unit is equipped with an extended web path to allow a high level of gloss to be achieved before UV curing.

The presses can be fitted either with rotary or flat-bed die cutting units and the servo driven rewind is equipped with automatic tension control. In the case of Schaefer, the presses are equipped with ABG turret rewinds. The presses are fitted as standard with Graficon TR03 automatic register control with auto-teach mode. The presses can be fitted additionally with multiple web paths and booklet label production systems, as seen on the Schaefer machines.

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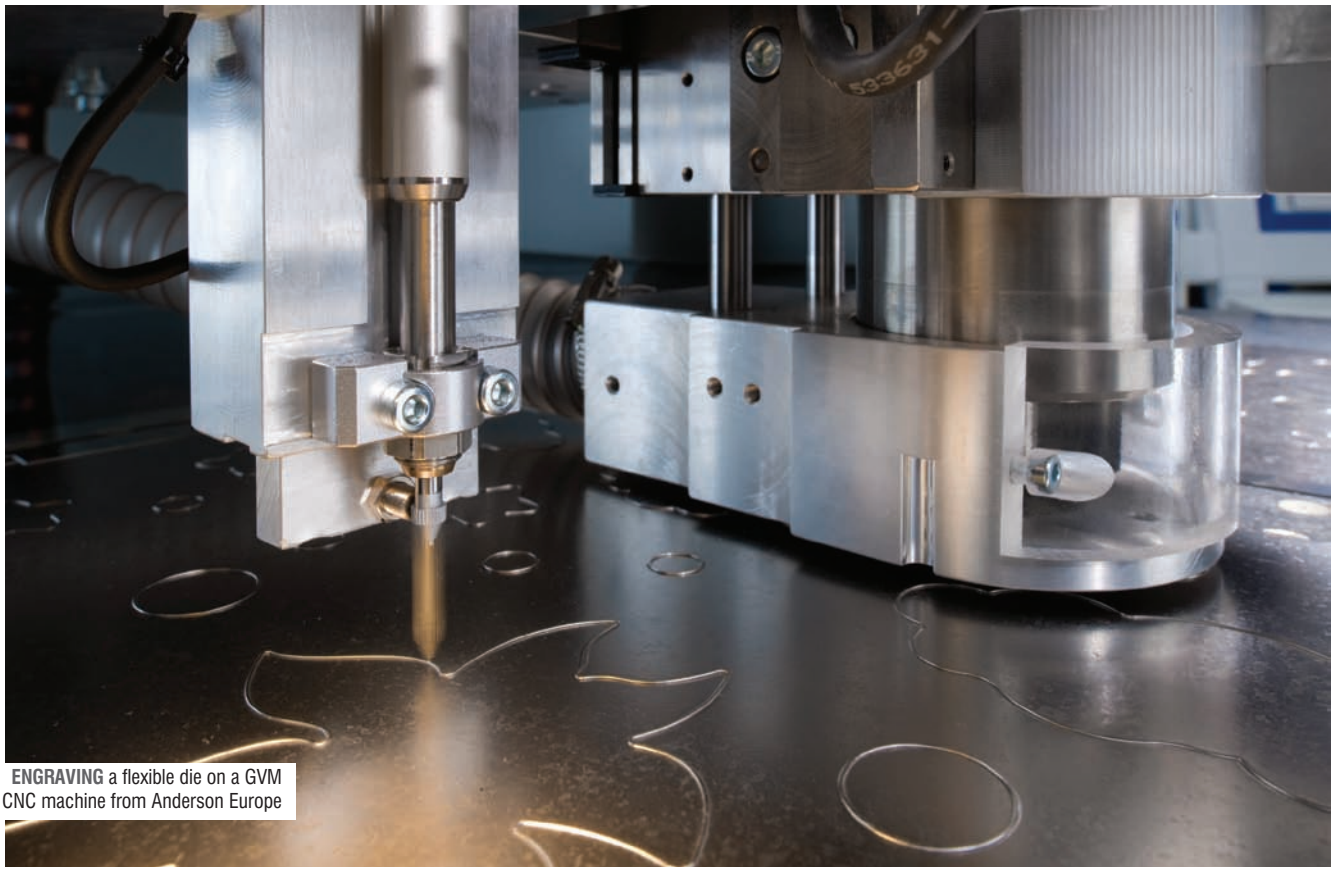


ENGRAVING a flexible die on a GVM CNC machine from Anderson Europe

Look sharp

HAVE YOU EVEN WONDERED what it takes to build a machine accurate enough to manufacture flexible label dies? L&L asked Alfred Könemann at engraving machine specialist Anderson Europe to explain

The GVM system is a high-precision CNC engraving machine designed specifically for the production of flexible dies.

By Ferrochloride etched flexible dies are engraved with a high-speed milling spindle at a consistently high quality level. An individually programmable sequence and contouring control allows the flexible production of various free-formed shapes. Thanks to the quality of the cutting edges post-machining of the flexible dies becomes unnecessary – a major advantage compared to conventional milling machines in which cutting quality and productivity is impaired by the necessary grinding of the bottom face of the die.

The GVM machine has great production flexibility due to freely scalable cutting edge geometries by both tool angle and diameter. Different production order mixes can be programed and the whole system integrates into existing network structures via Ethernet.

The contactless tool measuring system calculates the necessary dynamic tool contour geometries like length, open angle and active tool radius. The direct drive motors and high-speed cutting spindle of the GVM are water-cooled in order to afford the entire system maximum temperature stability. In addition the cooling system of the drive motors is specifically designed to offer complete thermal encapsulation between the machine axes and the machine base.

HORSES FOR COURSES

There is a great gap, therefore, between a dedicated flexible die production system like the GVM and 'standard' CNC systems. We have to separate applications into type categories: on one hand materials like standard paper and non-coated paper, fixed on thick liners, which require standard dies in dimensions of approx. 300 x 400 mm with the requirement of 4-6 microns in total height. On the other hand there are flexible dies for cutting more critical materials like coated paper or thin film materials, like polypropylene, which are fixed on ever-thinner liner materials, and require bigger die dimensions – above 400 x 600 mm. These dies more often combine complex shapes together with increased geometry length; dies above 50m engraving paths are possible and may take eight hours and more of production time.

MACHINE OVERVIEW

The machine base used for the GVM is a low quartz natural granite, which gives good damping capacity when subjected to mechanical vibrations, high wear-resistance and long-term stability. It is harder than steel and free from magnetic influences.

These physical properties mean we can use pre-stressed air-bearing guides to meet the requirements for precision positioning.

The feed axes of the GVM engraving machine incorporate linear direct drive technology which lends itself to really high-speed cutting processes – no wearing parts, robust motor technology and no maintenance, with excellent performance control and positioning behavior.

AN integrated height optimized cutting system (iHOC) keeps the height constant between the cutting edge and bottom die face

The iHOC system (integrated Height Optimized Cutting System) ensures that the preselected flexible die height between the cutting edge and the bottom face of the die is maintained. The observance of preselected parameters and quality standards during the entire machining process is optimized by this adaptive system.

The machine table is made from a solid granite block. Secure fixing of the flexible dies on the machining table is achieved via a vacuum system with numerous micro-injectors (adjustable suction capacity). The granite's high mass and a special guide system produce optimum damping behavior to counteract mechanical vibrations.

While the manufacturing process is running, the Human Machine Interface (HMI) allows operational procedures to be changed and/or defined via a flexible CNC programing language. A global database for administration of the CNC-programs is stored on an external server system for a secure production flow.

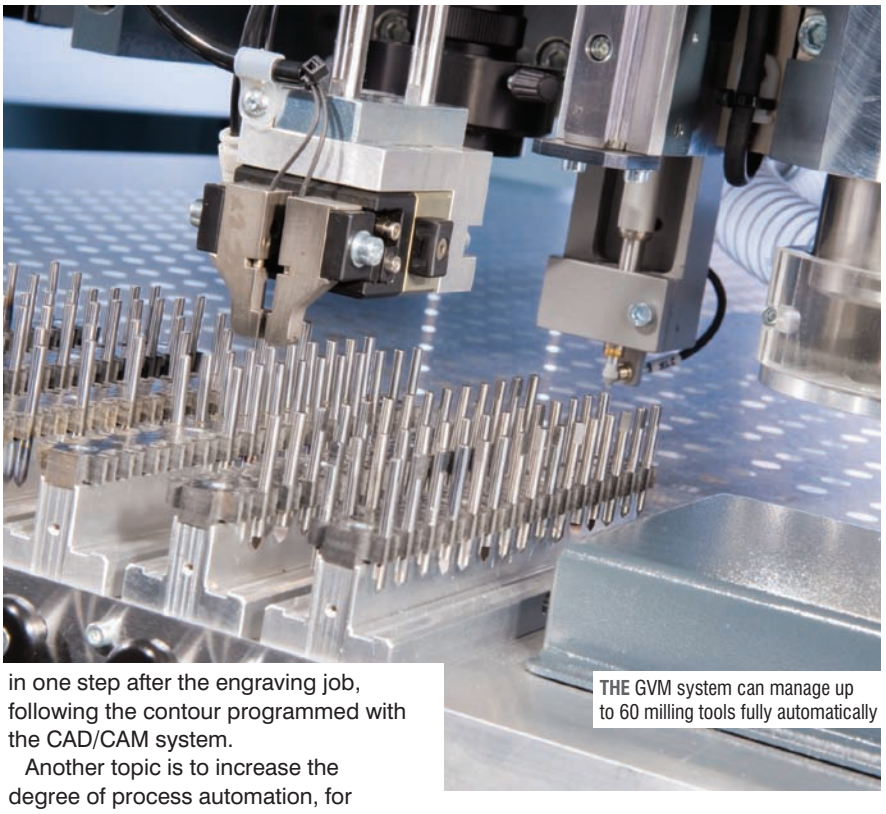
A fully integrated online look-ahead function works in conjunction with the direct linear drives to ensure stable positioning, even with the most difficult contour elements.

OUTLOOK

The performance requirements of flexible dies are constantly rising. One topic is the processing of perforations. By using the Micro-Perf Add-On on the GVM engraving machine, perforations can be produced in one step after the engraving job, following the contour programmed with the CAD/CAM system.

Another topic is to increase the degree of process automation, for which we have developed a special kind of multi-tool change system, which allows the GVM engraving machine to manage up to 600 milling tools. This option makes it unnecessary to update the standard tool magazine for each production job.

These and an increasing number of customized projects will keep us busy for 2011.



THE GVM system can manage up to 60 milling tools fully automatically

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alfred Könemann has been vice branch manager with the Anderson Group since 2001. At Anderson Group subsidiary Anderson Europe GmbH located in Detmold, Germany, he is responsible for sales and development.

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UNIVERSAL Sleeve's 8-color DCM BIVA rotogravure press

Universal benefits

FINDING A PROFITABLE NICHE in shrink sleeve labels requires a service-oriented attitude and dedicated, top class equipment. Andy Thomas finds all this at leading Spanish converter Universal Sleeves

Universal Sleeve was founded in 2008 as the print arm of Barcelona-based retail group Co-Aliment, but quickly established itself as a supplier of high quality printed packaging to Europe's leading FMCG brands.

Universal Sleeve was launched with a major investment in printing and converting equipment from French supplier DCM USIMECA, based around an 8-color, 680mm (26in) wide DCM BIVA rotogravure press. The machine runs here at 400 m/min with non-stop unwind and rewind, giving it a print capacity of shrinkable film of more than 200,000 sqm/day.

The press is specified with a Fife web guide and Eltromat DGC 700 series automatic register control, keeping register accurate to +/-12 microns. A turn bar sits between units 7 and 8, used mostly to apply a 'slip' varnish on wraparound labels, and the eighth unit has an extended dryer for varnishes and other specialist coatings.

Solvent is distributed automatically to each print group by means of automatic viscosimeters, and exhaust air with solvent is recycled up to 60 percent. A closed-loop chill system is incorporated for the cooling cylinder after each printing unit. The press has two full-time operators working on a 12-hour shift pattern, and the converting operation as a whole is run by just seven staff.

Why was DCM USIMECA chosen as the lead supplier? 'We trusted the company's strong technical and service background, while the quality of their gravure presses is very high,' says plant manager Luis Rusiñol.

RELATED EQUIPMENT INCLUDES:

- A DCM Sleeve Auto seaming/ inspection system with non-stop turret rewinder.
- A Panthere high speed slitter rewinder designed to slit rolls up to 800mm diameter to feed the dual unwinder of the seamer. The machine is fitted with circular shear knives to guarantee maximum edge slit quality for seaming.

NICHE MARKETS

Although Spain is primarily a PVC shrink sleeve market, Universal Sleeve offers the full range of shrink material types, including PET, OPS and PLA (see information box below). BOPP is standard for lamination and wraparound labels.

The company operates in niche sectors of the market not occupied by the big flexible packaging players, and is particularly strong in the area of promotional sleeves.

Luis Rusiñol says Universal Sleeve places a high premium on innovation and ongoing research into new systems and materials – 'particularly UV protection, special varnishes and adhesives, security seals with identity codes, and sleeves incorporating promotions and prizes.'

Universal Sleeve offers a full consultancy service in terms of materials, adapting designs for shrink sleeve labels, and providing mock-up and prototyping services. Advice on cost optimization throughout the workflow is also provided.

This service-driven approach has proven particularly popular with

DCM sleeve auto seaming/inspection system with non-stop turret rewinder

EXTENDED dryer for varnishes and other specialist coatings

PANTHERE high speed slitter rewinder designed to slit rolls up to 800mm diameter

Universal Sleeve's smaller customers, which now represent the fastest growing part of its business. The company's ability to undertake shorter runs is very important here.

Its DCM BIVA press can profitably print runs down to 150,000 labels. The press is cantilevered and does not require a trolley system to load the lightweight cylinders, which weigh only 16kg. This means a cylinder change on all printing units can be achieved in just 30 minutes - two hours if all inks have also to be changed. Money is saved by using cheap materials during set-up.

But isn't flexo better for shorter runs? 'Flexo would be cheaper in theory, but there are more elements in flexo to adjust,' says Luis Rusiñol. 'Gravure cylinders are cheap and can be made within two days by as many as five local suppliers.' Universal Sleeve keeps more than 1,500 cylinders in stock. 'This makes repeat work quick and easy in conjunction with computer storage of press settings, and means we can regrind an old cylinder at a local shop and image it very quickly,' says Rusiñol.

MATERIALS GUIDE

Universal Sleeve is able to advise its customers on correct material choice and application method:

1. PVC

This is used for applications requiring up to 55 percent shrink - used for safety seals, promotional packs or multi-packs, and for simple-shaped containers. It can also be on used on more complex container shapes where shrink up to 66 percent is required. Heat and steam tunnels are equally good for this type of material.

2. PET

Good where shrink up to 75 percent is required, PET has a thickness of between 30 - 70 microns. It will shrink at a low temperature and can use steam or heat tunnels. Has good printability and is recyclable.

3. OPS

With a thickness of between 50-60 microns and low density of 1.02 g/cm3 (compared with PVC and PET at 1.31 g/cm3), this is for applications requiring maximum gloss, moderate rigidity and where good finishing properties are required in terms of web tension and shrink speed. There are special storage requirements due to the high 'memory' level of the material.

4. PLA (Polylactic Acid)

An environmentally friendly shrinkable material which is biodegradable, non-toxic and has good shrink and printing characteristics.

Luis Rusiñol also has advice on choice of application method. 'Hot air is normally used for shrink-wrapping sleeves on empty containers, and steam tunnels for filled containers. Nonetheless, with many applications it is normal to use both application methods to optimise the shrink-wrapping process.' Shrink sleeve labels can be delivered either as cut&stack, or on the reel for automated application systems.

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Kingfisher swoops on Multi

THE FIRST OF A NEW GENERATION of dual stack presses from Edale, the Alpha Multi, has been acquired by Kingfisher Labels. Andy Thomas reports on the debut of this highly flexible machine

Edale has installed its first Alpha Multi press at Kingfisher Labels, an established label converter based in Yate, North Bristol, UK.

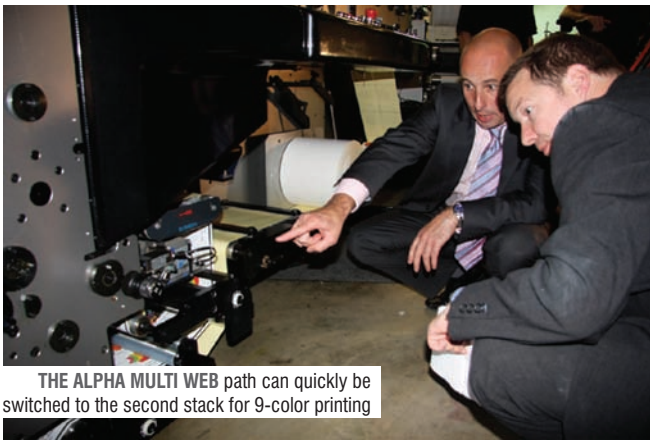
Kingfisher is a family business, including managing director Martin Jackson, his wife, Jackie and son Karl, who operates as production manager. Established in 1996, Kingfisher's first machine was a 3-color Mark Andy 830, which was followed by two more in a five year period. 'When we moved to our current plant and looked to expand, we could not really accommodate a modular press like an Edale Beta or Mark Andy 2200, so the 4-color Alpha was ideal for us,' says Martin Jackson. 'At that time we needed to improve our print quality and capability with increased web width in a compact design. We therefore purchased our original Alpha approximately ten years ago and have continually updated the press with new plate roll shafts, motorized unwind and rewind to keep in line with the other two more recently purchased Alphas.'

In the meantime, Edale was considering what to do with the Alpha press, as Edale's UK sales director Adrian Morton recalls:

'The Alpha is an award winning press and had not come to the end of its cycle by any means. After selling 150 of the Alpha worldwide, we felt there was a market for this compact flexopress – and the idea was to increase color potential whilst still remaining compact. We decided to work on the two stack concept and asked Kingfisher for their input from a very early stage.'

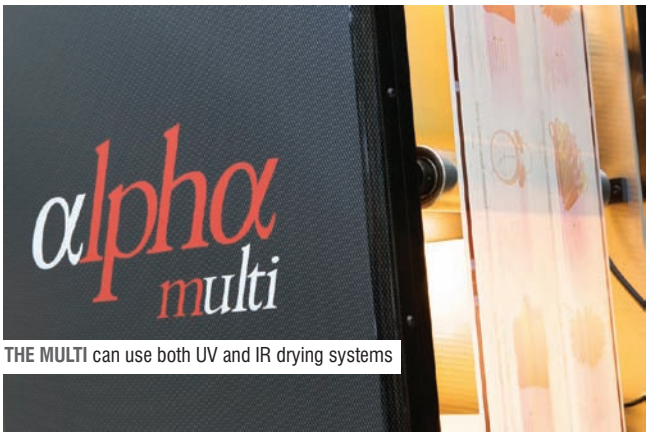
The Alpha Multi is effectively two Alphas – a 4-color and a 5-color – ganged together with a switchable web path. Each stack has its own infeed and web guides and the whole press takes up no more than 5 sq meters of floorspace.

This arrangement means one stack can be in production while the second is made ready, or the same web can be run through both stacks, allowing up to nine colors to be printed in a single pass. Customers with an Alpha can upgrade to the Multi in the field.



THE ALPHA MULTI WEB path can quickly be switched to the second stack for 9-color printing

L-R The Jackson family team of Martin, Karl and Jackie; Kingfisher UK sales manager Andy Watts and Edale's UK sales director and board member Adrian Morton



THE MULTI can use both UV and IR drying systems

THE 5-COLOR STACK can be made ready while the first stack in printing a 4-color job

FIGHTING FOR MARGIN

Looking at the wider business sector today, Martin Jackson says 'One of the biggest problems faced by Kingfisher Labels over the last two years has been the vicious downward spiral of selling prices within the marketplace when laminators and paper manufacturers are increasing their selling prices 2-3 times per year.

'At some point label companies in the UK have got to grasp the nettle and increase their prices, no matter how difficult. It is no use having a considerable number of label makers who only appear to want to cut each others' throats, enter administration and then start up again! We find this practice disgraceful, when we have committed a considerable amount to capital expenditure in our business where we value loyalty to our staff our customers and our suppliers.'

Jackson also points the finger at sales agents; 'In our industry we do not help ourselves. All too often companies are afraid to employ good sales people, and are content to let merchants sit between them and the end user. Ultimately this leads to a lack of loyalty which then drives the prices downwards. The merchant's cut is often more than the manufacturer's, subsequently reducing the opportunity of capital investment which in many areas is badly needed.'

This is all part of a bigger trend, where large organizations outsource services and commodities, not realising that there could be two or three intermediaries between the label manufacturer and the end user. 'The end user would see considerable savings by dealing with the manufacturer; it then allows manufacturers like Kingfisher to fight its corner on price,' says Jackson. 'It's a pity our suppliers - laminators, paper makers and film manufacturers – don't support us more in getting the message over about prices. It's quite surprising that in the economic recession we have faced over the last two years, we have had to suffer as many as six price increases with no end in sight. Despite these problems in the last 12 months and the difficult economic climate in which we operate, Kingfisher has pressed ahead with the Alpha-Multi, also investing in additional equipment and constantly looking at ways of improving productivity and innovation.'

'We can use the Multi as a standard 4-color press and we can set up the back stack while the front stack is running,' comments Martin Jackson. 'At the same time, it's easy to web up from one stack to the other for the extra colors. We can change jobs quickly and there is very little waste. In five color mode we have no more than 8 – 10 meters of web in the machine and 23 meters when we run 9-colors. '

A significant input from Kingfisher's side was the turn bar on the press, which allows the company to print both sides of the web in full color and with the addition of varnish and cold foil where necessary.

Other aspects of the Multi are identical to the Alpha. Both IR and UV curing are available, as is cold foiling. A quick release plate roll mechanism allows accurate registration to be achieved quickly, and a three nip tension control system aids registration stability. Quick release lightweight ceramic anilox and doctor blades help speed up makeready. All tooling is fully interchangeable with Kingfisher's existing Edale machines.

Martin Jackson says the new press has already opened doors with existing customers. 'Jobs that previously would have to have been passed through a press multiple times or where we would send out for foiling, we can now do in one pass.'

The fast changeover of the Multi press is particularly important with the growth of shorter runs and of multi-sorts within the same order. One recent job involved 30 sorts, and this is not untypical.

Commenting on the quality achieveable from the Alphas and Multi, Jackson notes that when the company started out, a 400lpi anilox was 'pushing the boat out. Today we are using 1200lpi anilox.'

The future looks bright for Kingfisher - an opinion shared by the company's UK sales manager, Andy Watts, who has a wide range of experience in the labels industry with larger print companies, and was happy to commit to a smaller, more agile business like Kingfisher. 'We can make a significant impact with our ability to respond faster and are more flexibly to customers' changing demands,' says Watts.

Imaginative Colours

A LEADING SPANISH LABEL DESIGNER has set out to demonstrate how Manter's colored paper range can be used to develop compelling and original label designs. Andy Thomas reports

Manter has released a stunning visual guide to its Imaginative Colours range of premium label papers. The sumptuously produced book consists of 22 'real world' label ideas developed by leading Spanish wine label design artist Xavier Bas to utilize the color, texture and tactile properties of each label paper.

'These 22 'real' labels place self-adhesives on the level of a true work of art,' enthuses Christian Galí, export area manager at Manter and a member of its global marketing department, said: 'We developed a selection of elegant Fedrigoni colored papers with titles such as Sirio Pearl, Savile Row, Tintoretto and Black Pepper for the most creative and innovative printing ideas. Xavier Bas has developed images which help show designers and label printers how they can be used to best effect.'

What really sets the Imaginative Colours book apart from standard product catalogues, are the in-depth explanations of how each label was designed and printed. This includes descriptions of the print technologies used, and the order in which each color and decoration effect was layed down. The labels themselves are object lessons in creative design.

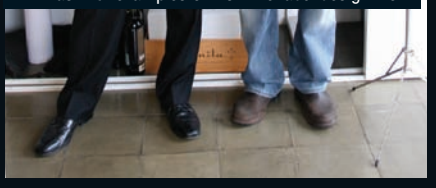
Manter actually launched its Imaginative Colours set of colored and textured papers in 2007, 'but it has proven difficult to get designers to move away from the "safe", white paper choices,' says Christian Gali. 'We identified the problem that designers did not know or did not dare to use colored papers to their best effect.'

Manter contacted Xavier Bas, one of Spain's leading wine label designers, to put together some ideas.

'Manter told me that they wanted to change the mentality of the industry,' says Xavier Bas from his studio in downtown Barcelona. 'Why would you want to use white papers when you want your products to stand out among the competition?'

Almost all the papers included in the Imaginative Colours collection are manufactured from colored fibers, and not just surface printed. 'This means, for example, that in the case

L-R Christian Gali, Manter export manager, and Xavier Bas with examples of his wine label design work



SPANISH designer Xavier Bas created labels which explore the decoration possibilities of the Fedrigoni colored papers range when used with a range of innovative printing and finishing effects

of sticking the label in a glass bottle, the label will show the same color in the front and in the back, when you look through the bottle,' says Christian Gali. 'Even if the label is damaged during transit, the paper will keep the same color This doesn't happen if you print on a white paper.'

Gali also points out that although you can print the surface of a white paper, you cannot print the sides. 'It means that the sides will be always white! Obviously, it doesn't happen if all the fibers have the same color.'

Xavier Bas worked closely with local label converter Gráficas Vidal Armadans and Juan Gil, Manter's marketing director, on the design concepts, which often required new ways of approaching the label converting process. 'My idea was to produce a catalogue to show the creative possibilities when using these papers. I have also tried to suggest what kind of product would work best with each paper.'

'I wanted to speak to designers in their own language,' continues Bas. 'Each paper has a communication character of its own, which suggests certain treatments. You can use an 'ecological' paper for example to communicate the values of a gourmet product – I have used the example of a premium fish product (see photograph p.68). There is a direct relationship here between the qualities of the paper and its target market.'

Some papers in the range have attractive finishes, such as pearlescents, which again, suggest a different communication message.

'It might also be to do with the texture of a particular colored paper which suggests a treatment and gives an effect quite impossible when the paper is simply printed,' says Bas. 'An example is the 'Tintoretto Cashmere' paper, which I have used to demonstrate an expensive Italian wine label design. Again, that effect is impossible to achieve simply by printing a color.'

The Imaginative Colours collection shows Xavier Bas' expertise in international wine label design, showcasing concepts for the different styles of French, Spanish and Australian wines, all matched to different papers.

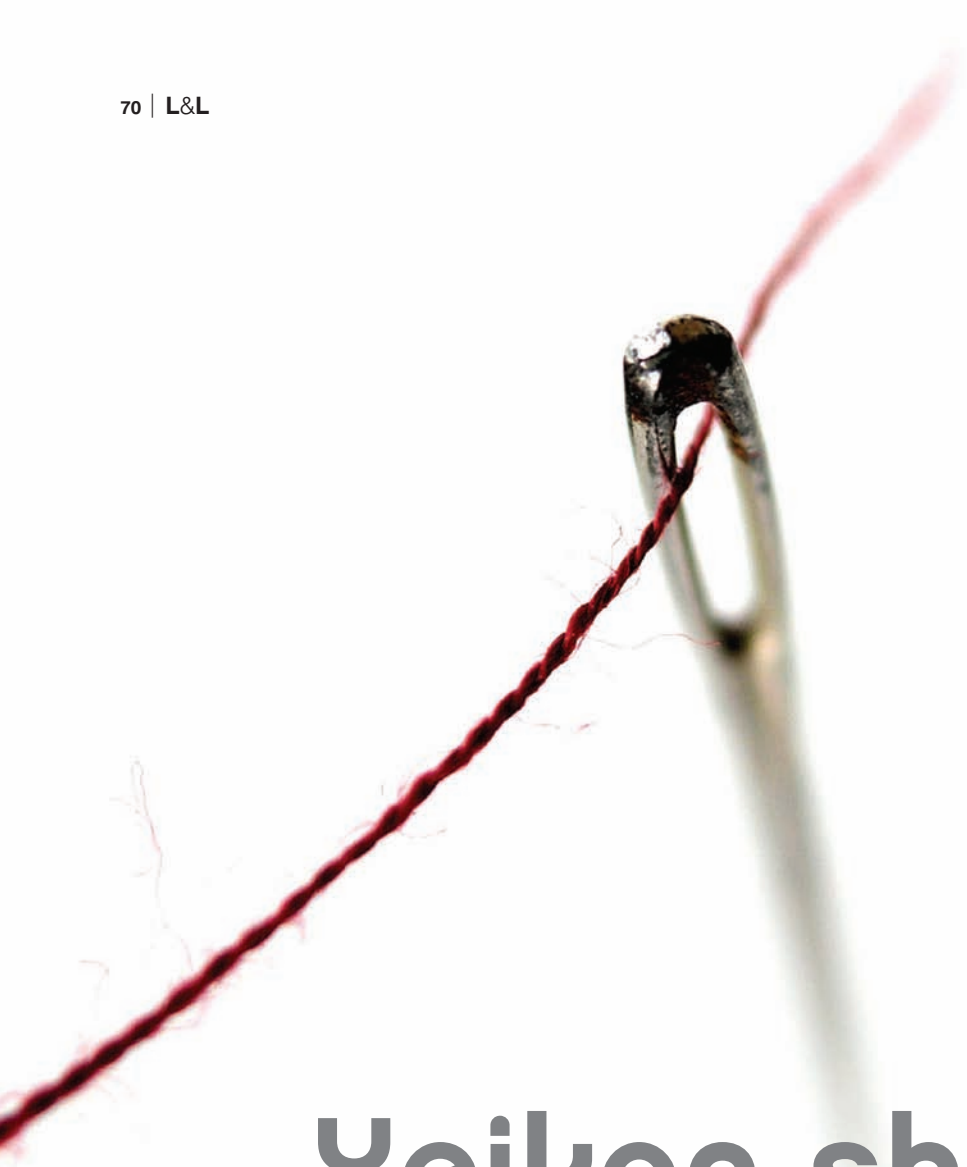
Bas cites as a further example the 'Tintoretto Angora' paper. 'This suggests wool, something emotional, which I have brought out with the embossed 'duck' graphic' (see photograph).

The labels are converted using standard in-line print processes –flexo, offset, screen, hot and cold foil stamping, embossing and de-bossing. 'We were working with the printer to find the best processes – it was like making a puzzle. For example it was a challenge to get three metallic inks to adhere to non-coated stock on the Pimientos label,' says Bas.

This collaboration demonstrates what can be achieved when designers, like Xavier Bas, understand intimately what can be achieved when using high quality papers, a modern in-line press, and are working with technically skilled, imaginative and visionary printers like Joan Armadans.

INTERACTIVE WEBSITE

To see the labels mentioned in this article in more detail, visit the Imaginative Colours website www.imaginativecolours.com. This features interactive displays of how each label was designed and printed. For example, by clicking on 'silkscreen' or 'embossing', one can see the elements within the image which were printed using these processes, along with the full print spec and print unit order.



Xeikon sharpens NAFTA region focus

WITH THE DIGITAL LABEL MARKET continuing its rapid expansion in North America, Xeikon is sharpening its focus on the region. Danielle Jerschefske reports

As one of the founders of digital label press technology back in the 1990s, Xeikon is today a driving force in the global adoption of digital label printing.

While the majority of Xeikon's current market share is in Europe, it is working hard to capture more business in North America. Signs of increased activity include the appointment of Jetrix Soluciones Gráficas as distributor for Mexico In May of 2010, and the company is an active member of the TLMI.

Xeikon's North American headquarters and demo center are located in Itasca, Illinois. The supplier's main focus in the North American market is digital print in two sectors: documents and industrial. Most of its 1,110 machine installations are currently on the document printing side.

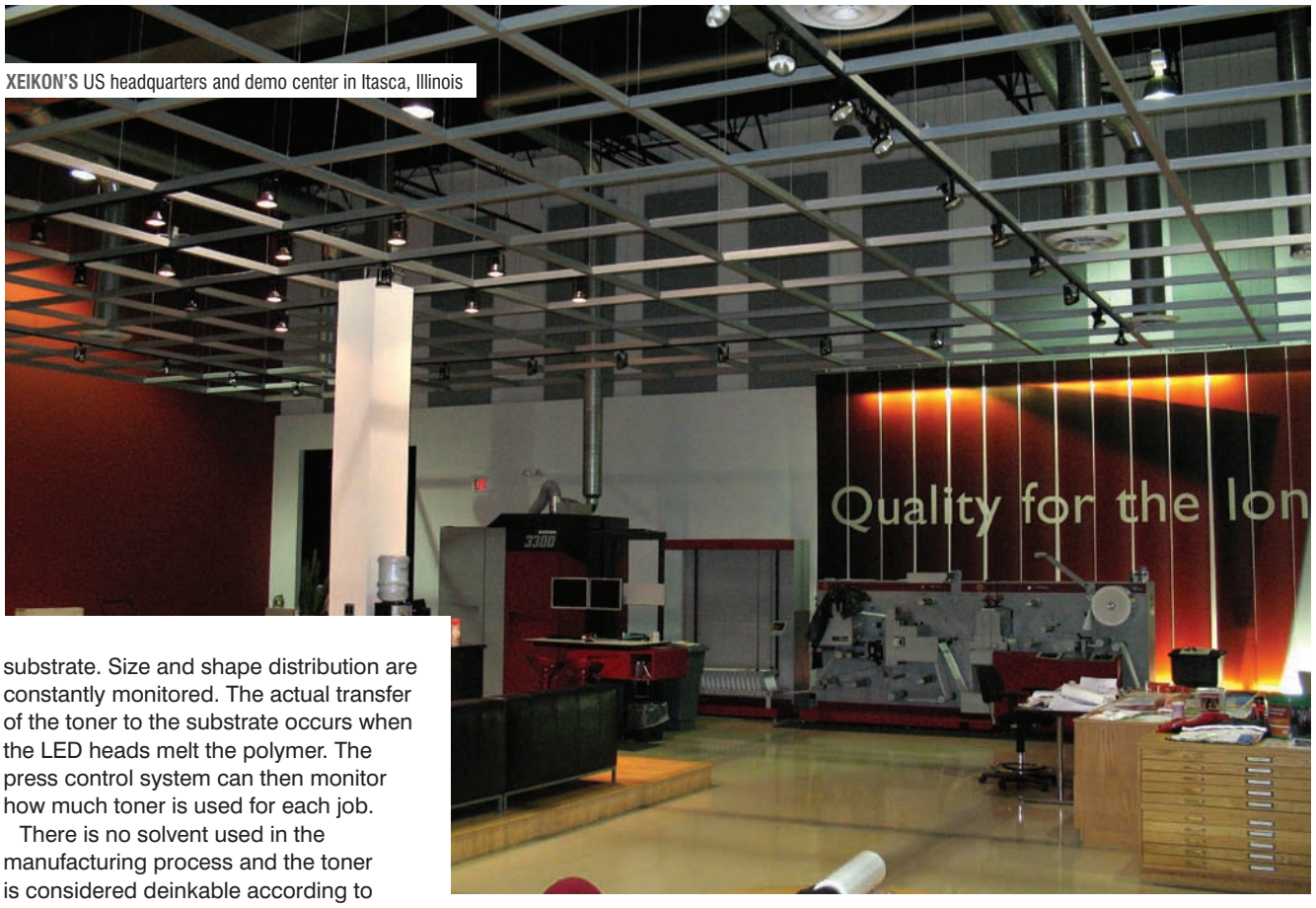
TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

Headquartered in Lier, Belgium, Xeikon has recently expanded its range of toner-based presses. The Xeikon 3000 series machines are full rotary, roll fed machines with 1200 dpi imaging, offering 5 colors including white. Xeikon launched the most advanced 3500 at Ipex over the summer, and revealed the 3050 and 3030 at this year's Labelexpo Americas, demonstrating the capability of the 3030 live at the show's Technology Workshops. Each press has an in-line densitometer and comes standard with its internally developed X-800 digital front end.

At the beginning of 2010 Xeikon introduced its newly formulated QA-I dry toner developed specifically for label printing. The preceding FA-40 toner consisted of the same chemical formulation for both the company's document and label business, but, in order to achieve the appropriate tolerance levels for each market's demands, concessions had to be made. Now QA-I hits the ideal tolerances for label production.

The new toner consists of a polymer formula based on EF catalysts. These polyester toner particles are held between 5 micron – to avoid health issues when particles become small enough to inhale – and 9 micron, after which image quality begins to decline. Size distribution is achieved through a process known as jet milling where the particles are broken down by high speed collisions. Scientists are unable to control the shape of the molecules in this process, so the particles must then be reshaped and treated.

They are formed into potato shaped particles that help with the transfer, performance and stability of the toner on the



XEIKON'S US headquarters and demo center in Itasca, Illinois

substrate. Size and shape distribution are constantly monitored. The actual transfer of the toner to the substrate occurs when the LED heads melt the polymer. The press control system can then monitor how much toner is used for each job.

There is no solvent used in the manufacturing process and the toner is considered deinkable according to Ingede standards. It meets and exceeds FDA standards for food contact, releases no VOCs, and has little risk of ink migration. Xeikon feels these attributes are critical to its growth in the market because forty percent of all labels are potentially subject to food contact criteria.

Xeikon's toner plant, also located in Belgium, is considered to be the biggest in Europe. This plant is powered by 100 percent renewable energy - water, wind and solar. Here the supplier is able to manufacture large, medium and small batches of CMYK, white and spot color toner. The plant has experienced an increased demand of 25 percent since January of 2009. There is little to no waste produced at the end of the manufacturing process. What waste is left is molded to small cuts of wood and used by the concrete industry as an alternative fuel source.

MATERIALS EXPANSION

Xeikon is working on what it calls 'Application Enablement', requiring a honed focus on materials able to run through the machine effectively. The 3000 range's current sweet spot is with PS labels.

Xeikon has been researching and testing printability of high-density polyethylene to allow converters to expand into PE tubes. These products can now be produced along with in-mold labels for pails. It has partnered with Color Logic to produce design software for metalized paper, which is supplied soley by MGX Digital. It also sees potential growth in the folding carton and PoP markets.

One of Xeikon's biggest success stories is Odyssey Printing based in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which specializes in PoP production using a fleet of Xeikon digital machines including the latest model Xeikon 3500. The company broke into the industrial printing segment in a venture with popular golf suppliers Titlest and Pinnacle. Utilizing the personalization and on-demand capability of digital printing, Odyssey was able to provide short-run, custom packaging for these clients. It also found substantial growth amongst golf clubs, providing custom sleeves for custom logo balls.

Most recently Odyssey has set a contract with a major candle manufacturer. The brand sees custom labels as a huge opportunity, especially to promote fundraising. Shoppers are able to upload their own photos to be produced as labels for their favorite scent. Other applications being tested by Xeikon include direct thermal label materials and anti-static coatings to better target IML applications.

The company plans to promote these expanded capabilities at Labelexpo Europe 2011 with a 'customer store shelf' display.

XEIKON'S dedicated toner production facility

ESTER ORTEGA, Germark; Michelle and John Hickey, Smyth Companies; Iban Cid, Germark; Joe Hickey, Smyth Companies

JAKOB LANDBERG, Nilpeter; Julie Chavez, Stixon Labels

FRANK Gerace, Multi-Color Corporation and Past Chairman; Roger Pellow, Labelexpo

DOKHY SHAMS and Shahriar Gouddousi, Multi Packaging Solutions

TONI and Walter Dow, Dow Industries

DIRK EDWARDS and Floyd Needham, Multi-Color Corporation

GREG and Judy Jackson, Columbine Label; Steve and Heather Schulte, Mark Andy; Sharon and Lance Shumaker, AVT

TLMI young leaders step forward

AT the TLMI's 2010 Annual Meeting in Florida, the Young Leaders Organization was launched with a fanfare and award winners were honored. Danielle Jerschefske reports

North America's premier label association, the Tag & Label Manufacturer's Institute, held its 2010 Annual Meeting in Boca Raton, Florida in October. The meeting welcomed a whopping eighteen new members, including international converters and suppliers from Mexico and Europe.

A key objective of the meeting was getting the Young Leaders Organization (YLO) off the ground and moving forward. Guided by Whitlam Label's Alex Elezaj as chair, and supported by John McDowell of McDowell Label & Screen Printing, and Floyd Needham of Multi-Color Corporation, the group discussed a purpose, initiatives, and overall planning. The team, which consists of thirty or so eager young managers, decided that it would hold YLO meetings around other industry events and will look into hosting a dedicated YLO annual team building meeting in the future.

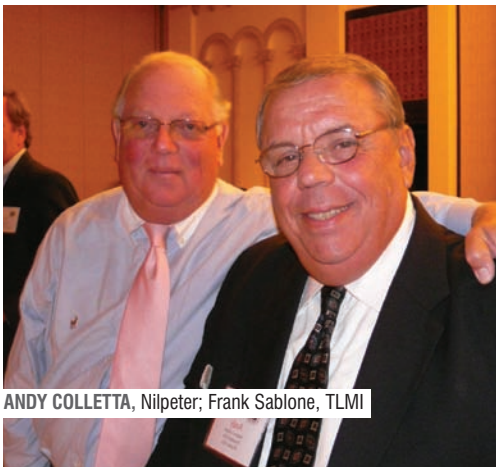
The group feels that it's important to remain in regular communication; therefore it scheduled a list of regular webinars. The first was hosted by Floyd Needham at the end of November discussing his involvement in developing an apprentice program. In December Tracy Tenpenny of Tailored Label Products will share his experience with strategic planning, followed by a session from Kevin Foos of acpo on the challenges and opportunities facing the industry's growth in January.

The group is soliciting submissions for a new logo. Entries should be submitted to the chairman no later than 12/1. The winner will receive an iPod Touch.


DIANA GONZALEZ, Evonik; Kurt Walker, tesa Bandfix; Bibiana Rodriguez Vidal, Rotatek


JEFF DUNPHY, Design Label Manufacturing; Ester Ortega, Germark


COLLEEN and Gary Cooper, Inovar Packaging Group


ANDY COLLETTA, Nilpeter; Frank Sablone, TLMI


KAREN MORELAND and Steve Lee, Rotometrics


KLAUS DAMBERG, Roger Pellow, Julie Chavez and Jakob Landberg


DAN MUENZER, Spear Systems; Darell Hughes, Avery

MENTORSHIP

As a part of the YLO's continued development, the group will solicit the participation of current industry and TLMI veterans to counsel and cultivate the group. For this reason the YLO sponsored an impactful presentation by past TLMI chairman of the board and recently retired CEO of Multi-Color Corporation, Frank Gerace. Gerace, who served on the TLMI board of directors since 2003, shared his experience of guiding Multi-Color Corporation to be the leading multinational player that it is today.

In response to the presentation, Elezaj stated that he learned how critical it is to keep employees caught up on the business' strategies in order to revel in success. 'And clearly, you have to have the right plan and be able to drive a clear vision. This is what separates a leader like Frank.'Brian D. Gale of I.D. Images, LLC said, 'I thoroughly enjoyed Frank's talk. His willingness to share his story is what makes TLMI great. My biggest takeaway other than 'nice guys can do well' is develop a vision and stick with it. Frank had a vision for Multi-Color and put himself and the company in a position to execute.'

Joe Perdue, Altana, enjoyed Frank's message that commitment is more important than passion. He explained how, 'passion wavers and can come and go while accountability and commitment build trust and lead to action. He also talked about focus in what he calls 'ruthless self-examination'.' This was described as a relentless look in the mirror approach toward really deciding what and who you want to be, and then doing it.

Cheryl Caudill of Multi-Plastics learned the importance of finding balance in business and in life. She said, 'Because things aren't simple anymore, true leaders must embrace and learn how to manage the complexity.'

Prior to his time at Multi-Color Gerace served as director of strategic business systems for Fort James Corporation's packaging business from 1993 to 1998, and held various general management positions with Conagra, Inc. and Beatrice Foods Company. Read more about Gerace and his talents on Labels & Labeling online.

GROUP outing

SUE and Art Yerecic, Yerecic Label

IAN BATES and Klaus Damberg, Gerhardt

NICK VAN ALSTINE, Macaran Printed Products; Paul Brauss, Mark Andy; Eric Seiler, Xeric Web Drying Systems

KLAUS BACHSTEIN, Karen and Ferd Rueesch, Brian Bishop, Gallus

NEW CHAIRMAN

Art Yerecic, president of Yerecic Label in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, was promoted to the position of TLMI chairman. He has been a TLMI member since 2001 and has served on the board of directors since 2004. Yerecic Label was recently honored by the US Department of Defense with the 2010 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award, the highest recognition given by the US Government for the support of employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve. Read Yerecic's Recipe for Success (on L&L on-line) to find out more about this second-generation converting operation.

ANNUAL AWARDS

The Converter of the Year honor was awarded to John Hickey, CEO of Smyth Companies. Currently employing fourth generation members of the family, Smyth Companies has serviced local and national brands for more than one hundred years. Its executive team consists of Hickey's brothers Bill and Dan, and his long time friend, business partner and university tennis teammate CFO Dave Baumgardner. Smyth uses virtually every printing technique available to operate in an array of markets including food & beverage, spirits and personal care, offering a proprietary high-speed label application system, Red Rock that is favored by the likes of international breweries such as Coors.

Hickey joined TLMI in 1994, has served on the board since 2002, and performed as chairman from 2006-2008. His authority has greatly helped TLMI members realize how to adapt, grow and compete in a globalized world. A number of articles about Smyth and its ability to differentiate from the competition can be found on the L&L homepage.

The 2010 Supplier of the Year award was given to Calvin Frost, CEO of Channeled Resources Group. Frost has been a beacon in the global industry with regards to sustainability. He has devoted most of his career to recovering label industry materials waste, most specifically substrates and pressure sensitive release liner. Frost founded Channeled Resources in the 1970s, which now has locations throughout North America, Europe, China and Russia. In 2006, Frost received the R. Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award. and in 2010 Channeled Resources Group was the winner of the Global Green Award.

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Flexible productivity

AUTOMATED rewinding systems are enhancing productivity at German narrow web flexible packaging and labels specialist Kölle Etiketten. Michael House reports

One of Germany's oldest established label printing companies, and a leading supplier of flexible packaging and self adhesive labels, Kölle Etiketten GmbH, recently celebrated its 125 anniversary. This family company, now under the fourth generation of management with Philipp Kölle, is still based in Esslingen, southern Germany, where it began life with the manufacture of embossed labels, heat seal labels, wet glue labels as well as swing tickets.

Kölle moved into the self adhesive market when the new substrates were being pioneered in the 1950s and was one of the first companies offering self adhesive labels. In the 1970s the printing of flexible packaging was also included in the production range. Over the years Kölle developed into a leading international supplier for flexible packaging – especially in the field of tea bag production. For several years Kölle has been ISO 9001 certified and in 2010 gained ISO 22000 (food safety) accreditation. Currently, Kölle Etiketten exports around 25 percent of its output worldwide.

Today, flexible packaging accounts for the majority of the company's output of several thousand tonnes of substrate every year and keeps a workforce of 35 busy. Printing is carried out on letterpress and flexo printing presses.

Gallus flexo lines are utilized for flexible packaging, ranging from four to eight colors, all using water based inks and hot air drying to assure food safety.

Each of the Gallus lines, the most recent of which was installed in October 2009, is fitted with a Martin Automatic LRD automatic turret rewinder. Philipp Kölle explained why: 'We run large reels up to 1250 mm diameter, so unwind/splicing units are of little interest because we have to stop the press regularly for cleaning and job inspection. The turret rewinders however, make a huge difference to our output, allowing running speeds of up to 150 m/min, and giving us the ability to slit and rewind the web into finished rolls in one single operation.'

Kölle visited the Martin factory in the US before the unit was delivered. 'I suggested a few minor modifications to the LRD that would assist us with our special type of work, and the Martin technicians were able to make them before the machine left the factory,' said Kölle.

Koelle concluded by saying: 'To maximize output we need to constantly improve our workflow efficiency to fulfil the continually increasing demands for quality and flexibility and Martin Automatic is a very important partner in reaching this goal.'

KÖLLE ETIKETTEN is based in this beautifully restored building in Esslingen

THE MARTIN LRD allows Philipp Kölle to run his presses at 150 m/min and finish in one pass

INSTALLATIONS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL INSTALLATION STORIES

PACMAN-CCL
MPS EC UV FLEXO PRESS

Cairo, Egypt-based converter Pacman-CCL has installed a third UV flexo press from MPS. The company conducted a study of MPS's new EC press line and was impressed by the machine's print quality, stability and repeatability.

Pacman-CCL installed its first MPS UV flexo press at its Cairo premises in 2006, with a second machine ordered soon afterwards. Pacman-CCL produces shrink sleeves and self-adhesive, wrap-around, cut & stack, in-mould, booklet and promotional labels, tags and tickets. The company serves a number of leading international brands, including Coca Cola, Head & Shoulders, Heinz, Pepsi Cola and Whiskas.

NUCERIA ADESIVI GROUP
JUPITER TC280 INSPECTION REWINDER

Italian label and packaging converter Nuceria Adesivi Group has installed a Jupiter TC280 inspection and finishing machine from Prati. The installation means the company runs 12 Prati machines across its three production sites.

The Jupiter TC280 can handle a wide range of materials at high speed, including self-adhesive labels, flexible packaging, cardboard, laminates, multi-page labels and other sensitive materials. Label quality is managed by the VaryControl program, which offers total control for managing three different types of rewinding tension: constant on the axis for self-adhesive labels, constant on the web for flexible materials, and mixed for special jobs.

'The quality control afforded by Prati inspection machines is very impressive,' said Guido Iannone, plant manager at Nuceria Adesivi's San Giuliano Milanese site. 'They're also extremely easy to use and very reliable – which is essential for an operation as busy as ours. Plus the low maintenance costs mean we'll see a faster return on our investment. Another important aspect for us is that the different models of Prati inspection machines have very similar user interfaces. This means it's no problem to move operators to different machines when needed.'

Nuceria Adesivi Group has grown at a rate of 20 percent a year over the past two years. It expects to close 2010 with a turnover of around 28 million euros, 40 percent of which comes from foreign markets. Iannone added:

Maximizing opacity in flexo whites

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS in narrow web flexographic inking and plate systems allow converters to approach the opacity of screen whites at faster speeds. Alexander James explains

High opaque white is a common challenge in today's flexographic industry. How much opacity can you achieve with high opaque UV white ink in a flexographic setup? More importantly, what is the opacity target?

With a rotary screen station you can hit 80 percent plus in opacity, but the downside is a restriction in production speed – not to mention the length of time required for the setup process. If everything goes smoothly and the screen does not get punctured, you should be up and running within a couple of hours. If by chance the screen does get punctured, then the re-setup for a new screen is costly in time and materials.

Back to the initial question – how much opacity can you achieve with high opaque UV white ink in a flexographic setup? In today's narrow web environment it is entirely possible to hit opacity levels exceeding 80 percent running at 150 – 200+ feet (45 – 60+ meters) per minute.

This article deals with the ingredients needed to successfully achieve opacity values of 80 percent plus for High Opaque UV white ink in a traditional flexographic setup. Thankfully, in today's environment there has been a tremendous advance in all the required ingredients, including anilox roller, ink, doctor blade, sticky-back, polymer, UV lamp, press and corona-treated substrates.

SUBSTRATE TREATMENT

How does surface tension affect ink adhesion? The basic premise is that the surface tension of a substrate must be higher than the ink in order to achieve proper ink lay-down or 'ink wetting'. The most common type of surface treatment for narrow web is corona discharge. Other types surface treatments are plasma, flame thermal and UV.

Regardless of the type of treatment, having freshly treated substrate can make or break the lay-down of any ink, in any format, be it wide web or narrow web, but it is especially important for narrow web UV white ink.

The treatment of any film will dramatically alter the surface tension and will enable the ink to wet out and adhere to the surface. If using polypropylene, polyethylene or PVC, the dyne level should be between 40-44. Use dyne pens to test the substrate and confirm acceptable surface tension prior to starting your print trial. This could save you a lot of time and headaches.

For example, we conducted a print trial where the ink would not lay down smoothly; it had a mottled look to it. Knowing that this substrate was pre-treated, we never thought to double check it. Instead we did what the majority of printers do – troubleshoot by changing the ink, the sticky-back and the polymer. Finally, after several hours of lost time, we decided to have the substrate tested. Confirming that the substrate was not up to our needed dyne level, we had it re-treated. We went back to our initial setup and – low and behold - our problem was solved. The roughness of the substrate enabled the ink to adhere easily, improving the ink wetting and adhesion, and the job printed smoothly.

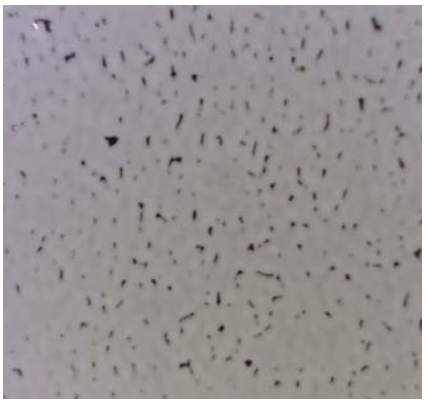
PRESSES AND UV LAMPS

Traditionally, printing thin gauge film was a challenge, but the majority of today's presses can handle clear film of two mil gauge or thinner. Shorter web path configurations and more control on the nip zones all contribute to a balance in tension zones throughout the modern press. Coupled with the press is the need for strategically placed UV lamps. Your desired level of opacity will determine the thickness of the ink applied and the wattage of UV lamp required. You will need 400 or 600 watt lamps. If you go past twenty bcm in volume, you might need to double hit the ink with two separate lamps. Work with your UV lamp vendor the select lamps that are out fitted with longer wavelength bulbs. This will give you better penetration and curability of the opaque white ink. Also be sure to check that your lamp system is in good operating condition and that your reflectors are clean. Up to 70 percent of useful light energy comes off the lamp reflectors.

POLYMER AND STICKYBACK

Another ingredient is the durometer of the polymer in combination with the choice of stickyback. This choice can influence the smoothness of ink laydown and the level of mottle or pinhole. A good rule of thumb is that with a medium durometer polymer, use a hard durometer stickyback; with a hard durometer polymer, use a medium durometer stickyback. Results will vary depending on the formulation of ink and will affect the level of opacity and the quality of overprint. See the photos in figures 1 and 2 showing the difference when the only change made was the choice of stickyback.

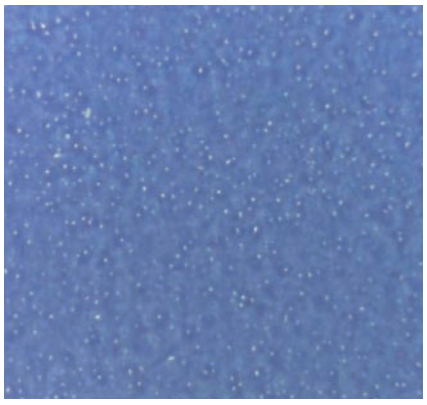
FIGURE 1



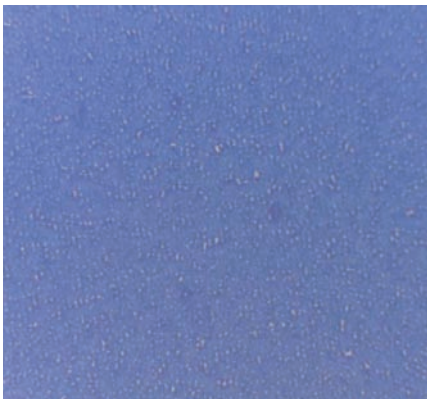
HARD DUROMETER stickyback with Hard durometer polymer

MEDIUM DUROMETER stickyback with **HARD** durometer polymer

FIGURE 2 – WITH CYAN OVERPRINT



HARD DUROMETER stickyback with Hard durometer polymer



MEDIUM DUROMETER stickyback with Hard durometer polymer

FIGURE 3

USING A SPECTRO-DENSITOMETER to measure opacity levels on site

DOCTOR BLADE

Another key ingredient is the choice of doctor blade. For this level of thick ink, doctor blades between .008, .010 to .012 will be needed to successfully meter these heavy volumes. Testing will be necessary to determine your best choice based on the lubricity of your ink vendors' formulation and your desired production speed.

INKS

Another key to success is the type of high opaque UV ink used. Testing will be required to determine the level of opacity possible with the other elements in the system, but the ink formulation will be a critical factor. Thankfully, over recent years new formulations have lowered the viscosity of most UV inks, including the white ink. Some have a smaller pigment grind for the titanium dioxide and others have proprietary carriers and additives, which aid in the printability and opacity of the inks. At any rate, the lubricity of the ink formulation will be a determining factor as to what combination will result in the desired opacity level at an acceptable production speed. Work with your ink vendors and anilox suppliers when setting up an opacity test.

ANILOX

Finally, the anilox engraving specification will be the biggest factor in achieving success. A key factor will be the volume and the type of engraving that works with your ink vendor's formulation. Ideally you will want to set up a banded roll trial with all the system ingredients to determine what level of opacity you can achieve.

For high opaque UV white with opacity of 70 percent or higher you will need a minimum of sixteen bcm or higher. Opacity targets for UV white require a difference of two bcm to get a percentage point difference in opacity. The lubricity of the ink will factor in to what type of engraving works; traditional hexagonal engraving, forty-five degree engravings or channeled engravings such as thirty degree channel engraving, tri-hellical channel engravings, or other proprietary channeled engravings.

Take the time to do your homework and conduct your testing. Just because an anilox engraving is new does not mean it is better. Over the last year and a half our HGS technical department has conducted countless tests with a wide variety of ink vendors and found that, depending on the formulation, the tried and true traditional 60° hex and 30° channel engravings work just as well as new channeled or patterned engravings.

MEASURING OPACITY

Once you have all the ingredients, how do you measure the opacity level on site? If you happen to have an opacimeter, no problem. If like most people you do not, here is a method for measuring opacity in the field (see figure 3 above). Using a Spectro-densitometer, select the La*b* option, and using the black part of the Leneta Board, place the clear film with the printed white area over the black Leneta board and measure the white solid print. Use the 'L' or lightness level as a measure of your opacity. If you are printing on a self-adhesive stock, remove the liner and stick the printed white to the black Leneta board. Be sure to rub all the air bubbles out between the layers of the film and the Leneta board.

DEFINE YOUR TARGET:

What is your opacity target? Defining your opacity target will help you work out how much change in anilox volume you may need. You can use one of your current acceptable anilox volumes as a gauge to measure the current level of your opacity value. After determining what your opacity level is, decide what your desired opacity target may be; coordinate with your anilox provider and ink vendor and schedule a banded roll print trial.

Remember to verify the treatment of your film prior to starting the print trial. If you are having issues of 'mottling', the first thing to check is the treat level of the substrate. Then move on to checking the choice of stickyback and polymer choice before checking the inks.

Additionally, and an 'old school' approach, is to output plate separations in the 96% to 100% range for evaluation as solids; evaluate different screening technologies and test different polymer types.

Remember the relation of 'hard to medium' or 'medium to hard plate to stickyback. Additionally, depending on the formulation of the ink, you may find that an increase in speed will aid in the 'smoothing out' or 'wetting out' of the white ink. Therefore, when testing be sure to vary the speed of the press to find the sweet spot where the white levels out. Try varying the speed in increments of 50 feet per minute (15 m/min), flagging each change for evaluation. Finally, determine your opacity target and what cost difference is acceptable in order to achieve it. Keep in mind that an increase in opacity will require an increase in anilox volume and will also result in an increase in cost.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Alexander James is the Eastern Technical Manager for Harper GraphicSolutions, a division of Harper Corporation of America, Charlotte, NC. Alex has a Master of Science degree in graphic communications from Clemson University and more than 15 years of experience in the graphics industry. James has presented at numerous industry-related events, including Tarsus Label Summits, and travels extensively globally assisting customers in improving efficiencies and productivity.

Bike labeling system triumphs

WHEN IT CAME TO DEVELOPING a graphic labeling system for the latest Special Edition Triumph motorcycle, Madico and branding agency CGI worked together on a tough assignment. Michael House reports

With over a century of history, iconic British company Triumph Motorcycles has something of a reputation to uphold when it comes to producing truly unique machines that are distinctive in looks, design and performance. From initial conceptual idea to actual production, a commitment to engineering and design excellence is something that pervades every aspect of the development of a new Triumph motorcycle. This includes directing particular focus to the type of graphics system used – from the company's globally recognised logo that adorns the fuel tank to a host of other decals specific to the respective bike model.

It was for this reason that, during the design stage of its latest high-end sports bike, the Daytona 675 Special Edition, Triumph Motorcycles sought the expertise of leading specialised automotive branding solutions provider, Creative Graphics International (CGI). In turn, well acquainted with their credentials in substrate development and dependability as a consultative partner, CGI approached UK-based, Madico Graphic Films Ltd, and the two companies embarked upon developing a graphics system package that would meet the industry's harshest specification for quality and durability.

'Although we had supplied graphics to Triumph in the past, these had previously been applied under a protective lacquer coating, which lessened the requirement for highly durable materials and inks with superior technical properties', explains Steven Perry, managing director of the Bedford, UK-based CGI.

However, for this particular project, Triumph wanted graphics that – without compromising on quality and durability – would be fitted on top of the paint system. This would increase the company's global marketing flexibility and allow for easier badging of bikes once built and painted. Additionally, surface mounted graphics would, in the event of a bike becoming

scratched or damaged, enable Triumph's dealers to repair the paintwork and re-fit the decals themselves. This would ensure a speedier return of the bike to its owner, than could otherwise be achieved via the longer process of encapsulating graphics under lacquer at Triumph's factory.

Knowing that effectively fulfilling this brief would call for the creation of a bespoke substrate solution, Perry contacted Madico and presented them with the various specification criteria laid down by his client. 'When we are faced with particularly demanding, or unusual application requirements by our clients, we typically consult with Madico to develop an applicable solution', he explains. 'As a specialized provider of niche substrates, they differ from larger suppliers, who are often only interested in mainstream, volume orders.'

Having considered the prerequisites, Madico's own technical team began to formulate an idea for a substrate that would ensure graphics that were not only stunningly vibrant, but also extremely durable and versatile. 'We knew that this would be a very technically demanding application, but being accustomed to developing customized film solutions, we were excited by the challenge', says Gary Flavell, Madico's technical manager.

'The Triumph graphic performance specification is designed to simulate the most severe environments to which the graphics may be exposed and the combination of these worst case scenario requirements makes for a very aggressive test for surface mounted graphics', explains Flavell. 'They had to withstand extreme abrasion and scratch resistance to replicate the contact of motorcyclist leathers and other more abrasive materials. Then there was the need to perform in various weather extremes – from very cold to very hot temperatures. We also had to consider that, given how proudly Triumph owners cherish their bikes, the graphics would certainly be subjected to much more cleaning and polishing than your typical family car and that, after regular use, such polishes can damage printed film systems.'

In addition, since the graphics would be applied to variously shaped motorcycle parts, Madico also factored in the need to deliver good conformability. As parts of the bike would include plastic panels – for example the fairings and tail – there was also the need to resist out gassing. 'We were conscious that certain panels made from ABS plastic could gas slightly, which would induce bubbling, so the adhesive would need to account for this', adds Flavell.

For the first time, producing the new graphics system for the Daytona 675 Special Edition also saw CGI's team work closely with Triumph's design department to collaborate on the actual artwork creation. 'We developed a design scheme for the graphics, which were even overseen by Triumph owner, John Bloor', says Steven Perry. 'From there, we were provided digital images of the actual bike itself and were able to superimpose our graphics onto the fuel tank, front, side and belly fairings, and the rear bodywork. These were then sent to the client for approval.'

More than pleased with the designs, Triumph sent a prototype of the motorcycle itself to CGI's Bedford facility. With Madico having supplied CGI with a customized graphics system, comprising a specially produced material, ink and varnish, CGI was able to engineer the specific shapes and guarantee they could be correctly fitted. 'The body panels contained lots of double curvatures, so we needed to ensure plastic panels were engineered to accommodate the variously shaped graphics', explains Perry.

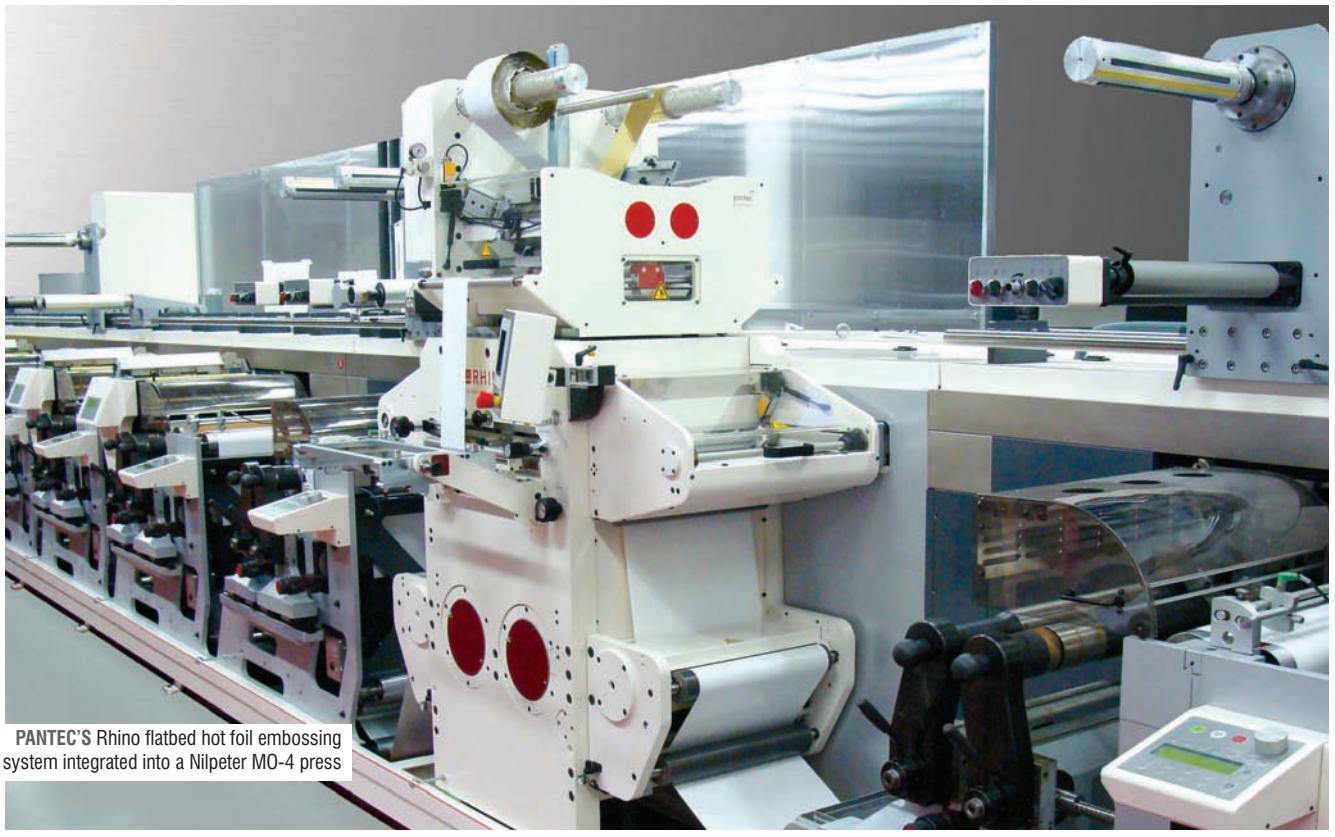
CGI ultimately supplied around a dozen different decals for the Daytona 675 Special Edition, ranging from the 400mm Daytona graphic itself, to much smaller scaled parts, such as a 100mm long model designator fitted to the bike's tail. With the bike's first production run already shipped to dealers worldwide, the consensus from Triumph is one of complete satisfaction in the graphics system supplied.

'This was undeniably a difficult brief in that it called for a multi-functional, high performance substrate to ensure eye-catching and hard-wearing graphics that would uphold Triumph's globally renowned prestige', says Simon Warburton, product Manager, Triumph Motorcycles Ltd. 'CGI and Madico rose to the challenge and met every aspect of the project's criteria and, as a result, we are now looking to introduce the same graphics technology to other bike models.'

As sole supplier worldwide for the Daytona 675 Special Edition graphics, CGI is equally pleased that its faith in Madico was rewarded with a solution that delivered on its client's expectations. 'It is the collective benefits of Madico's graphics system that make it a winning formula', says Steven Perry, 'but this one called for much more than technical expertise. We also knew that flexibility and patience would be critical and, as expected, Madico didn't disappoint. Projects like this invariably involve a lengthy period from initial concept to final delivery, which makes them unattractive to larger, more mainstream substrate suppliers who, unlike Madico, are not prepared to invest the time and energy to see the task through.

'When Triumph first presented us with this particular challenge, neither they nor we were 100 percent sure that we would actually arrive at something that would tick all their boxes', he smiles. 'However, with Madico as our partner, we were always assured of remaining on track.'

FOLLOWING the success of the Daytona 675 project, Triumph is looking to introduce the same graphics technology to other bike models



PANTEC'S Rhino flatbed hot foil embossing system integrated into a Nilpeter MO-4 press

Dies + foiling

THE RECENT LABELEXPO AMERICAS SHOW in Chicago revealed a wide range of developments in die cutting systems. Andy Thomas reports

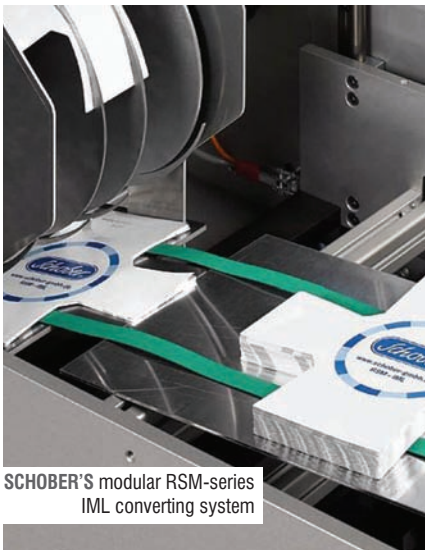
Bunting Magnetics introduced its Spiral Cylinder 'extreme' series, featuring curved magnetic rows which give higher holding power than conventional mag cylinders. The supplier also featured Repel, a new coating for flexible dies. Repel is designated for cutting substrates with thick, sticky adhesives. Bunting said visitors to its stand were interested in making the switch to flexibles to reap the cost saving benefits – an increasing trend in North America. Around 15 percent of the company's business is exports, with a particular focus on India, Latin America and Europe.

Gerhardt featured its Texture Flexi dies that put a texture on commonly used wine label stock, saving converters the cost of specialized material. The company's High Blade Flexi dies designed to cut through thick substrates were also promoted. With a cutting height of up to 0.9mm, thicker materials can be converted with rotary tooling including booklet labels, cardboard and folding cartons. Gerhardt Air Flex flexible dies have an advanced coating that requires less frequent sharpening of the die to cut effectively.

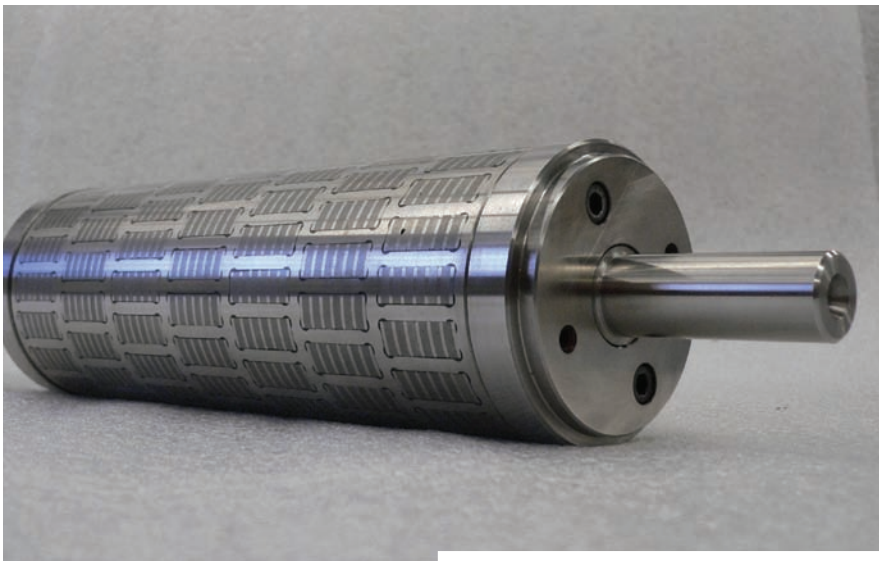
RotoMetrics introduced its new heavy duty die stations for converting folding cartons, blister boards, tickets, labels and other specialty applications. Unique to the design is a hydraulic pressure bridge and a cooling system that keeps the die and anvil at room temperature for optimum cutting and extended die life. The company also promoted the Pantec Electroman hot foil stamping system, an electrically heated and sealed mandrel that contains encapsulated oil. This patented product provides even heating across the entire cylinder and has no pumps or hoses, eliminating the risk of hot oil exposure. RotoMetrics showed its AccuPrint Sleeve Cylinder designed as a match for the industry's advanced servo driven presses. It has a polycarbonate inner core and a proprietary hard case coating lending to high scratch resistance. The die is hollow between the two layers making it light weight and easier on operator changeovers.

Pantec GS Systems launched its Rhino flatbed hot foil embossing system onto the US market, demonstrated in-line with the Cheetah hologram insetter. Production speeds of up to 80m/min on textured or 120m/min on smooth materials are claimed, while the less expensive foils and tools used in flat embossing and the foil saver technology result in cost savings over rotary systems. Pantec says that the 3D embossing patterns exhibited on its stand were of most interest to wine label printers. Multi-colored designs can be embossed in a single process with several foils on the Rhino.

Schober, meanwhile, launched its modular RSM-IML/MSV system for the converting of in-mold labels. Additional equipment can include



SCHOBER'S modular RSM-series IML converting system



TD Wright's Modular magnetic cylinder

DIES IN BRIEF

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST DIE STORIES

PUNCHING ABOVE ITS WEIGHT

South Africa-based Lieben Dies has commissioned a new CNC machine at its Ballito factory. Established in 1998 in Johannesburg by Manie Liebenberg and his son Flip, the company specializes in punching tools and dies for wet glue labels, casino and playing cards. The majority of its dies are used on wine and beer labels.

Over the past three years Leiben has seen a significant rise in sales to African customers, but its single biggest challenge remains the reluctance of European customers to buy from Africa, according to Flip Liebenberg. 'To date we have mainly supplied converters in Eastern Europe, who have been more willing to change suppliers than some of the converters in Central Europe. Lieben Dies has been exporting to Europe since 2006 and converters are realising that we are serious about business, and that our products conforms to European standards.'

HARDER AND FASTER

Holfeld Tool & Die has announced the development of special coatings for extra long life of flexible and solid dies and also non-stick coatings to cut exposed adhesives.

The company's Milton Keynes, UK branch is meanwhile expanding with a state-of-the-art repair and resharpen facility for rotary dies, which are currently manufactured in Dublin. Further expansion in the UK, with additional CNC finishing machines is taking place, to enhance flexible die production.

Investment is also taking place in the area of fully hardened dies used in the medical and automotive industries.

GERHARDT Texture Flexi dies

adjustable de-nesting station for multiple products across for reliable product stacking, and antistatic device and a Gap Control System (GCS) for precise wear compensation of the die and micro-perforation

The machine is available for working widths of 410 mm, 520 mm and 740 mm.

It is delivered as standard with an 'M'-stack delivery for short runs, the 'S'-stack for long runs, the 'SM' for very challenging/complex products, the "SMA" for fully automated stacking, counting, piling and bundling, and the V-stack for very large/long products which can not be handled with the 'M' or 'S'-stack delivery system.

For small to medium runs Schober is promoting its RSM-IML/MX system, available in working widths of 260 mm, 330 mm and 410 mm. The MX model incorporates many of the proven technologies integrated in the high capacity models, including heavy duty rotary die cutting station, automated web guide, continuously monitored registration, vacuum controlled product flow, static neutralizer and "M"-stack delivery.

ROTARY DIES FACILITATE MOVE INTO WEB NARROW CARTONS

Portuguese labels and packaging converter Olegário Fernandes has used inline flexo printing and rotary die cut/crease tooling to meet rising demand for reduced delivery times and production runs in pharmaceutical box production. Among its customers are leading pharmaceutical companies such as Colgate, Unilever, Bayer, Janssen-Cilag and OM Pharma.

'We saw huge potential for the production of cardboard boxes in smaller quantities and with a reduced delivery time,' explains Duarte Sousa, managing director of Olegário Fernandes. 'So we planned how to work smarter – be more flexible, with shorter production runs and lower costs. Demands could not be met by the traditional sheet-fed offset printing.'

In 1997 Olegário Fernandes installed new inline narrow web/flexo printing machines from Gallus to produce self-adhesive labels, followed in 2003 by investments in narrow web/flexo inline printing machines from Comco. That inspired Duarte Sousa to produce folding cartons using flexible rotary die cutting tools. This would reduce the workflow to one process compared with sheet-fed printing plus flat bed die cutting, creating more uptime, the ability to handle shorter production runs and lower production costs.

Flexible male/female dies mounted onto magnetic cylinders for creasing and cutting were the solution. Gerhardt is delivering the complex and high precision tooling within 72 hours from its factory in Derby, England. 'We used to have to wait two weeks for a new set of male/female flexible dies. This, in turn, means we can now add new jobs to our production line at very short notice,' says Sousa, who also expressed himself impressed with Gerhardt's 'technological insight', such as the final trim of their Braille embossed cardboard boxes.

The production line runs up to 80 metres per minute with a set of rotating male/female flexi dies, and is operated by only one employee. Sousa estimates that a set of male/female flexi dies are enough for at least 7 million cardboard boxes (equivalent to 2.3 million revolutions). The boxes are produced in cardboard with a thickness of 0.5mm, but the line handles up to 0.6mm. Included in this process is the obligatory embossing of Braille dot text for the visually impaired.

Production is fully automated and runs 24 hours a day, making up to 4 million boxes per month. Down time is considerably lower and the set-up of the male/female flexible dies, which needs only one operator, takes only 15 minutes. A short set-up time is necessary when production runs are down to 5,000 boxes or fewer. ' There is a huge, untapped potential for label converters to move into manufacturing of cardboard boxes,' says Sousa.

NHT HARDENED GOLD DIE

Following L&L's recent article on die cutting beyond standard PS stocks, Suron is promoting its NHT hardened gold dies as suitable for die-cutting extra tough and abrasive stocks, including on longer runs. The flexible dies have high levels of magnetization and high resistance to erosion and corrosion.

Optimized digital finishing

KEVIN GOURLAY, worldwide sales manager at Mark Andy company Rotoflex, analyzes trends and options available for the converting of digital label rolls

The momentum behind digital label printing has hit new strides and digital is becoming a staple of the global packaging and label printing industry. With anticipated market forecasts of digitally printed packaging and labels to grow by 182 percent by 2014, reports indicate nearly 250 new digital package and label printing machines are being installed annually.

As digital continues to take an assertive hold, the need for high-tech finishing for digital print is also riding this wave. With more than 35 digital printing suppliers now competing for their piece of the digital printing pie, there still only remain a few leading finishing solutions that are equipped to design and deliver the converting needs of this industry.

In-line and off-line finishing technologies both share the finishing portion of the digital print workflow, however a whopping 79.5 percent represent converters using an off-line solution, where workflow, production speeds and a bigger variety of configurations can be managed more effectively and efficiently.

In any event, finishing for digital print is increasing at a high rate, mostly in order to meet the increasing and expanding demand for application decorations and treatments necessary to deliver a complete printed label or package. In the early years, finishing included only die cutting, basic inspection and rewinding for final label delivery. Today, the applications have expanded beyond that, and the industry is seeing growth in several converting areas.

FINISHING OPTIONS

Vandagraf International has been keeping tabs on the trends in digital, through both their own research and partnering with digital suppliers for on-going forecasts. Its research shows that the keys to off-line finishing in support of the fast growing digital printing space are:

- Fast, efficient set-up and quick changeover Intuitive inspection
- defect detection and quality management
- Flexible and fast changeover of multiple decoration and finishing options
- Lightweight, ergonomic tools and accessories

CONVERTERS MUST ADAPT TO STAY COMPETITIVE

To effectively stay focused on these key aspects, converters must focus on finding and utilizing finishing equipment that truly compliments the digital workflow. The most advanced and up-to-date systems incorporate servo technology, highly accurate inspection tools and registration systems. In addition, the newer equipment is integrated not only with one or two value-added decoration attributes, but several. From turrets to hot foil and embossing to varnish and variable printing, the ability to provide variety and flexibility will allow digital printers to capture and sell more labels and packaging applications. And, all of these attributes need to be easy-to-access and operate, to be able to deliver quickly and efficiently within the unique digital print business model.

Traditional off-line finishing in many digital printing shops which is limited because of older style finishing work flows, in turn, has limited the output a digital printer/converter can supply. In order to deliver the fullest spectrum of decoration, die cutting and finishing, digital converters have begun seeking equipment that delivers more effective, flexible decoration options.

FINISHING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIGITAL PRINT

Converters are incorporating state-of-the-art registration systems and quality control tools that better fit into the on-demand digital print world. By doing so, they have been able to develop a more complete business model that delivers sound profit margins that fit nicely with today's very short-run and fast- turnaround environment.

TOP PRIORITIES

The biggest demand for finishing among digital printers and converters lies within varnishing and die cutting. In achieving these two high demand aspects, the finishing equipment's top functions become efficiency in delivering quality product, ensuring finite Registration and eliminating or reducing waste.

Newer equipment that has integrated and incorporated software and servo drive systems is able to outperform outdated or traditional finishing lines that do not take the working relationship of the digital workflow with finishing needs into consideration. When converters focus on these top priorities within their operation, half the battle is won when staying competitive and maximizing their margins in their digital printing businesses. Equipment suppliers who can offer integrated registration management, while also adding value with more in-line, easy change, full-feature decoration options, will be able to support the continued speed and growth of digital printing workflows.

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United front

THE AUSTRALIAN LABEL ASSOCIATION is working to unify the country's converters and prepare the industry for the challenges of the 21st Century. Henry Mandelson reports

The year 1901, a stellar stepping stone in the history of early Australia, marked the coming together of its diverse States into the country's fledgling Federation. Sadly not so its labeling industry, which until this year has been impeded by the strictures of State parochialism. Each undertook its limited activities, administered by a separate Board on constrained budgets, with little or no broad-based communication other than an annual conference.

Unsurprisingly, progress was at best, stop-start (with more stop than start) When its industry association's visionary president, Frank Gavrilos took the chair three years ago, he steered his fellow directors to bring the 30 year old 'Label & Tag Manufacturers Association' (LATMA) into line with similar associations around the world and create a more efficient national organisation. The process has not been without its difficulties as traditionally-minded factions strove to retain the status quo – even after the national concept finally prevailed. The new organization now has members representing five States.

Today LATMA operates as a co-ordinated national organisation, the membership of which comprises the top echelons of a savvy industry recognised worldwide for its creativity and technological sophistication. Not only does it regularly feature in the winners' circle at inter-national label award ceremonies, it moreover manufactures advanced labeling hardware widely used by Australian converters and extensively exported.

New strategy maps of the key battlegrounds were carefully prepared to pursue an integrated national concept, courtesy of six sub-committees. These cover such areas as website management, fund management, conference arrangements and the organisation's annual national awards. In addition, an active events schedule is a high priority, as is the organisation's emphasis on national training programs such as a recently-completed national circuit of a series of Lean seminars. Gavrilos bemoans the lack of educational facilities specific to the labeling industry, noting that it trails other industries when it comes to industry specific educational facilities and resources.

FRANK Gavrilos took over as chair of the Australian Label & Tag Manufacturers Association (LATMA) three years ago

MANAGING THE BUSINESS SIDE

'That's where I think we can extract some value by giving people access to those and leveraging scale across all industries or associations for topics that really can apply to all of them', he contends.

'I put these together because this is primarily what I would like to change in this industry – by which I mean having an on-going collection of training or development or educational resources available to all companies so they can improve themselves, their business models and the people within their organisation.

'I'm talking about personal development, leadership development, business tools... up to and including improving the tools and skills to manage the "business" side in the current environment.

'Whether it's about labels or paper or widgets – in the end it's still all about business; about running the business as a business not just as a print shop.'

And in a burst of personal introspection, Gavrilos added: 'I hope we can evolve culturally to a point where we are willing to take full advantage of these opportunities and put fears, egos and in some cases the parochial biases aside.'

But it is in Gavrilos' long-term overview where the real changes will occur in the Australian labeling scene. He encapsulates this by a visionary approach to the future.

COMMON ISSUES

'We're in a highly competitive business environment these days and the converters have few opportunities to differentiate themselves. In the end it comes down to those with the

best people and the most effective organization will be the winners. I'd like to see LATMA become the leader of organisational development programs offered to all members and even non-members across the industry and similar industries,' he savers.

'Most large companies have these resources but most small to mid-sized companies cannot access the right resources to develop their organization and improve their business, so this is an area where LATMA can create real value.'

Other objectives for the Australian industry by next year, Gavrilos stressed, will be to create a 'benchmark market database', similar to that available in Europe, where members can log in and source market data and comparative benchmark data to analyse their business and their strategies.

Comparison with and information from overseas is of course high on any Australian agenda given the country's remoteness from other parts of the developed world. Gavrilos now attends the international L8 group consisting of national presidents from around the world which meets to work on common issues such as environmental programs, international label awards management, packaging covenants and synergies.

'By spending time together with the other national presidents, we've already learned that we have similar challenges and are getting benefits by having others with whom to interface when confronted with these challenges,' he said.

The LATMA crystal ball is also being rubbed vigorously in other areas to enable the smaller member company to access services to burnish its competitive edge. One of these involves the concept of a leasing alliance with a major financial organisation.

Extensions from there, such as credit collections and bulk purchasing, all fit into the same category.

'These are all ways that can create value for our members. I keep saying in this economy, in these difficult times, it's all about the 'value equation'. In our case, it's creating value for members so they believe it will ultimately help their companies so that it's worth their time and money to continue to participate.'

TREND TO DIGITAL

On a broader area of industry interest, Frank Gavrilos ranged widely over current trends, particularly in the light of the comparatively small size of the Australian market compared to many others. The one on which he placed most emphasis is the trend from offset to digital.

'More and more are we seeing this burgeoning', he maintains. 'It's all about speed these days and it's an area where we can get into some applications that historically have not been on any pressure sensitive. It fits under the heading of 'growing the pie' as opposed to just stealing market share.

'For some (of the more) complicated brands, with multiple sku's, with traditional technologies the prep costs and changeovers would prohibit those applications from even considering pressure-sensitive. Now it is feasible, not to mention the option to promote, change, add bonuses or specials, etc. It's all about brand strengthening.'

If anyone is strengthening not merely the brands which his own label converting organization handles, Gavrilos and his new national executive have taken up the challenge to add a totally new perspective to the future outlook of the entire 'downunder' labeling industry.

Opinion
taking die cutting off-line

SPLITTING up converting processes seems to be a new way of creating a healthy business. Bo Meyer, Gerhardt International, talks about his observations as a supplier of rotary tooling to the industry

Over the past five years, the biggest influence on the label printing industry has to be the current financial crisis that has hit hard throughout the world. Companies were forced to down size on staff, run lengths became smaller and smaller, customers are no longer keeping label inventory on shelf, and every process is being scrutinized to see just where money can be saved. Because of all of this, process optimization began in all label printers shops

Because run lengths are becoming shorter, make readies and set-up's were the first to be under the microscope. With today's high speed presses, if one was not careful the set up could actually take longer than the run. This can take a job from being profitable to being a bust. A few years back the focus was centered on optimizing the long production runs. The higher speed presses were a great start, the dramatic change in press capabilities meant higher quality labels at a faster speed. But still, you had other steps in the process that still added time and money. Hot foiling, slitting, sheeting, and in some cases die cutting were all added expense and additional set ups, when it came to producing a label.

But as always technology moves forward and today's presses are efficient high speed machines that can perform almost every task needed in the label printing process. Printing, hot foiling, die cutting, slitting and sheeting can now all be done in one pass, on one machine, eliminating multiple set ups on a single job. Optimization, process improvement, lean manufacturing are all now a part of everyday life in a printer's facility. The combination of these processes and advancements in press technology are what keeps the label printing industry alive today.

WHY SLOW (EXPENSIVE MACHINES) DOWN?

The latest trend in Europe is to separate processes again. If a label shape is difficult to

strip, why should the most expensive machine (the printing press) be slowed down? Investments in separate converting machines can then do the stripping of the matrix, and the printing press can run at maximum speed to obtain maximum profitability. In most cases the operator of the press can operate the converting machine as well as a modern automatic servo register press.

Let me give an example: If a 10-color printing press only can run 20 m/min instead of 80 m/min due to difficult stripping of a label, then it would be more economical to have a converting station that only does the stripping and let the press run at maximum speed.

Once the job is done at 80 m/min, the press can be used for other printing jobs, and the converting machine continues to strip the difficult label at slow speed.

Tackling the counterfeiters

MIKE FAIRLEY, co-author of the new Encyclopedia of Brand Protection and Security Printing Technology, looks at the challenges and opportunities for label converters to develop anti-counterfeiting solutions

Annual global losses through counterfeiting have recently been estimated to be as high as $600 billion. A staggering sum. A sum which includes lost revenues to brand owners, lost government taxes, lost jobs at product manufacturers, and death or injury of hundreds of people each year due to products such as fake medicines, fake and faulty electrical goods, counterfeit and dangerous car components. Indeed the list of counterfeit products today is absolutely extensive.

In another recent study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) it was estimated that pirated products worldwide cost companies over $250 billion – a rise of more than 53 percent above the 2007 figure.

With both the recent counterfeiting and piracy studies it has been shown that the pharmaceutical, medical and cosmetics industries have posed a particularly high risk to the public – often because of ineffective filling agents instead of genuine, more expensive medical substances; and cheap ingredients instead of high-quality cosmetics agents.

Indeed, according to the World Health Organization, counterfeit or fake medicines can have active ingredients missing or the product be adulterated with toxic substances, or with ingredients which clash with other medicines. This can undoubtedly have significant cost implications for drug manufacturers, pharmacies, medical insurance companies, hospitals and health services.

But it's not just counterfeit and fake medicines that are at issue. Counterfeiters will target almost any products that have a value to them that can be sold through street markets, car boot fairs, on the internet, or in pubs and clubs. Products and goods which include, sports and other clothing, footwear, perfumes, automotive parts, toys, electrical goods, games and business software, fashion accessories, and many other items.

What's interesting for the label and packaging industries is that a great many of the genuine products are extensively labeled and packaged to make them attractive to buyers in the retail environment. So, apart from the counterfeit products, the counterfeiters also have to counterfeit the labels

and packaging – and even the guarantees and warranty documents for some products.

Just look at some of the ways that counterfeiters and pirates work:

- They counterfeit the entire product and the packaging and labeling
- They counterfeit packaging and labeling only to enable reject or out-of-date products to be re-packaged and passed-off as genuine
- They re-use genuine packs and labels with counterfeit products
- They use an unauthorized look-a-like or registered brand name with a counterfeit product
- They counterfeit ownership and sale documents – including guarantees
- They even counterfeit instruments of payment, i.e. checks, credit and debit cards

The obvious question that perhaps arises from all of this is: 'Why don't the brand owners, packaging printers and label converters work more closely together from the very beginning to build brand protection and security features into the packs and labels at the early design stage?' Is it a lack of understanding of what can be done, or worries about cost considerations, or simply not talking at an early enough stage?

After all, packs and labels have to be designed, printed on a substrate, with inks, by different printing processes, finished in different ways, and packs closed or labels applied. Every one of those steps has the possibility of building-in security and brand protection features. So what can the label and packaging industries – and brand owners – do to help better authenticate products, reduce counterfeiting, enhance brand security and minimize theft or product tampering?

Well, wherever possible, they should look to build counterfeit deterrence, product authentication and brand protection technologies into the design of the label or pack from the very beginning. They should aim to combine different (low and higher-cost) technologies to provide the most cost-effective overall solutions. If possible, they should look to make each label or pack unique. Then, once a pack or label has been developed with security and brand protection features they need to keep ahead of the counterfeiters by changing the solutions and technologies they have used on a frequent basis.

Part of the challenge for converters is that few of them are aware of the wide range of security technologies and solutions that are available to them. Some solutions are only available under license or restricted usage; some require specialized equipment to produce; some are probably too expensive to use on consumer products. Nevertheless, there are still literally hundreds of possible options, either on their own or in combination.

Put together, the possibilities for label and package printing companies to offer anti-counterfeiting solutions to their customers is extremely diverse and includes security designs and backgrounds, security substrates, security inks, varnishes and coatings, security printing and converting, sequential coding and numbering, Optically Variable Devices (OVDs) – primarily holograms, optically variable inks, films and coatings, and newer innovations such as bio-codes, DNA, RFID and other 'smart' label solutions.

Certainly an ever-more sophisticated and ingenious range of security design features have been developed in recent years, many of which – such as Secuseal – are finding applications in brand protection, anti-counterfeiting and security labeling. This is an Agfa Graphics dedicated design and verification tool for designers, label and package printers and producers of counterfeit-sensitive products such as pharmaceuticals, tobacco products, luxury goods, perfumes, liquors amongst others that generates complex security designs and patterns that will make counterfeits recognizable and traceable.

Then there are security substrates which have been developed to include one or more special identification features, such as chemicals, metallic strips, taggants, security threads, colored fibers, reactive dyes or watermarks that will assist in detecting fraud and in preventing counterfeiting.

Security inks, varnishes and coatings are perhaps a perfect medium to provide authentication and brand protection on labels and packaging because almost all packs and labels will be subjected to a printing process of some sort. Therefore, inks that will provide some kind of special security or authentication feature(s) can offer an effective solution to security problems.

Close cooperation at an early stage between brand owners, designers, printers and a specialist security ink manufacturer can be a cost-effective pf protecting packaged and labeled goods. Many of the security inks can be printed by most printing processes, although not all printing processes are suitable for every variation of security ink.

Many converters will also be aware of hologram (Optically Variable Devices or OVDs) solutions which have become powerful tools in the prevention of counterfeiting of packaging, labels and tags. Both overt and covert machine readable features, variable data and unique serial numbering can also be incorporated.

Holograms offer a wide variety of different features which can be matched to different levels of security requirements, form those used in relatively low-cost applications such as labels and packaging, up to more sophisticated security methods used

to protect currency. Easily identifiable holograms are primarily used for first-level identification devices and are designed to enable successful authentication at point of inspection.

While not wishing to review every kind of security and brand protection technology, it can already be seen that discussion at an early stage between brand owners, designers, printers and security solution providers can frequently offer cost-effective solution – particularly if some basic guideline rules are adopted.

Firstly, aim for the highest possible level of security with optimum cost. Secondly, look to combine low and high security elements to enhance protection, for example, by printing a sequential number over a hologram. Thirdly, use different types of security technologies to maximize counterfeit protection.

At the end of the day it should remembered that labels and packs have to be designed, they have to be printed with inks, they all need to be printed on a paper, board, film or other substrate, and they mostly need to be varnished, coated and go through some kind of converting or finishing operation – all of which can include some kind of security feature.

So why not suggest security inks, substrates, designs and converted solutions to customers from the very beginning so as to enhance their brand protection in the most cost-effective way possible?

Having said that, the real challenge is that while there are many hundreds of brand protection, security printing and authentication materials and technologies available today, few label or packaging printers generally offer more than a handful or so of the available solutions to their customers. And few really discuss all the available options with their clients from the very beginning.

Little wonder that the counterfeiter continues to thrive.

THE LATEST in a long line of Mark Andy presses installed by Flexsa, which prints eight colors and is fully UV

Rapid growth in Guatemala

GUATEMALAN label converter Flexsa has grown rapidly since its foundation in 1997, thanks to an expanding local market and regular investment in new technology. James Quirk reports

When label converter Flexografica S.A., or Flexsa, was founded in 1997, many of Guatemala's leading brands were importing 100 percent of their labels from outside the country. But over the last 13 years, rapid expansion of the local market, coupled with regular investment in new technology, have seen the company twice move to larger facilities to accommodate annual growth of up to 25 percent.

Flexsa began by printing clothes labels with a Mark Andy 830 press. 'Once we were present in the market, we quickly saw the need for quality products,' says managing director Carmina Pinto. 'There were competitors, but generally there was a limited offering to the market.'

Over the next seven years, the company invested in various Mark Andy presses plus additional finishing equipment. A mixture of 6- and 8-color machines, they also brought the company UV varnish, inline lamination, hot stamping and cold foiling capabilities. Rotoflex machines handle finishing.

In 2007, Flexsa installed shrink sleeve equipment from Karville and an HP Indigo digital press. A year later came a full UV Mark Andy machine with die-cutting and inline lamination, which produces wraparound labels and shrink sleeves. Presses are operated in two 8-hour shifts, but will often run for 24 hours during busy periods.

The Mark Andy presses boast impressive records of reliability. 'In 13 years, we've never had one of the presses completely stop because of a technical problem,' says Pinto. 'It's a remarkable record. The first Mark Andy press that we installed continues to produce the same quality of products today.'

'There is always growth in this market,' says Pinto in explanation of the company's regular investment in new technology. 'If you don't invest in new machinery and continuously improve the quality of your production, someone else will. The demand for quality in the local market is increasing. Ten years ago, we were already producing good quality, but even since then it has improved a great deal.'

The company's rapid growth, which has mirrored that of its local market, has necessitated a number of factory moves. In its original facility for four years, Flexsa then moved to a 2,000 square meter site. But continued expansion – often at 25 percent a year, says Pinto – forced a further relocation to its current factory, of 3,000 square meters, three years ago. Anticipating continued growth, this facility, which houses 65 staff, has plenty of room for further expansion in both production and office space.

Indeed, Pinto says that growth was still at 10 percent a year when the recession hit. No business was lost during the downturn and growth returned in September 2009. Since the beginning of this year, Pinto reports that normal service has been resumed.

TECHNOLOGY DIVERSIFICATION

THE COMPANY moved into digital label production with the installation of an HP Indigo press

Flexsa's investment in new technology has also been motivated by the desire to expand its product offering in what remains a comparatively small local market, despite its rapid growth since the company's foundation. Guatemala has a population of 13 million people. The ability to offer a wide range of products and technologies has been an important part of the company becoming one of the country's leading label converters.

Investment in shrink sleeve equipment, for example, was driven by market trends and has seen its production quickly rise to 25 percent of the company's total output. Digital technology, meanwhile, has allowed Flexsa 'to cater more effectively to short run work', says Pinto. 'We had felt a limitation in our offering in terms of short runs, which the local market increasingly needed. The cosmetics sector in Guatemala, for example, is mostly made up of short runs with a great deal of product variation. Digital technology has therefore opened many doors to us that we could not enter with flexo.'

The HP Indigo ws4050 is largely dedicated to cosmetics and pharmaceutical label production. Pinto reports that clients like the speed of turnaround from design to delivery, but warns that the technology has its limitations in other areas. 'In Guatemala and in Latin America in general, volume is found in consumer products such as household goods, personal care and beverages. These are often very cheap, so cannot be handled cost-effectively by digital.' Of the company's 700 jobs each month, 150 are short runs printed digitally.

In a further effort to diversify its offering, Flexsa distributes applicators and adhesive tapes, and also manufacturers its own material for use in guarantee stamps for sleeve necks.

Despite shrink sleeves' increasing share, self-adhesive labels remain Flexsa's core business with 75 percent of production. The remaining 5 percent is dedicated to paper products with no adhesive. The local market for textile labeling, the company's original production, has decreased, but remains a part of Flexsa's business.

Ninety percent of the company's labels serve the Guatemalan market, with El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua importing the remainder. Pinto says that the company hopes to increase its exports to its neighboring Central American countries. Export to South America is hindered by large distances and poor infrastructure. And what about North America? 'It would be possible logistically,' says Pinto, 'but the market is very competitive and there isn't the need. The biggest financial outlay is on materials. We import them from the US, so we wouldn't bring much of a price advantage.'

Aside from Fasson and UPM Raflatac materials imported from North America, Flexsa buys a small amount from Colombia and Argentina. But Pinto reports that not all the materials that the company uses are available from its fellow Latin American nations.

Regular investment also takes place in Flexsa's pre-press department, where a Degraf Concept platemaking machine was installed last year. It joins further pre-press equipment from Agfa, EskoArtwork and Dupont. Inks come from leading US-based suppliers. 'We believe in the importance of standardization and stability, so we don't change suppliers often,' says Pinto.

Flexsa also pays close attention to the training and development of its employees. With little local technical support, the company brings in experts from various areas to give seminars to its pre-press and press operators. The company has benefited from stability within its workforce: managers in the production and sales departments have been there since the company's foundation 13 years ago, while the accounting department, too, still counts on employees from this time.

Pinto is aware of the growing importance of environmental sustainability, but is frustrated at the lack of local infrastructure in Guatemala catering to recycling of waste. 'Waste recycling needs to be facilitated by local support,' she says, 'but it doesn't exist here.' Instead, Flexsa sells its waste to another company which uses it as fuel. To avoid the threat of counterfeiting, no whole label leaves the factory as waste; it is compacted in the plant first.

'We need to focus more on recycling as an industry,' says Pinto. 'The process must be facilitated. It is the responsibility of everyone involved: the converter, the end user and the material manufacturer.'

Pinto has extensive experience in wide web technology and the packaging sector, and cites flexible packaging as a possible avenue for expansion in the future. 'But there has been so much growth in the label market that we have not needed to expand into packaging yet,' she says.

2010 has been a rare year for Flexsa with no investment in new technology. Pinto emphasizes the need to ride out the effects of the economic downturn, but says that further installations are being planned for 2011.

Avery Dennison moves to new Argentine premises

JAMES QUIRK reports from the inauguration of Avery Dennison's new distribution center in Buenos Aires

L-R: Jorge Grondona, Ronaldo Mello, Joao Adao and Luis Chahwan open Avery Dennison's new distribution center in Buenos Aires

Avery Dennison has moved to new facilities in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The 5,700 square meter site was inaugurated recently with a ceremony attended by around 120 visitors, among them Argentina's leading label and packaging printers.

Located in Don Torcuato in Buenos Aires province, just outside the capital, the state-of-the-art facilities house three slitting machines and extensive warehousing. Operations are streamlined by lean manufacturing, adherence to 5 'S' office standards and world-class safety precautions, which see the slitting machines rigged with an infrared system that automatically switches them off should an operator get too close to the material.

The site was officially inaugurated by Joao Adao, general manager for Spanish-speaking South America; Ronaldo Mello, VP and GM of Avery Dennison South America; Luis Chahwan, supply chain manager; and Jorge Grondona, general manager of OPG.

In his opening speech, Joao Adao called the new facility 'an important investment for Avery Dennison in Argentina'. He cited three specific benefits that the new distribution center would bring to Avery's operation: 'Firstly, it allows us to continue to improve our service as the new facility counts on a warehousing area that is 80 percent bigger than our previous distribution center.

'Secondly, the improved handling and storing of materials reinforces our ability to offer consistently products of the highest quality. Thirdly, the new distribution center boasts a working environment with world-class levels of industrial security, which will guarantee the safety of all those who work in and visit our operations.

'This inauguration is just one example of the many actions we are undertaking in the region and throughout the world that support Avery Dennison's new bolder, more innovative vision, which is founded upon greater proximity to end users in strategic market segments. In this way, we are increasing the size of the market with more differentiated products which benefit the businesses of our clients.'

Ronaldo Mello, VP and GM of Avery Dennison South America, said: 'We are lucky to be present in a region that is witnessing faster growth than most other parts of the world. South America is an increasingly important area for Avery Dennison.'

Mello talked about Avery's recently launched product lines – Curvy, ThinkClear and Roll Fed Shrink – which are now being rolled out in the South American markets. ThinkClear is a range of ultra-transparent films; Roll Fed Shrink is a line of shrink sleeve materials. Fasson Curvy is an advanced PS material claimed to behave like shrink film, allowing packaging designers the freedom to create and label complex curved bottle shapes.

Avery Dennison was the first self-adhesive material manufacturer to move into South America, opening an office in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1969. Today, the company employs more than 2,000 people in the region and operates three production plants – in Brazil, Colombia and Argentina – and six distribution centers that house eight laminators and more than 20 slitting machines.

In Argentina, production takes place in San Luis, in the country's interior, from where a distribution center also serves the large wine label market in Mendoza. The rest of the material is distributed out of the company's new center in Buenos Aires.

The inauguration of Avery Dennison's new facility in Buenos Aires is one of a series of events the company has held around the world in 2010 to mark its 75th anniversary.

AVERY Dennison recently launched its ThinkClear range of ultra-transparent films

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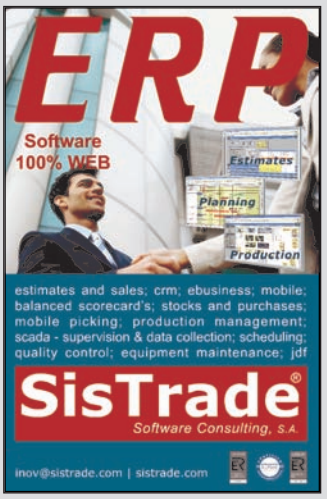

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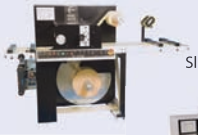

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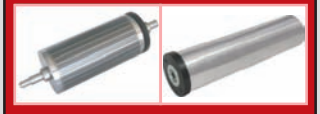

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Effective leadership

Leadership is about knowing when to lead and how to lead. It's also clearly about when to follow, how to follow and who to follow. A lot is written about what makes a good leader, however there are four main behaviours that can block our effectiveness as leaders. So what are they?

The first is the lack of clarity given by leaders to managing both the Urgent and the Important. This lack of clarity results in the Urgent getting in the way of the Important. Good leaders recognise the need for everyone in an organisation to 'manage, respect and enjoy' working on both Urgent and Important tasks.

The second leadership blocker is failing to translate "strategy" into specific actions and how each of these drive success. Leaders too often think others will work it out, but without clear proper expectations "the others" fail to challenge and the vacuum does its worst: politics, frustration, confusion and stress.

The third negative behaviour is that too often the people tasked with developing a solution have no accountability for its implementation or success. Leaders regularly choose a team of experts from across the business to develop new initiatives. These experts work up solutions that all too often fit the idealised view of how the company operates rather than how it actually operates. Very rarely is the team that comes up with the solution expected to also launch it and make it profitable.

The fourth behaviour blocker is 'accepting endless preparation'. Accepting endless preparation reflects poor leadership. Leadership that is in effect being pushed around by subordinates who fundamentally do not understand how to tackle the opportunity, disagree with it, or do not have the time and resources available to do it, but who also don't want to tell the boss that it can't be done. Endless preparation is insidious; it sets illusions of worthwhile work whilst delivering very little.

So why do we see this (bad) leadership behaviour so often? The answer often lies in poor prioritisation by leaders of what the business should be working on, a lack of clarity on what they are actually asking for and expecting to see as a result, and a weakness in confronting the procrastination of others. This may sound harsh, but leaders have to first recognise their own short comings and then fix them to drive progress.

Successful leaders not only recognise their shortcomings, they use all of the resources at their disposal to overcome them. But this is easier to say than do. Behaviours are often deep rooted. The good news is that changing the four behavioural blockers makes a huge difference to productivity.

SO HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Two principle ways of working will help.

Firstly separate activities into operational tasks and growth initiatives. Then allocate the resources needed to deliver separately stretch but achievable objectives for both side by side. This requires leaders to recognise that everyone has a natural style of working and learning that is either more left brain (operational) or right brain (creative) and to build teams with that in mind.

Secondly great businesses are often 'self leading' organisations where skills and resources are continuously developed and encouraged throughout the team. Self leading organisations grow quickly and sustainably based on active growth management – the ability to recognise the critical factors that generate success (processes, thinking styles, openness, controlled creativity etc) rather than specific initiatives themselves.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew Lester is the managing partner of Carr-Michael, business growth specialists. He has was MD of Jaguar Cars UK from 1996-2001, successfully leading the transition of the company, and is author of 'Growth Management: Two Hats are Better Than One' which Warwick Business School recommends on its Executive MBA program.
See http://www.carr- michael.com/ebrochure

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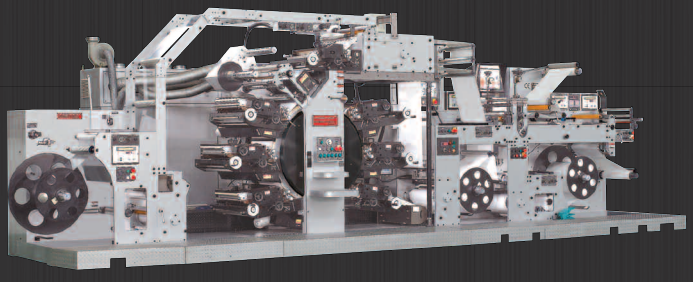

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