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Stork has launched a new version of its DSI digital press with positions for up to ten inkjet heads plus in-line converting

BEVERAGE MARKET SURVEY

New decoration techniques and a changing mix of products and dynamic global markets are creating pressures for change in the beverage sector

SLITTER REWINDER TECHNOLOGY LATEST

It's all change in the slitter/inspection-rewinder market with new players emerging and a range of new technologies and productivity techniques

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VOL.33 ISSUE#2 MAY 2011
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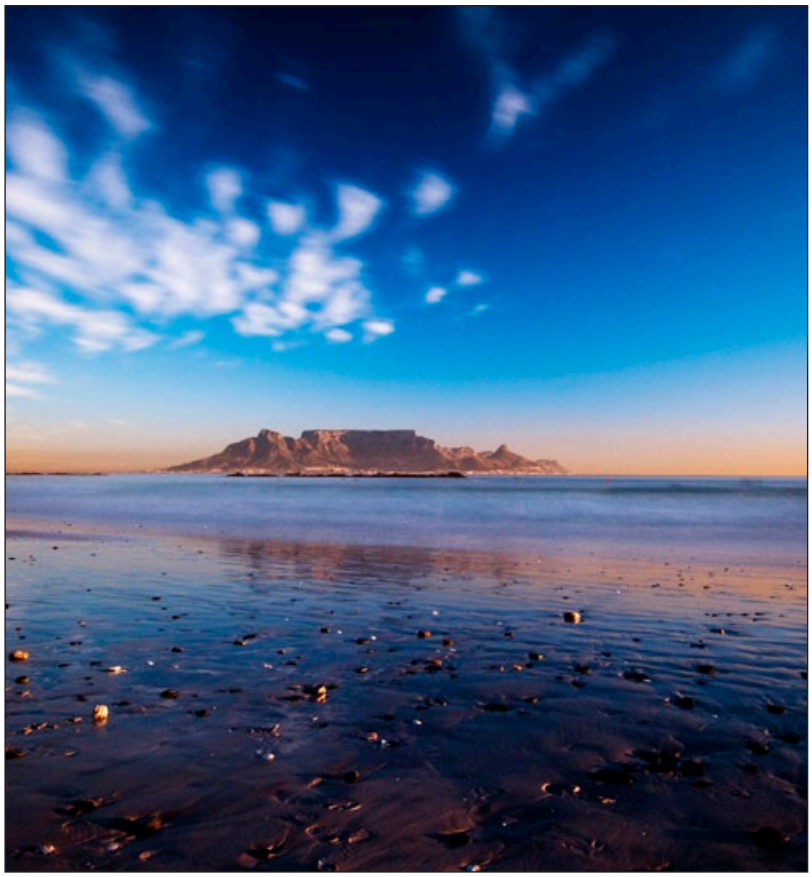

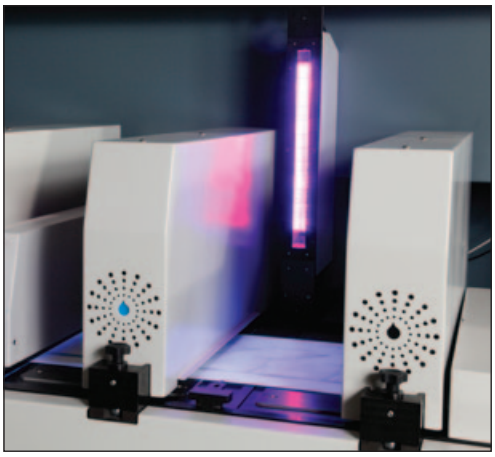

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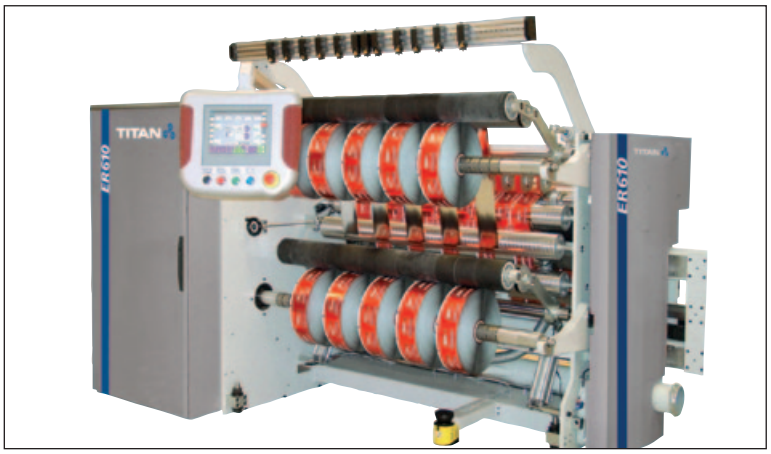

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REGULARS

A FRAGMENTED INDUSTRY CONSOLIDATES

The news that Smyth Companies has acquired Dow Industries, and that Multi-Color Corporation (MCC) has increased its holdings in the European wine market demonstrates the profound impact of private equity in reshaping the label converting world.

With the backing of Canadian-based private equity firm Novacap, Smyth purchased Dow primarily because of its American East Coast coverage, thereby forming a powerhouse national converter and an entity powerful enough to play on the world stage.

Multi-Color's latest European acquisition is wine label specialist La Cromografica, and this follows the announcement that the company is increasing its footprint in South Africa. MCC now has a truly global capability in wine label converting, matching the growth of global brands in this traditionally fragmented sector and allowing MCC to apply its existing expertise to new markets where PS still has a lot of growth potential.

As readers of Bob Cronin's regular M&A column will be aware, these developments demonstrate the perception by the private equity world that the labels industry is likely to return significant growth over the next decade, and that there are major opportunities in a highly fragmented industry to build world-class label converting companies. Although carton and flexible packaging remain far bigger than labels in terms of volume and packaging market share, these industries have already been largely integrated through a handful of top players. The only globe-striding label converter to match these behemoths today is CCL.

So a major change is taking place in the structure of the label converting world, with rapid consolidation at the top matching – and driven by – consolidation and globalization of the global branded goods industry.

At the other end of the scale, smaller converters remain agile enough to service smaller local buyers and take local FMCG business where it makes sense. The danger comes for medium sized converters, already being squeezed by the big converting groups and by globalized industry suppliers and end users, but without the local client base which supports the small converter ('mom&pop' shops).

These converters need to change rapidly their business models from selling on price and volume to providing services which are not on the radar of the top groups, and beyond the capabilities of the smaller converter. This represents a key challenge and gives great scope for the kind of creative entrepreneurship which has driven our industry for the past 35 years.

ANDY THOMAS
GROUP MANAGING EDITOR
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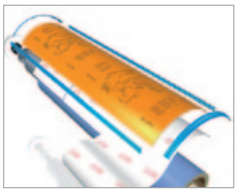

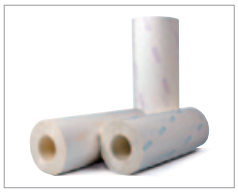

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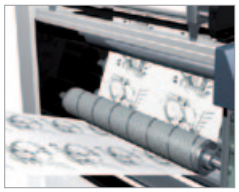

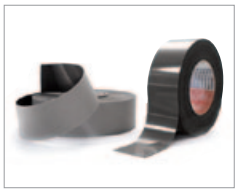

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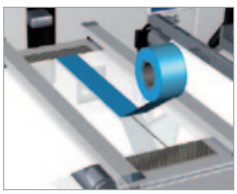

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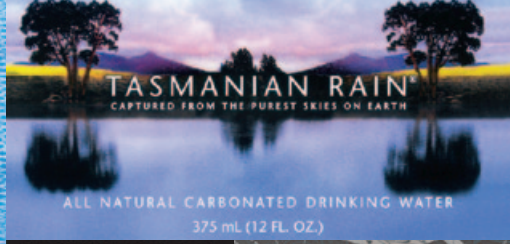

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INBOX

Letter to the editor

In the last few years, we've heard that UV LED will solve all the problems affecting metal halide UV lamps: no heat transfer to the material, no lamps to be replaced, no blower to cool the reflector.

But the power of UV LED is limited by the physical LED's output per square centimeter. Also, the heat dissipated from the diode has to be cooled with a chiller.

To increase the power, a lens is applied under each LED to concentrate the emissions. More efficient cooling solutions were then needed. You also have to use a specific ink that works only with UVA wavelengths.

In the meantime, UV lamps are seen as an 'old' technology and customers ask 'why don't you have LED technology for a standard printing machine'?

So how can we increase the efficiency of the standard metal halide lamp? Its main technology, the electronic power supply, was introduced at the beginning of the millennium, but has not increased its performance – only the cost has been reduced and the customer can obtain stackable solutions. This has erased some problems like power fluctuations and is suitable for use all around the world.

Recent developments make it possible to obtain instant ignition of the lamp, avoiding blackening and reducing energy consumption. There is also a positive impact on CO2 emission because the lamp remains off – or at an extremely low power without damaging the web – while the machine isn't printing. When the press is ready to print, the lamp ignites.

You could say this is 'old technology – nothing revolutionary' because instant start was used in Japan at the beginning of the UV curing system era in the 90's, but I say that is completely different. Microprocessor control of the power regulation means lamps start instantaneously. The instant start was originally done with fixed power – typically 80 w/cm. The process was completely electro-mechanical causing reliability problems .

Digitally controlled instant ignition rewrites the role of the UV metal halide lamp. A shutterless reflector design allows the lamp to come closer to the web, increasing efficiency and dramatically reducing the power needed. These improvements are comparable to the Compact Disc, which launched the optical disc era with 486 times the capacity of a floppy disc, and now Blue Ray with 36 times more capacity than the first CD.

Stefano Maiano, technical director UV Ray

Top industry Tweets:

Danielle Jerschefske rounds up the latest topics doing the rounds of the blogs and Twitter pages.

@Roger_Pellow @Nilpeter says sales of #label presses back to pre-recession levels during recent Denmark visit

2011 North America #Label Converter Survey finds market leaders are making moves around #sustainability

@HPIndigo Users Group event, managing director Alon Bar-Shany estimated $9B of $298B global #label & packaging market is printed digitally #Dscoop6

#Unilever CEO Paul Polman: 'We cannot choose between [economic] growth or #sustainability – we must have both.'

CPG SUSTAINABILITY ROUND UP:

L'Oréal USA will now use its Sustainable Packaging Scorecard to evaluate the life-cycle sustainability of product packaging. All new products will undergo a packaging assessment using seven criteria: use of bio-plastics, recycled materials, certified paperboard, light-weighting techniques and PIQET; PVC-free, packaging volume and primary packaging size.

PIQET (Packaging Impact Quick Evaluation Tool) is 'an online tool that identifies and reviews actions to reduce the environmental impact of packaging, particularly at the design development stage.' It allows for packaging specs, manufacturing and distribution data to be entered. Design re-manipulation is possible to improve environmental sustainability.

Coca-Cola has 2.5B of its PlantBottles in 9 global markets after its 2009 introduction. Now Heinz will use the 30 percent renewable content PlantBottle, a beverage bottle combined of petroleum and natural sugars. It will begin with the global conversion of 120M 20oz bottles this year, about one-fifth of annual production. This is Coca-Cola's first licensing agreement for the material.

At the same time, PepsiCo unveiled its 100 percent plant-based bottle made of switch grass, pine bark and corn husks. The company is currently in beta and plans to pilot in 2012. It's working to incorporate the use of agricultural by-products from its Quaker and Tropicana brands.

P&G has pledged to pursue USGBC LEED sustainable building certification for all its new sites globally. Its Taicang, China plant-in-building will be the first of its manufacturing sites to pursue LEED certification. Major US corporations including Colgate-Palmolive, Coca-Cola, DuPont, Dow Chemical and Kellogg's created an environmental packaging lobby group. Ameripen (American Institution for Packaging and the Environment) will advocate on public policy relating to packaging and the environment while remaining 'material-neutral' in approach and encouraging science-based decision-making to ensure sustainable life cycle management. It's modeled after Europen and Incpen.

NEWS

ROTOMETRICS ANNOUNCES ACQUISITION OF GERHARDT

GERHARDT brand and product lines maintained

RotoMetrics and Gerhardt International have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore the acquisition of Gerhardt by RotoMetrics.

'Combining these two companies will create a supplier with unprecedented global reach and technology leadership to support converters' total requirements for high quality rotary converting tools,' said Michael Bryant, president and CEO of RotoMetrics.

RotoMetrics, with headquarters near St Louis, Missouri, supports customers from operations in 8 countries with major manufacturing operations on 4 continents. Gerhardt International, headquartered in Herlev, Denmark, is one of the industry's leading rotary converting tool providers with manufacturing operations in Europe and Australia, and sales and service networks across the world.

'The RotoMetrics and Gerhardt teams are excited about the transaction and the opportunity it represents to continue to develop our collective technology leadership in rotary converting tools,' said Klaus Damberg, president and CEO, Gerhardt International. 'Our customers can be assured that they will continue to have access to the full range of current product solutions and technologies, along with continued support from their usual contacts within both companies.'

'RotoMetrics is in a strong financial position to pursue the transaction, and we look forward to moving quickly to implement growth plans and expanded product offerings on a global basis,' said Michael Bryant.

SMYTH COMPANIES ACQUIRES DOW INDUSTRIES

ACQUISITION brings eastern US location and creates national converting powerhouse

US converter Smyth Companies, based in St Paul, Minnesota, has acquired Dow Industries of Wilmington, Massachusetts. Dow Industries has won a number of awards around the world for its high-definition flexo printing processes, used in the health and beauty market and other consumer goods segments.

'Walter Dow has been a long-time friend whose company I've admired from afar, and I'm delighted that he has decided to tie the knot with Smyth,' said John Hickey, Smyth's CEO. 'Our goal will be to provide the industry's highest quality label production for those companies who demand the very best.'

With production locations in Minnesota, Virginia and Colorado, and the addition of the Dow facility in Massachusetts, Smyth will now employ approximately 400 people. The company specializes in package labeling for mass-marketed consumer goods products, and serves clients in the food and beverage, personal care, household care and beer markets, among others.

Smyth says it sought the acquisition of Dow because of its eastern US location, market reach and print technologies employed. Dow Industries was founded in 1976 by Walter Dow.

MADICO UK NAME CHANGE

LINTEC Japan link formalized

Madico Graphic Films, a UK-based supplier of specialist pressure-sensitive coated film products for durable label applications and screen/digital products, has announced a major re-brand which will see the company formalize its association with Lintec Corporation, one of Japan's foremost materials manufacturers and a primary supplier to the company.

Madico Graphic Films' transition to Lintec Graphic Films enhances an already successful 14-year association with Lintec Corporation, a manufacturer of pressure-sensitive adhesive products and specialty papers for a diverse array of applications and sectors. The move also marks the first time the company has permitted the use of its name by an external company during its 76 year history.

Lintec Graphic Films will benefit from the full support and resources of Lintec Corporation in order to drive product development for customers' specific application requirements. This will include an increased focus on sharing creative ideas and closer participation from the planning and R&D stage through to manufacturing.

In addition, the range of products offered by Lintec Graphic Films will increase, as the company is granted access to a much wider portfolio. As well as spanning labeling and digital printing substrates, this will include products from Lintec Corporation's other business units, such as the company's industrial division.

Lintec Graphic Films will continue to operate from Maidenhead in the UK and will retain the existing management structure, headed up by managing director Andy Voss.

Sumio Morimoto, general manager printing and variable information products operations at Lintec Corporation, said: 'Madico Graphic Films has an exceptional reputation for combining innovation, flexibility and responsiveness, to meet the specific application needs of its customers. We now look forward to an even closer relationship with Andy and his team and anticipate that our collective strengths will make for a unique and superior proposition within the marketplace.'

A YOUNG MANS LEJEUNE (left) with Andre Strauss, Finat president (1958-1971), at an association meeting in 1970

FORMER FINAT SECRETARY GENERAL PASSES AWAY

MIKE Fairley reports on the sad loss to the label industry of Mans Lejeune

It is with great sadness that Labels & Labeling reports that Mans Lejeune, the secretary general of Finat from 1969-1997, passed away on Saturday February 12.

Well known to label converters and industry suppliers throughout Europe and many other areas of the world, Mans Lejeune first signed a contract between Finat and Lejeune Association Management (then known as Bureau Le Jeune) in 1969. At that time, Finat had just 30 members and a modest budget. Taking the association to The Hague, Mans brought members together for committee meetings, seminars and study tours, as well as an annual congress, launched the Label Awards and rapidly grew membership to over the 200 mark just a few years later. Today, membership is over 500 in 54 countries. Quite an achievement, much of that due to the energy, persuasion and passion that Mans put into his 32 years as secretary general.

In 1978, Finat also endorsed the launch of *Labels & Labeling* magazine, so beginning over 30 years of liaison and co-operation between the two bodies. Then in 1991, Finat, under the guidance of Mans, became the sponsor of the Labelexpo shows in Brussels, as well as the fledgling Labelexpo Asia shows in Singapore (now in China). This funding enabled Finat to carry out various projects over the years which otherwise might have had to wait.

By the time Mans retired in 2000 more than 20 national and international associations had chosen Lejeune Association Management (LAM) as their headquarters. In that same year the responsibility for running Finat was succeeded to his son Jules, who also took over as managing director of LAM.

There can be little doubt that the worldwide label industry is richer for what Mans Lejeune achieved over his years as secretary general of Finat and that he will be sadly missed by all those that knew him during that time as a friend, colleague and associate. *Labels & Labeling* and Labelexpo extend their deepest sympathy at this time to Jules Lejeune and to all the Lejeune family.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

Claudio Vinci's winning design from Finat's congress logo competition

FINAT AND GIPEA ANNOUNCE CONGRESS

Self-adhesive label association Finat has announced the participation details of the 31st edition of its international labeling competition and the provisional program of its annual congress, which will take place at the Hilton Giardini Naxos in Taormina, Sicily, Italy, from 8-11 June 2011.

This year's congress is organized in collaboration with the Italian label association Gipea. 'We take pride in hosting this year's congress in the beautiful setting of Mount Etna and the Ionian sea,' said Alfredo Pollici, Gipea president, who will talk about the trends in the Italian label market. After two years, current Finat president Andrea Vimercati will hand over his presidency to a newly elected president during the congress.

I.D. IMAGES ACQUIRES HEATHER LABEL

US pressure sensitive label converter I.D. Images has acquired Matthews, North Carolina-based Heather Label. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

'This is our third strategic acquisition in the last 18 months. We continue to invest in the business and we are excited to have a physical presence in the southeast US. We now have four production facilities, each with unique production capabilities. All four facilities have common abilities to warehouse for our distribution partners,' said Brian Gale, I.D. Images' president. I.D. Images will continue to maintain operations at the existing Heather Label facility and expects to expand products distributed out of that facility to better service customers in that region.

L-R: Joel Carmany, Consolidated Label Company; Lori Campbell, The Label Printers; Doug Kopp, Kopco Graphics; Greg Jackson, Columbine Label Company; and Art Yerecic, TLMI chairman and Yerecic Label

TLMI ANNOUNCES EUGENE SINGER AWARD WINNERS

The winners of the Eugene Singer Award for Management Excellence have been announced by TLMI.

One of TLMI's highest honors, this award recognizes excellence in business management measured and defined by an established set of growth and profitability ratios through the TLMI Management Ratio Study. It is given annually to four narrow web converting companies; each company within a certain sales range category.

The following companies recieved the 2010 TLMI Eugene Singer Awards at the association's recent Converter Meeting in Palm Beach, Florida:

- Columbine Label Company – Centennial, Colorado. The small company category is defined by annual sales of less than USD $6 million.
- Kopco Graphics – Fairfield, Ohio, won for the mid-range company category, defined by sales of $6-14 million. This is Kopco's third TLMI Eugene Singer Award.
- The Label Printers – Aurora, Illinois, won for the medium company category, defined by sales of $15-35 million. This is The Label Printer's second Eugene Singer Award.
- Consolidated Label – Longwood, Florida, won for the large company category, defined by sales greater than $35 million. This is Consolidated Label's ninth Eugene Singer Award.

AVERY OPENS DESIGN CENTER

Avery Dennison's Retail Branding and Information Solutions (RBIS) group has opened its first Europe-based customer design and innovation center for the apparel industry. The center provides a location for retailers, brands and manufacturers to experience the entire brand process through a simulated global supply chain, complete with its own brand 'UNITI'.

Shawn Neville, group vice president of RBIS, and the Mayor of Sprockhövel, Dr Klaus Walterscheidt, opened the 'UNITI' brand's store at the center. In a departure from tradition, the ribbon was 'cut' using RFID technology inserted into the material. Detlef Merken, promoter of trade and industry to the Mayor's office, was also present. The official opening also marked Avery Dennison's own rebranding, with 'Solutions' replacing 'Services' in the group's title.

The site in Sprockhövel, Germany, was previously used as a manufacturing center, allowing the company to benefit from a ready-built knowledge base. Avery hopes the center will work as a hub for the German sales team. It has enhanced capabilities in design, high definition graphic embellishments, sustainable packaging, as well as RFID-enabled inventory and loss prevention technology. It also provides space for Avery to find new ways to build on investments in material science, high speed digital printing and information technology.

FURTHER ACQUISITION
FOR MULTI-COLOR IN ITALY

US-based converting group Multi-Color Corporation (MCC) has acquired Italian wine label printer La Cromografica. MCC will pay 8.3 million euros for 100 percent ownership of the Florence-based company, whose revenues in 2010 were approximately USD $11 million (8 million euros). 'The acquisition perfectly complements our existing Italian business, Guidotti Centrostampa, by providing short run technology solutions common to our wine label businesses in the USA, France, Australia and South Africa,' said Nigel Vinecombe, MCC president and CEO. 'We know La Cromografica's type of business extremely well and have been impressed by Guidotti Centrostampa's performance and the opportunities in the Italian wine market. This is a perfect match for us.'

La Cromografica's management and team will continue to run the business from their current Florence location with general manager Marco Caciotti reporting to European president Andrea Guidotti.

AVERY DENNISON UNVEILS
NEW BUSINESS UNIT NAMES

Avery Dennison has given its business units new names as part of a rebranding exercise.The company's largest business unit, Roll Materials, becomes Label and Packaging Materials to reflect the fact that its products extend beyond labeling to packaging applications.

Retail Information Services is now Retail Branding and Information Solutions to reflect its offering of products and services for retailers and apparel brands. Office Products becomes Office and Consumer Products to reflect the relevance of its organization and identification products to the home as well as the office.

Graphics and Reflective Products becomes Graphics and Reflective Solutions; and Specialty Tape Division becomes Performance Tapes. The company's Specialty Converting Division, which includes Industrial and Automotive Products, Performance Films, Business Media and Security Printing, is now Designed and Engineered Solutions. Medical Products, the RFID Division, and Automotive are now Medical Solutions, RFID, and Automotive Solutions, respectively.

THE INSIDER

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

NOVAMELT-JOWAT COMPLETES FACTORY EXPANSION

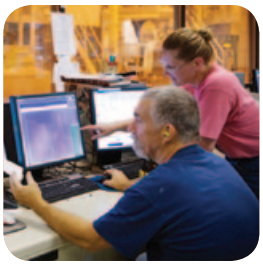
On February 23, Novamelt-Jowat celebrated the completion of its factory expansion in Archdale, North Carolina, USA, with a ribbon cutting ceremony. The owners of Novamelt, Harold Braun and Pieter Mol, as well as senior management from Jowat Corporation, were in attendance at the building dedication and opening ceremony.

'This investment underscores Novamelt's dedication to our customers in the North, Central, and Latin America North markets,' said Braun. 'This expansion is just the next step in our global growth strategy and in our efforts to support our growing customer base worldwide, and to secure reliable sources of raw material supply for this growth.'

The new facility includes 30 feet tall movable racks to maximize storage and enhance operational and distribution efficiencies. The expansion has effectively doubled the size of the manufacturing and storage facility, which has been operating at full capacity since early 2006, says the company.

LOW MIGRATION OFFSET INK

Sicpa has launched a low migration UV sheet-fed offset ink. Sicura LM 361 is targeted at labels and food packaging applications



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NEWS

NEW US location for Bluestar manufacturing facilities

BLUESTAR SILICONES PLANS TO EXPAND

THE COMPANY announces major US investment

Bluestar Silicones has announced investment plans to expand its manufacturing footprint and R&D operations in North America. The plans include Bluestar Silicones acquiring a 147,000 square foot former textile chemicals factory in Charlotte, North Carolina, which will become home to the company's two manufacturing sites currently located in Ventura, California, and Rock Hill, South Carolina. The new site, which sits on 19.4 acres, offers Bluestar Silicones significant room for growth to support its global five-year strategic plan to become a leader in the silicones industry.

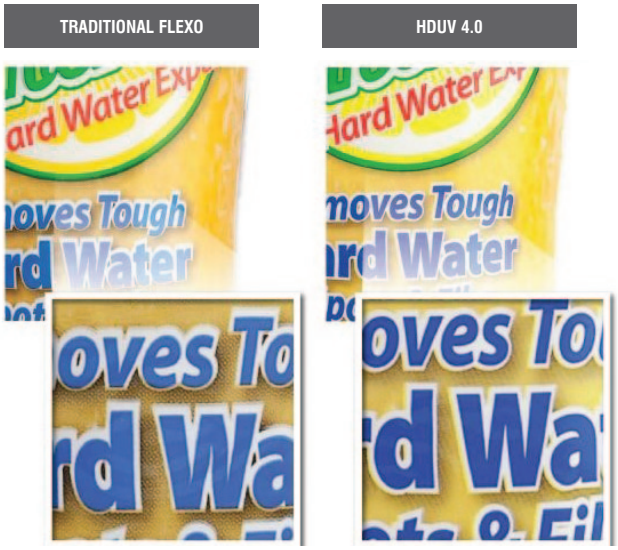
'The sizable footprint in Charlotte will enable us to expand our manufacturing workshops, increase our laboratory space and give us significant room to grow in existing specialty markets and enter new markets,' said J. Christopher York, president of Bluestar Silicones North America. 'In addition, this investment will greatly improve our day-to-day operational efficiencies to become even more responsive to market needs.'

The company also intends to increase staffing in sales, marketing, and technical service. Employment is projected to increase 25 percent in the next two years at the new Charlotte facility. As part of the plan, existing manufacturing workshops will begin to be transitioned into the Charlotte site towards the end of this year. The company will add a range of operational improvements to its processes, including statistical control and automation machinery wherever possible.

According to York, new process equipment will be purchased and installed at the new site for more localized manufacturing to support growth in key markets. In addition, bulk storage capability will be available at the new site to improve efficiency and assure raw material feedstock supply.

This investment also includes expanding R&D capabilities in North America at the new site. Bringing R&D personnel together from Ventura and Rock Hill to Charlotte, combined with larger R&D laboratory facilities, new pilot equipment and increased staffing, will offer customers improved technical responsiveness and faster product development, says the company.

Bluestar Silicones says the transition for customers will be seamless in terms of supply, with noticeable improvements in its manufacturing environment and operational efficiencies. The new site is expected to be fully transitioned by mid-2013.



NEW SHRINK LABEL FOR MCDOWELL

THE FIRST HDUV 4.0 Shrink sleeve label

US-based converter McDowell Label has partnered with Envirocon Technologies, the makers of Lemi Shine, to manufacture the first High Definition UV 4.0 shrink sleeve label to be mass produced in the US market. Lemi Shine, an automatic dishwasher additive, got a new HDUV 4.0 shrink sleeve to accentuate its hourglass figure.

McDowell Label recently launched HDUV 4.0, the largest generation of an all-encompassing printing process based on an entirely digital work flow. HDUV 4.0 provides brand owners the benefit to enjoy freedom of design, says the company. This discipline allows for the graphic reproduction of brand identity, as intended by design. McDowell Label has partnered with EskoArtwork by investing in the latest pre-press technologies. 'The result of this partnership delivers an extended tonal range, smooth vignettes and exceptional highlights with eye-catching detail,' said the company in a statement. 'This advanced process results in a replicable symphony of color accuracy and consistency of exact detail that is unachievable with other printing platforms.' The new HD package is in production and currently shipping to major retailers across the US.

K+B PARTNERS WITH JET TECHNOLOGIES

Kocher + Beck has appointed Jet Technologies as its distributor in Australia and New Zealand. This move comes after the termination of Jet's agency agreement with Gerhardt International.

'With five production facilities across the world and a leading market position in rotary tooling, Jet Technologies is excited to bring K+B to the region,' said a spokesperson for Jet Technologies. 'Together with Jet Technologies' extensive local network in the narrow web, print and converting fields, the partnership will provide an exciting alternative to the market place.'

NEWS

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

UPM RAFLATAC TO ACQUIRE BRAZILIAN COATING OPERATION

UPM Raflatac is to acquire Gumtac, the Brazilian labelstock coating and slitting business of BIC Group. Gumtac is located in Rio de Janeiro and employs approximately 35 people. The closing of the acquisition is subject to obtaining appropriate licenses from local authorities. 'UPM Raflatac has in recent years developed a widely recognized brand in Brazil. Through our distribution terminal in Jaguariuna, Sao Paulo, we have served key customers in this rapidly growing market. Gumtac's well-managed operation will give us an excellent platform to extend our product offering and further support our customers' growth in the region,' said Jouko Lahepelto, senior vice president, Americas and Asia Pacific.

UPM RAFLATAC LAUNCHES WEBSITE FOR DESIGNERS

UPM Raflatac has launched a website for label and packaging designers. Pro Label Studio presents visual examples and information about the numerous possibilities that self-adhesive label materials offer for building brands and enhancing the shelf-presence of consumer products. Pro Label Studio helps designers select the right label materials for end-uses including wine, beverage and personal care labeling, and renders textured previews of selected designs and materials on various kinds of product packaging. By rotating the previews, users get a feel for how the selected combinations work in real life.

FLEXCON ACQUIRES NEW BUSINESS ASSETS

Flexcon, a manufacturer of pressure-sensitive films and adhesives, has acquired Arlon Engineered Coated Products and Arlon SignTech of San Antonio, Texas, forming Flexcon Industrial, LLC. Flexcon Industrial has hired all of the executives and employees and the move expands the company's manufacturing capabilities to produce engineered products. Arlon Engineered Coated Products has manufactured a range of industrial products for numerous industries for over 50 years. The company coats and laminates a variety of films, foams, synthetic materials and foils. Arlon SignTech produces flexible PVC substrates used in outdoor signage and is a supplier to Arlon Graphics.

HEIDELBERG ACQUIRES BELGIAN SOFTWARE SPECIALIST CERM

PRESS manufacturer adds MIS to product portfolio

Heidelberg has acquired Belgian software specialist Cerm. The company, headquartered in Oostkamp, is a developer of management information systems (MIS) for commercial and label printing and employs 26 staff. Effective immediately, Heidelberg plans to launch and sell Cerm's existing portfolio worldwide and integrate it into the Prinect production workflow.

'By acquiring Cerm, a well-known software specialist in western Europe, Heidelberg is expanding its portfolio of management information systems. We aim to present a fully integrated MIS solution with central data management in combination with our Prinect print shop workflow at drupa 2012 and start the worldwide roll-out step by step,' said Marcel Kiessling. 'Cerm is an excellent addition to our existing solutions thanks to the strengths of the company's products and the customer segments it serves.'

Tom Musschoot, former owner and new managing director of Cerm, said: 'We'll continue to serve all our existing customers in all our markets. Additionally, as part of Heidelberg, we will be able to extend our business to a truly global level by making use of Heidelberg's worldwide presence and international sales channels.'

Heidelberg plans to integrate the Cerm products step-by-step into the Prinect print shop workflow. The aim is to launch a fully integrated management and production workflow for controlling all commercial and production processes in a print shop, irrespective of the business model and size of the company. The new development will allow customers who initially opt for Cerm technology to switch to a comprehensive integration product at a later date.

So far, Heidelberg has successfully connected around 50 third-party MIS to the Prinect print shop workflow. At last year's Ipex trade show, the company also established an MIS partner program with four leading suppliers, including Cerm. The aim is to enable users to boost their productivity by further improving interfaces between third-party MIS systems and the Prinect print shop workflow that have already been implemented successfully in customer projects. This program will continue to be an essential part of the company's strategy.

'Heidelberg's worldwide presence including Gallus will create a unique sales channel for our very specialized narrow web solution,' said Musschoot. 'We are already serving our first US customers, and will now be able to reduce the time-to-market considerably.' Cerm's existing partnerships will remain in place.

CCL TO INVEST IN JOINT VENTURE LABEL COMPANY FOR MIDDLE EAST

CCL acquires 50 percent stake in Pacman-CCL group

Global converting group CCL Industries has signed a binding agreement to acquire a 50 percent interest in Pacman-CCL, a privately owned group of label companies based in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates with additional operations in Cairo, Egypt, and Muscat, Oman. Pacman-CCL has been a license holder of CCL Label since 2009. The remaining 50 percent interest in the venture will continue to be held by Ali Saeed Juma Albwardy who, through his holding entity Albwardy Investment, has overseen the growth of the company for more than two decades.

CCL Industries will pay US$18.5 million in cash to acquire its 50 percent interest in the venture. The agreement also binds CCL and Albwardy to complete an investment in a new facility currently under construction in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 2011, with an estimated total cost of US$4.0 million to be funded by a combination of debt and additional equity in the new operation shared equally by the parties. CCL expects its own equity contribution to be funded by dividends from the venture in its first year. The partners have also agreed in principle to a prospective future greenfield investment by Pacman-CCL in India.

Geoffrey Martin, president and CEO of CCL Industries, said: 'We have enjoyed a great relationship with John Dawson, managing director of Pacman-CCL, and his team since we began the license arrangement in 2009.'

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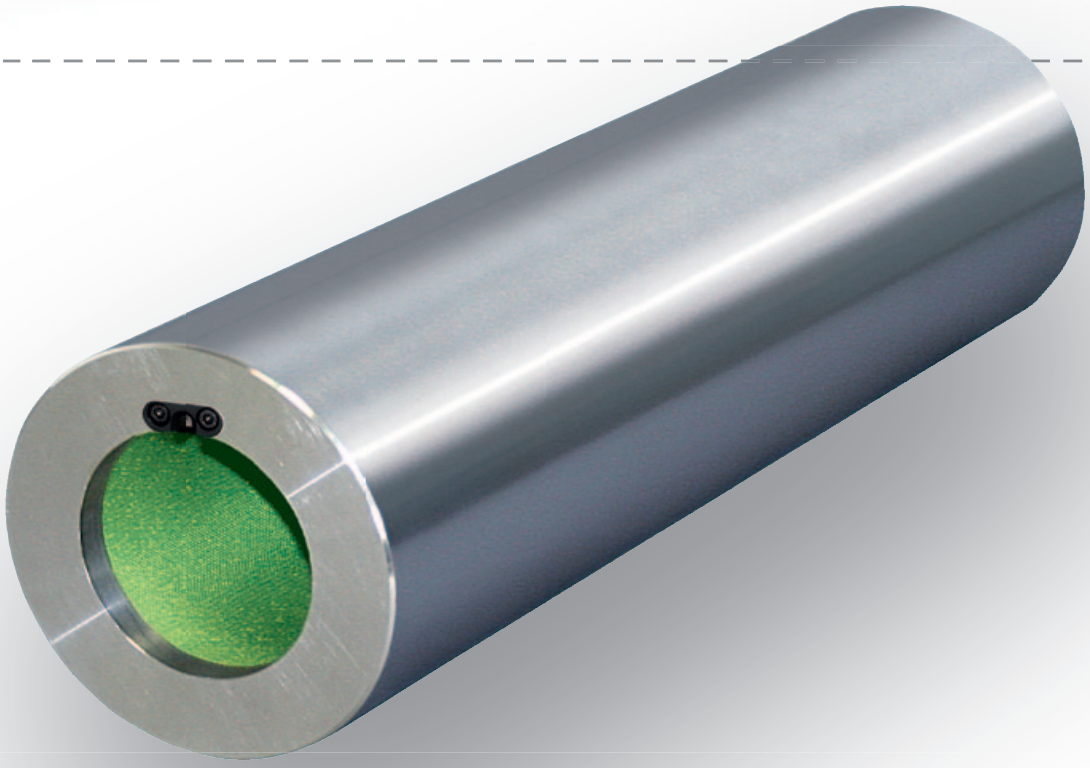

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L-R: Karl Bostock, Paragon's finance director; Steve Dunne, managing director Skanem UK; Tony Lennon, CEO of Paragon Group; and Dennis Patterson, Paragon's operational director

SKANEM SELLS RETAIL LABELING BUSINESS

PARAGON picks up Gateshead, UK-based operation

Skanem UK, Newcastle, has completed the sale of its retail food labeling business, based at its Gateshead operation, to Paragon Print & Packaging.

Steve Dunne, managing director of Skanem UK, said: 'This is part of our strategic changes we are effecting in the UK. We have grown rapidly both in the multinational and the domestic market in recent years, but with such growth comes the necessity to focus on core markets and core activities. The expectations from various markets are becoming more demanding. As a consequence, we will focus on serving the growing portfolio of key strategic customers as we do not want to give our retail customers reduced service expectations in the future. We want to continue our focus on high quality customer relations. Paragon Print & Packaging are highly respected in the food manufacturing and the food retail sector and our food business could not be placed in better hands.'

Tony Lennon, group CEO of Paragon Print & Packaging, said: 'This transfer of business makes good commercial sense to all parties as we continue to focus and expand our strategic commitment to the domestic food manufacturing and food retail sector. The transfer has been concluded in a very fair and open manner and both Skanem and Paragon will continue to work alongside each other to ensure that all existing customers' requirements are satisfied.'

ZELLER+GMELIN ACQUIRES NEW PROPERTY IN US

Ink manufacturer Zeller+Gmelin has purchased an 83,247 square foot building in Henrico County, Virginia, USA, in order to expand its business operations as well as enhance efficiencies and productivity. The new location will combine corporate offices, manufacturing and a warehouse distribution center. Zeller+Gmelin's corporate headquarters is located in Eislingen, Germany, and the company operates numerous manufacturing and service support facilities around the world. Zeller+Gmelin has supplied UV printing ink products for lithography, flexography, dry offset and screen printing to customers in more than 75 countries.

HOT OFF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

GE PARTNERS WITH AVERY DENNISON FOR RF SENSOR TECHNOLOGY

GE's Technology Ventures operation is to commercialize its Radio Frequency Sensing technology (RFS) through a commercial license to the RFID division of Avery Dennison. The proprietary RFS technology will enable a wide range of low-cost wireless sensing products in a series of applications, including industrial, food and beverage, packaging and pollution prevention.

GE RF Sensing technology provides a platform for passive, wireless sensing capability. Built on traditional RFID technology, these sensors can detect toxic industrial chemicals (TICs), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), as well as biological agents and physical parameters. Developed by a team of scientists and engineers at GE Global Research, this sensing approach is capable of providing selective quantification of chemical agents with low detection limits, and can operate in the presence of ambient humidity and other interferences. The sensors comprise HF RFID tags laminated with unique films, and work in combination with a proprietary reader that interrogates the tag to read both the RFID tag data and the complex RF waveform associated with the chemical, biological or physical measurement.

Jack Farrell, vice president and general manager at Avery Dennison RFID, added: 'Through our technology development with GE, we have successfully demonstrated that RF Sensors can be manufactured using a standard roll-to-roll process. This achievement makes RF Sensors a commercially viable solution for high-volume applications across our diverse base of customers.'

In the upcoming months, GE and Avery Dennison will collaborate to engage partners and conduct RF Sensor technical field trials of applications for relevant industries such as pharmaceutical, food assurance and agriculture.

EFI ACQUIRES PRINTSTREAM

EFI has acquired Streamline Development, the developer of PrintStream ERP/MIS software focused on mailing and fulfillment services for the printing industry.

'While PrintStream is the first product we have acquired as part of our new consolidation strategy, we will be actively seeking out additional print ERP/MIS solutions worldwide,' said Marc Olin, GM of EFI's Advanced Professional Print Software division. 'By concentrating our investment and efforts on Monarch, Radius, Pace and PrintSmith, we can ensure that the largest development and support teams in the industry are delivering the best possible solutions to give our clients the best chance to succeed in today's challenging business environment.'

PrintStream, which has been renamed EFI PrintStream, has several key features and technologies including direct mail and warehouse management tools. EFI will leverage these strengths by offering the PrintStream Warehouse Management/Fulfillment module as an add-on module to a number of EFI's existing ERP/MIS products. In addition, Laurence Snyder, as well as the rest of the PrintStream team, are now part of EFI and will assist in the development of the company's products.

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ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

UPM RAFLATAC ACHIEVES FSC AND PEFC CERTIFICATIONS IN FINLAND

UPM Raflatac has achieved both FSC and PEFC Chain of Custody certifications for a range of labelstock produced at its Tampere factory in Finland. The certificates verify the sustainability and legality of all wood fibers used at the Tampere site for the production of paper labelstocks.

'A clear chain of custody benefits everyone in the supply chain. Our customers can purchase paper labelstock knowing that their materials are sourced from sustainably managed, legally logged forests where consideration has been given to biodiversity. Retailers are able to demonstrate their sustainable credentials to consumers, who in turn can make responsible buying decisions. This is a typical instance of our commitment to the development of our environmental performance,' said Juha Virmavirta, general manager for UPM Raflatac in Finland.

UPM Raflatac's range of PEFC-approved products in Europe consists of the company's Vellum, Raflacoat and Coated Board 130 materials, which target high-volume labeling in the food and retail industries and logistics end-uses. UPM Raflatac also offers a wide range of FSC and PEFC certified products for the A4 and cut-size market, together with a new A4 grade made from 100 percent recycled paper.

In addition to the Tampere site, UPM Raflatac has achieved a chain of custody satisfying both FSC and PEFC certifications for factories in Scarborough (UK), Polinya (Spain), North Carolina (USA), Illinois (USA) and Wroclaw (Poland), and FSC certification for a factory in Changshu (China). The Nancy factory in France will attain chain of custody certifications during 2011.

'This achievement is a strong step towards our dual aims of supplying customers with products that are sustainable over their lifecycle and increasing our range of eco-labeled products,' said Robert Taylor, environmental director for UPM's Engineered Materials business.

NEW ZEALAND DEBUTS CARBON FOOTPRINT WINE LABEL

Wine consumers in New Zealand will soon find Carbon Reduction labels outlining a wine's carbon footprint when the New Zealand Wine Corporation's (NZWC) Mobious Malborough Sauvignon Blanc hits the shelves. The first of what is expected to become a trend among wine labeling will show the wine's carbon footprint has been measured at 190g CO_2e per 125ml serving. NZWC has been working alongside Planet Ark, the program manager of the Carbon Reduction Label in Australia. The Australian environmental group's Diane Mann stated: 'The Carbon Reduction label helps people easily identify products that are actively working to reduce their carbon footprint. By choosing products that carry the label, consumers are supporting companies that are working towards a more sustainable future.'

SUN CHEMICAL ISSUES 2010 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Sun Chemical has released its 2010 sustainability report. As in the company's previous report, measurements were provided for seven key sustainability metrics to help customers and consumers understand the company's environmental impact.

The report shows data collected since 2005 from approximately 170 Sun Chemical sites in over 25 countries. The sustainability metrics measured in the data include energy consumption/conservation at production and non-production sites, the energy carbon footprint at the production sites, process waste reduction, water consumption, materials safety and employee safety.

Gary Andrzejewski, Sun Chemical's corporate vice president of environmental affairs, said: 'We have received favorable feedback from our customers when we issued our first sustainability report in 2009. They appreciate that Sun Chemical proactively provides them with meaningful data that they can use to understand our sustainability performance. These data-driven reports are an important part of our sustainability effort, and are part of our commitment to providing our customers with the resources they need to meet their sustainability goals. This is one way we help them achieve those goals.

Michel Vanhems, sustainability leader, Sun Chemical, added: 'Through a defined road map, our sustainability policy pushes us as a company, to improve the eco-efficiency of our processes and products. This sustainability report not only provides our key sustainability metrics for 2010, it also gives numerous examples of Sun Chemical sites across the globe that reduced their environmental footprint or improved employee safety. These significant achievements motivate us to further strengthen our program while maintaining our customer-centric focus.'

Both the 2009 and 2010 sustainability reports, along with the 'Carbon Footprint Report 2010', which outlines the results from nine independent environmental analyses focused on quantifying the carbon footprint of its product lines, are available to customers and can be requested online.

L-R: David Ferguson, president, McCourt Label; Bert Clark, operations manager, McCourt Label; Calvin Frost, CEO, Channeled Resources Group

MCCOURT LABEL WINS TLMI ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

Pennsylvania-based converter McCourt Label was presented with the TLMI Environmental Leadership Award for Process Improvement at the Annual Meeting of the Tag and Label Manufacturers Institute (TLMI).

This award recognizes those TLMI member companies that have consistently shown a commitment to progressive environmental practices across a range of areas, including solid waste reduction, recycling, waste or energy recovery, the implementation of new 'clean' technology and processes, and the implementation of an education program.

The decision for these leadership awards is made by an independent panel of judges from industry peers that recognize and grade the specificity of the submitted applications. Past winners of the award include 3M, Avery Dennison, Fujifilm and DuPont.

McCourt won the TLMI award for building upon its ISO 14001:2004 environmental management system, and specifically for its employee team project to recycle cooling water used in its solvent distilling process.

COGENERATION PLANT FOR TORRASPAPEL

Torraspapel plans to install a new combined cycle cogeneration plant at its coated paper mill in Sant Joan les Fonts, in Girona, Spain. The 24.9 MW plant will be operational in the summer of 2011, and represents an investment of 32 million euros.

Cogeneration is an efficient power generation system, permitting simultaneous production of electrical and thermal energy for industrial consumption. This saves on primary energy use as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing industrial competitiveness.

In addition to the industrial benefits of cogeneration, it brings advantages to the region where the plant is located: an enhanced electricity supply, more efficient power distribution and reduced dependence on external sources.

With this new cogeneration facility, a total of five Torraspapel mills – Zaragoza, Sarrià, Leitza, Motril and Sant Joan – now use high-efficiency energy systems.

HERMA REVEALS CARBON FOOTPRINT

Herma claims to be the first manufacturer in the labels industry to publish figures on the carbon footprint of adhesive material and labels. One interesting finding is that film release liners produce twice as much CO2 emissions as paper substrates.

UPM RAFLATAC LAUNCHES BIODEGRADABLE FILM RANGE

UPM Raflatac has launched its RafBio range of biodegradable cellulose films, PLA films, and paper faces combined with the company's new biodegradable adhesive RP 55 Bio. Aimed at the food, beverage and personal care segments, the range is designed to offer versatile options compliant to EN13432, the European standard for compostable packaging.

The RafBio cellulose films in clear, white and silver are made from renewable wood-pulp from managed plantations. They are sustainably sourced and home-compostable. Cellulose films are top-coated for good printability.

The RafBio PLA films in clear and white are derived from corn starch and are suitable for direct food contact. These industrially compostable PLA films have naturally good printing properties, excellent scratch resistance and higher levels of transparency and gloss, says the company. They also offer resistance to moisture, fats and oils.

The newly launched RP 55 Bio adhesive has been formulated for sustainability and biodegradability. It includes a high content of renewable (non-fossil derived) materials. RP 55 Bio is available with the biodegradable films as well as two paper faces: Raflacoat Plus and Thermal ECO 300. Most papers can be classed as chemically unmodified materials of natural origin, and can be accepted as biodegradable without testing.

RafBio films are also supplied with UPM Raflatac's RP 37 adhesive. The adhesive itself isn't biodegradable, but adhesive and ink amounts below one percent of the total packaging are 'considered negligible' under EN 13432, according to UPM Raflatac. RP 37 is water resistant.

THE RAFBIO RANGE is aimed at the food, beverage and personal care segments

L&L PUBLISHES SUSTAINABILITY GUIDE

L&L is to publish a reference book on sustainability and the environment, authored by label industry 'guru' Mike Fairley – founder of L&L and strategic consultant to the Tarsus group – and Danielle Jerschefske, L&L's North America editor.

The book will look at a wide range of environmental issues affecting the labels and packaging industry, including a comprehensive guide to current and pending environmental standards promulgated by governments, international standards organizations, industry bodies, global fmcg brands and retailers.

The guide will also look at state of the art recyclable and compostable materials and examine issues such as the current status of liner waste recycling technologies.

NEW PRODUCTS

1 SOFTWARE ASSESSES SHELF IMPACT
ESKOARTWORK AND VTALES GRAPHICS

Thanks to a joint effort by EskoArtwork and VTales Graphics, a new software application has been created that allows brand owners and retailers to assess the on-the-shelf and point-of-sale impact of their packaging and displays. The partnership draws on EskoArtwork's expertise in creating realistic 3D packaging models and VTales' visualization technology. The result, called Esko Store Visualizer, allows users to place virtual objects in photographed scenes, enabling them to see their designs in an in-store setting and determine how they compare with rival products. Store Visualizer is compatible with all Esko Suite 10 tools and is available immediately.

'Most buying decisions are made in the store,' explained Kris Van Bael, EskoArtwork 3D and visualization product manager. 'This is why it's so important for brand owners and retailers to evaluate packaging designs, displays and shelve layouts as early as possible in this realistic store context. Store Visualizer gives them this insight. It allows them to assess their designs in a retail environment before the packaging and displays are actually produced. No need to say this saves them significant time and money.' The virtual packaging mock-ups are created with EskoArtwork packaging design software (ArtiosCAD or Studio). Using Store Visualizer, the mock-ups are easily placed on shelves or displays in realistic store environments. This way, brand managers can assess on screen the appeal of their designs early in the design cycle. The visuals can also be used by market research companies to measure the performance of different designs or shelf layouts.

LABEL LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
PRISYM ID

Prisym ID has launched Prisym Enterprise, a label lifecycle management software that assists manufacturers to create, review, revise, approve and print labels securely in multiple locations. Providing a central control for label design, it automatically maintains version information and enforces appropriate access controls.

The web-based system is quick to deploy and can be used outside the organization by selected partners, customers or suppliers.

2 LABEL PRINTER/APPLICATOR
THARO SYSTEMS

Tharo Systems has launched its PA2000 Specialty Tamp label printer/applicator as an accessory for the company's H-400 Series of thermal/thermal transfer barcode label printers.

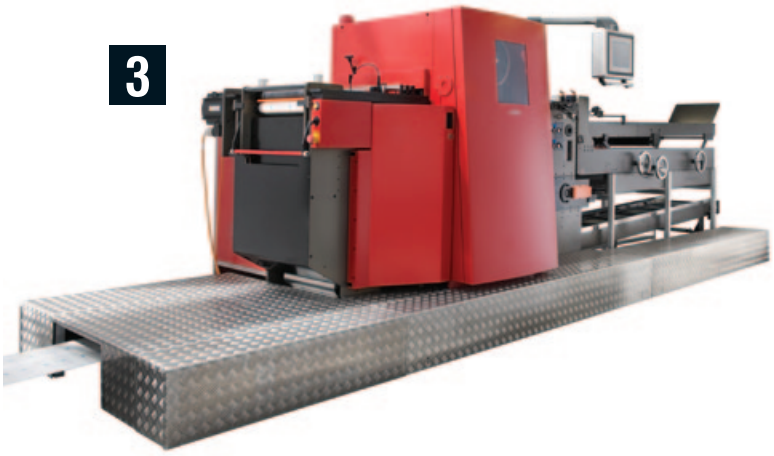
The Tharo PA2000 Specialty Tamp label printer/applicator is said to be easy to use, with minimal adjustments necessary, quick setup and changeover for applying labels to the top or side of varying height products. The PA2000 Specialty Tamp features a small footprint – 16.5in wide x 32in tall x 30in long – with a remote front panel for easy access, regardless of the orientation of the applicator. It has an all-metal construction and is made to last with time-tested components.

With or without a computer attached, the PA2000 Specialty Tamp can print and apply labels. The PA2000 Specialty Tamp can apply labels as small as 0.20in x 0.20in. Suitable for small, delicate, high precision applications, the PA2000 Specialty Tamp is suited to applying labels to electronic components, printed circuit boards, pharmaceutical and medical applications, cosmetics, automotive parts, plastic parts, assemblies and more.

The PA2000 Specialty Tamp is automatic or semi-automatic, and can apply up to 58 labels per minute depending on printer used, label size and height of product.

VISY TECHNOLOGY SYSTEMS'
VARIOUS COMPANIES

Visy Technology Systems, a division of Australian packaging giant Visy Pack, has partnered with RFID specialist Mikoh Corporation to produce a locally made label press. Described as a Mikoh 4-color variable inkjet printer with several advanced options such as fan-folding, die cutting, laminating and secure variable data print finishes, the machine's base unit comes from a Rotomag flexo press developed by Australian printing equipment manufacturer Rotary Engineering. The partners say the new unit will have applications in short run variable data printing of labels and other types of flexo packaging. The unit requires no pre-treated base stock, while its use of Xaar 1001 inkjet heads means it will run ink from a wide range of manufacturers. Its standard configuration prints 210mm wide on a 250mm web width at up to 25 meters per minute.



3 WEB-FED FLATBED DIE-CUTTER
EDALE

Edale has unveiled a new line of converting equipment: a web-fed flatbed die-cutter, the FDC-510.

The FDC-510 is claimed to combine the best of sheet-fed flatbed die-cutting technology with a cutting-edge servo-driven constant tension web transport system. Designed for fast job change and set-up, when run in-line with machines such as the Edale Gamma flexo printing press, or digital printing lines, the FDC-510 creates an efficient web-fed, single pass folding carton production line ideal for short run cartons from 1,000-100,000 units. The machine is said to reduce tooling costs, is capable of embossing and printing Braille, and allows cutting tool changeovers to be completed in less than 15 minutes. The new equipment can be retrofitted to an existing web-fed press, or to an unwind stand for offline conversion of conventionally or digitally pre-printed webs.

4 UV HOTMELT ADHESIVE
UPM RAFLATAC

UPM Raflatac has launched a UV hotmelt adhesive for use with transparent and opaque films in beverage and food labeling. The RC 7B adhesive performs well on a range of substrates, including glass and PET, and is suitable for applications requiring a no-label look.

RC 7B also provides excellent performance in challenging conditions, showing good adhesion and lasting clarity even when labels are applied to moist bottles, says the company. High temperature tolerance also makes the adhesive suited to packing and bottling processes involving pasteurization. RC 7B has good resistance to water-whitening at any stage of its lifecycle, including prolonged immersion in water after labeling.

UV VARNISH
PULSE ROLL LABEL PRODUCTS

Pulse Roll Label Products has developed a new UV flexo release varnish for peel and read booklet labels. The formulation is claimed to offer a low cost, alternative technology to the conventional cationic chemistry used for this application.

'This new patented varnish means that printers can achieve savings of up to 20 percent in comparison to cationic technology,' said sales and marketing manager, Claire Seward. 'The varnish has undergone extensive blocking and ageing tests and demonstrates both high gloss and optimized scuff resistance properties with long term release comparable and often better than with cationic systems. The use of cationic and free radical UV chemistry on the same press means there is an ever present risk of contamination that can lead to wasted varnish. Our free radical formulation eliminates this risk making it much easier to handle press side.'

5 M-REAL SPECIALTY PAPERS
NEW LABEL PAPERS

M-real Speciality Papers has launched a portfolio of label and flexible packaging papers, all produced at the company's Zanders Gohrsmühle mill in Germany. The collection contains products suited to all labeling and packaging applications in the beverage, food and consumer goods industries, including a new flexible packaging paper, Zanflex; the new Zanlabel range; and the existing cast-coated label line, Chromolux. For more details see Substrates feature in this issue.

NEW PRODUCTS

6

6 COVERT SECURITY FEATURE
SCHREINER PROSECURE

Schreiner ProSecure has integrated its new invisible FluxSecure authentication technology into self-adhesive products. The FluxSecure feature can be quickly checked even through product enclosures and packaging. In addition, it is easy to integrate and ensures reliable authentication, says the company. Schreiner ProSecure is a business unit of Schreiner Group based in Oberschleissheim near Munich, Germany.

The FluxSecure technology by Schreiner ProSecure consists of a magnetically encoded, extremely thin thread which is inserted between the adhesive and the masking paper. FluxSecure has a diameter of about 30 micrometers – thinner than a human hair. The delicate thread consists of a metal alloy mixture and is surrounded by a glass coating. The magnetic properties of the security feature are read out without line of sight, using a handheld reader or a sensor that generates a magnetic field. This allows products to be verified even through heavy and metallic packaging. The readers are specifically adapted to the customer's system. Authentication is indicated by both an optical and an acoustical signal. Customized sensor solutions are available for integration into machines, equipment or products or for stationary reading systems. The magnetic properties can be modified through variations of the alloy and changes to the thickness and length of the FluxSecure thread. In addition, the alloy mixtures are customized and therefore not reproducible. The FluxSecure technology can be easily integrated into existing products like folding boxes or blister packs and marking products. Since the security feature is hidden, it does not interfere with specified design patterns. Combinations with additional overt or covert security features are also possible.

7

7 SILVER INK FOR METALLIC PRINTING
COLOR-LOGIC

Color-Logic, developer of the Process Metallic Color System, has introduced its Best Silver Ink. Mark Geeves, director of sales and marketing, said: 'Unlike other metallic inks in the marketplace, Color-Logic Best Silver Ink has unique properties that revolutionize metallic printing. With a maximum ink density of only 0.35 – compared with 1.0 for standard silver inks – Color-Logic Best Silver Ink is much easier than conventional metallic inks to control on offset presses, and is far less inclined to pile in the ink fountain. Even more important, Color-Logic Best Silver Ink does not dull down under either aqueous or ultraviolet coatings, or lamination films. Unlike conventional metallic inks, the Color-Logic ink gets brighter when coated.' Color-Logic Best Silver Ink is formulated to be compatible with conventional process inks. It may be used with the Color-Logic Process Metallic Color System or with conventional designs.

UPGRADED WORKFLOW SYSTEM
VISI-TECH

Visi-Tech Systems has unveiled its new, modernized Girus workflow system. Aimed at printing and packaging companies, Girus identifies key areas of inefficiency, loss of productivity, excess waste and downtime.

Paul Falloon, managing director of Visi-Tech Systems, said: 'Girus offers a new insight into your production environment allowing you to identify inefficient working practices and costly waste of resources. Visi-Tech is positive that Girus will take the market by storm.' With Girus, printing companies are able to identify and reduce waste, target and combat downtime, highlight training issues, attack existing or potential machine problems, increase efficiency and develop a leaner operation by being provided with an instant analysis of their manufacturing operation both locally and globally.

Visi-Tech Systems cites shop floor productivity and efficiency as one of the most important challenges facing printing companies today. Statistics show that the average printing shop floor is only 60-65 percent efficient when measured against established Key Performance Indicators (KPI). 'It's not difficult to see that improving efficiency to 80-85 percent would have massive implications for margins and profitability within an organization,' said Paul Falloon.

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INSTALLATIONS

NILPETER FB-3300 COMBINATION PRESS
LABELS UNLIMITED, UK

UK converter Labels Unlimited has installed a Nilpeter FB-3300 combination press at its new factory in Bredbury, near Stockport.

The press is configured with eight UV-flexo units, an interchangeable rotary screen module and a hot foil module, both based on Nilpeter's Drop-In technology. It has a maximum web width of 330 mm (13 inches) and can produce self-adhesive labels and flexible packaging at a top speed of 228 m/min (750 ft/min).

Founded in 2003, Labels Unlimited has experienced rapid growth in recent years. The company's main business is to produce paper and filmic self-adhesive labels for the home-care and bakery sectors, with food labels for the farming industry as a growing specialization. Lately it has expanded into flexible packaging, such as sachets and pouches, involving unsupported films and foil laminates.

'Last September we moved into a new factory unit of 603 square meters (6,500 sq ft) in Bredbury. We are currently in the process of expanding the unit by installing a mezzanine floor to store plates, consumables and materials to open up the pressroom floor,' said Marc Bradley, managing director. 'The new press with UV-curing will greatly expand production volumes and the type of products we can produce. Our equipment includes an Aquaflex water-based flexo press, but we are looking to replace it soon with a second FB-3300.'

The company's expansion plans also included a Polish-made Flexor/Emis 440C slitter rewinder with die-cutting unit to convert blank data labels.

MPS EF AND EC FLEXO PRESSES
ARGENTINE AND MEXICAN CONVERTERS

MPS has reported three recent press installations in Latin America for label and packaging printing. The machines – two in Argentina and one in Mexico – are all equipped with the company's iControl system.

Buenos Aires, Argentina-based Autopack has purchased a 10-color EF UV-flexo press. Angel P. Bonavera, director, cited the machine's print quality and advantageous cost-per-copy as decisive factors in the investment.

Buenos Aires, Argentina-based Adhepel has taken delivery of an 8-color EC UV-flexo press, the company's first machine from the Netherlands-based manufacturer. Adhepel's director Daniel Varsky chose the MPS press after a thorough market study and cited the Crisp Dot and Automated Print Control features as key to the decision.

Technolito, a shrink sleeve label converter based in Col. Pensil, Mexico, has installed an 8-color EC UV-flexo press, equipped with MPS's Automated Print Control system. Juan Antonio Alduncin, general manager, said the new press was needed to increase capacity. 'Superb quality in packaging printing, technology and leadership distinguished MPS above other alternatives,' he said.

L-R: Juan Antonio Alduncin, general manager of Technolito, and Eric Hoendervangers, CEO of MPS

EDALE ALPHA FLEXO PRESSES
KALABARCHASB, IRAN

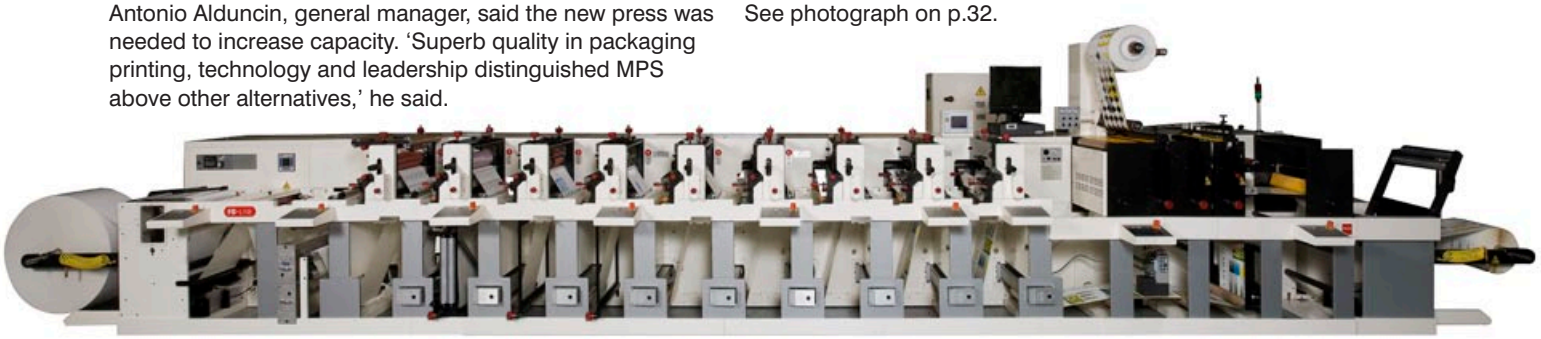
Kalabarchasb, a label printer based in Tehran, Iran, has installed its sixth and seventh Edale flexo printing presses with the introduction of two new Alphas.

In 1992, Kalabarchasb purchased three Edale machines from the older product range: an E180 and two E250s. As business grew, 2008 and 2009 saw the company purchase a Beta and an Alpha before purchasing a further two Alphas in 2010 – bringing its total number of Edale machines to seven.

The Alpha is Edale's compact flexographic printing press, capable of converting a wide variety of labels, packaging and ticketing substrates, with a short web path of 12m, compact design of 2.5sqm and quick job change through ease of access. The Beta is Edale's versatile modular press, with the capacity to incorporate up to 14 print stations and three converting stations. The modular design allows for simple upgrades and a host of value-added options to be retrofitted.

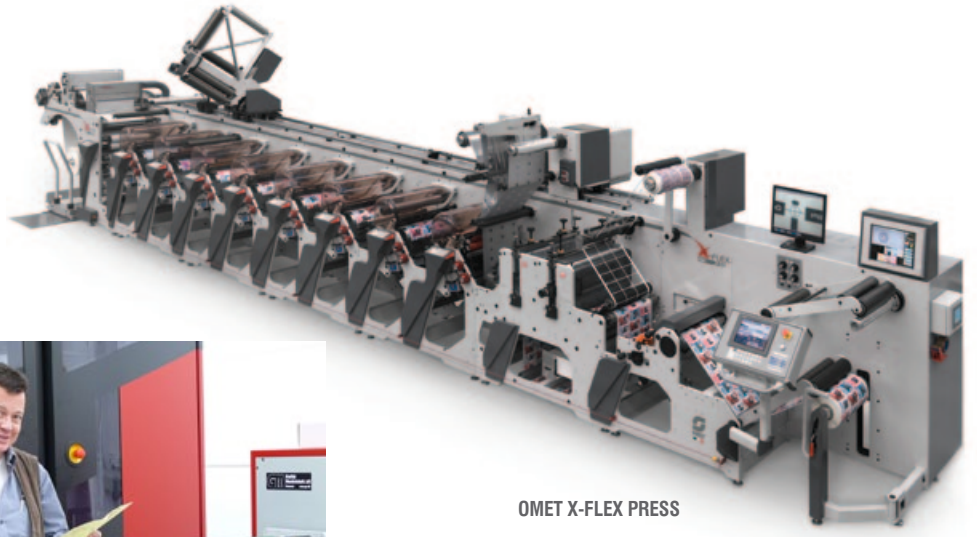
'I first got to know of Edale at a show they were exhibiting at in Tehran,' said managing director Maghsoud Mahboobi, who runs the business with his two sons. 'We had never really considered looking at compact flexo presses then, but were impressed with the machines and the solutions that Edale could offer. That is when we purchased our first E180 and E250. Even now, these machines are still in production. However as technology has moved forward, so have we and this is where the introduction of the newer Edale presses came in – we find the Alpha and Beta models so powerful, fast and with 100 percent quality and accuracy capabilities.'

See photograph on p.32.



UK converter Labels Unlimited has installed a Nilpeter FB-3300 combination press

MANAGING directors Christian Coreth and Walter Schuppler-Helf with the new Xeikon 3300



OMET X-FLEX PRESS

XEIKON 3300 DIGITAL PRESS

HELF ETIKETTEN, AUSTRIA

Austrian label converter Helf Etiketten has installed a Xeikon 3300 digital label press. The 3300 is designed for use with the most common web width of 330mm, but is also capable of handling a web width as narrow as 200mm. It runs at speeds up to 19.2 m/min.

The Xeikon 3300 uses the QA-I toner, which meets all the applicable FDA guidelines for indirect food contact under room temperature and less severe conditions as well as direct food contact for dry food substances containing no surface oil or fat under the same conditions. The Xeikon 3300 was awarded the New Innovation Award at the Label Industry Global Awards during Labelexpo Americas 2008, and in 2009 became the first digital label press to receive an InterTech Technology Award.

'Customers are increasingly demanding sustainable and food-safe product packaging at competitive prices,' explained managing directors Christian Coreth and Walter Schuppler-Helf. 'We opted for the Xeikon 3300 because we wanted to significantly increase productivity by improving production speed and throughput. The system also delivers superior uptime, as well as fine detailing thanks to the high print resolution.'

OMET X-FLEX

ARGRAF GROUP, SPAIN

Spanish label converter Argraf Group has installed a 10-color Omet X-Flex 430 press fitted with three rotary die-cutting units. Argraf Group supplies the food and beverage market with a particular interest in the wine sector.

'The investment was driven by rapid growth within the company's adhesive wine label sector,' explained Martin Torroba, general manager of Argraf Group, which has turned to this half-hybrid machine technology where units of different print techniques are combined to give a wide range of production capabilities. 'We have configured [the press] precisely to meet our actual needs, with screen, coldfoil and plastic coating, but no offset.'

Omet's X-Flex 430 can also be used for small runs of containers and polyethylene and propylene products, without the use of an adhesive. It has an upper rail system for mounting the three coldfoil stamping units, turner bars for reverse printing and units for rotary screen, relief/embossing and printing on the adhesive. The machine is equipped with the company's Vision automatic register system, which provides pre-register and automatic longitudinal and transversal adjustment without intervention by the operator.

'This X-Flex 430 is highly customized,' said Enric Pont of Omet Iberica, 'and allows the Argraf Group to maintain the high quality and added value levels that today's advanced technology offers.'

MULTIPLE INSTALLATIONS FOR MARK ANDY IN AUSTRALIA

Mark Andy has reported a series of recent installations in Australia through its local distributor Aldus Engineering.

Aldus will show a slimmed-down version of a 10-color Mark Andy P7 press at PrintEx11, the country's major print trade show this year. Due to its size and extensive enhancements, the machine is being kept under wraps by the unnamed Sydney-based converter which will take delivery of the press in May.

With printing widths of 250, 330 and 430mm and the ability to print on substrates, including film from 25 to 350 microns, it will be the largest Mark Andy press ever sold in Australia.

This follows a number of other Performance Series presses purchased by label converters in Australia since the machine's launch at Labelexpo Americas last year. Two 8-color machines with GEW UV curing and Harper ceramic anilox rolls – of 430mm and 250mm web widths respectively – have been installed at Melbourne-based converters Peacock Bros and Rapid Labels. Another unnamed printer purchased two of the machines during the show itself.

Ian Guanaria, general manager of Aldus Engineering, Mark Andy's distributor for the region, says that the standard inclusions of servo drives, automatic registration, pre-register and re-register, makes the P7 one of the most versatile and productive presses available in the narrow web market place. 'These days, changeover times and low wastage are the name of the game; runs are getting smaller so printers can't afford to waste material or even ink. This product would suite any narrow web printer whether they be flexible packaging, label, or tag printers,' he said.

Pacific Labels, meanwhile, has installed an 8-color Mark Andy XP5000 flexo press. The company already has four Mark Andy 2200 presses installed at its Wyong, New South Wales, facility. The first eight-color XP delivered into Australia, the press uses the latest servo drive and registration control technology on the printing and die-cutting stations, together with servo drives on the unwind and rewind. Internet capable diagnostics, another standard feature, will ensure full service access 24/7. Pacific Labels has had the press fitted with a GEW eBrick water-chilled UV drying system, Enercon corona treater, Teknek double-sided web cleaner and Harper Platinum XLT ceramic anilox rolls sourced from Australia's Aldus Engineering.

L-R: Kalabarchasb's Pooya Mahboubi, sales manager; Payam Mahboubi, marketing manager; and Maghsoud Mahboobi, MD

AVT INSPECTION SYSTEM

TLF GRAPHICS, USA

TLF Graphics, a label converter based in Rochester, New York, USA, has installed an AVT PrintVision/Helios II 100 percent automatic inspection system together with a Helios II WorkFlow Link.

The company produces pressure sensitive labels as well as labeling systems and screen printed products. For label production it uses both flexography and digital printing processes. TLF installed the AVT equipment on a Nilpeter press and an Arpeco Tracker rewinder.

Dan Wagner, vice president of operations and partner of TLF Graphics, said: 'It is all about delivering the highest quality, defect-free product to the customer. The AVT systems have allowed us to improve print quality and increase throughput. We use the AVT defect detection system for all applications including the automatic inspection of printing products with very small type that are difficult and costly for an individual to inspect.'

BASHIR Mohideen, Uniprint, beside the company's Rotocontrol RSC slitter rewinder inspection machine

ROTOCONTROL RSC SLITTER REWINDER

UNIPRINT, SOUTH AFRICA

Rotocontrol has installed a RSC slitter rewinder at South African converter Uniprint. Pascal Aengenvoort, director of Rototec, Rotocontrol's South African agent, and Manohar Dhugga, Rotocontrol's field applications engineering manager, were on-site during the machine set-up and installation.

Liam Gibson, Uniprint's technical and production manager, said: 'This is our first Rotocontrol slitter rewinder machine in the factory. The production team is pleased with the smooth installation and successful production results from the advanced S-Drive Servo Technology capability to run our unsupported film material. As our production needs continue to grow, we plan to utilize more Rotocontrol finishing machine technology.'

Ten Rotocontrol finishing machines have been installed in South Africa in the last year.

FOURTH ROTOCONTROL FINISHING MACHINE
REYNDERS (BELGIUM)

Rotocontrol has received an order from Belgium-based Reynders Pharmaceutical Labels for a RSC slitter rewinder equipped with an AVT Helios 100 percent inspection system. Three Rotocontrol slitter rewinders have previously been installed at sister company Reynders Etiketten, also located in Belgium.

The new machine will include a vacuum splice table with integrated waste wind-up at the vertical inspection area, a recently released option available on all Rotocontrol RSC slitter rewinder and RSP single pass 100 percent security inspection machines.

Marc Reynders, CEO of Reynders Label Printing, said: 'Our current investment of three Rotocontrol inspection machines has proved very beneficial for label production at Reynders Etiketten. Significant growth within Reynders Pharmaceutical Labels resulted in a need to expand our slitting/rewinding and inspection capacity, and we naturally opted to invest in another Rotocontrol machine.'

Reynders Pharmaceutical Labels specializes in the production of labels for the pharmaceutical industry.

Reynders Label Printing is comprised of seven companies that serve the pharmaceutical industry, labels for cosmetics, personal care and luxury goods, labels for industrial applications, security and other types of complex labels.

INSTALLATION NEWS IN BRIEF

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

Renault Paper Products, a Manohar Packaging Group Company, has installed the first Omet X-Flex press in India at its 23,000 square foot facility in Palghar.

Planet Label, a Wasau, Wisconsin, USA-based online retailer of blank labels, custom printed labels and flexible packaging, has installed a WS6000 digital press from HP Indigo.

Ireland-based converter Pharmagraphics Guy has installed Rotoflex vision verification technology to further increase its pharmaceutical labeling quality assurance systems.

US converter Macaran Printed Products, based in Cohoes, New York, has purchased an 8-color Mark Andy Performance Series P7 in-line flexo press and a Rotoflex VLI440 finishing machine.

Color-Logic has installed its Process Metallic Color System at digital converter Admiral Products, based in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

Warsaw, Poland-based Emis, manufacturer of the Flexor line of inspection slitter rewinders, has installed a die-cutting and converting machine at Australian converter Peacock Bros' Melbourne headquarters – the first such machine in the country.

Sydney-based label converter and carton supplier Labelcraft has invested in a Bobst Ambition folder/gluer, bought through Ferrostaal Australia. Its folding carton division, formerly known as Labelcraft Print & Packaging, has been rebranded as Labelcraft Cartons.

Squid Ink Manufacturing has installed its VDP In-Line variable data printing system at US converter Taylor Made Labels.

Rotocontrol has received an order for a second finishing machine from Taflex, a Russia-based self-adhesive label converter.

The JPL Group has purchased an EC printing press from MPS for its facility in Rouen, France, which specializes in labels for the agro-chemical industry.

UK converter Systems Labelling has invested in an 8-color Mark Andy servo-driven flexo press with a web width of 17 inches. The new machine brings the company's total to 10 presses, all of which have been installed in the last six years.

Belarusian converter Maxiprint has installed a second press from UK-based manufacturer Edale. The UV 5-color Alpha was installed in December 2010 and joins an 8-color modular Beta press.

South Africa
opens door to a continent

SOUTH AFRICA hosts one of the world's most advanced label converting industries and is a springboard for converters looking to tap into the fast growing pan-African market. Danielle Jerschefske reports

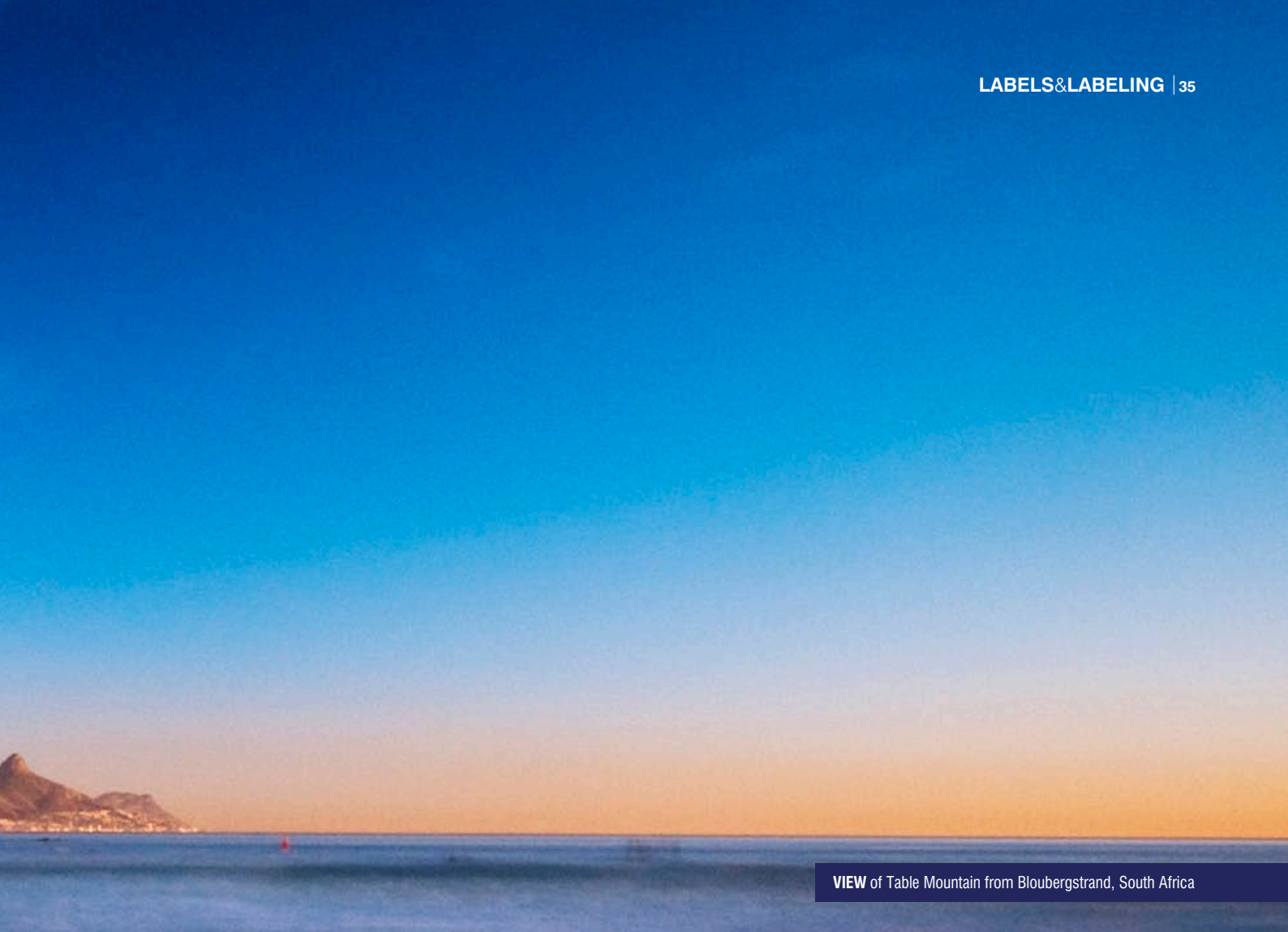
A recent PriceWaterhouseCoopers report, Beyond the BRICs: A broader look at emerging market growth prospects, takes a look beyond the 'E7' emerging economies. 'The general message is that investors with long-term horizons should look beyond the BRIC's.' South Africa is clearly on that horizon.

The country has diplomatic and economic clout in the global arena and an infrastructure generally far more advanced than any other African nation. It has the most concentrated consumer spending power on the continent and a rising demand for more premium products and leading international brands, all pointing towards quality labels and packaging competing for shelf space.

For example, nearly everyone has a cell phone and all the cell phone companies have operations here. Even in the outer townships, there's a local store selling Vodacom calling cards, Coca-Cola and 750mL bottles of Carling Black Label beer. Consumers share with the global consumer a strong interest in product functionality, brand names, health and the environment. 40 percent of the country is considered urban.

However, in global terms South Africa has a relatively small domestic consumer market, with only 15 million, or 30 percent of the population, with a disposable income. Much of the rest of the population is considered impoverished, with some earning just $1.25 per day.

For this reason the labels industry is also heavily export-oriented. Lee Barnard, co-founder of label converter Track & Trace, says, 'I am confident of growth in the label industry in our country as well as the rest of Africa. We manufacture labels for the export fruit industry, predominately to Europe and the UK, which has shown consistent growth. Using a network of Distributors we have also started to sell our products into Sub Sahara and Mid Africa and see opportunity



VIEW of Table Mountain from Bloubergstrand, South Africa

to expand these markets"

Problems and opportunities for the label converter in South Africa are very similar to those facing converters in North America: capital investment, technology, label design, price pressures, the economy, training and CPG trends. But other aspects of the local label market are unique to South Africa, and define its position as a player in the global market: as an entry point into the rest of Africa; currency strength; market size and consumer activity; sophistication of the supply base; and training.

The SA label converting industry overwhelmingly produces pressure sensitive labels, with many converters diversified into ticket, tag, and POP production. There has not been a major move into unsupported film, although interest appears to be increasing. As a whole, converters are concerned with driving efficiency through their business as competition with the Middle East heats up. Global buyers evaluate and compare cost, quality and sustainability when choosing between South African and Middle East-based – particularly Egypt – converters.

Label converters working with international CPGs stress the focus on quality in South Africa - the popular term is 'pedantic'. Bharat Mehta, MD Uniprint, says, 'Quality in the US is not there. I've seen labels on the store shelves there that would be rejected by leading international brands here in Africa.'

ECONOMIC STRENGTH

In general, the global recession had only a minor impact on South Africa's economy, The South African Rand has strengthened by around 32 percent against the dollar over the last 18 months and the government recently acted to cut interest rates to six percent.

Converters interviewed by L&L said the price for raw materials can be up to 14 percent higher in South Africa than elsewhere due to the strength of the Rand, which forces converters to cut label prices to the Middle East in order to compete. The currency's strength has meanwhile forced industry suppliers to cut prices. Bennie Friedman, MD of Rebsons, says, 'Materials suppliers have dropped prices by as much as thirty percent to remain competitive with the strong Rand.'

To help offset the strong currency, converters are increasingly offering to store inventory for their customers, especially for smaller companies. At the same time, buyers are driving down stockholding and becoming more conscious of inventory, on-demand delivery and cash flow.

Another effect of the strong Rand has been a growth in imports.

SUPPLY CHANNELS

Because of the distance of South Africa from key global manufacturing and distribution hubs in the US, Europe, China and India, lead times for equipment and consumables can be long and support is expensive.

This has provided an opportunity for local suppliers. One example is Select

SOUTH AFRICA STATS

- 50 million people
- ¼ unemployed
- ⅓ considered consumers
- Ninth largest beer market globally
- 11 official languages
- Currency: Rand
- GDP $287B
- Nine provinces
- South Africa is not considered an 'N-11' country, one likely to be the world's largest economies in the 21st century, yet still forecasted to boom 2040-2050.

CITY POPULATIONS

Johannesburg, Gauteng province	**3.8M**
Cape Town, Western Cape province	**3.4M**
Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province	**3.4M**

YOUR MARKET— OUR SOLUTION

With the HP Indigo digital label and packaging printing presses you can better serve different markets, keep production costs down, and achieve higher revenue. New standards in speed, quality and efficiency, make your short-to-medium run labels and packaging production easier and more profitable.

Progressive, Profitable Printing

Inks, whose owner, Peter Thomas, is well known for his technical competence, support network and innovation.

Other converters, including Rebsons and Track & Trace, utilize local MIS supplier Systec. Rebson's Friedman says, 'It's nice that they're local. We don't have to deal with the complications of a company from outside the market.' Rebsons is about to implement a full barcode-driven production monitoring system.

Local company Lieben Dies manufactures punching tools and dies for cut & stack and in-mold labels. 'The South African market and the African market in general has enormous potential,' says the company's Flip Liebenberg. 'Converters here have state-of-the art production plants in a market that's considered emerging.'

First Impression Labels expressed some difficulty in sourcing wraparound laminate materials. PET is most frequently imported from the East, and is in short supply. MD Sandra Cumming says, 'The huge PET shortage makes it difficult to find supply. There can be as much as a three month lead time in order to receive materials and as much as a six week forecast for PET.'

Global companies, meanwhile, continue to use their global supply chains. Spear, for example, partners with Avery Dennison globally and uses the same Siegwerk inks specified by its Tennessee, US operation.

TRAINING

Although there are no national benchmarks for skill certification in South Africa, a range of educational tools are available.

Converter HP Labelling supports the apprenticeship program provided by SA's Media Advertising Publishing Printing Packaging sector education training authority (MAPP seta).

'It's so important to prepare and support operators in South Africa,' says the company's Neville Gibbs. 'The program is based on a modular system with a focus on both theoretical and practical. When an individual finishes the program they graduate as a senior printer with a certificate for verification.' In a final test, the student is required to set up and run a job in registration. The converter has taken in four people on the apprenticeship program.

Paarl Labels, together with its sister companies, has established the 'Academy of Print', based in Paarl. It is fully accredited by the MAPP SETA.

For 18 years Ferroprint has used a self-designed 14 module training program for the development of its employees. At any time, an employee can elect to learn a module, earning certifications for that specific job task. Additionally the converter sends up to four people annually to its suppliers for training updates. Upon return, the new information is systematically filtered back through the rest of the associates. The company also hosts a day where suppliers come into the plant to conduct training.

Both Lithotech Labels and RotoLabel have access to centralized training provided by parent company Bidvest. Kevin Swan, MD at Lithotech says, 'We understand the value of spending money on training. We have our own training center where all employees are educated and tested on the basics of printing litho, gravure and flexo printing.' Rotolabel also has a MAPPP SETA approved Learnership Program. Greg Gabriels runs the training program and Rotolabel boasts 28 learners in various stages of completion.

SUSTAINABILITY

All the big brands have sustainability programs in SA – Unilever, Woolworth's, SABMiller being key examples – and more label and packaging converters are being proactive in reducing their business' environmental footprint. Energy consumption is of particularly high importance in South Africa

A new Waste Management Act came into effect in 2009 making producer responsibility a legal requirement. The Packaging Council of South Africa is working on a paper and packaging industry waste management plan.

A report undertaken by label converter Clomark with 40 regional FMCG companies, found that 26 percent of respondents were prepared to pay a five to ten percent premium for 'eco-labels'. Of that group, 60 percent rated eco-labels as a 'medium importance' issue on a scale of one to five.

ROSO label for kids sauce bottle

BLACK EMPOWERMENT

Any company operating in South Africa needs to be aware of the broad based Black Economic Empowerment act, legislated by the national government in an effort to spread wealth across all colors of the African nation - much like affirmative action in the US. Businesses are assessed for both 'direct' and 'indirect' empowerment, on areas like equity ownership, management and skills development. A score is tabulated and certification awarded for a BEE level between one-eight. Every company has a copy of its BEE certificate in the lobby.

LABELEXPO ANNOUNCES SOUTH AFRICA LABEL SUMMIT

The Tarsus group – organizer of the Labelexpo Global Series of exhibitions and conferences and publisher of L&L – is to hold its first label summit in South Africa. Label Summit Africa 2012 will focus on the growing African label and package printing market. The conference and table-top exhibition will take place next March in Cape Town.

Roger Pellow, Labelexpo managing director said: 'We are very excited to be moving into this important region. Label Summit Africa will give African printers the opportunity to learn about global advances in label technologies and to meet with both local and international suppliers to discuss the future of label printing in Africa.'

JOHANNESBURG City Center

When asked about 'eco-packaging', 50 percent of respondents ranked it as 'intermediately' important, while forty percent said that eco-packaging is of 'high' importance. The study also found that CO^2 emission data influences the purchasing decision of over half of respondents.

Uniprint's Bharat Mehta confirms the trend. 'As a large printer for Coca-Cola, we have a sustainability measure to meet in order to remain as a selected supplier.' Uniprint recycles as much as it can, including the film left over from plate production. Already ISO 9002:2008 certified, the company is contemplating ISO 14000 certification.

BidVest Group, owner of Rotolabel and Lithotech, is one of the few SA companies listed on the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index, as well as receiving an 'excellent' rating in the Ernst & Young Excellence in Sustainability Reporting award. The company created an environmental policy in 2008, appointing an employee-led sustainability committee whose initiatives have included carbon offset programs and low energy lighting systems.

Another company which has been proactive in the sustainability arena is Paarl Labels, which recently launched a treefree label paper, endorsed by a certification seal. The treefree papers are sourced from a Sustainable source, and carry a price tag about the same as for other premium materials. Approved by the South African Wine and Spirit Board, the label paper is made from sugarcane fibre, a by-product of sugar refining, and was developed by Paarl Labels together with UPM Raflatac.

Callie De Wet, MD Paarl Labels, says the company's marketing campaign has gained rapid, positive feedback. 'Typically there's a five percent response to marketing emails, but from this treefree campaign we've received a 40 percent response.' The print quality is basically the same as other standard wine label materials and it performs well in an ice bucket, says de Wet.

DIGITAL

Like all markets in the world, South Africa has seen an increase in digital press installations. Rotolabel has followed its initial investment in an HP Indigo WS4050 to produce short runs for all its customers with two HP Indigo WS6000s. Jessica Rohman, commercial manager at Rotolabel, says, 'We were doing longer and longer runs on the WS4050 and needed a machine with faster speeds and wider window to increase the throughput required for more efficient work production.' Rotolabel achieved the third highest output/impressions in the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Asia) region with it's HP WS4050 in October 2010. It uses an ABG Digicon Series I to coat material and Series II with one screen head, two flexo heads, and foiling to convert.

PRIVATE LABELS

The private label market presents a lot of potential business for label converters in South Africa. Private label brands in the market include Woolworth's and Massmart, soon to be owned by Walmart. These opportunities shine particularly brightly for converters like Uniprint, under the media giant Avusa's umbrella, which currently does little private label work.

WOOLWORTH'S brand juice

VARIETY in the local food market

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CAPE TOWN with Table Mountain, Signal Hill and the Cape Town Stadium

South African converters

SOUTH AFRICAN is home to a world class label converting community. Danielle Jerschefske visited a selection of leading companies

TRACK & TRACE

Founded in 1995 by Lee Barnard and Theresa Adinolfi, Track & Trace recently partnered with a private equity firm to increase the business' cash flow and ability to invest. Starting as a PS label distributor, in 2009 the company purchased an 8-color 14" Gidue press to advance into prime label production. Now management is looking to exchange the press for something wider which can handle both pressure-sensitive film and unsupported film, including cutting to sheets, and which is able to reverse print behind the film. Track & Trace uses a Mark Andy Scout with 4-color inkjet heads for variable data printing on computer labels.

REBSONS

Rebsons started in the early 1960s making small tags for the jewelry market on a Melzer Machine. When PS label demand spread, the company switched to a small two-color machine, eventually acquiring the funds for a new 4-color press to truly expand into PS labeling. Rebsons now has 70 employees running production 24/7 for private label FMCG, dealing direct with retailers. Its most recent investment is a Nilpeter FB 3300 servo press.

LABEL & LITHO

Louis Smit purchased a small litho printing company with a partner in 1982 while his brother, Sakkie Smit acquired a label company on auction in 1990. The two brothers merged their respective companies and formed Label & Litho in 1995. The business is located in Pretoria, where the label division concentrates on ticket production for game redemption, parking, bus passes and more. It prints millions of reward tickets for childrens' indoor play parks using a 6-color MA 2200 and an MA 830 equipped with a Jaime 1000 S4 plus inkjet system for variable data. Converting the foil for the mag strip on cards is a specialty carried out using a Nilpeter press. The company has 50 employees.

HP LABELLING

With locations in Cape Town and Johannesburg, HP Labelling produces work mostly for local brands in the water, juice and beverage markets, pharmaceuticals and fruit labels. Around 20 percent of business is in wine and spirits. Neville Gibbs, divisional director of HP Labelling Cape Town, explains, 'This broad market view gives the business a shield from the up and down of the economy.' Volumes increased during the World Cup when production moved into three shifts, but has since pulled back to two. Gibbs estimates the Cape Town location, with 110 employees, has over 5,000 solid dies for one dual gear Mark Andy LP 3250 press and a fleet of ten 2200 gear presses.

GTV

GTV was established in August of 1989 by Ravi Pillay, following in the footsteps of his father, who started in the SA label industry in the 1970s. The company has advanced from humble beginnings, as

ABG DIGICON II

Pillay explains: 'We used the off-cut rolls of a nearby converter to produce production work. With the price of raw materials, this was the only way to break into the market and have a reasonable profit margin.'

Pillay got the cash for a down payment on GTV's first press by winning a whopping 80,000 Rand playing a 40 Rand slot machine. The company now has an 8-color Nilpeter FA-4, running mostly solvent-based inks. The converter has designed its own lamination device for the press, which is not designed to run solvent-based inks. While running at 120m/min, the unit builds up the heat on the web prior to applying the lamination.

The lamination of solvent ink is an extremely difficult trick, widely done in the wide web market, but increasingly adopted in the narrow web sector. The press is equipped to run all UV, but GTV usually does not, to save on the more costly inks. The company's press is 8-color flexo with six UV units.

The majority of GTV's work is PS, as well as paper and wrapper films for small packages of candy bars and such. It is heavily involved in the oil market, producing Total Oil labels with reversed out four-color process on a home-built 6-color machine. The converter recently purchased a Nilpeter FB 4200 to increase capacity, reduce lead times and move into the film market.

FERROPRINT

Ferroprint is reckoned to be SA's largest label converter by volume. Based in Durban, it employs 220 people and runs seven days a week with sales offices around the country. The bulk of its business is in FMCG, H&B, beverage and pharmaceuticals; it sold its wine label company to CCL in 2009. The converter has been in the shrink sleeve label market for 18 months, finding good growth there.

An interesting facet of Ferroprint's business is an automated clothing tag production system designed by Jeremy Ferrow, MD, using digital Nipsons and self designed, unwind, die cutting and sheeting machines. Garment retailers send their variable data files via logistics and marketing company Trader Plus, that sorts and forwards the data to the company. The tags are printed directly without requiring an additional PS label, all without human intervention. The exact system has been replicated in Ferroprint's $ 3.5M Chinese facility opened in late 2008.

Ferroprint has invested in a number of automation and communication tools to drive profitability, focusing on the power of visual communication to match the current education level of the majority of the country's workforce.

The company's homemade MIS system is incredible. Everyone in the company has access to live data, both in-house and remotely. Material handling is seamless. When sales enters an order into the database, the PO is sent automatically to Avery Dennison with a unique code for details

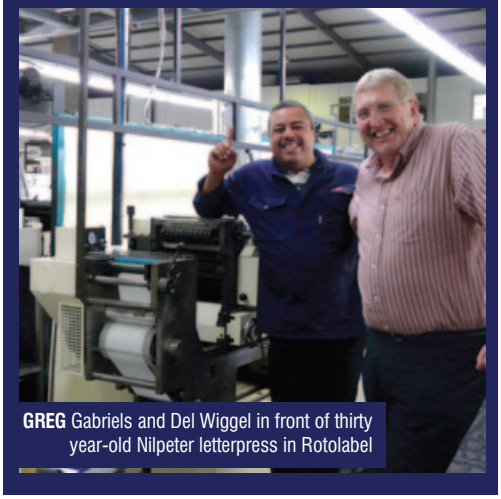
such as slit size and quantity.

All stock is regularly separated into two areas: work in progress, and raw stock. Jeremy Ferrow explains, 'In separating material by each 12 hour shift we provide a visual means for establishing work completed and work to be done, by job order.'

Ferroprint uses a mix of Nilpeter FA 3300, FA 4 and FA 6 machines to produce mostly PS labels. Each press is equipped with a computer system that gives multiple screen prompts for the operator to monitor their own productivity. Operators select a reason for press downtime through computer prompts such as: customer approval, ink error, die, UV curing, pre make-ready and lunch. Once an operator selects an error button, the problem is automatically flagged in maintenance and the time is allocated to that part of the production team. The computer calculates and carries an operator's 'debts' as lost time and sets individual targets for improvement.

Ferrow explains, 'This system speeds up accurate resolution of problems, which improves productivity.' There is even a referee on the floor to handle disputes.

Two large screens hang on the wall of the shop floor which all can see. Screen one shows the production graph of a 24 hour shift – work completed and to be done. Screen two shows a bar chart for each press, making it easy for a production manager to visually assess the progress of any job on any press, and move quickly to address problems before an 'error' call.



GREG Gabriels and Del Wiggel in front of thirty year-old Nilpeter letterpress in Rotolabel

Both screens are updated minute by minute. Operators see the productivity bar for their own press on their computer. The bar accounts for make ready, production and clean up time for any given job.

Jabula – Zulu for 'happy' – interacts with associates at the bottom of the job-by-job production screen. When an operator is on time, Jabula is happy, but if an operator is running late, Jabula gets angry and spits fire.

'Debts' for each department and shift are tabulated daily to show Debt per Shift and Debt per Operator. Ferroprint has an incentive system based on a ten point scale to reward productivity. Rewards are given shift by shift,

WINE LABEL AWARDS

Every two years UPM Raflatac hosts the Wine & Spirit Labels of Excellence Awards competition, which recognizes the power of a strong partnership between label stock supplier, converter, designers and the brand owner when creating a label with serious shelf impact. Self-adhesive labels are the dominant bottle decoration technology for this market.

Rotolabel was the big winner in the 2010 excellence awards, including Best Label Overall, Innovative Artistic Merit, Outstanding Technical Achievement and the Designer Award in the wine labels category. Paarl Labels, which uses MPS and Nilpeter presses, received Special Mention; Collotype Labels, an all Nilpeter house with gravure combination, won for Outstanding Technical Achievement, and HP Labelling, an all Mark Andy press shop, won Creative Branding.

In the spirits category, Pyrotec won for Outstanding Technical Achievement and CCL Label Cape won for Creative Branding. The winning labels advance to the Institute of Packaging (SA) to be judged for its Gold Pack Awards.

creating healthy competition. Overall, the MIS system showed a 25 percent productivity increase after working for one year.

UNIPRINT

Uniprint started as a family-owned business in Durban in 1926. It has four divisions: offset sheets and PoP, wet-glue, cartons and pharma boxes; silk screen; forms and labels; catalogs and brochures. It is a qualified PS label supplier for Unilever, Reckitt Benckiser and more and supplies high-volume wrap and shrink sleeve labels to the beverage market, including Coca-Cola and Pepsi. It also manufactures 'butterfly', or two-ply peel & read labels for pharmaceuticals and produces flexible packaging.

Uniprint uses a 560mm Comco to convert unsupported films for the beverage industry and is investigating IML for the dairy and industrial segments. It uses an HP Indigo ws4500 for runs up to 1,000m. Two Mark Andy full UV flexo machines handle short to mid-sized runs, and medium runs go onto three Nilpeter MO offset or FA 3000 flexo presses. Forms and brochures are printed on a Heidelberg Speedmaster. A Nipson meets the converter's variable image requirements and track & trace barcode needs.

Uniprint has a niche in security work for national elections, printing voter registration forms for many African countries. Combined with a sophisticated software package to print ballot forms, Uniprint's system helps ensure a credible, legitimate election.

Significantly, in 2008 Uniprint joined forces with Hirt & Carter, one of the country's foremost software providers linking advertising agencies and marketers to printers, and working closely with the nation's largest retailers. Bharat Mehta, says, 'the merger brought an integrated IT solution to pull artwork automatically from clients to create product packaging, advertisements, etcetera, and it captures ad data on price point in local, regional and national retailers.'

As of November 1, 2010 Uniprint is part of publicly held South African media conglomerate Avusa. Avusa has business interests in many areas, including cinemas, newspapers, magazines, and book retailing. Mehta says, 'We intend to find growth in packaging and how it fits into the overall business plan of Avusa.' This could help the converting side of the business penetrate the private brand market.

FIRST IMPRESSION LABELS

A leading FMCG converter, Durban-based First Impression Labels is a 14 year-old business started by Sandra Cumming and Vaughn Cumming, in a barn with a Flexo Diecutter. Richard Jones, Sandra's brother, worked with the company for some time before moving out to start his own label company.

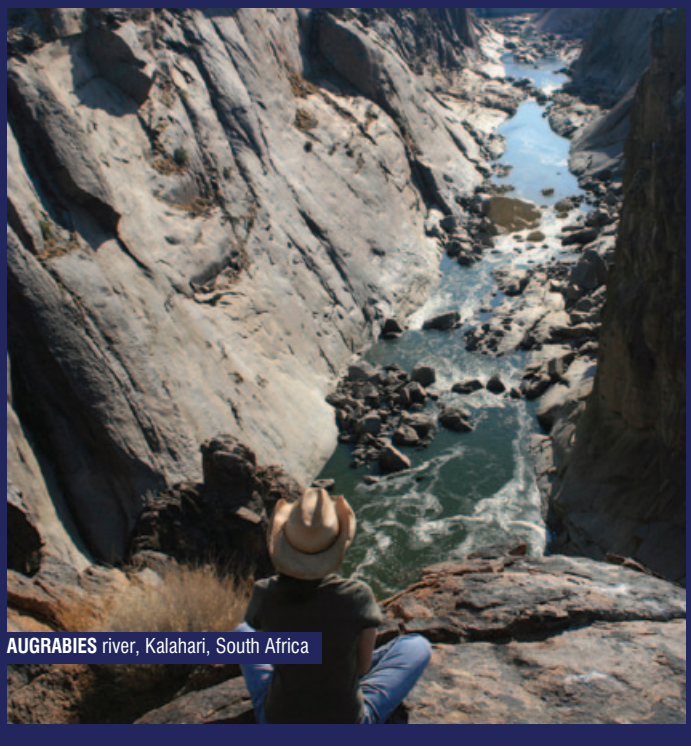
First Impression recently installed a new Mark Andy Performance Series press - a 9-color, 430mm P-7 model. The converter needed capacity, particularly for shrink sleeve label production, beyond what its XP5000 and battery of MA2200s could produce.

First Impression entered the sleeve market in 2007, and for the last six years has experienced strong year-on-year growth. Sandra Cumming, MD, says, 'wrap around and shrink are cut-throat markets in South Africa and shrink was a difficult market to break into.' But Cumming sees opportunity for growth in both PS and shrink. '25 percent more brands are choosing shrink for packaging.' She attributes the shift to legislation requiring more information to be on a label.

First Impression uses Karlville shrink-dedicated seamers, cutters, and inspection equipment.

The converter supplies roll-fed wrap-around and PS labels for multinational firm SC Johnson, and attracted its business for shrink sleeves with the recent investment. Cumming says, 'if you look at the ZA market as a whole there's lots of business to be had in the dairy and juice markets.'

The quality of the company's shrink label work was recognized with a finalist nomination for the FTASA's (Flexographic Technical Association South Africa) Printing Excellence Awards. The Winnie the Pooh bath and shower gel shrink sleeve labels were produced with locally supplied plates from ICS Digital and Flint Group Narrow Web inks.



AUGRABIES river, Kalahari, South Africa

ROTOLABEL AND LITHOTECH LABELS

Del Wiggel, who now works for Nilpeter's agency in South Africa, founded Rotolabel with two partners and a German investor in 1981. Rotolabel now forms part of Bidvest Paperplus, a division of the Bidvest Group of companies. Today the company converts mainly PS labels, including multi-ply labels, in the retail, wine, personal care and pharmaceutical sectors for a wide range of customers from small to large corporate companies like Johnson & Johnson and Glasgow Smith & Klein, and big retailers such as Spar and high-end retail/supermarket chain Woolworth's.

'We need to be flexible in scheduling in order to properly support our customers,' says Greg Gabriels, technical director at Rotolabel. Woolworth's re-launched its brand packaging a couple of years ago to standardize their branding proposition across all lines.

Gabriels worked his way up from cleaning floors at Rotolabel to having responsibility for maintenance of the plant's press fleet and for training operators on the letterpress machines. The plant includes nine Nilpeter letterpress machines – four 300mm wide B-3000s, of which two can do silk screen and foiling, and five B-200s. The machines are still able to run at 250ft/min (83m/min) and to hold a one percent dot on a photopolymer plate. Production runs 24/7.

Lithotech is a sister company to Rotolabel, and MD Kevin Swan is working to integrate four different labels and forms businesses, each with a different niche from process color UV flexo to blank labels, into one operation. The plant in Johannesberg houses twenty presses in total – Gidue, Comco, Aquaflex, Gallus and Mark Andy – which presents problems in terms of tooling, materials, scheduling and maintenance.

The converter does some nice business with the national Post Office using a Digital Print Inc. inkjet system attached to a 5-color press, and sees a major growth opportunity in this type of application.

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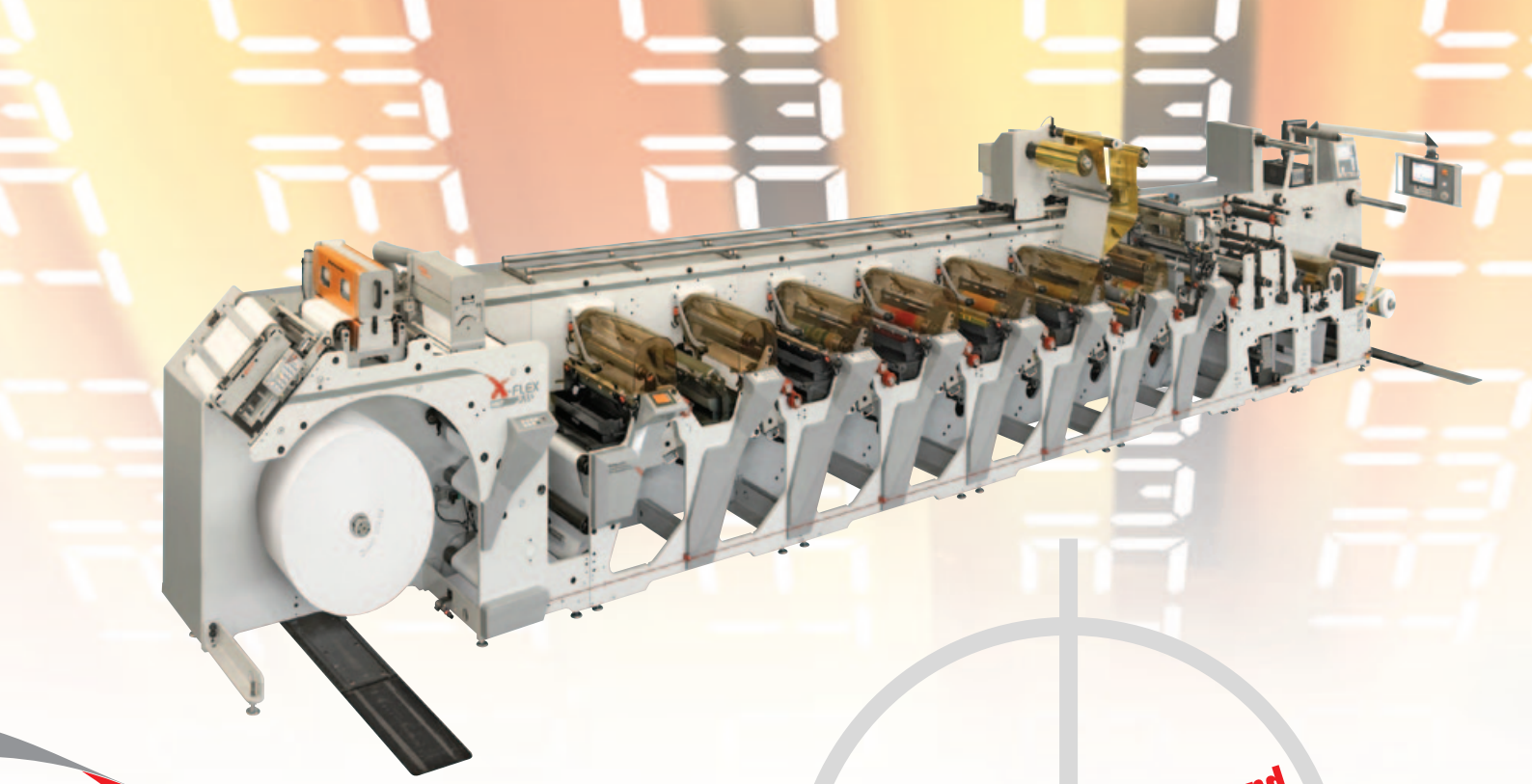

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Innovation With Passion

SHOP FLOOR view of Spear South Africa

Entry point

WITH its deep understanding of different African cultures and logistics networks and the opportunities offered for English speaking international partnerships, South Africa has become the key entry point to the rapidly growing pan-African market.

South Africa has become the key entry point for Western companies looking to move into the African continent, which is predicted to be the next major boom area of the world economy.

Walmart, for example, in January 2011 bid to purchase a 51 percent controlling stake in pan-African retailer Massmart. The $2.5B deal would give the mega-mart access to over 280 wholesale and retail stores in 13 African countries.

Germany-based Rako Etiketten, one of Europe's largest label converters with 1,400 employees and production sites across Europe and Asia, has also used South Africa to start its business on the African continent.

In February 2011, Rako formally opened Rako Labels Cape Town (Pty) Ltd following an asset deal with a medium sized local converter. The new plant is located in Capricorn Park outside Cape Town.

Rako Labels Cape Town managing director Üwe Boegel purchased a 10-color 430mm Gallus EM-430S UV flexo press with three silk screen heads and foiling capabilities. This prototype model – the first in the world - is built on the standard Gallus EM series platform, but the whole machine, including its UV drying system, is water cooled, a technology first introduced in the ECS340 'granite' press to deliver a high level of energy efficiency.

The EM-430S was tested at Rako's headquarters in Germany before delivery to South Africa. It will allow the location to expand from PS production into shrink sleeve labels, pouches and wraparound labels.

'We want to get into wrap around and shrink sleeve markets as well as in highly refined clear on clear labels for a no-label look,' says Boegl, shareholder in Rako Labels Cape Town. Besides the Gallus EMS press, three Mark Andy presses are printing in two-shift production with one press dedicated to Extended Gamut Printing. The prepress capabilities include an in-house prepress studio with digital DTP, proofing and CTP plate making equipment.

The SA operation is aligned with the same suppliers, which support the Rako Group worldwide, including Avery Dennison, UPM Raflatac, Ritrama, Flint and Sun Chemical. Local and international brands will benefit from the same standard offered at any Rako facility and the broad knowledge base and R&D capabilities within the international group.

Food accounts for 30-40 percent of current business, with

SABMiller

South African Breweries (SABMiller) is the world's second largest brewer, and owns 89 percent of the country's beer market share, tracing its origins to 1895 when it established business premises outside Johannesburg to service the rising mining population. SAB has operations in over 31 African countries, bottling soft drinks for Coca-Cola in twenty. Its Carling Black Label won a fifth international quality award and is popular in the townships.

FINISHED labels ready to ship

the balance in household products, personal care, wine and price marking pressure-sensitive labels.

SPEAR OF DESTINY

Another global giant which used South Africa as an entry point to the African continent is Cincinnati-based Spear Group. A global supplier partner to SABMiller, Spear specializes in PS label production for the world's biggest breweries and beverage companies. In 2007 it set up greenfield operations in Johannesburg to support both the local market and the African continent. SAB exports labels to Ethiopia, Angola, Zambia and Swaziland.

The business grew in 2010, extending the converter's African portfolio in the ready to drink (RTD), flavored alcoholic beverage (FAB), and non-alcoholic sectors. It supports brandhouse – a joint venture of Heineken, Diageo & Namibia Breweries – with labels for premium spirits like Johnnie Walker, Bell's and Smirnoff. Spear's SA operation also does work for Distell, a large ($1B) SA wine and spirits company that sells into Namibia, West and East Africa, with distribution centers in Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Mauritius.

Spear has found the South African market to be a great deal different from Europe and North America. For one, the runs are shorter. Secondly, 750mL bottles dominate the market. And third, David Merrill, GM of SpearSystem Packaging Africa, says, 'three percent of the country's beer market is wash off and standard pressure sensitive. Over 95 percent is paper cut and stack.'

Understanding the market has been a learning process, and has required some adjustment for this converter, which loves volume PS work. Georgina Webb, business development manager, explains, 'the shift to PS is moving. Diageo has switched some of its brands in the market and Heineken launched its flagship beer with a PS label.' Savannah beer and Namibia Breweries are also said to be in transit from direct print to PS labels.

Webb continues, 'Understanding consumer perception has been key. For instance, a green bottle is seen as premium - Italian Peroni and Dutch Grolsch. If it comes in a brown bottle, the beer is viewed as less than premium.' The country's most popular brand, Castle Lager, is SAB's original brew from 1895. It comes in a brown bottle with a cut and stack label.

Spear is consulting local buyers on the economic effectiveness of flexo/screen combination printing. With the average run lengths on the low side for the converter, it often sees combination printing as a wiser choice than gravure, although most buyers don't see a lot of value in the process. The converter sees room to grow in the paper market and will continue looking to fill its machines with higher volume work.

Spear uses a Cerutti 960 1000mm wide gravure press for long-run cut & stack and PS work, with an Eltromat print check 7000 for register control and 100 percent inspection. Its Cerutti is identical to the one in Spear's UK plant. In line with the company's overall business model, the UK press runs 100 percent pressure-sensitive material. In Johannesburg it runs 95 percent paper. A mid-web MPS all-UV flexo press loaded with screen and foil capabilities is used for small capacity runs. Says Merrill, 'The wide and narrow press combination complement each other.' Spear employs 110 people in South Africa.

SA END USERS

GEOGRAPHY PLAYS ROLE IN LOCAL MARKETS

WINE

South Africa wine production is predominantly in the Cape Town area with the biggest concentration in Paarl, Stellenbosch, Constantia and Worcester. The first harvests can be traced to the late 1600s when trading companies needed wine to help fight scurvy in sailors traveling around the Cape.

South Africa's wine industry experienced impressive growth through the 80's and 90's as trade sanctions started to lift. It is now among the top ten wine producing nations in the world. The market is export-based, primarily to the UK, Europe and the US.

The consensus among the country's wine label converters is that growth in 2010 was significantly restricted because of the global economic collapse and export cost inflation. Market volumes in fact dropped by more than 20 percent, though local wine sales remain more or less stable.

Much like California's wine market, the South African market is experiencing an increase in boutique wineries, shifting average run lengths for label orders down to less than 15,000 ft (3,000m).

Similarly too, the SA wineries are cutting cost by reducing the amount of embellishments on a label. For example, rather than using foil, they are turning to metallic inks and varnished papers to give a more sophisticated look.

The total cost of packaging rapidly increased around March 2010, so much so that many wineries have transitioned their business to the UK, shipping the wine in bulk to the island to be bottled and labeled there, where the labels are also produced.

AUTOMOTIVE

Founded 40 years ago, Clomark is the only approved label supplier for the automotive industry in South Africa. Automotive used to form the bulk of the company's business but now makes up only about 20-25 percent of total output. The similarity of auto industry specifications and quality standards to pharmaceutical requirements makes the latter an interesting opportunity for future growth.

Clomark is accredited to TS16949, the automotive management spec, ISO 14001 and ISO 9001, and holds supplier certificates for VW and Ford. This specifies a rejection rate of less than 20 parts per million.

PRIVATE LABELS

The private label market presents a lot of potential business for label converters in South Africa. Private label brands in the market include Woolworth's and Massmart, now owned by Walmart. These opportunities shine particularly brightly for converters like Uniprint, under the media giant Avusa's umbrella, which currently does little private label work.

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Commercial printer cultivates label division

WITH EXPERT print management support, fresh leadership and a new Mark Andy P-3 press, ColorLabel is poised for growth, writes Danielle Jerschefske

Founded in 1865, Mulligan Printing is located in a beautiful historical building in downtown St.Louis, Missouri. A commercial printing business with sheet-fed offset and digital equipment, it has survived and thrived because of its advanced print management capabilities. Through the fluctuations of the nation's economy, the printer has continually adopted the latest technologies and diversified into new markets, such as in-house flexographic label production.

Most recently, the label division of Mulligan Printing, known as ColorLabel, acquired an 8-color Mark Andy P-3 press, the first of its kind in North America. Historically, when a recession hit, current president Jerry Kiske leveraged cost-effective capital equipment for the commercial side of the business, incurring rapid growth in that side, but did not share the same focus and achieve the same rate of growth at ColorLabel.

Kiske says, 'but in the last few years there's been a shift for us to even out the combination of the businesses. We are going to develop the label business outward by more closely integrating our skills from the Mulligan side.'

The printer has advanced software systems that allow it to turn data files into a type set book. It knows the importance of quality, having long offered staccato screening at 320-line screen, and has impeccably thorough production methods and quality procedures. Kiske says, 'We understand your [label] business.'

The P-3 press is the gear-driven model in Mark Andy's successful Performance Series line launched at Labelexpo Americas 2010. Armed with two 10-color Mark Andy 2200 presses, ColorLabel was looking for quick turnaround and quality for a minimal investment.

The P-3 also has the same functional print head design as the dual servo P-7 for easy plate loading and access to the inking system. It also has rapid registration and independent plate roll adjustment to improve make ready and changeover speeds.

Kiske feels that the press will allow the division to find profitable growth opportunities in the general label market. He says, 'It's about how we can we bring value when putting ink on paper. ColorLabel differentiates from the competition in terms of value add.'

SPECIALTY APPLICATIONS

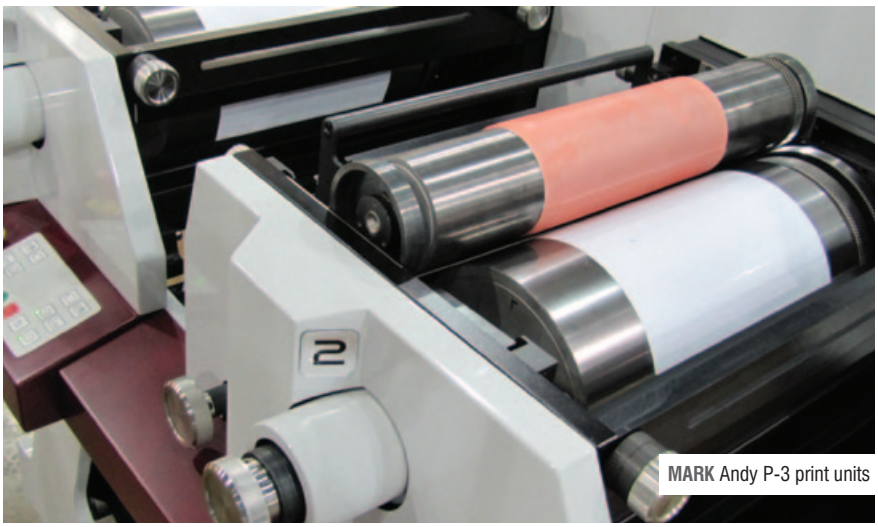
A particular specialty for ColorLabel is converting large amounts of complex plant seed tags. The bi-fold, re-closeable tag offers more space to include government regulated content in one single piece. They seal much like a post-it note with printing on both sides, streamlining the inventory process and giving a cleaner overall look.

Lead press operator, Tim Connelly produces the tags on a 2200 press, fitted with a general purpose vision system and four cameras that watch each hot zone of the label. This advanced quality control system has an integrated voice system that audibly flags errors, giving the operator more freedom to focus on other complications of completing a sellable job. Finished product rolls off the end of the press, equipped with a folding machine that automatically counts the number of packets.

ColorLabel customers have access to an e-commerce portal to automate order processing, access detailed reports and improve the fulfillment experience. The custom software strength on the Mulligan Printing side of the business is available to support label customers in a way they had never thought possible.

Personnel are key to the development of this successful business. Keith Grimm, a local talent with over 20. years experience in the roll business, is the new VP/GM of ColorLabel. His leadership skills will push ColorLabel to achieve its full potential.

Kiske says, 'We are positioned well to achieve real growth and can't stack the deck anymore.' Mulligan and ColorLabel have current combined annual sales of over $13 million.



MARK Andy P-3 print units

DAVID LANSKA, chairman of the FTA Great Lakes Group, reports on the group's last meeting, which saw suppliers and end users attempt to put the current economic situation into a positive perspective

Adjusting to the harsh reality of a prolonged economic downturn, companies have had to brace for the uncertainty by taking extraordinary measures in their operations. These have included reducing R&D and marketing budgets, delaying or cancelling new equipment acquisitions, slashing benefits and salaries, and ultimately reducing the size of the workforce. And while optimism abounds about the eventual recovery, that optimism has yet to fully transition into confidence.

If you rush from one critical situation to another with cell phones in each hand and a beeper on your belt, it is likely that you are so focused on fighting fires that you miss the bigger picture. If you can't always see the forest for the trees, you should have been at the December meeting of the FTA Great Lakes Group. Held at Fox Valley Technical College's Bordini Center, the speakers went to great lengths to put things back into perspective for the audience.

SEEING THE PLATE FOR THE DOTS

For Tim Reece of All Printing Resources, a key to consistent repeatable print quality is consistent plate

Fighting Back

quality. Plate quality results from interaction of processing variables including exposure, washout or dry removal times, post exposure and detack. Rather than fighting with the system by guessing, Tim advocates using the clues you are given to diagnose what went wrong and how to fix it. Those clues are measurable quality indicators such as:

- plate thickness and relief
- dot size and uniformity,
- box ratio (height of dots divided by width – ideal ratio is 1:1 with +/-10 percent tolerance, while a 1.2:1 ratio indicates elongation or a slurred dot)
- circularity (pixilation vs. smoothness of the radius – ideally .9 to 1.1)
- dot and area percent (physical and optical dot size) – A discrepancy of more than 2 percent indicates an ink transfer problem.
- plate hardness

To control these characteristics, you need to be able to measure them. Everything typically starts with a

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visual inspection of the plates or print samples. Aided by a loupe or scope, the human eye identifies any obvious red flags that indicate a potential issue. At that point, it is time to break out the tools of the trade.

A black and white transmissive densitometer used in laser set-up ensures it is operating at peak performance. Laser setup is based on several factors: plate thickness, focal length, type and reflectivity of the black mask material, cleanliness of the lens and aggressiveness of the laser. Using a loupe and the human eye, a visual inspection of a 50 percent Euclidean screen shows a perfect checkerboard effect. If the laser is running with too much power or the drum is turning too slowly, the laser ablates more material than you want. In this scenario, a 10 percent dot will be much larger than a 10 percent dot. If, on the other hand, the laser is running at too low of a power setting or the drum is rotating too fast, the laser will not ablate away enough material and the 10 percent dot will be smaller than desired. Tim recommends verification of laser performance on a weekly basis.

Micrometers measure plate thickness and relief. Variation in plate thickness or variation from standard both point to a probable drying issue. Excessive relief - as indicated in the box ratio - results in slurred dots, particularly on fine highlights, as the shoulders do not properly support the peaks. The plate analyzer measures a number of variables including box ratio, circularity and dot percentage.

Plate relief is important for several reasons. It is desirable to have a deeper plate relief for solids than screens. You may want significant plate relief such as .03 if you are running solids with reversed-out type. If, on the other hand, you are imaging a screen, you want less relief to ensure proper support for the highlights.

Measuring raw material ensures it is consistent in thickness across a given plate. You may also want to measure it because the material is subject to normal process variation from batch to batch. Material that comes in at .068 thickness may be labeled as .067 material. If it comes in to your facility at .068, that is its optimum thickness. That tells you that when it comes out of the drier at .068, it is properly dried. Additional drying at this point only wastes time and could be detrimental to the plate material. Material that comes in at .066 would not be properly dried at .067 and would require additional drying time.

Handheld micrometers are cheap, but hard to use and direct contact can affect the reading. A bench micrometer is limited to the distance of the throat so cannot take readings across a wide plate. An optical micrometer is non-contact, but is more expensive and accuracy is subject to operator variation.

Plate analyzers are useful in measuring dot quality, which has become much more important as digital imaging has begun to proliferate. The flat top dot is much easier to measure than a rounded or pointed top of a digitally imaged plate. As such, the defaults for instruments measuring dot area are not in agreement. Tim says that if you have multiple locations, it is more importation to be consistent than precise because you are not going to have inter-instrument agreement. For this reason he encourages use of the same type of device in all facilities.

Plate analyzers don't measure plate thickness and relief and they can't tell you if your exposure units are set up or operating properly, or if plates are properly exposed. What they will do is measure dot size and determine if those dots are uniform. If there is less than 10 percent standard deviation of the dot size, the plate is considered to be good. If there is more than 10 percent deviation in dot size on the print, you can work back from plate to mask to file in order to identify where the issue is occurring. Once identified, you can make adjustments to laser power or drum speed, or simply clean the lens. Plate analyzers also identify circularity issues. For instance, good circularity on the plate that does not show up in the print indicates a dirty plate or an ink transfer issue that could result from inadequate drying, unbalanced driers, or inadequate detack.

A durometer gauge measures the hardness of the plate. Durometer readings affect how the material prints: impression, halo, ink release capabilities, the hardness, durability and tackiness of the plate, as well as the affinity of the plate to pick up the ink and its ability to release it. UV-A and UC-C light meters take measurements to ensure proper crosslinking of monomers, elimination of tackiness, and to compensate for declining bulb efficiency over time.

UV-A meters ensure proper operation of UV-A lamps for optimum crosslinking of monomers so plates hold up to long press runs. Reduced output can be compensated for with added exposure time. UV-C meters verify the performance of UV-C lamps to ensure they properly remove tackiness.

Armed with readings from each of these measurement instruments, the operator is no longer shooting in the dark. Readings provide clues to the source of problems. Adjustments made on a timely basis reduce make-ready waste, defective finished product and unnecessary premature replacement of plates.

SEEING PRINT FROM THE CPC'S PERSPECTIVE

To give a point of reference for what is important today, Allen Marquardt from Kimberly Clark Corp. put it into a historical perspective. Thinking back just 10 years, virtually everything was analog with either a round AM or FM dot. Presses were running fast if they get up to around 900 fpm (30m/min). 6-8 hours was pretty routine for a changeover. 133 line screens were cutting edge and 'light – standard – dark' press approvals were common.

Just 10 short years later, digital is everywhere. Dots have taken on many new shapes with plate screens often exceeding 175/in. Presses can exceed 3,000 fpm (100m/min) although they rarely approach those speeds in production.

Oh, and one other little detail: the spectrophotometer has replaced the human eye for critical color control. It is amazing how far we have come in such a short time. Gone are the days of eyeballing the color, as the human eye is an inaccurate judge of color. The press-side 'Dixie cup magic' has been replaced with agreed-upon color specs verified by a color measurement device.

Even the mechanical systems have improved dramatically. With cartridge style press stations, rail systems and cantilevered sleeve mounting systems, it is now possible to be setting up the next job while the current one is still running. Robotics reduce setup time and allow for a safer, faster and quieter pressroom. Automated color control is being combined with vision systems to ensure proper impression and

"Speaking as the voice of the customer, Allen says he is not impressed when print shops rush to 'look busy', making adjustments on press when he walks in. He is impressed when he asks the operator specifics about press settings and spectro readings and the operator knows the answers"

registration and identify defects on the fly. We have even gotten to the point where reactive spectrophotometers are stationed on-press and linked to auto-feedback and adjustment mechanisms. All of these help reduce setup times from hours to minutes, while improving consistency and driving out waste.

But while we are enamored with all this technology, Allen is quick to point out that we cannot overlook the fundamentals. While presses may be to the point that they almost run themselves, there still exists a critical need for a highly skilled, well trained workforce. To avoid what he sees as degradation of print on the shelf, we have to stave off the erosion of technical understanding in our organizations. Training is crucial, especially when the top press operators are promoted up the ladder. As operators are replaced, there is all too often an erosion of technical understanding in the 'backfill of talent'. New operators don't understand how to troubleshoot graphics and that lack of understanding shows up in the print.

Allen said he would rather work with a company that has well trained talent, even if their equipment is thirty years older than someone with state-of-the-art equipment whose operators don't understand the process or know how to troubleshoot graphic issues. When you are 'pushing the limits of physics', which everyone seems to be doing these days, you can't afford to have the operators' understanding limited to where the start button is located. If the goal is to get more ink down faster with better placement control, getting it to dry without plugging up plates or anilox, using front and back print on multiple layers with built-in security features and so on, the way to achieve that goal is through training.

If the goal is simply to put down the correct amount of ink predictably and repeatedly, you need to 'run by the numbers'. Allen strongly advocates implementation and adherence to the Flexographic Technical Association's FIRST (Flexographic Image Reproduction Standards and Tolerances) program as a means to faster setups, reduced waste and greater consistency.

Speaking as the voice of the customer, Allen says he is not impressed when print shops rush to 'look busy', making adjustments on press when he walks in. He is impressed when he asks the operator specifics about press settings and spectro readings and the operator knows the answers. He would rather see the press running in control with a knowledgeable staff sweeping the floors to keep busy. It is simple. If you ever needed a perspective on what's important to your customers, Allen nailed it in thirteen words: 'I come in with a signed proof. You match it. I buy it'.

A PERSPECTIVE ON SUSTAINABILITY

While waste reduction was an integral component of Allen and Tim's presentations, sustainability involves more than reducing waste. It also involves doing something productive with the waste that is generated. By finding new uses for waste materials, they are diverted from landfills and become a renewable source of raw materials. And the trend today is for brand owners to place more and more pressure for sustainability on every part of the supply chain.

Rolando Sanz-Guerrero of Greenwood Fuels discussed generating power from the waste byproducts of the printing industry. When coated and laminated papers and films, as well as matrix waste, are formed into fuel pellets, these have adequate density to produce power comparable to that achieved from burning coal. The pellets comply with stringent air quality regulations, burn cleaner than coal and require no major retrofit to burn in coal-fired equipment.

Calvin Frost, CEO of Channeled Resources, said his plant in Marathon County generates nearly 1,000 tons per month of 'byproduct' (fuel pellets) and the company is 98.5 percent landfill free.

Dave Robinson, also of the Channeled Resources Group, says matrix waste is a major component in fuel pellet production as the adhesive materials help bind the pellets together while the paper products produce good amounts of heat energy. Other materials include pressure sensitive paper, poly-coated paper, polypropylene, polyethylene and polyester films, packaging materials and non-woven products, as well as waste paper, carbon paper, tapes and other materials. Materials typically come in compacted or bailed. All materials are tested for qualification purposes looking at btus, metals and sulfur content and elimination of materials that would give off chlorine.

The primary suppliers for the pellet raw materials are label and flexible packaging producers. Dave said the printers do pay a dumping fee similar to what they would pay at a landfill, but they are diverting material from the landfill and generating a renewable energy source. He said the cost for transporting the material to Greenwood Fuels depends on the distance it needs to be hauled. For those companies near a Greenwood facility, recycling is either cost-neutral or slightly cheaper than disposal. He said, though, that for printers/converters that use this approach, the benefit comes as a differentiator and selling point in their being able to state in the context of a sales presentation, that their company diverted (for example) 100,000 pounds of waste material from the landfill to renewable energy in a given month. This is a great alternative for people that are already paying to get rid of these materials, but with an unsustainable approach. As landfill costs continue to rise, and pressure for sustainability continues to grow, clean fuel will become an even better choice.

As Chairman of the FTA Great Lakes Group, it is a pleasure to put these meetings together. I would like to personally thank our speakers. Each meeting, we are privileged to hear from some of the top experts in the flexographic industry. I would also like to thank our hosts, in this case Fox Valley Technical College, for providing such fine facilities for our meetings. We greatly appreciate our food sponsor, Actega-WIT, and the door prizes provided by Harper Corporation of America, Flint Group, All Printing Resources, Mekelburg Consulting LLC, D.J. Lanska and Associates LLC, Tesa Tape, MacDermid, and the FTA. Your contributions made for another enjoyable, entertaining and informative holiday event.

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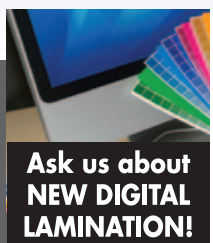

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Inkjet suits Ample Industries

AMPLE Industries finds inkjet technology to be a great fit for the business, writes Danielle Jerschefske

A tradition of technology runs in the Menzies family, who launched Ample Industries in 1968 to produce labels. Ample Industries was one of North America's first label converters to step into the digital printing world with the purchase of a free standing EFI Jetrion 4000 UV inkjet machine at Labelexpo Americas in 2008. Digital printing had long-been an area of interest, and DOD inkjet technology had reached a new level of quality and reliability.

The converter was keen to bring economic short-run production in-house to capture new business, and also recognized a profitable opportunity for the excess butt rolls typically viewed as waste. Rather, Ample Industries took the view that the pre-paid material could be used to turn a profit on the Jetrion. Vice president Natalie Menzies-Spradlin says, 'When we saw how the Jetrion worked we were impressed. Others looked overly complicated, or came with requirements to pre-coat and post-coat materials.'

Shortly after the press was installed, Ample was running sellable work with few hiccups. Still,the converter is happy to have its lead operator, Marissa Lipsey, who is fearless when it comes to adjusting print heads and fixing what is needed based on the OEM's guidance.

Ample acquired the next generation Jetrion 4830 shortly after its launch at Labelexpo Europe 2009. The 4830 model is wider at 9" and comes standard with four heads for process color inks, plus a fifth head for opaque white ink to print on clear and silver materials. Menzies-Spradlin says, 'it had such good opacity, we saw all the more opportunity.' Both models use UV inks and have a print resolution up to 1080 dpi.

The capabilities of digital inkjet technology – short-run, cost-effective, on-demand, high-quality, and customization - have allowed Ample to reel in new business, especially in the wine market. Menzies-Spradlin, says 'It opened the door to the wine label market that had previously been a hard industry to break into.' Springfield, Missouri, where Ample Industries is located, is surrounded by established and new boutique wineries looking for labels that will effectively convey their story to buyers.

There are five designers on the Ample team, including Natalie, who enjoys playing with new materials and processes, figuring out how to make them work. Menzies-Spradlin explains, 'every substrate distributes ink differently, depending on the face stock. You have to design the artwork with a specific texture or finish in mind.'

The converter has worked with a variety of materials on the Jetrion and has developed new techniques to bring value and added punch to its clients' digital labels. One trick is flooding silver foil paper to make it appear as yellow stamped foil.

Private label barbeque sauce has been a popular market for Ample. It's shifted some work from its flexo presses to the digital machine, but Menzies-Spradlin says it is a tricky process, and any switches that have been made, have been done so on shelf appeal alone.

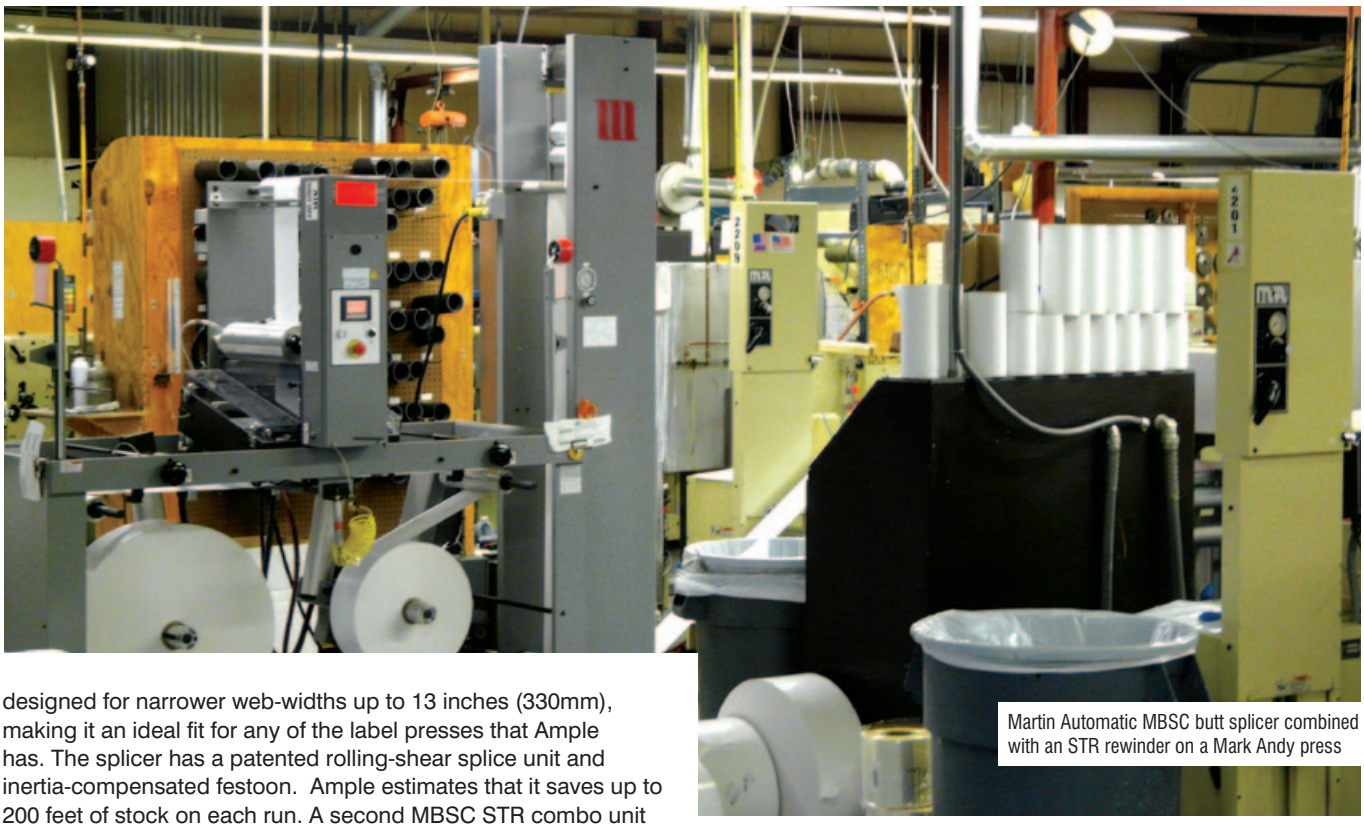
Digital has helped to increase the overall profile of the company. With a majority of business in food and beverage, Menzies-Spradlin says, 'many more companies that we had tried to get into before will talk to us now because of our digital capability.' This includes small and larger brands. Now the converter quotes both processes when it goes to a customer to show the economics, that overall cost savings are possible with digital, and to prove that sometimes a particular job is easier to produce using digital.

THE SHOP

Ample Industries employees 53 people housed in a 40,000 sq ft facility, running two shifts with a night shift working four 10-hour days. Flexo plates are made using DuPont's Cyrel Fast thermal system and the Esko CDI Spark 4835 system.

The majority of the shop is narrow-web with two 10" and four 7" Mark Andy presses, and one 17" machine. The most recent capital investment on the analog side has been in a Martin Automatic MBSC butt splicer combined with an STR rewinder. The MBSC has been specifically

MAUI GIRL FARMS (see p.60) used an effective labeling strategy to propel a small new brand to national retail status



Martin Automatic MBSC butt splicer combined with an STR rewinder on a Mark Andy press

designed for narrower web-widths up to 13 inches (330mm), making it an ideal fit for any of the label presses that Ample has. The splicer has a patented rolling-shear splice unit and inertia-compensated festoon. Ample estimates that it saves up to 200 feet of stock on each run. A second MBSC STR combo unit will be installed soon.

CASE STUDY: KITCHEN TO THE SHELF

The Maui Girl Farms brand originated with a Hawaiian Style Macadamia Nut Pesto created in Roxanne Van Paing's kitchen in a small community on Maui Island, Hawaii. The brand's products use many organic ingredients sourced locally from family-owned farms and are GMO-free.

After regularly sharing jars with friends and at local swap meets, the recipe grew to be popular, and proper labels needed to be made. Roxanne's first experience with ordering labels is priceless. With limited options on the Hawaiian Islands and minimal knowledge, she found herself with pricy labels at fifty-cents a piece with an adhesive strong enough to remain on a car bumper for years.

It wasn't until Roxanne met Natalie's father, David Menzies, in a Maui diner that she was able to source the labels to suit her business and brand. The original design work started on the Islands. Roxanne says, 'The Maui Girl label started with a sketch of a wholesome 1940s pin up girl with her iconic hair, bathing suit and smile.' The background is a few shades of green and blue, some palm trees, water and a tropical flower. 'We wanted her and to convey an 'all natural' image, like the product. Her innocence and a strong green background are pushing the idea out there.'

Maui Girl Farms brand products now stretch to the mainland and can be found in a number of natural and specialty stores in Southern California. 'The labels turned out beautifully, which speaks to buyers. People's eyes are trained for quality and a quality label just adds to the appeal of the product.'

The entry cost for getting into the national market chains is high. A good price on the right amount of labels can reduce the initial investment cost, but also incubate the brand more quickly to earn cash to reinvest into long-term brand growth and equity. Maui Girl Farms recently re-launched its original pesto recipe and the newer Pineapple Macadamia Nut Pesto with a manufacturer in Los Angeles. Roxanne will continue to develop the brand eastward, using its label as a communication piece with both retailers and the consumer.

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The new generation Stork Prints DSI digital press can accept up to 10 print heads. *See the video demonstration at www.labelsandlabeling.com*

Stork Prints launches 'next generation' DSI

STORK PRINTS has launched a new generation of its DSI digital label press, with the ability to mount up to ten print stations in line. Andy Thomas reports

Stork Prints' new generation DSI digital label press comes as standard with four inkjet print stations, but a total of 10 positions are available. The company offers a range of possible options for using this number of print heads, including opaque white, variable data printing, extended color gamut, or the possibility of digital varnishing stations.

Label converters who start with the basic configuration can retrofit their DSI press with the extra printing positions at a later date, making it a 'future proof' investment.

The DSI press is equipped with a new servo-driven chill drum on the final UV curing station, which will allow more flexibility in the choice of substrates, including unsupported films and thermo-sensitive materials.

Stork Prints also demonstrated to L&L its latest opaque UV inkjet white for applications involving clear films. 'As we are recognized as the experts in rotary screen printing, we know the specifications and what it means to print a real opaque white,' says Wilfried Koopman, managing director Graphics at Stork Prints.

INK INTEGRATION

Wilfried Koopman sees the fact that Stork Prints manufactures its own ink as a key differentiator. 'We are not depending on the mainstream ink manufacturers, for whom inkjet is only a very small volume of their market. We are a total solution provider and take full responsibility for the performance and quality'.

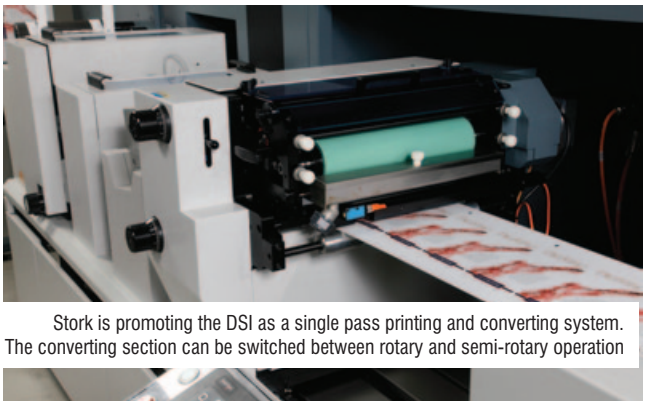
The UV ink developed by Stork Prints does not require a protective lacquer for light-fastness or scratch resistance. 'In our case the UV-flexo lacquer station is not used to protect the print,' says Wilfried Koopman. 'It is often used to make the print match the quality of UV-flexo. It can also be used as an individual spot varnish or printing station.'

The Stork Prints UV inks can be changed on the fly, with enough ink stored in the system to keep the press printing. The ink is 'fixed' between print stations by individual LED curing units, which stops the ink spreading before it reaches the final (conventional) UV curing station, thus minimizing dot gain. 'The key to getting the highest quality print out of the DSI digital label printer is to adjust this fixing power depending on the substrate's effect on ink spreading,' says Arno Steenkamer, product specialist DSI at Stork Prints. The company has developed a database of different material types with pre-set fixing levels, which also takes account of any corona treatment the material has undergone. 'The operator is free to fine tune the output of the fixing stations if new materials come along. In general, more pinning supports crisp fine text and reduced pinning contributes to improved flow of the UV inks, and thus optimal solids,' says Steenkamer.

IN-LINE CONCEPT

The DSI is sold by Stork Prints as an in-line 'hybrid' press, with modular, integrated finishing – semi-rotary UV flexo station, semi-rotary die cutting, slitting and rewinding. 'We noticed that there is high interest in an in-line configuration,' says Wilfried Koopman. 'Our philosophy is one operator, one machine from start to finish of label production. This approach reduces

UV inks are 'fixed' by inter-station LED lamps before final (conventional) UV curing station.



Stork is promoting the DSI as a single pass printing and converting system. The converting section can be switched between rotary and semi-rotary operation

Ink can be changed on the fly

extra costs of equipment, labor, handling and waste. In this respect, the new DSI offers a superb TCO per printed label.'

The DSI press' converting section can be switched between full rotary and semi-rotary finishing. The semi-rotary finishing solution is optimal for short runs as only one cylinder size is required to cover all repeats. Printing speed is up to 35 m/min (100ft/min). Koopman stresses that the press can also be sold without finishing solutions where converters want to use their existing equipment.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The DSI can be used to re-register pre-printed rolls, allowing variable black or full color text and images to be added, in register, to a flexo printed roll.

The DSI press comes with its own control system, and one interesting feature is to select only jobs which will be printed on the same substrate. 'By showing all jobs to be printed on a PE roll, for example, this makes both the workflow and color management system more efficient,' says Arno Steenkamer. The press software is fully compatible with EskoArtworks' software systems, making it easy to integrate with wider pre-press workflows. Other standard DSI features include variable data printing (VDP) and non-stop-design-change (NSDC) to support versioning.

POSITIONING

Stork Prints is very clear about where the DSI fits into the overall digital print jigsaw. 'As well as converters moving into digital printing for the first time, we see companies which already own toner systems buying this press as a complementary technology,' says Erik Blankenstein, area sales manager at the company.

'The combination of a photographic quality and a rotary screen "look and feel" means that the DSI is very competitive for many label applications, not only for short runs but also medium to long run jobs,' adds Wilfried Koopman. 'This will be even more powerful when we bring our new opaque white to the table.'

The new generation DSI press has now been sold and will be demonstrated on the Stork Prints stand at FESPA Digital in Hamburg in May. The press can also be seen in action at Stork Prints' new digital demo center at its headquarters in Boxmeer, the Netherlands.

INKJET HISTORY

In developing the DSI press and its own UV inkjet inks for label printing, Stork Prints has built on knowledge gained from well-established industrial inkjet printing businesses for both textiles and graphic proofing. The company has, in fact, been active in inkjet printing – with both systems and inks – for more than 20 years, during which time more than 4.000 machines have been installed using its technology. Stork Prints manufactures high-tech electroformed precision components for several well-known inkjet head manufactures, and in the 1990s even manufactured its own continuous flow inkjet heads. 'In combination with our own manufacturing capabilities for water-based and UV inks, this means that we have the right expertise for optimizing the total system performance for label printing,' says Wilfried Koopman.

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INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR CREATIVE LABELS

Shrink experts step into printing spotlight

THE DWYER GROUP has installed an RDP Marathon variable repeat offset press to print shrink sleeve labels. Danielle Jerschefske reports

The 20-year old Dwyer Group, headquartered in Anaheim, California, in the south central suburbs of Los Angeles, has made a significant investment to move into process color offset shrink sleeve label production. Within 12 months the company installed an RDP Marathon IVCO press at its Pennsylvania location and an HP Indigo WS6000 digital press in California.

The Dwyer Group gained its strength in the preform business, supplying tamper evident seals for the bakery and dairy markets. Jim Dwyer, CEO of the Dwyer Group says, 'Most of the commodity business has evolved into a bigger footprint for items such as party-sized fruit and salad trays with bigger containers, whereas printed shrink sleeves have increased in adoption in pharmaceuticals, dairy, beverage, household products and even pet food containers.'

The company is using the digital press to create prototypes to drive sales for the high volume offset press. Dwyer explains, 'It came together as a philosophy that falls in line with the general principles of the business. Our whole business model is just-in-time delivery. The prototyping allows us to get our foot in the door to show the quality of the label we can produce, and it increases overall speed-to-market.'

Dwyer and his father joined forces in 1988 to create a packaging brokerage company selling nearly every material that can come on a core – polypropylene, polyester, metalized films, coextrusions, mainly to converters.

The business got involved in packaged salads early on, and introduced preforms to the produce market, most of which was coming from overseas. Dwyer Group found some Asian suppliers, but eventually started producing its own shrink bands when issues with lead times started to rise. Some new and second hand equipment was acquired, a slitting machine, seamers, cutters, and the business grew from there.

It now houses a Karlville 700mm lay flat converter with end fold and glue application, and turret rewinder running at 300m/min. The California location has a total size of 120,000 sq ft, much of which stores the various preforms, and employs two-thirds of the company's 150 workers.

Dwyer says, 'We were one of the first to do domestic converting on the commodity [preform] side. We went national by opening distribution sites in Chicago, Texas, Florida –

RDP MARATHON

RDP Marathon restored its original name in 2009 after being known in the market as Drent Goebel North America since 2006. In October of 2010 Sanden Machine Limited of Ontario, Canada and RDP Marathon Inc in Montreal, Canada formed an alliance to service the label and packaging markets of NAFTA region, including an exclusive distribution agreement with Edelmann Graphics in Beerfelden, Germany for the STAR Print (Sleeve Technology Advanced Rotation).

RB Dwyer's Karlville converting machine

RB Dwyer Digital Show Room in California

BC Bundt yogurts produced on RDP Marathon

SUSTAINABILITY

Dwyer has installed solar panels at its Pennsylvania facility to reduce the manufacturing sites' pull on the grid. It recycles all pallets, boards and waste products at both locations.

basically a day or two from anywhere on the East Coast, which broke the business open. People back East were having trouble getting preforms in the time frame that they wanted. Just-in-time delivery is hard to manage, expensive and problematic but our customers want stuff when they want it; not when we want to supply it.'

The demand had existed for the materials, but the supply base was rather fragmented with a lot of small suppliers, and no one had made it easy for larger customers to reliably source the materials.

PRINTING SHRINK SLEEVE LABELS

Dwyer plans to carry this JIT philosophy into the printing side of shrink label production. It partnered with other businesses in the past to offer printing capability to clients but Dwyer says, 'it didn't work because of lead times. So we came to a crossroads where we needed to decide what to do.'

The prospect of acquiring Ideal Sleeves in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania presented itself as a viable solution to move forward. Equipped with some older flexographic presses there was high potential to get into the printing business with a few equipment upgrades.

Dwyer looked at gravure, but steered away, fully realizing that there would be some trade offs and limitations in selecting another print process. Further research found that only a few other companies in North America are producing shrink sleeves with offset technology. Hence, the decision was made to invest in an RDP Marathon 8-color 38" Infinite Variable Cylinder Offset press.

All water-based, the offset press allows Dwyer to shorten lead times with its quick changeover capability. In combination with digital prototyping as a speed-to-market tool, Dwyer says, 'we have compressed the time-line to get through the finished process in two to three weeks from concept to consumer. It's all now possible with the technology.'

The only printing that's done in California is digital. The HP Indigo has color matching software installed to match the digital print to the offset print. Rather than purchasing a new coating line, costs were reduced by combining a couple of flexo stations in-line to varnish and prime the materials for the digital machine.

'Medium sized companies are our target customers, but there's also the possibility to reach larger firms that are producing sleeves using flexography, but want the graphic quality of offset technology. Now, they can upgrade with no extra front and little added total cost.'

Design and layout for shrink sleeves is critical in order to avoid any distortion issues. Dwyer is concentrating on its CSR infrastructure and has implemented strict quality control procedures and processes to eliminate mistakes.

A number of upgrades were made in the finishing department in Pennsylvania including new slitting and seaming machines.

Dwyer Group has experienced a positive response to its new offset capabilities. 'Potential clients have been eager to hear about offset, and it's gotten our foot in the door.'

The company has launched a new marketing campaign to build up awareness about its new printing capabilities, including full production work on the digital press. Most sales are contracted through brokers and distributors on the East Coast since most purchasing decisions come from there.

'Within three years we'd like to bring the same press into our California operations, to have offset capability here,' explains Dwyer. 'Then we'd be the only wider web sleeve offset printer within 1500 miles. But for the time being we are going to concentrate on pushing the limits of the technology, helping our customers to be courageous and try doing new things.'

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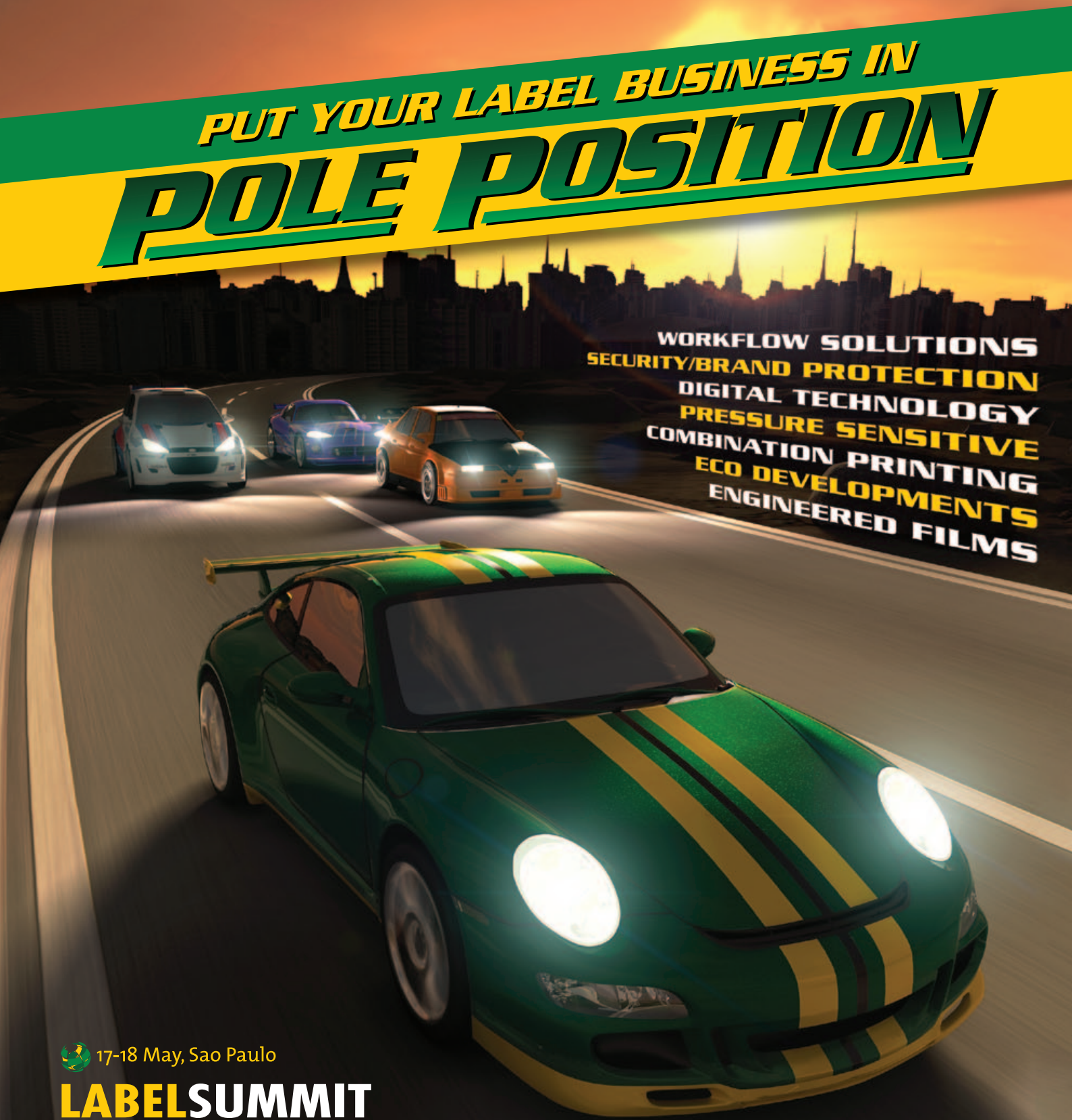

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DOES THE FLEXO PROCESS have too many variables to allow true standardization? Paul Teachout at Harper Graphics argues that the numbers are there to be hit, so long as we can identify them and work to their strengths

Standardizing

Over the years I have seen flexography grow into a well rounded manufacturing process. The numbers are all there to achieve a standaridized workflow if we know how to identify them and work towards their strengths, despite the fact that the flexographic process has more variables than other print formats.

We also need to remember that flexography – both central impression and the inline process – offers many other advantages for packaging converters, including the ability to run 12 micron film materials, laminations, paper labels, multi-layer coupons, folding cartons or corrugated at speeds up to 2,000 fpm.

The flexographic process continues to evolve with new photopolymer plate processing technologies, graphics software, thinner ink films and advanced automated printing and converting machines. This evolution provides the perfect opportunity for standardization. Tighter tolerance products and consumables have reduced the size of the window where we need to create upper and lower control limits. This has allowed flexography to be much more competitive with other printing formats. It has also created the perfect opportunity for lean initiatives to be implemented throughout the converting process to turn a flexible, and generally manual craft, into a fully fledged manufacturing workflow.

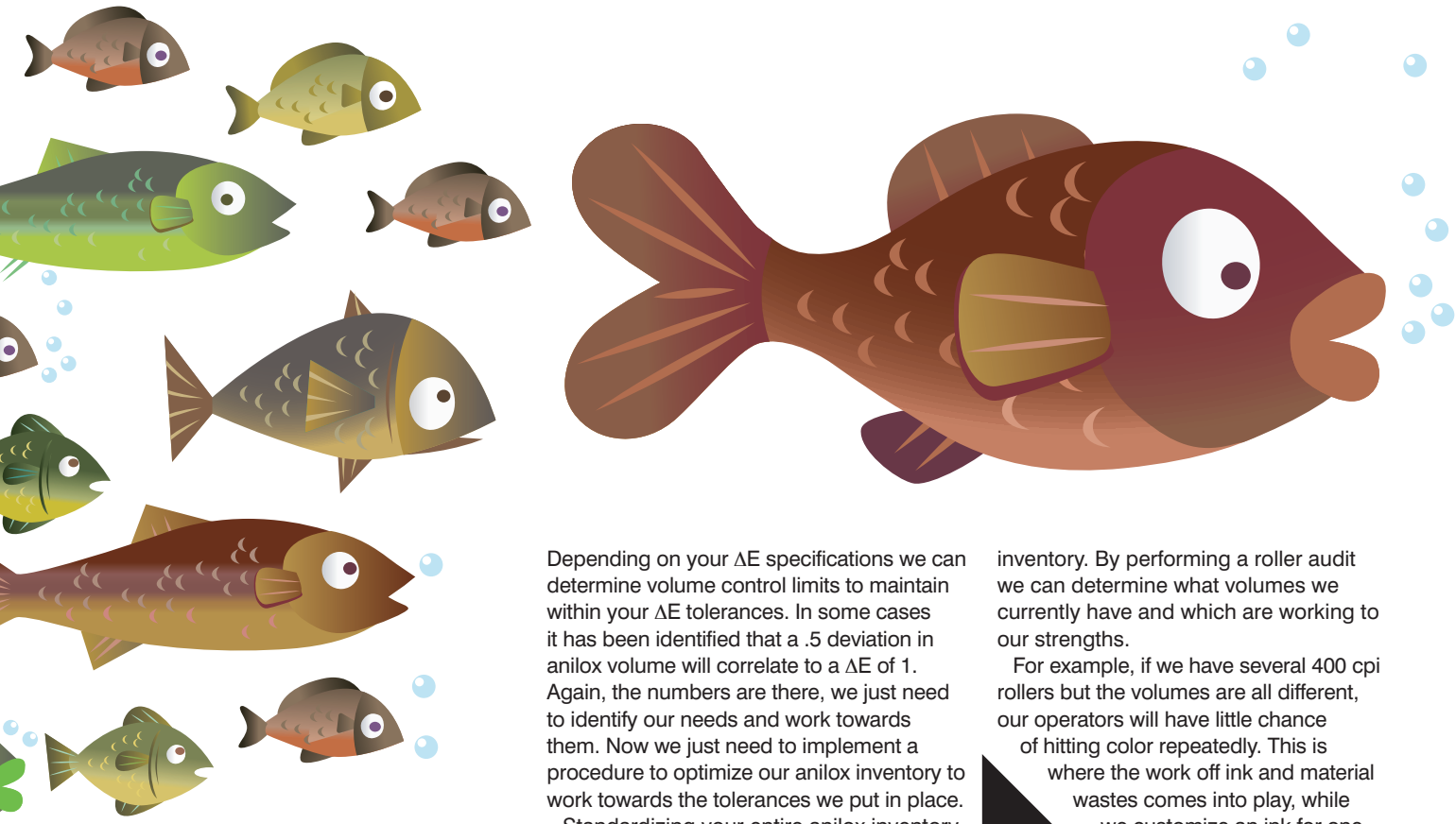
Perhaps the most important part of the workflow is the color management process. The ability to hit repeatable and predictable color on press will allow us to be more efficient.

In many cases the ink cost is roughly four to six percent of the total operating cost. The substrate could be as much as 60 to 70 percent of the total operating cost. Most converters are concerned at the rising cost of substrates and the waste thereof. But in most cases it is the four percent ink cost that is causing the waste of our most costly consumable, the substrate. This is due to poor color management practices, including ink chemistries, poor anilox selection or lack of knowledge on how to properly identify the root causes of any problems.

The primary tool in the flexographic printing process is the anilox roller. This is the roller that will deliver the required ink film thickness at the desired printable viscosity. This tool when properly selected will allow us to hit specified solid ink densities and delta E tolerances. We have the targets to hit and we know the numbers. Now we need to determine the ideal anilox roller and most importantly, volume, to be able to hit those targets consistently and repeatedly.

Solid ink density and ink volume are directly related. If we can determine the proper volume of ink to hit a desired ΔE or SID target then it will provide the opportunity to standardize the anilox roller inventory.

Setting upper and lower control limits to identify our operating window is easier than you think. For example, we know that when printing process yellow in flexography we shoot for a solid ink density of 1.0. We also know that +/- .05 is the acceptable working tolerance. So we can read from .95 to 1.05 on yellow and achieve acceptable solid ink density. Now we need to determine the exact anilox roller volume that hits the high side of our window. For example, a 2 bcm volume roller hits 1.05 density.



Variation

This is acceptable on the high side and leaves room for wear and minor plugging.

We know from previous trials that a 1.8 bcm roller will give us a .95 density reading. So we can predict that a new 2.0 bcm anilox roller will deliver a 1.05 SID for process yellow, and once it wears to a 1.8 bcm it will hit the lower limit. Now the decision is either to re-cover the roller to its original tolerance, or become an ink chemist and create a lot of variations of process yellow to sit on the shelf. If we work by the numbers, standardize to our control limits and work within them, we can make and proof inks the same way all the time as well as send them to press and achieve color first time every time.

This process can also be repeated to identify targets and volumes for spot colors.

EXAMPLE OF STANDARDIZED INVENTORY

300 cpi 8 bcm whites and varnishes
400 cpi 5 bcm heavy spot colors
600 cpi 4 bcm spot colors
800 cpi 2.5 bcm combination work
1000 cpi 2.0 bcm process work

Depending on your ΔE specifications we can determine volume control limits to maintain within your ΔE tolerances. In some cases it has been identified that a .5 deviation in anilox volume will correlate to a ΔE of 1. Again, the numbers are there, we just need to identify our needs and work towards them. Now we just need to implement a procedure to optimize our anilox inventory to work towards the tolerances we put in place.

Standardizing your entire anilox inventory is the key. With standardized line screens and volumes you will have fewer targets to hit from the ink room. With a standardized and scheduled cleaning program your anilox will always be consistent and repeatable. This will all lead to reduced waste, reduced set up time and a properly managed process.

There are many ways to identify the anilox engravings that will work in our environment. The most common and efficient way is to perform a banded roller test. This will allow us to trial pre-determined cell count and volumes all at once. The other way is to utilize our existing inventory. By performing a roller audit we can determine what volumes we currently have and which are working to our strengths.

For example, if we have several 400 cpi rollers but the volumes are all different, our operators will have little chance of hitting color repeatedly. This is where the work off ink and material wastes comes into play, while we customize an ink for one roller. If we have a 3 bcm, 3.5 bcm and a 4 bcm roller we can run our own test to see which volume with our press ready ink hits the color management target. Then adjust our process to that standardized volume. Now it will not matter what 400 CPI roller is chosen because they all have the same volume. This will allow us to reduce our anilox inventory and manage it much more efficiently.

Many converters are standardizing their inventories by selecting, for example, five CPI values along with five volume values and setting them as the new standard. Anytime future rolls are ordered they must fall within this profile. Now, regardless

PHANTOM handheld flexo proofer from HarperScientific

of what operator, or on what press, the results will be consistent and repeatable.

The best way to achieve acceptable color match is to proof the inks before we go to press. This can easily be done in the ink room with the use of a hand held proofer system. We can correlate the proofer rolls to match that of the standardized anilox inventory.

Now that we have standardized volumes on press, the ink technicians will have a consistent target to shoot for. Depending on the ink system being run – UV, solvent or water-based – we can determine the proper set of proofer rolls for predictable color matching.

UV inks are 100 percent solids – what goes on the web stays on the web. UV inks will correlate one to one with the press rolls. Solvent and water based inks have high percentages of vehicles and evaporants that flash off in the drying process. This needs to be taken into consideration when selecting the proper proofer rolls. Typically you will see proofer rolls with a 10-30 percent increase in volume over press anilox to obtain proper color match with thinner ink film printing. It will always be easier to err on the high side and extend than to have to build color. Your ink and proofer roll supplier have well defined processes to support the selection or proofer roll engravings and color matching guidelines so always consult them when determining the proper proofing systems.

The best way to maintain consistency in our anilox rollers is to be sure they are properly cleaned after use. This will ensure that each time we go back to press with that roller it will pull consistent color. Off-line anilox cleaners such as chemical bath cleaners, media blast or pressure cleaners are very important tools. Our anilox inventory should cycle through a cleaner on a scheduled basis to ensure they are deep cleaned properly. This would eliminate the concern of plugging that will rob us of volume and create inconsistent color on press. Each roller should cycle through a deep clean cycle at least once every two weeks, as long as they are being properly cleaned on press as well.

When it comes down to ensuring that your rollers are in good condition for use we will need to inspect them. There are a couple options we have here. The first is the step up audit program. This is where a reverse impression is taken of each roller in your inventory. This is done by using a small pressure-sensitive tape with an Indium foil on the back. The foil is compressed into the cells, forming an exact mirror image of the roller surface. The samples are then returned to the anilox supplier for full evaluation. They will be able to identify wear patterns, damage, poor engravings and if the rollers are being properly cleaned. They will also document the exact line screen and volume of each roller so we can better control our color management process. A complete report will be returned to the converter with digital images and statistics of each roller.

Performing a yearly audit of our rollers will give us all the information we need to manage the inventory. We will identify wear patterns and roller lifecycles. By identifying our volume tolerances and performing the roller audits we will be able to make educated decisions on roller orders and forecasts.

Some converters decide to purchase their own scopes and measurement devices. This allows us to measure and maintain our inventory onsite. There are different types of scopes available for this process, although they require extensive training and are somewhat costly. For pressroom use we recommend the use of handheld inspection scopes just to see if the roller is clean and identify any wear or damage. A 400x power handheld scope will allow us to see the surface of the roll to identify these concerns. It does not take any measurements; it is for inspection only. But it will very quickly tell us if a roller is plugged or worn, thus giving us a direction to go in without just changing anilox all day until a good one is found.

As with any process, flexography is an endless pursuit of continuous improvement. It will continue to grow and reach new levels of performance. As we take each step we will continue to tighten the tolerances that have created challenges in the past. This is not your grandfather's flexo anymore. We are a manufacturing process with specifications and tolerances and when we work by the numbers we standardize our results and reap tremendous financial rewards. That's a fact!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Teachout has been in the packaging industry for more than 25 years. Starting out in offset, he moved to flexo press manufacturing with Webtron in 1986. He remained with the company through its evolution into Aquaflex. Teachout has held numerous key positions including printing management, application specialist, sales support, engineering support, marketing and product development manager. As of March 2008, he became southeast technical graphics advisor for Harper Corporation of America. He is also active on various industry committees and is an author and contributor to numerous technical articles.

Sustainability a time for action

A GENUINE COMMITMENT to sustainability demands a 'cradle-to-cradle' approach, and new technology allows this idea to be applied to release liner recycling, argues Dr Thomas Baumgärtner

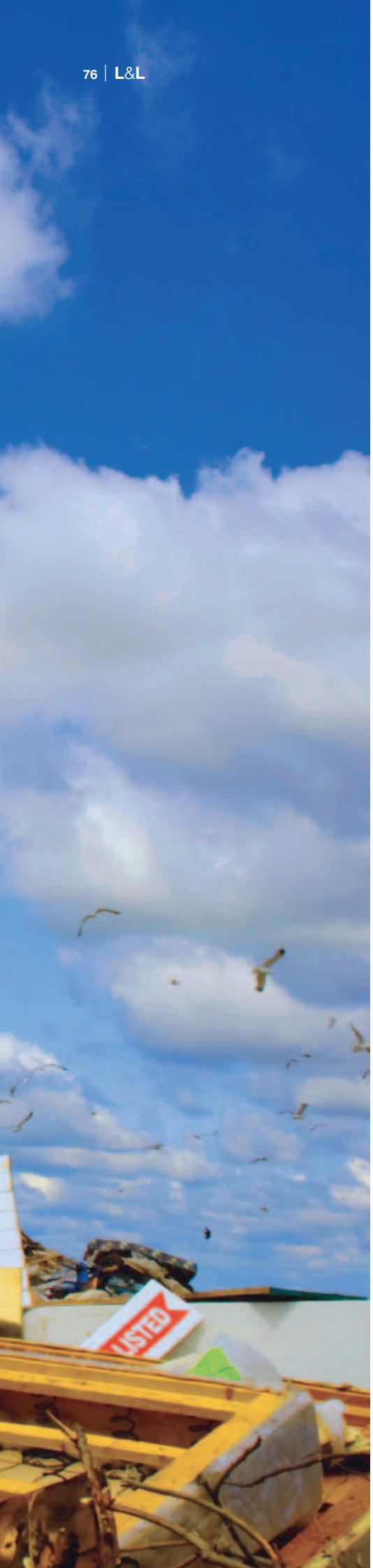
Before today, it was enough for businesses that wished to convey the image of an ecologically aware and sustainable enterprise to print their brochures on recycled paper and install solar panels – even if their production and development processes were not modified at all.

In his widely acclaimed book, Strategies for the Green Economy, Joel Makower made a delightful comparison: 'Corporate sustainability is like teenage sex. Everybody talks about it. Nobody does it very much. And when they do, they don't do it very well.'

In the past, green thinking was all too often just a marketing or communications trend, not a call for action. In my opinion, however, we have reached a turning point. In future green issues will be shaping our agenda in a way that was inconceivable until recently. My belief is founded on three drivers. First, highly critical and better-informed consumers; second, extremely tough business management factors; and third, an entirely new approach to the subject of recycling.

MOBILE APPS FOR ECO-WARRIORS

The much-admired Carbon Footprint Calculator (www.carbonfootprint.com), which enables consumers to measure the CO2 emissions associated with certain activities or products, was a forerunner of recent developments. Mobile phone apps are now available that investigate manufacturers' eco-sins



while the consumer is shopping. All he does is scan in the barcode (e.g. www.codecheck.info (German only) and www.barcoo.com). Although such tools may still be in their infancy, it is worth remembering that, not so long ago, the tremendous (market) power exerted by a simple search engine was unimaginable. Major international consumer goods manufacturers and brand producers, which regularly consume enormous quantities of labels, among other things, are suddenly becoming the driving forces of sustainable management. They are exposed to pressure from consumers and are responding accordingly. Manufacturers are now asking both immediate and upstream suppliers to perform detailed eco-audits.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

There is a further reason why producers of consumer goods are now taking action in this respect: cost pressure. Although cost economies are imperative, they must not be made at the expense of quality – that is a lesson that has been learnt from the past. Bearing that in mind, label users also take another factor into account: wasting resources is expensive. And waste disposal is costly too. Irrespective of his place in the supply chain, a supplier who does not have both of these aspects under control must be suspected of passing on costs without offering the customer any value-added in return. Without doubt, the environment benefits directly from both factors – critical consumers and the pressure to conserve resources. These two issues are suddenly making brand producers take a very close interest in the processes employed by label printers and adhesive material coating businesses. They are presumably undertaking fact-finding missions to paper mills as well. We are already inviting more and more of our customers, together with end-users, to visit our adhesive material production facilities – and the outcome has been very positive from our perspective. Before this practice became the norm, we had already invested considerable sums in the latest production technology. Herma was the first company in the industry, for example, to recover heat for priming the dryer intake air. We were also the first to dry the coated paper with highly efficient, gas-fired SpeedMax dryers. We have almost entirely dispensed with internal traffic movements because intermediate product store, coating machine and finished roll store are more or less a single unit of our new coating plant.

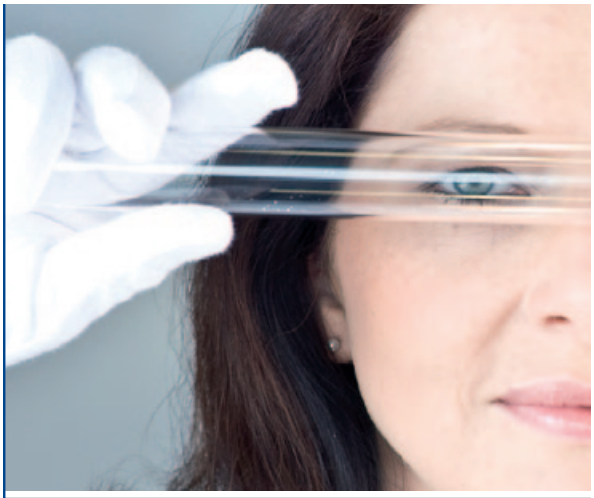
RECYCLING, NOT DOWNCYCLING

In principle, it was to be expected that consumers would exert a stronger direct influence, and that costs would play a more prominent role in the utilization of finite resources. But possibly the most underestimated, or misconstrued issue is recycling – an area in which we think that we are already performing well. Many people in Germany, where enormous effort is often invested in separating waste, believe that they lead the world in recycling. That may even be true as far as quantities are concerned, but regrettably in many cases we are not recycling at all, but downcycling. Used plastic bottles do not reappear as bottles, but as hefty garden furniture that nobody wants. Even worse are cases in which waste is first neatly separated – supposedly for the sole purpose of recycling – before being shipped to India, Vietnam or China.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE: CRADLE TO CRADLE

This is another issue, however, that is gradually being subjected to more critical scrutiny, driven by a holistic perspective. By way of example, I refer to the cradle to cradle concept. The process engineer and chemist Michael Braungart, a professor at Erasmus University Rotterdam, has been causing a sensation, attracting attention and stirring a lively debate with his ideas for several years, most recently at the Finat Congress in Turkey in June 2009. In brief, he is calling on designers to create products in which materials are viewed as nutrients circulating perpetually in biological and technical metabolisms.

The cradle to cradle approach stands in stark contrast to the conventional notion of cradle to grave. Putting the concept into practice would create a world without, or with significantly less, waste. It is already being applied to the manufacture of office chairs, carpets and T-shirts, for example. It is an approach



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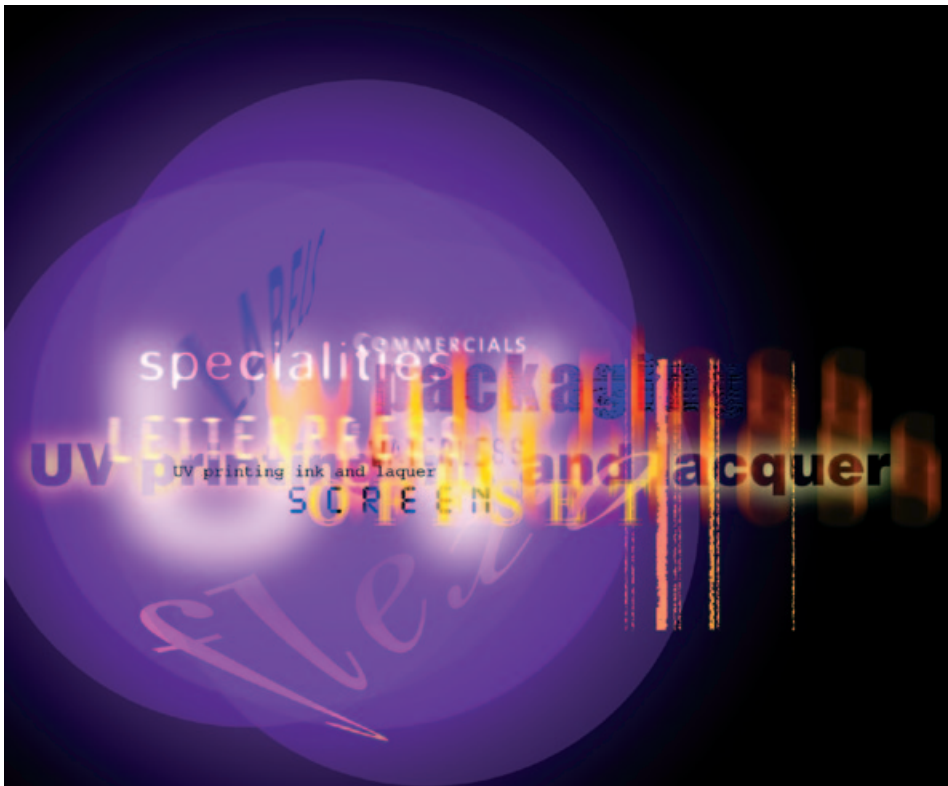

UV printing ink and lacquer for

- **selfadhesive labels**
- **shrink sleeves**
- **in mould labels**
- **flexible packaging**

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QUALITY PRINTING INKS

that caught our attention a long time ago. Back in 2008, Herma was the first company to offer an adhesive material that is 100 percent biodegradable. Among other applications, it is highly suitable for labeling packs of natural cosmetics, vegetables and fruit, as well as all products in the growing organic trade.

RELEASE LINER TO RELEASE LINER

Dispensing labels, whether green or conventional, generates enormous quantities of waste. A large portion of the waste consists of the silicone-coated release liner. Genuine recycling has been practically ruled out thus far because the silicone has resisted separation, but the Cycle4Green initiative (www.cycle4green.eu) has now solved this technical problem. Subject to a minimum quantity of five metric tons, the material is also collected at source free of charge anywhere in Europe. Austrian paper producer Lenzing, which has vast experience in paper recycling, uses the waste liner in its fine and specialty paper products. The quality is no different from that of the company's pulp-based products. An even more pleasing outcome is the production of high-quality label paper from the former release liner. The waste is also used to produce genuinely recycled release liners.

250,000 TONS OF POTENTIAL

When news of the scheme reached us at Herma, it prompted immediate excitement. We estimate that we will be able to recycle 100 tons of silicon-coated paper ourselves in this way, while reducing our disposal costs at the same time. Measured against the 250,000 tons of silicone-coated waste paper generated in Europe alone in each year, however, the quantity is rather modest. The true potential rests with end-users, the label consumers. Because we find the initiative so compelling, we are seeking to get our clients – numerous label producers and printers throughout Europe – on board as well, while acknowledging that the greatest potential rests with their customers.

Supporting this initiative brings us closer to implementing the cradle to cradle concept. It represents only an initial step, of course, and silicone-coated release liner represents only a tiny proportion of our entire waste mountain, but at least it shows what can be achieved and illuminates the way forward.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Thomas Baumgärtner, 50, was appointed managing director of Herma at the start of 2005, and also heads the adhesive material division of the company located near Stuttgart, Germany. As chair of Finat's environmental committee he is actively involved in promoting an industry-wide solution to liner collection and recycling.

HOT OF THE PRESS

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

WELDON TO REPRESENT PRISM IN INDIA

Weldon Celloplast and UK-based Prism announced at Labelexpo India its partnership to sell Prism WIN and QTMS throughout the Asian sub-continent as well as the UAE.

'The market for sophisticated and flexible management information systems is growing in India,' said Pawandeep Sahni, director of Weldon Celloplast. 'The ability for label manufacturers to track individual label orders back to raw material is becoming increasingly important for quality control. We see a great potential for QTMS in this area.'

Weldon Celloplast introduced WIN and QTMS to the label market at Labelexpo India in New Delhi. 'Labelexpo produced enough leads for our company to provide a comfortable base for WIN and QTMS in India,' said Sahni.

MARK ANDY SURPASSES HALF-CENTURY OF PERFORMANCE SERIES SALES

Mark Andy has sold its 60th Performance Series press, a line of machines launched at Labelexpo Europe 2009. The company reports that some customers have replaced multiple machines with a single Performance Series and that five converters have purchased multiple Performance Series presses, with commitments to future investments already planned.

ALPHASONICS APPOINTS US DISTRIBUTOR

Alphasonics has appointed St Louis, Missouri-based Conversource as its distributor for the narrow web flexo market in the United States. Conversource will now serve as the primary contact for all Alphasonics customers in the US with regards to consumables and maintenance. The company will sell and promote all Alphasonics equipment, including the AS range of parts washers, the PW and PC plate cleaners and its established range of dual frequency anilox roll cleaning devices.

MEECH MD CELEBRATES 30 YEARS

Meech International's managing director Chris Francis has celebrated his 30 year anniversary with the Oxfordshire, UK-based manufacturer of web cleaning products. The company has also reported an increased turnover during the 2010 financial year of more than 37 percent.

EFI APPOINTS UK DISTRIBUTOR

EFI has appointed Grafitec Label Press, based in Featherstone, West Yorkshire, as a distributor of its Jetrion digital label press in the UK and Ireland.

KODAK ADDS TO BRAZIL CAPABILITIES

Kodak has added a new offset plate finishing and packaging operation at its facility in Brazil.

The local finishing capability means that Kodak will cut, stock and supply any size of digital offset plate that is required, without having to order new sizes from the US or Europe. In addition, local operations enable lower costs and improved customer service, while reducing overall delivery times, says the company.

Rapid route to short run printing

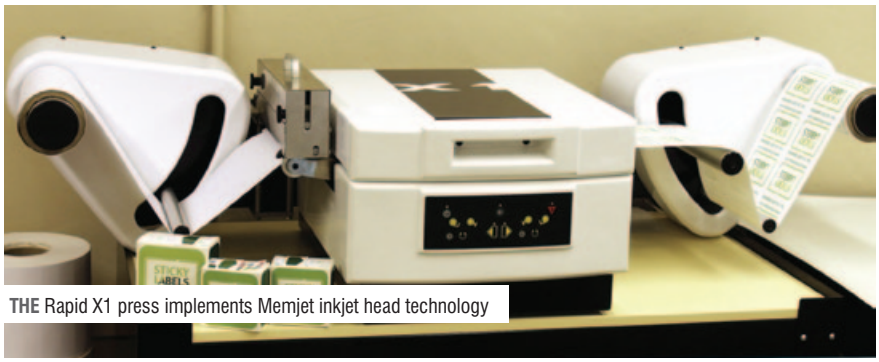
STICKYLABELS.COM has installed the UK's first Rapid X1 label converting system using Memjet's inkjet technology. Andy Thomas reports

The speed of the Memjet inkjet system caused a stir when it was first seen by L&L at Labelexpo Americas last September. StickyLabels.com has now had a press using the technology installed in the UK.

Although known as Sticky labels the original name of this converter is Vine Lodge Products. The company was started back in 1973 by the father of the current owner, Gideon Hall, who saw a gap in the market for supplying short runs of labels via mail order. Although a common concept now, it was a genuine innovation to spot this opportunity almost three decades ago.

The company started in the family home – from which the name comes – and operated from there for a number of years before moving to its current address. Gideon Hall now owns that house and is bringing up his family there.

(L-R) Roy Burton, MD of Impression Technology Europe and Gideon Hall, owner of StickLabels.com



THE Rapid X1 press implements Memjet inkjet head technology

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

It wasn't long before Gideon spotted the potential of the Internet as a way of updating his father's business model. He noticed that much of what was around was 'somewhat lacking in user friendliness', and www.stickylabels.com was born.

'I knew that to be successful this had to be as easy for the customer to use as possible,' says Gideon. 'Our target market was effectively everyone who wanted labels no matter how big or small, and when you are aiming at such a wide range of customers you have to accept that a proportion of them will not be experts in either printing or labels. The site needs to be as easy for them as anyone else and we think that we have, as the computer techs say, created a good web experience for visitors to the site.'

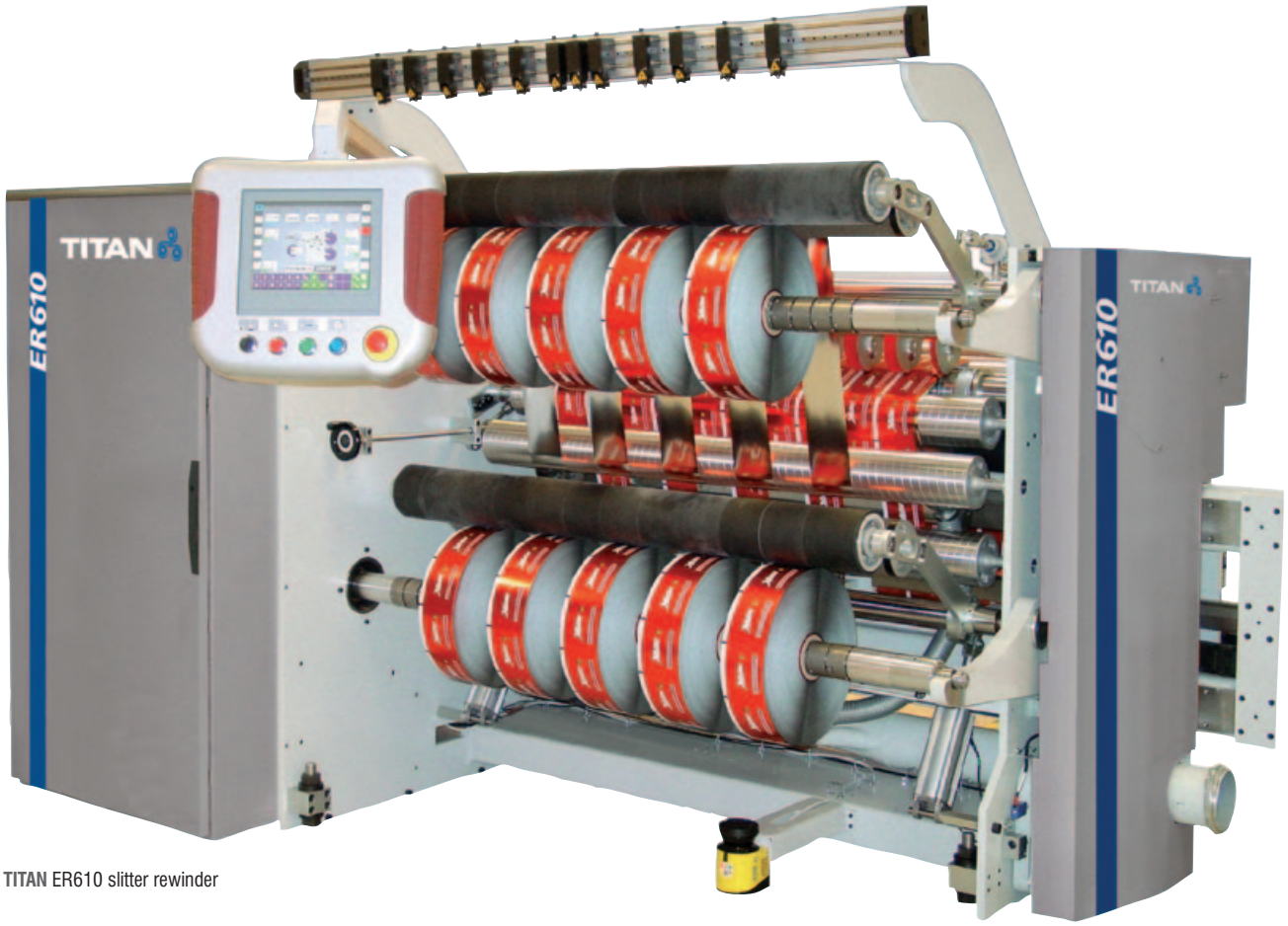
Gideon's search for a flexible short run label system led him to investigate the Memjet technology, and he settled on X1, the smaller of the two Rapid machines which incorporate this exciting technology.

The Rapid X1 and X2 machines can produce full color labels at speeds up to 18m/min. The Memjet technology allows both machines to deliver in excess of 70 million drops of ink per second through over 70,000 nozzles.

Gideon Hall worked with UK supplier Impression Technology Europe on the machine's final configuration. 'Although this machine looked ideal for economically producing small runs of full color labels, the print quality had to be right. We have a good reputation in the market and there was no way that I could allow that to be compromised. We look at quality just as much as speed so it had to tick all of the right boxes.'

Why did Gideon choose the X1 over conventional machinery? 'Under normal circumstances, to be cost effective using industry standard methods of producing full color labels the production run would need to be between 10,000 and 15,000. But because the X1 is basically an inkjet printer running off a standard PC, the viable figure drops to, one. The X1 works the same way as an office desktop printer and so the unit cost (per label cost) doesn't really vary whether you produce one label or one thousand.'

The installation of the X1 has allowed Gideon to develop further the on-line side of the business, which can now accept a wide range of order sizes. 'With the addition of the Rapid X1 to our production system we can now easily and quickly supply a very large proportion of the label market.' To ensure the converter can stick to its 'within three days - but same day dispatch if you need it' pledge, large stocks of cutters and label stocks are held.



TITAN ER610 slitter rewinder

The end of

BARRY HUNT examines the role of slitter/rewinders in a wider web finishing world

While often taken for granted, slitter/rewinders have been transformed in recent years. Improved web transport and web control systems have widened their functions so that they now form a key part of a dynamic post-press finishing scene. The latest models offer a choice of finishing modules. Rotary die cutting with web re-registration is the most popular option for economically die cutting and/or perforating labels off-line at high speed. Furthermore, the widespread availability of flexible die plates means that applications are not restricted to producing blank label rolls. Other popular options include matrix stripping units, flexo overprinters, laminating/varnishing units, and inkjet units for overprinting barcodes or variable data.

These type of functions can help converters develop flexible production workflows. They may even allow them to improve overall press performances, especially when the workload includes individual die cutting or matrix stripping tasks that are more difficult than normal.

The slitting/rewinding operation has benefited from improved electronic counting sensors, job data devices, and touch screen interfaces. However, the most important development is that of electronic devices that facilitate the smooth unwinding and rewinding of paper or filmic rolls at high speed. Older generations of machines relied on pneumatic clutches and electronic brakes. It took some skill to monitor the changing weight and diameters of the unwind and rewind rolls to maintain the right web tension while slitting cleanly.

Taper tension controls, with transducer rollers to sense the pressure on rolls, automatically calculate these parameters. Besides precisely wound rolls, such controls also reduce the risk of broken webs when stopping the machine at high speed to deal with faulty labels. While satisfactory for mainstream self-adhesive labels, such controls do not perform as well when slitting and rewinding clear-on-clear labelstocks and unsupported packaging films. Instead, as commonly found on combination flexo or offset presses, more manufacturers offer servo-driven unwinds, nips and rewinds that introduce closed-loop tension control for handling slippery materials at high speeds. Maintaining the correct web tension in real-time, rather than calculating it, helps to prevent 'web wander'. The longer web paths on some inspection slitter/rewinders make this an important consideration, just as the use of anti-static bars and razor slitting wheels, rather than scissor-knives, are

essential when converting all film materials.

Predictably with web finishing, it takes time for seemingly important developments to take hold. Former owner of Arpeco UK and onetime Rotoflex agent Les Bradley, managing director of LPP Ltd, has first-hand knowledge of converters' attitudes: 'Equipment with 100 percent servo drives are essential for any top-end finishing, especially when running 50-micro films or thinner, because they remove any guess work. Unfortunately many converters have a misguided attitude to end-of-press finishing, especially where film is concerned. It's the Cinderella of the operation, coming way down their list of priorities in terms of investments or even basic servicing with some firms. This attitude is beginning to change, thanks largely to the demands of the larger brand owners. They want their work delivered to tighter finishing specifications, including accurate label counts and dust-free, cleanly-wound rolls. Their needs have certainly begun to concentrate minds.'

Tony Bell, sales director of AB Graphic International, agrees: 'Many label converters lack a knowledge about film handling requirements. Companies will often buy a new servo-driven combination press and sometimes add a new rewinder with a similar web width. Sooner or later they may decide to move into film, which is well within the press's capability, but without fully understanding that the slitting and rewinding operations can be the weak link in the chain'.

RISE OF INSPECTION

As well as improved web transports, the rise of web inspection represents a key factor in the development of slitter/rewinders. Of course, post-press inspection is not new. Many converters still rely on simple, but effective, stroboscopic lights to identify defective labels at the rewind end. Now we are seeing the growth of 100 percent print inspection as an off-line process. Some attribute it to the so-called 'me-too' investments driven by end-user pressure, perhaps to win or maintain a major order. A similar phenomenon led to the growth of video web inspection systems on full-color narrow web forms presses when the direct mail market took off around the mid-1990s.

the line

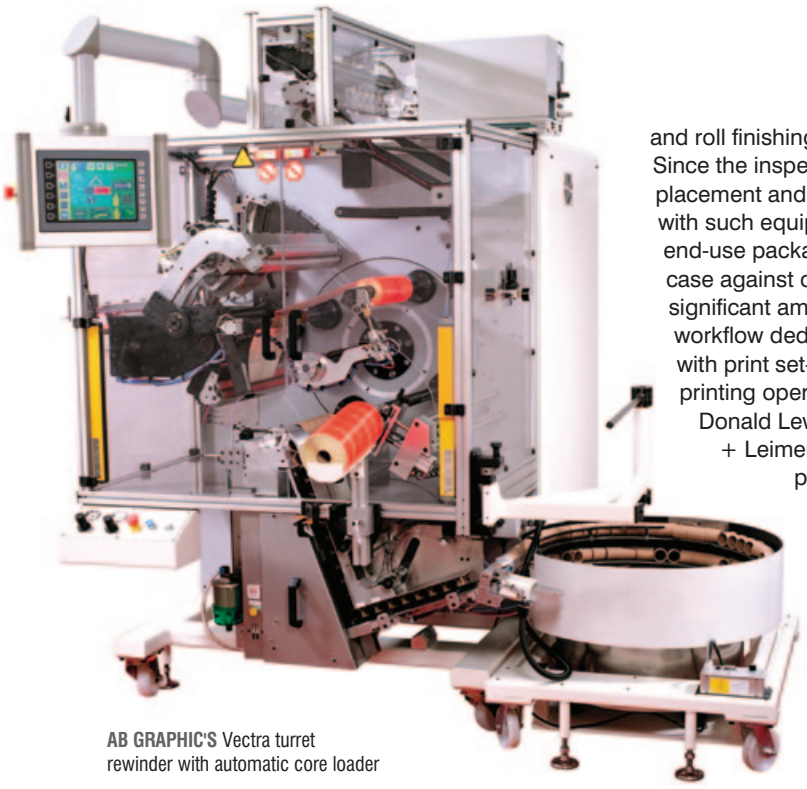
The adoption of 100 percent web inspection is on firmer ground where zero-fault production is essential, as with pharmaceutical labeling and other critical or security-sensitive applications. Such systems detect and identify printing faults, missing labels, color changes, mis-register, filled bar codes and much else. The high-resolution cameras scan images line by line, comparing each to a 'perfect' reference image. The cameras continuously monitor the full width of the web, whereas on-line video web viewing is based on random, area samples of the web. Detected faults, set within pre-set threshold values, generate a signal to stop the rewinder with controlled deceleration. The machine then reverses to place the fault on an editing table while slitting and rewinding ceases. An accumulator, or web buffer, feeds fault-free products for splicing by the operator. After resumption of processing, the fault is re-inspected by the vision system.

Off-line inspection is an expensive option, but a single inspection rewinder can serve several presses. Stopping the rewinder for each defect obviously slows the entire operation. It may also introduce false defects, although it is usual to reverse the web direction and re-inspect for introduced flaws. The so-called positive logic of inspection systems means that if no defect is detected it is generally assumed that the customer's order is free of defects. But this presumes the operator has not excessively overridden the threshold values to increase productivity.

By contrast, on-line inspection is obviously restricted to a single press. Pundits argue that a mitigating factor in defraying the extra cost is that prompt action to rectify printing faults at this stage will significantly reduce the expense of producing rejected labels using expensive materials. Modern systems allow the rate of inspection to match the optimum performance of the press, with the added benefit of generating the necessary data on detected defects for saving as an error log, or a so-called digitized roll map. As a virtual equivalent of the printed roll, operators can analyze it off-line to isolate those defects that only have a minor relevance. Flagging up the 'real' defects introduces an element of predictability for the rewinder operator, with a resulting increase in productivity. This form of scheduling likens the rewinder to more of a dumb terminal, but its use requires the application of some form of marking code, usually applied on the reverse of the release liner.

Individual situations determine whether to inspect on the press, or treat inspection as the final backstop just before shipping the order. Brian Ivens has worked with both Arpeco and Rotoflex, and is now sales manager of recently founded Prati Automation, handling Prati's North American sales. While confirming the increasing popularity of high-speed inspection rewinders, he nevertheless feels that perhaps the technology should really belong on the press to help reduce waste. 'Today, it depends on whether the products being produced require final stage inspection, such as pharmaceutical, security or other high value items, or whether the investment in vision inspection equipment for multiple presses is cost prohibitive. This usually determines where the technology will be installed. Some customers have even installed them on their presses and slitter/rewinders to achieve both waste management and final-stage quality control.' (As a sign of the times, Prati's latest Saturn Plus rewinder with rotary die cutter offers a new Nikka compact inspection system with a unique iPhone touch-screen interface.)

Advocating the off-line approach, Jacob Schnarre, Rotoflex product manager says: 'On-line inspection actually drives more technology and capabilities into finishing, rather than reducing the functionality of rewinders. These camera systems simply move the point of observation, but efficient error correction, counting



AB GRAPHIC'S Vectra turret rewinder with automatic core loader

and roll finishing depend upon using advanced slitting/rewinding equipment. Since the inspection information must be passed on to the rewinder, fault placement and job management tools must become more closely integrated with such equipment. With sizes and tensions of rolls demanded by end-use packagers being so broad, there is still a very strong economic case against on-line inspection and finishing on a press, which carries a significant amount of overhead to maintain. In addition, an operation or workflow dedicated to 100 percent quality roll delivery (not combined with print set-up and management) will continue to be a key factor in any printing operation.'

Donald Lewis, international business development manager with Erhardt + Leimer, says on-line inspection can bring benefits and savings as part of a managed workflow covering MIS, pre-press, press and finishing. 'The return on the investment is much higher and much clearer to see. Rewinder efficiency remains were it should be, with the knowledge that only relevant defects will need rectification. As part of this workflow, the rewinder is not hampered by the stop-start nature of the inspection system doing its job. The faults and human errors that creep in through the production process leave plenty of places for mishaps. Finding them at the end of the chain is not ideal for any company trying to minimize waste and maximize production time.'

TURRET REWINDERS

Automatic turret rewinding offers a quite different approach to on-line production. It is closely identified with rewinding small diameter rolls, such as price/weight labels. Commercial

pressures have widened applications to include various roll diameters for high-volume jobs.

After coupling the electrical and pneumatic supplies, turret rewinders will run with most roll label presses or converting lines. Some models offer the flexibility of running off-line with integrated or stand-alone unwinds, as well as in-line. The machines are usually equipped with standard rotary scissor slitting units, and have multiple spindles to facilitate the creation of successive rolls of labels without any interruption of press speed. Each roll of labels is wound on a plastic or cardboard core, usually to a specific number of labels per roll or a specified roll size, for delivery straight to the shipping carton. This level of accuracy means that printers do not need to print more than the order demands for single jobs. Much of this work does not justify fitting an advanced inspection system, although some companies have specified turret rewinders with vision systems located before the rewinding operation to pick up faults flagged up on the press.

Webs are normally affixed to the core with glue, although there are non-glue variants involving various methods to start the web to the core. They are used mainly for the direct thermal market. New forms of fugitive glues have become available as an alternative to ordinary glues to achieve the type of cleaner rolls that glueless systems offer.

VLI VERTICAL SLITTER/REWINDER from Rotoflex International

ALL CHANGE AT THE TOP

One distinguishing aspect of the slitter/rewinder market is the way it has changed at the top end. It started in late 2008 when, at a time of financial turmoil, Mark Andy's parent company acquired the floundering Rotoflex

PRATI Jupiter slitter/rewinders at Nuceria Adesivi's plant in Milan

International. Just 14 months later it acquired Arpeco, then a division of Precision Automation. Both firms were formed around 40 years ago and were headquartered in Mississauga, Ontario. The related deals gave Mark Andy Inc access to a large worldwide installed machine base. It already manufactured the VS 300 series of inspection slitter/rewinders, which as one of three legacy brand names is now consolidated under the Rotoflex name.

Mark Andy Inc's declared strategy is to be a 'single-source provider for converters within the pressroom workflow'. A dedicated sales force handles sales of new Rotoflex equipment in North America, while a combination of direct sales and authorized distributors handle sales throughout the rest of the world. MAX North America, MAX Europe and a network of MAX distributors supply parts, service and support for new and existing installations, including the legacy brands. Recent developments include an expanded R & D facility in Mississauga, and the new Genesis inspection rewind management control system. The company has also chalked up several major installations that combine its Performance Series presses with Rotoflex rewinders.

The polarization of the rewinder scene has certainly not stunted the ambitions of other internationally-minded players at the mid-to-top level. An improving economic situation, plus solid growth in certain developing markets, has encouraged them to develop their overseas businesses, especially among the European manufacturers. Several have boosted sales revenues by introducing new types of off-line web finishing equipment using modular components.

The rise of digital colour printing has been a contributing factor. For example, AB Graphic's OEM links with HP Indigo have boosted sales of Digicon Series 2 finishing lines to usefully augment its Omega inspection slitter/rewinders, and Vectra turret rewinders. The company supplies its own fleyeVision 100 percent inspection system. It is among the options available for its new Flytec F2010 system that offers single-pass inkjet printing, slitting and rewinding.

In Italy, Prati's move to product-specific areas is underscored by the Vegaplus and Vegaplus Booklet label finishing lines. With the PharmaCheck system, they augment the Saturn and Jupiter slitter/rewinders. In March the company formally opened a new headquarters in Faenza, in the Ravenna district. It quadrupled the size of its original premises and followed a doubling of its year-on-year turnover for 2010.

Other companies jostling for position in a crowded market include Rotocontrol, formed largely by former Rotoflex employees in Germany. Long established firms include Ashe Converting Equipment, Bar Graphic, Daco Solutions, KTI-Keene Technology, LeoMat, Martin Automatic, and Smag Graphique. The arrival on the international scene of the Polish-made Flexor/Emis inspection slitter/rewinders highlights the market's fluidity when former agencies and distributorships are changed or wound up: Flexor's UK and Ireland distributor is Les Bradley, whose Arpeco and Rotoflex connections were mentioned earlier.

Other developments include a management buyout at Atlas Converting Equipment that moves it from the Swiss-based Bobst Group. The UK company manufactures the Atlas and Titan ranges of slitter/rewinders for the film and flexible packaging markets, and is a major supplier of primary slitters for the labelstock coating and laminating industry.

Among the new contenders, several Chinese inspection slitter/rewinder manufacturers seek to compete at the entry level end of the market. For example, last year Scantech Automation Inc became the North American distributor for Shenzhen Brotech Graphics. Its Eurotech range include the FS330 inspection slitter/rewinder with an AVT vision system and a version with an inkjet option. Scantech makes the Printrack LR rewinder for thin-film and pressure-sensitive label finishing. This closes the loop. The Canadian company used to cooperate with Arpeco, whose founder, Allan Prittie, retains a connection with the company.

SLITTER/REWINDER NEWS

COMPLETE FLEXO PRINTING machine with Leonardo

ASHE launches energy monitoring for Diamond and Sapphire slitter-rewinders

ERREPI

LEONARDO AUTOMATIC NON-STOP TURRET REWINDER.

Errepi's Leonardo automatic non-stop turret rewinder can handle core diameters from 20 to 76 mm, and allows converters to rewind finished rolls up to 350mm external diameter. Machine widths are 330mm and 500mm. Job changes via a touch screen interface, take around five minutes, with the only mechanical adjustment changing shafts.

Leonardo can be supplied with both in both glue and patented glue-less versions, where the rolls are closed using labels which can be printed with variable data.

Attachment of rolls to cores and roll closing are handled automatically, and the machine can be equipped with manual, semi-automatic or fully automatic core loaders.

Roll rewinding is electronically controlled by brushless motors to ensure accurate tension control.

Leonardo can be connected to any printing or non-printing machine, with speed detection managed by an encoder. The company also offers a flexo printing system incorporating the Leonardo system.

In February Errepi delivered to a French converter its first Leonardo model which allows the user to switch between 'hidden' glue and label closing methods.

TOOLS & PRODUCTION

DROP-IN SHEAR SLITTER

T&P has developed a drop-in shear slitter designed to provide clean and more precise slits than the alternative crush cut die. Dished knife blade shearing action against a hardened tool steel anvil ring ensures burr-free cutting edges with a minimum of paper dust, says the company. The unit accepts different tag and label widths. Each knife and anvil ring can be individually adjusted with a single screw. In addition the entire slitter unit can be adjusted laterally for fine tuning.

DCM

NARROW WEB SLITTER-REWINDER

DCM has developed a cantilevered slitter-rewinder with two winding shafts for narrow web label applications. 'We use the same electronic as the one used on our wide web slitter rewinders, adapted to a mechanical construction for the narrow web label industry,' says the company's Vincent Huchet. The Serval slitter rewinder is able to handle film, paper, foil and pressure sensitive labels at speeds up to 500 m/min with accurate web tension control. Web width is 610mm, unwinding diameter 800mm and rewinding diameter 2 x 610mm. Minimum slit width is 10 or 20mm. A machine will be ready for demonstration to customers in July.

DCM has also announced the opening of a Sleeve Shop, a dedicated area where customers test the company's our sleeve converting equipment.

LABELS&LABELING

ASHE

ENERGY MONITORING SYSTEMS

Ashe has developed energy saving systems for its Diamond and Sapphire slitter-rewinding machines, allowing the user to enter the price paid for electricity and monitor the running costs of the machine in idle, running and per job modes if required. It will then be possible to factor in the energy cost for production of slit rolls, increasing costing accuracy.

Among other measures, Ashe is looking at using the latest energy efficient motors and preparing for new legislation which will define the efficiency ratings of machinery. The machines are already hydraulics-free, allowing use in a food packaging environment.

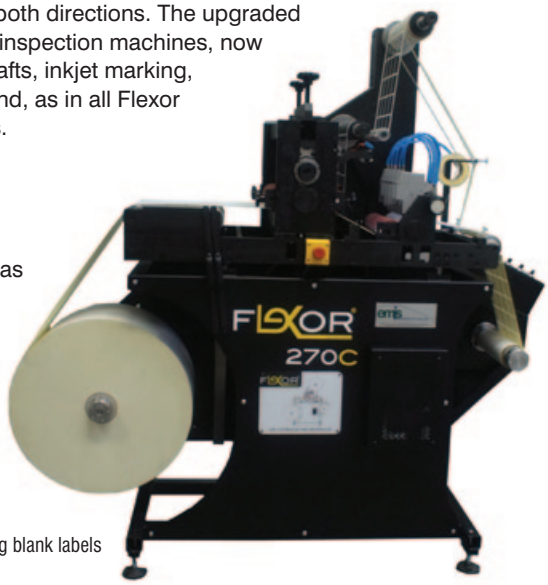
Ashe also sees a growing need for clean slitting of sensitive materials, and the company has gained considerable experience here from the pharmaceutical and photovoltaic sectors.

EMIS

EXPANDED SALES NETWORK AND NEW PRODUCT LINES

EMIS Ltd, based in Warsaw, Poland and manufacturer of the Flexor line of inspection slitters, rewinders and die cutters, is expanding its product range and sales network following recent installations in the Czech Republic, Belarus, Ukraine, USA and Australia. EMIS has now added agents in South and Central America, North America, Vietnam, South Africa, Scandinavia and Australia to its existing network of sales partners. 'This is a logical move any company with global ambitions has to follow in today's global economy,' comments Adam Robak, International sales director at EMIS.

The company has meanwhile extended its Flexor product line of inspection slitter rewinders and die cutting machines. The Flexor 270C is an economic solution for small and medium sized companies looking to produce blank labels. The 200TT+ machine, an end roll rewinder table, is fully servo-driven and can be used to rewind rolls in both directions. The upgraded Flexor 440IS, 100 percent inspection machines, now features segmented air shafts, inkjet marking, accurate tension control and, as in all Flexor machines, full servo drives.



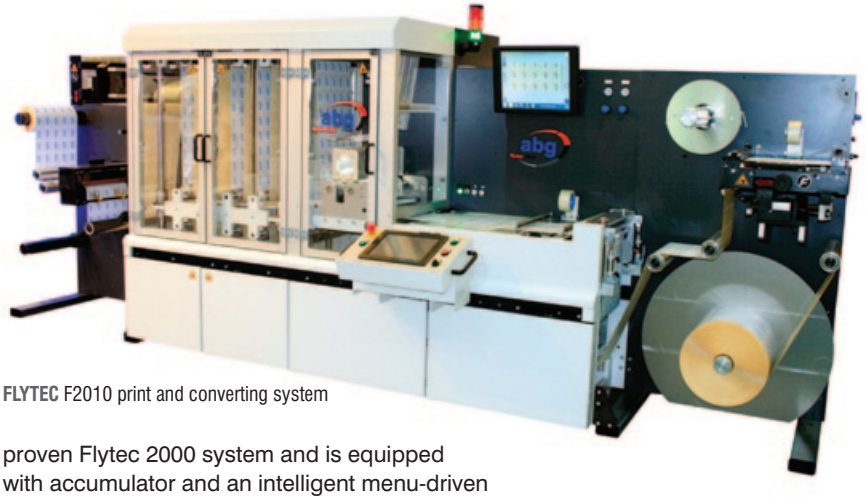
EMIS Flexor 270C for converting blank labels

AB GRAPHIC

FLYTEC F2010 PRINT-CONVERTING SYSTEM

AB Graphic International has developed a standalone printing and converting system that permits inkjet printing, slitting and rewinding in one work-step.

'The Flytec 2010 is based on our well



FLYTEC F2010 print and converting system

proven Flytec 2000 system and is equipped with accumulator and an intelligent menu-driven handling process,' says Tony Bell of AB Graphic International. 'All finishing and controlling work can be carried out in a single work-step.'

The F2010 can be supplied for rewind web widths of 330 mm (13") or 410 mm (16") and performs 100% print-face inspection through an integrated fleyeVision camera. This also allows the production of pharmaceutical or safety labels.

The machine comes prepared for integration with an inkjet printer to print serial numbers, sell-by-dates and barcodes on either side of the web. Slitting is through a scissor or razor blade system. Options include fly cut slitting and second rewind shaft. The system is capable of handling roll diameters up to 700 mm (27.5") at winding speeds up to 200 m/min (656 fpm).

MELZER

RFID CONVERTING LINES

With up to 60,000 products/h the new SL-600 extends Melzer's range of RFID converting lines. With a web width of 250 mm and maximum six parallel inlay tracks, the Melzer SL-600 covers all current RFID products - and is already perfectly prepared for the future miniaturization of RFID products . It incorporates servo-drives, accurate in-line RFID readers, punching units, reliable matrix removal systems and full process control.

CONVERTING EQUIPMENT INTERNATIONAL

MID-WEB EX SLITTER

Converting Equipment International (CEI) of Northern California, has added a mid-web multi-substrate model to its EX slitter line. The CEI 2400 26" (700mm) web width boasts many of the same standard features as the smaller EX models. Some of those features include, 40" (1000mm) unwind, dual 24" (610mm) slip differential closed loop rewind capabilities and alternate taper tension algorithms. These machines interface with multiple brands of 100% inspection cameras and inkjet numbering platforms. The CEI range of equipment is easily field upgradable.

The EX machine includes multiple HMI's (touch screens) which allow operation of the machine from various remote consoles.

Operational speed is up to 1800 fpm (550m/min). "We have customers who have dissolved entire shifts and eliminated overtime. One has reported a 5 fold increase in daily production," adds Simon. The EX line of equipment includes web widths for 14.75" (375mm), 17.75" (450mm), 22" (560mm) and 26" (700mm). The servo drives and advanced software control allow the machine to offer constistent tensions, as well as provide the speed and precise stops demanded by industry today.

DPR

COUNTING AND WINDING SYSTEM DEVELOPMENTS

DPR. has developed two new systems: a reversible label counter and a motorized core holder rewinder /unwinder.

The reversible reel-to-reel machine is used to count labels up to 220mm (8.66") wide on rolls with an outside diameter up to 400mm (15.75"). The machine can use both pneumatic and mechanically interchangeable core holders and incorporates missing label detection. It can be used with barcode verifiers as well as inkjet print heads.

The motorized core holder rewinder / unwinder is designed for heavy duty jobs. The motor is located inside the core holder and once the job is done, users can easily remove the core holder and take off the rewound / unwound roll of labels. The machine will handle labels up to 240mm (9.45") wide and rewind / unwind rolls with an outside diameter up to 250mm (9.84"), 300mm (11.81") or 400mm (15.75") depending on the chosen configuration. Rolls are wound or unwound onto a 3" (76mm) core holder, and the direction of rotation can be changed to handle labels both face in and face out. The motorized core holder can be configured as rewinder or unwinder and equipped with software for use with thermal transfer printers or inkjet color label printers.

ROTOFLEX

DLI MODULAR DIE-CUT AND FINISHING SYSTEM

Rotoflex has redesigned its modular DLI die-cutting system for applications including blank labels, flexible packaging and specialty converting. The machine is available in both narrow- and mid-web widths and operates at speeds up to 1000 fpm. Die stations are servo-driven while the main unwind and rewinds are driven by Rotoflex's eDrive A/C vector motor.

This redesign of the DLI includes an option for a die cut station well suited to exacting cuts on specialty flexible packaging such as tear-open enclosures. Thermal management reduces heat build up to maintain tolerances at high speeds and the Auto-Learn option provides speedier job setups - set up in registration in ten label repeats - reduced waste and faster initial die setups. Rotoflex is also rolling out the Genesis control system across its machinery range, allowing operators to monitor all machine functions and identify faults from a single screen. Genesis enables multiple lane missing label detection and multi-lane counting, operating regardless of varying label shapes or lengths.

NUCERIA ADESIVI

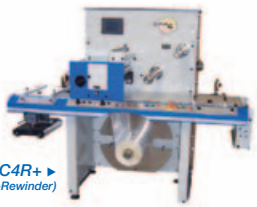
PRATI JUPITER TC280 INSPECTION AND FINISHING MACHINE

Nuceria Adesivi Group, one of Italy's leading packaging companies, has installed a Prati Jupiter TC280 inspection and finishing machine, bringing the number of Prati machines installed across its three production sites to 12.

MELZER RFID label converting line

THE LABELS ENGINEERING
Discover our product range

Inspection



C4R+ ▸
(Slitter-Rewinder)

Venus ▸
(Slitter-Rewinder with semi automatic turret rewinder)

▲ Neptune
(Slitter-Rewinder)

Converting & Finishing

Comet + ▸
(Blank labels & single color)

Uranus ▲
(Non-stop Rewinder)

Saturne ▲
(Sheeter)

▲ F1
(Gearless Fan Folder)

Screen printing (Roll to Roll Screnn Press)

▲ Galaxie

Digital web converting

Galaxie Digital ▲

Comet Digital ▲

Off-line Primer ▲

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**WORLD WIDE SUPPORT,
MAKES A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE**

The Jupiter TC280 handles a wide range of materials at high speed, including self-adhesive labels, flexible packaging, cardboard, laminates, multi-page labels and other sensitive materials.

Its Varycontrol system offers management of three 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,' says 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.'

SOMA ENGINEERING

TENZOMAT II REWIND CONTROL SYSTEM

Soma Engineering has launched its second generation automatic rewind tension control system, Tenzomat II. This option is available for its complete range of slitter rewinders and enables a wider spectrum of flexible packaging materials to be handled.

Precise rewind tension control is achieved through load cells linked to a PLC to measure tension values at each working station. These values are subsequently compared to pre-set targets and any deviations are corrected through changes in the pressure inside the rewind shafts. This enables precise rewind tension control during the entire rewind cycle.

Tensomat II allows for variations in the width, thickness and diameter of rolls to be processed. It incorporates touch screen control and entry of the job parameters including rewind roll width, lay on roller weights and material thickness and stores data for repeat jobs.

'The stretch and sleeve film market is one of the fastest growing for flexible packaging and consumes in excess of 2.1 million tonnes in Europe,' says Pavla Kusa at Soma. 'Operators are faced with the challenge of producing visually perfect rolls free from telescoping or variations in width, density and rewind consistency.'

LEOMAT

OFF-LINE LABEL PROCESSOR

LeoMat has constructed a machine which allows labels to be delaminated and die cut away from the web then re-applied to a carrier web. This is useful if, for example, labels are to be punched, which could damage the liner. In addition the machine is equipped with a matrix rewinder, to remove the matrix offline instead on the printing press – particularly useful for difficult stripping jobs. The machine is 510 mm wide and incorporates a missing label detector and a stroboscope lamp for visual inspection of the label web during the production.

Other developments include the LeoMat Digitakt 330 SFR for processing digitally printed labels with semi-rotary die cutting, and a two-spindle turret rewinder.

KINGFISHER LABELS

BAR GRAPHIC ELITE SLITTER-REWINDER

Bristol, UK- based label converter Kingfisher Labels has purchased a third Bar Graphic Machinery machine – an Elite rotary die cutting slitter rewinder.

Martin Jackson, managing director, of Kingfisher Labels Ltd comments: 'Over a four year period we had invested and purchased two other machines from Bar Graphic Machinery and in that time we have experienced no mechanical breakdowns or component failures, reliability has been impeccable, and when I enquired about a third machine I was amazed to find out that they are now offering a three year parts warranty for all components manufactured in-house. This in itself assured us of the quality standards they are proud to offer.'

The Elite 370 DSR Die Cut Slitter rewinder was launched at Labelexpo 2009 and has proved to be one of the best sellers within BGM's Elite range of finishing and converting systems.

ATLAS CONVERTING EQUIPMENT

TITAN ER610 COMPACT SLITTER

To address the needs of converters processing lower volumes of flexible materials, Atlas has demonstrated a 1650mm (65") wide Titan ER610 compact slitter. The ER610 is a twin-shaft cantilever slitter incorporating all electric, oil-free operation without hydraulics, a CCD edge-guide camera for reducing waste, a running speed of 450 m/min (1500 ft/min) and an option for slit widths as narrow as 35 mm (1.37"). The Titan ER610 slitter is also available in 1350mm web width, and both machines have a maximum rewind diameter of 610 mm (24"). Also featured is a 10" touch screen control system and an integral edge-trim extraction system. The pneumatically controlled braking system provides accurate web tension control and a digital edge-guide system controls lateral movement of the unwind reel to +/- 50 mm (2"). Slitting systems available include shear knives, rotary razor (burst) or razor slitting in air or groove. Optional features include a static electricity control system, laser (line) core positioning, EU safety guarding, laser safety scanners and unwind roll loading trolley.

RAANTEC

ACCURO CONVERTING SYSTEM

Raantec's latest flagship web converting system, the Accuro, is a flexible, modular machine which can be used for a wide range of applications as well as standard PS labels and blank labels. These applications include IML labels, technical and medical gauzes, fleece materials, gaskets and felts, moulds and stamped parts for electrical insulation, adhesive tape and folding box cutters.

Available modules include different sized unwinds and rewinds, printing modules, longitudinal and transverse cutting modules for crushing or shear cutting, stamping modules with register control, laminating modules and an edge trim extractor. The Accuro works from roll to roll, but can also be supplied with an additional sheeting module.

Specialist modules originally developed for customer applications but now available 'off the shelf', include a sophisticated rapid reversing glue-less rewinder with belt turntable and fully automatic cutting equipment. Rolls are closed off at the end with a label dispenser and printer system.

GRAFOTRONIC

MODULAR FINISHING LINES

Grafotronic, the Swedish manufacturer of finishing machines, has introduced two new modular lines. The Servo Converting Line is a modular built machine with the new Grafotronic automatic servo turret rewinder. Customers can build their machine according to their specific needs with everything from UV-Flexo printing, to laminating and multiple die cutting units.

The Pharmaline, meanwhile, is a full size 100 percent inspection machine with Braille and Inkjet numbering. The machine includes a high tech booklet buffer that allows the operator to run six labels across the web.

SUBSTRATES UPDATE

THE SECOND PART of a regular L&L feature looking at the latest developments in substrates

M-REAL SPECIALTY PAPERS
NEW LABEL PAPERS

M-real Speciality Papers has launched a portfolio of label and flexible packaging papers, all produced at the company's Zanders Gohrsmühle mill in Germany. The collection contains products suited to all labeling and packaging applications in the beverage, food and consumer goods industries, including a new flexible packaging paper, Zanflex; the new Zanlabel range; and the existing cast-coated label line, Chromolux.

The Zanlabel range includes a number of products suited for different label applications. Zanlabel gloss is a double-coated label paper with a smooth surface. It is available in non wet-strength (NWS), light wet-strength (LWS), wet-strength (WS) and caustic resistant label paper. Zanlabel pure is an uncoated, wet strength and caustic-resistant label paper available in three different surfaces and two shades: premium and natural white. Zanlabel tac is a face stock material optimized for self-adhesive labels, in standard and wet-strength qualities. Zanlabel met is a base paper for metalizing, also available in standard and wet-strength qualities.

Chromolux is a range of cast coated label papers, which are available in many different surfaces, colors and grammages, with wet-strength qualities included in the range.

The move by M-real to concentrate all label and one-sided paper production at the Zanders Gohrsmühle mill follows its decision to invest in extra folding boxboard capacity and close its paper machine at its Simpele mill in Finland. The Zanders Gohrsmühle mill holds certifications that include FSC and PEFC; ISO 22000 and EN 15593 hygiene standards; and ISEGA certification for direct food contact (for Chromolux, Zanlabel gloss and Zanflex).

INNOVIA FILMS
FILMS FOR LINERLESS APPLICATIONS

Innovia Films has launched a new range of films suitable for linerless label applications, Rayoface NB.

Working in partnership with leading machine and technology supplier Ravenwood Packaging, the new Rayoface NB films have been developed for use on Ravenwood's range of Nobac linerless label applicators.

Richard Southward, Innovia Films' product manager – Labels, commented: 'Rayoface NB films provide the linerless label market with a choice of solutions to minimize packaging waste, drive process efficiencies and create sustainable value through the supply chain.'

Rayoface NB films are available in both white and transparent grades and in thicknesses of 92μm - suitable for replacing carton board sleeves – and 60μm, for conventional pressure sensitive and wraparound label replacement.

When converted into linerless labels, Rayoface NB films can be used by retailers on lidded food trays for meat and fish product packs. As the label is applied directly to the pack, Innovial claims a reduction of over 30 percent to the labeling waste and weight can be achieved.

UPM RAFLATAC
BIODEGRADABLE SOLUTIONS

UPM Raflatac's RafBio range offers new labeling solutions for biodegradable packaging in the food, beverage and personal care segments. The RafBio range is compliant to EN13432, the European standard for compostable packaging, and comprises cellulose films, PLA films, and paper faces combined with UPM Raflatac's new biodegradable adhesive RP 55 Bio.

RafBio cellulose films in clear, white and silver are top-coated for good printability. They are made from renewable wood-pulp from managed plantations and are claimed home-compostable.

The RafBio PLA films in clear and white are suitable for direct food contact. They are industrially compostable films with good printing properties, excellent scratch resistance and high levels of transparency and gloss, says UPM Raflatac. They also offer resistance to moisture, fats and oils.

RP 55 Bio adhesive has been formulated for maximum sustainability and biodegradability. It includes a high content of renewable (non-fossil derived) materials. RP 55 Bio is available with the biodegradable films as well as two paper faces: Raflacoat Plus and Thermal ECO 300. Most papers can be classed as chemically unmodified materials of natural origin, and can be accepted as biodegradable without testing.

RafBio films are also supplied with UPM Raflatac's RP 37 adhesive. The adhesive itself isn't biodegradable, but adhesive and ink amounts below one percent of the total packaging are considered negligible under EN 13432. RP 37 provides the added advantages of clarity and water resistance, making UPM Raflatac's biodegradable films a sustainable alternative across a broad range of label applications.

*Also new from Raflatac is Holo Security, a metallized paper material with integrated holographic effect designed to replace hot stamping with a finish which is equally hard to reproduce. The lacquered face assists a good overprint with conventional printing techniques

INNOVIA launches linerless labeling films

and thermal transfer.

Key applications include sealing labels for luxury and consumer goods packages as well as in logistics and transport applications. An even higher degree of protection can be reached by adding security die-cutting on the press.

GREEN BAY PACKAGING

'GREEN' PRODUCT LAUNCHES

Green Bay Packaging has launched a range of 'green' material initiatives. First up are a range of wood derived cellulose-based films designed as an alternative to PET and vinyl for laser printing. The company's clear (0CLNF) and white (0WHNF) cellophane films stand up to the heat of a laser printer and provide crisp, clean images, says the company. Combined with a 78# lay flat liner, these films are ideal for address and shipping labels for home and office laser printing, as well as retail shelf marking labels.

Pursuing materials reduction, Green Bay has launched a 3.0 mil matte white BOPP (075WP), which is claimed thinner than traditional thermal transfer films, allowing more labels per roll. While thinner, 075WP has the stiffness needed for automatic application, and print and apply systems. Because it stands up to moisture, chemicals, grease, and abrasion, applications will include chemical warning labels, nursery labeling, drum labels, long-term logistics labeling, and other difficult environments.

Finally, Green Bay has launched a highly water-soluble paper (0DSLV) and adhesive (611) which allow labels to be easily removed from reusable containers. This dissolvable label material even works in dishwashers. Applications include foodservice containers and trays, work-in-process bins, produce totes, and beer kegs.

NEENAH PAPER

HEALTHCARE LABELS FOR EPSON PRINTERS

Neenah Paper Technical Products has joined Epson's Envision Partner Program as a technology partner focused on delivering media solutions that complement Epson's healthcare products. Neenah's isynthetic paper for medical wristbands and labels are complementary to Epson's SecurColor, an inkjet printer designed specifically for on-demand color printing in the healthcare industry. Neenah's Kimdura platform delivers durable, waterproof and chemical-resistant face stock that withstands the demanding conditions found in medical environments.

'Hospitals need a quick, reliable, cost-effective way to produce color-coded labels and wristbands,' commented Mike Helm, director of sales and marketing, Epson System Device Group. 'Neenah Paper provided an innovative substrate to work with our color-on demand inkjet solution. We commend them as a technology partner.'

TORRASPAPEL

ONE-SIDED COATED FINE PAPER RANGE

Torraspapel, part of the Lecta Group, has launched a new one-side coated fine paper range, Creaset Suit, developed labels and flexible packaging applications.

With its high bulk, opacity and dimensional stability, this gloss paper is designed for color printing, allowing for quick ink penetration and facilitating on-line varnishing and subsequent finishing processes. As do all Torraspapel's products, Creaset Suit papers are manufactured under ISO 9001 Quality Certification and also EMAS and ISO 14001 Environmental Certifications. Moreover, Creaset Suit products are fully recyclable and available with PEFC and FSC chain of custody certifications upon request.

TI

SUSTAINABLE FILM INITIATIVE

Ti's sustainability initiatives have led to the introduction of a BoPLA based film, branded Nativia, which can be used for pressure sensitive applications. The current Nativia range includes clear NTSS and metallized NZSS grades for both face and liner applications. Both films are fully compostable according to EN 13432 and are certified bio-based by VINCOTTE.

In its BOPP range, Ti has introduced LSA face film, featuring high transparency and specially tailored for 'no label look' applications. This film can be used as monoweb as well as in lower thickness for overlamination. LSE is a white voided PS film, with a high yield and opacity, making it well suited to simple decoration applications such as household and body care. Ti's LSW, meanwhile, is a high-gloss solid white film grade.

Cham launches alternative liner technology

A CLAY-COATED KRAFT PAPER (CCK) liner technology has been launched by Cham Paper Group as an alternative to PE-extruded paper. Andy Thomas reports

Cham Paper Group has developed a CCK-based release liner which matches the dimensional stability of PE-extruded paper while increasing process speeds for the laminator. 'With the release liner market facing the challenge of higher competitive pressures and only a slight innovation potential in terms of product performance, we have had to re-think and look closely at the question of what our customers really need,' says Edgar Habich, product manager for the industrial release market segment of Cham Paper Group. 'After the analysis phase, we were clear that we wanted to substitute plastics.'

PE-extruded papers are valued for their high dimensional stability, ensuring that the printed film or paper does not curl or react in any other way with humidity, since this would have a negative effect on the print result or the printing process. However, compared with CCKs, PE papers have various siliconization disadvantages - for example, lower siliconization speeds and lower temperature resistance.

'On the whole, the use of PE papers means that our customers tend to have higher process costs than when using CCKs,' explains Habich.

Cham Paper Group chose its Silico Premium product to substitute PE papers. Habich says the special coating technology used by the manufacturer matches the dimensional stability of PE papers. 'Performance is absolutely comparable in terms of flatness and dimensional stability with PE papers. We are giving the paper properties that were previously not thought possible.'

At the same time, the thermal stability of Silico Premium helps to increase production speeds at the laminator, says Habich.

'With our new product solutions, we succeed in achieving the delicate balancing act between optimum process costs and efficiency for everyone ranging from siliconizers and coaters to print service providers. 'We also see that the entire market is endeavouring to apply more emulsion processes in order to use more environmentally friendly production methods. This is where we see particularly interesting potential for our innovation. Once again, this is related to the sustainability megatrend.'

Habich believes this development reflects a major change in the way ideas for innovations are generated, citing the company's experience in the adhesive tape industry. 'A few years ago, the focus was still on producing and selling the adhesive tapes. Today, innovations are developed on the basis of finding alternatives to the joining methods previously used. For example, look at the automotive and aviation sector, where we are increasingly using innovative adhesive systems. These end-user sectors are much more open to adopting process changes and implementing innovative concepts. A new attitude is discernable amongst manufacturers of adhesive tapes who are not just looking for innovations in 'their own back yard', but who are also identifying related application areas where similar functionalities are required. A specific example of this attitude is the innovative area of replacing screw or rivet joints with adhesive tapes or adhesives.'

THE INSIDER

A ROUND-UP OF THE LATEST GLOBAL LABEL STORIES

OMET APPOINTS SOUTH AFRICA DISTRIBUTOR

Italian press manufacturer Omet has appointed Rototec as its distributor in South Africa.

'Our plan is to target the short-run self-adhesive label production market with our Flexy and X-Flex models, the wine industry with our Varyflex offset machine, and the packaging industry, either flexibles or cartons, with our Varyflex combination press, which is 850mm wide and integrates all possible printing technologies inline,' explained Sergio Villa, Omet's area manager.

MARK ANDY BOOSTS PERFORMANCE SERIES SALES

Mark Andy has sold its 60th Performance Series press, a line of machines launched at Labelexpo Europe 2009. The company reports that some customers have replaced multiple machines with a single Performance Series and that five converters have purchased multiple Performance Series presses, with commitments to future investments already planned.

ALPHASONICS APPOINTS US DISTRIBUTOR

Alphasonics has appointed St Louis, Missouri-based Conversource as its distributor for the narrow web flexo market in the United States. Conversource will now serve as the primary contact for all Alphasonics customers in the US with regards to consumables and maintenance. The company will sell and promote all Alphasonics equipment, including the AS range of parts washers, the PW and PC plate cleaners and its established range of dual frequency anilox roll cleaning devices.

ARMOR OBTAINS EN 16001

Armor has become the third French company to obtain EN 16001 certification, the European standard for Energy Management Systems (EMS), providing a full set of guidelines to meet carbon emissions reduction requirements. The future international standard for EMS, ISO 50001, will be based on EN 16001.

VILA BOOSTS SALES WITH DIGITAL PRINT

DUTCH LABEL SPECIALIST VILA ETIKETTEN has achieved an average annual sales growth of 25-30 percent for the fourth year running following its move into digital. Carol Houghton reports

VILA produced 2,000 labels for a limited edition of 'Dutch Genever' whisky on the WS6000

Established in 1992, Vila Etiketten is one of Holland's fastest growing label producers, with a portfolio of over 2,000 customers including blue-chip brands, retailers and other local printers.

The company originally produced black and white barcodes with a one day delivery time on two thermal transfer machines. Finding it expensive to buy in thermal transfer food labels, the company invested in its first digital press. Managing director, Robbert Vugts said 'the huge investment was daunting at first and we spent a few years looking for the best solution before deciding on HP Indigo.' The company invested successively in WS4050 and WS4500 digital presses driven by HP's SmartStream Labels and Packaging Print Server, powered by EskoArtwork.

Vila Etiketten now produces small quantities of self adhesive labels with the addition of hot foiling in a maximum of five days, following its philosophy to deliver within one week. 'Hot foil and digital are a good combination,' said Vugts. 'Hot foil has a five minute set up time, is very fast and cheap, with minimum waste.'

EXTENDING CAPABILITIES

Based in Breda, Vila Etiketten extended its digital capabilities last year with the purchase of an HP Indigo WS6000 digital press to meet a growing demand for labels with variable content – particularly barcodes for food, pricing labels for retail items and healthcare products.

'The WS6000 is HP's most productive digital solution and we are able to offer the benefits of digital printing combined with the quality usually associated with offset,' says Vugts. Vila Etiketten now offers its services to all market sectors except pharmaceutical, and plans to explore international market opportunities, particularly in Sweden and Denmark.

The WS6000 prints at up to 30 m/min in four colors. Vila Etiketten is transferring jobs up to 13,000 linear feet (around 4,000m) from conventional to digital printing, achieving better quality and productivity at a lower cost, according to Robbert Vugts. Vila Etiketten uses the 5 or 6-color capabilities of the WS6000 for 10-20 percent of its jobs. The extra white is needed to print on transparent labels and Vugts guesses the company would lose 10-15 percent of jobs without this capability.

'Many of our customers, who have worked with conventional printers in the past, say they notice the cost savings that come with choosing digital print,' says Vugts. 'Customers no longer need to order 20,000 labels if they only require a few thousand, and they no longer need to keep excess stock. Instead, they can just re-order labels in short-runs at any time and be confident we will deliver a quick turnaround – a crucial requirement for some of our retail customers who need to order labels to promote the latest campaigns at short notice.'

Vila recently produced 2,000 labels for a limited edition of Dutch Whisky, 'Dutch Genever' from Zuiddam Distillers, on the WS6000. Each label had its own number and was printed using color and white ink on a silver adhesive material with a metallic ink effect. 'The customer was impressed with the superior quality of the finished product, despite also being a very cost-effective solution,' says Vugts. 'They have already expressed an interest in using our WS6000 for future jobs.'

MD Ton Reichardt and Robbert Vugts

BEVERAGE BRANDS

Seeks clear advantage

AS COMPETITION in the global beverage market hots up and brand owners look for innovative ways to catch consumers' attention, the label is emerging as the primary message carrier. Carol Houghton reports

In the increasingly competitive beverages sector, the impact of labeling in launching new products has never been greater.

Martin Usher, sales account manager at Chesapeake, supplier of cartons, labels and leaflets, and specialist plastic packaging, agrees: 'There is very little product differentiation in the market at the moment; companies are looking at using different materials and finishes to make

their product seen'.

Brands are looking to bring consumer customers closer to the product, building associations with social status, class and sophistication – particularly in the higher value spirits category. According to Rik Olthof at international branding and packaging design consultant Claessens Cartlis, 'branding has become an experience and brand owners should be creating an image that consumers want to share.'

These trends have impacted the way label converters work, says Jan De Roeck, director of solutions management at EskoArtwork: 'It's clear that shorter press run lengths are the main trend in the beverage market, driven by product diversification and personalization of the marketing message.' A range of technological solutions enable converters to respond to this demand, including online communication and web-based approval, integrating business systems, digital printing, color management, 3D virtual prototyping and automation of prepress workflows.

LABEL TECHNOLOGY

Glue applied technologies continue to dominate in the beer, carbonated soft drinks and wine markets, but brands are increasingly being pushed towards self-adhesive technology with its ability to provide product differentiation. The global beverage market is now the third largest end-use segment for self-adhesive labels, taking 15.6 percent according to the TLMI's North American Label Study.

Brand differentiation is seeing a variety of finishes and effects being used on a wide range of face stocks, including textured papers, foils and clear films using both conventional and digital print processes. Tactile printing, for example, has crossed over from Braille to be used by the Co-op for its vodka and gin brands. The same process can be used to create labels with a 'grip' that stops the bottle slipping from wet hands.

Kevin Lyons, sales director at The Label Makers predicts the next stage for beverages will be lenticular and 3D labels, although these are very much in the development stage at the moment (see L&L 3 for a feature about special finishes). Lyons adds, 'limited edition labels for special occasions and promotions are not only possible but affordable with digital technology.'

The label is estimated to be between two and five percent of the total packaging cost for beverages. In a traditionally wet glue market, self-adhesive technology meets design and application demands for quick changeovers, but materials are twice as expensive, packaging line speeds are lower and a significant investment is needed in application equipment. For high value products the improved reliability and consistency of self-adhesives outweigh these disadvantages, notes Paul Johnston-Knight, director at paper agent Papico: 'If your product is worth £50 per bottle, every single label must be perfect and identical, without any glue spillage or migration.'

> "There is very little product differentiation in the market at the moment"

There are also issues surrounding liner waste and label removal from returnable bottles. The main issue with self-adhesives in Europe is the challenge of removing labels from bottles for reuse at breweries. Glue applied labels are easily removed in a caustic wash bath, so converters need a competitive solution.

Martin Hardman, sales and marketing director at Chadwicks, shrink sleeve label specialist, offers an alternative. 'More brands are beginning to consider using shrink sleeves as the preferred choice of primary label for maximizing the shelf presence of their products.' Sleeves are durable, provide total bottle decoration and can incorporate tamper evident features, while the use of UV flexo allows cost effective production of high quality shorter runs. 'Shrink sleeves provide the perfect, contemporary packaging solution,' believes Hardman. 'With advancement in technology and special features, together with the relatively low costs, sleeves are now a viable option for most products.'

Cider, sparkling wines and premium spirits often use secondary packaging and security features to prevent tampering and prove authenticity. Holograms, security threads and anti-theft devices can be built into self-adhesives. 'Holographics are a relatively cheap way to add value,' Kevin Lyons commented. 'They are easily available and good for security as well as marketing. There is a massive counterfeiting risk in the market and many are working on covert and overt methods to verify the original label.' There is particular scope for an innovative solution in China, a hotbed for counterfeiting problems, especially in the wine market.

WINE AND SPIRITS

Traditionally, wine brands spend less on advertising than other beverages so the label is crucial at the point of purchase. World wine retail sales are expected to increase by 62.5 percent over the next decade.

The UK is one of the world's biggest per capita consumers of wine. 'Wine is increasingly being shipped to Britain in tankers to be bottled and labeled in the UK, giving English designers more freedom and flexibility' said Kevin Lyons, The Label Makers. 'People are thinking more about their carbon footprint so this trend is stronger now than five years ago.'

Thermochromic inks are being increasingly used as brand differentiators following the success in the beer segment of Coors Light's Blue Mountains. Inland Labels recently helped Domodimonti Societa Argricola Winery become the first winery to utilize Hallcrest's color change technology. The hidden message, 'Natural Wines' appears on the wine's self-adhesive label when it reaches ideal drinking temperature. Caroline Brownstein, director of sales and marketing, North America for Domodimonti Società Agricola says 'Inland has definitely enabled our wines to stand out on the shelf. Our importers and distributors along with our customers are all extremely impressed with the quality and originality.'

Spanish company Canals is digitally printing wine bottle capsules to match the label. Canals primes the capsules with the print-receptive coating required by HP Indigo technology before printing. Poly-laminate is used for higher end products but 60 percent of the capsules are PVC. Canals aims to build its online presence with a new website to help customers market digitally printed capsules and allow them to track their jobs. Guasch Soler, general manager, sees a major

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Booklets introduced to help label converters and suppliers understand the differences between the established and growth label markets. The surveys also analyze the different technologies and materials trends by region.

Regions include: *North America, Latin America, South East Asia, India and Europe*

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opportunity for digital label printers to color-match bottle/capsule decoration solutions to wineries.

Self-adhesive label manufacturer Label Apeel has entered the German beverage labeling market with a deal to supply self-adhesive wrap around bottle labels to Weignut Herbet Becker, a vineyard in the Kraichgau region. Label Apeel's design will replace the front and back bottle labels, erasing the color issues experienced in using wet glue. Managing director at Label Apeel, Stuart Kellock said 'in the German industry, there are few labeling businesses willing to invest time and effort for smaller brands.'

The niche boutique wine industry has increased in value globally in the last 15 years, demanding labels that reflect the wine's high quality. HP Indigo's WS4050 has allowed Tapp Technologies to cost-effectively supply small orders to wineries in this under-served area. According to Bill Knopka, senior vice president of Tapp Technologies, the wine industry needs to be flexible and tailor solutions to fit customers' needs.

Special purpose adhesives can be delivered to accommodate for ice bucket performance and long storage in damp conditions essential for vintage wines. UPM Raflatac recently launched a UV-hotmelt adhesive for use on film food and beverage labels which provides good adhesion and clarity even when applied to moist bottles. RC 7B is resistant to water-whitening throughout the label's lifecycle, including immersion in water after labeling. A high temperature tolerance also makes it suitable for bottling processes with pasteurization. The adhesive is claimed to perform well on a range of substrates including glass and PET, and is suitable for no-label look applications.

Shrink sleeves are becoming increasingly popular with spirit brands, partly because security features can be incorporated into the sleeve.

Paul Johnston-Knight, director at paper agent Papico, says wines and spirits are moving from glossy, coated and metalized labels to a more natural, rustic look with uncoated paper labels. He also notes that a significant proportion of the labels business which traditionally supplied wet glue for whisky and spirits is moving towards pressure sensitive labeling.

An example is John Watson, a wet glue label specialist which purchased a Gallus RCS 330 offset combination press to produce self-adhesive labels. The company mainly prints for the traditionally wet glue Scottish Whisky industry. Robert McLachlan, joint managing director says 'pressure sensitive labels are becoming easier to apply and can have much more intricate designs.' He adds that because of these attributes some of their major clients are looking to make the move from wet glue.

Digital printing is being used in the spirits category, finding particular favor for Scotch whisky brands running limited editions. Vila Etiketten, the Dutch label specialist, recently produced 2,000 labels for a limited edition of the 'Dutch Genever' whisky by Zuiddam Distillers on its HP Indigo ws6000. Each uniquely numbered label was printed using color and white ink on a silver adhesive material with a metallic ink effect. 'The customer was impressed with the superior quality of the finished product' said managing director, Robbert Vugts (See 'HP Indigo technology boost sales' pg. 100)

BEER

The beer market is dominated by glue applied labels, but has perhaps the biggest potential for growth in self-adhesives. Consolidation is evident in Europe, and the Russian market is now dominated by international brewers. Carlsberg, InBev, Heineken, Efes and SABMiller now own around 75 percent of the global market. Beer Business Daily cites Heinken's global revenue growing by 9.7 percent in 2010.

Beer labels favor gravure printing, but swayed by higher speeds and efficiency, Heineken and Bud Light are leading the switch to self-adhesive labels. Self-adhesive usage grew between 10 – 20 percent in Europe and North America during 2008.

Papico's Paul Johnston-Knight notes that beer and cider brands are switching from metalized paper labels to coated white paper, printed with metallic inks. Embossed papers with metallic inks 'give a more striking effect then the substantially more costly metalized alternatives.' He believes brands that consider their front body label too iconic to change are starting to allow changes to neck and back labels but keeping the metalized element on the front.

Camilo Perez, general director of Impresora del Sur says 'the label is the first thing that the consumer looks at.' The printer helped SABMiller rebrand its products in 2007, replacing standard rectangular labels with irregular shapes and introducing varnishes and metalized paper for premium brands. With self-adhesives, complex label shapes can be die cut and multiple labels applied in one pass on the

UPM RAFLATAC technology for the no label look on a clear bottle

packaging line. The rebranding also saw one label on the bottle become three; one on the front, back and neck.

Smyth Companies recently used its Red Rock application machinery to add value to the Boston Beer Company's Samuel Adams Boston Lager. Two-ply labels with a promotional code on the front were applied to the inside of unfolded bottle cartons in-line with the manufacturing process at high speed. Customers visit the website to enter their code – found by lifting the top ply of the label – thus extending the brand experience online.

Craft beers are one of the fastest growing segments of the industry, particularly microbreweries. Between 2005 and 2008 the segment increasingly used film labels. The 'no label look', created by applying a moisture, temperature and scuff resistant clear film to clear bottles, is particularly popular. In January the USA reported that domestic sales were down by 4.4 percent, but both craft beers and flavored alcoholic beverage (FAB) sales grew by 12 percent. There are opportunities for self-adhesive growth in the FAB market. Targeted at young females as an alternative to beer or wine and often drunk from the bottle, they have a strong emphasis on image.

An interesting alternative to 'no label look' PS labels is clear film wet glue (or 'patch') labels. Henkel, for example, recently launched a third generation of synthetic adhesives, Optal LG 30, for wet glue labeling applications. The adhesive allows transparent label application without the investment in self-adhesive label application equipment.

NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Papico's Paul Johnston-Knight has noticed a trend to use paper, rather than plastic, in the water, smoothie and juice markets. Usage of uncoated or part-recycled paper is becoming more common to achieve a 'natural' look and feel.

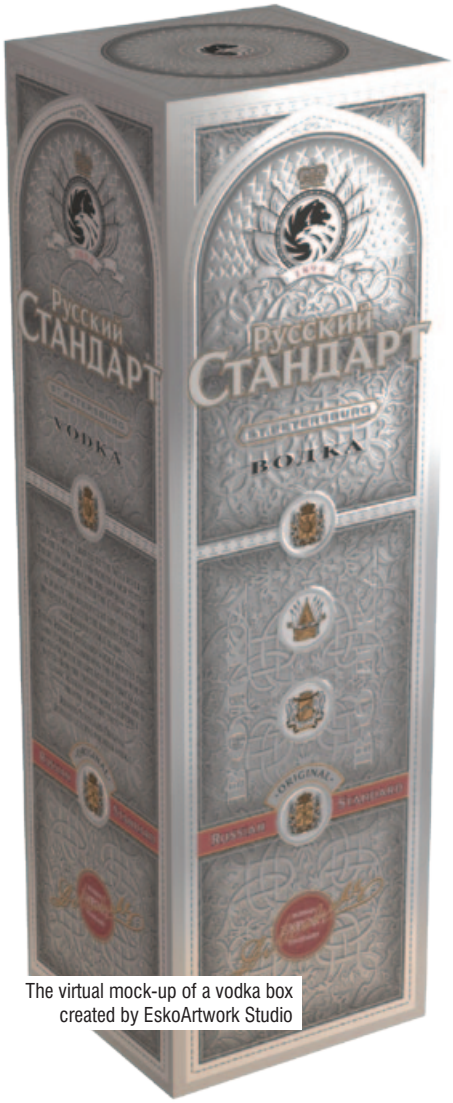
The fizzy soft drinks sector, once dominated by direct printed cans, is seeing a move towards wrap around or shrink sleeve labels. Premium water brands mostly use self-adhesive labels on glass bottles, but PET bottles are mainly using wrap-around film or PE stretch sleeve labels.

Jeff DeLiberty, Amcor Rigid Plastics, producer of PET packaging, says 'beverage marketers continue to look for ways to make their products "jump off the shelf". Many try to accomplish this through custom shaped bottles, however the cost to design and buy custom molds for those unique bottles can cost $100K and more. That's why offering eye catching label designs and substrates on stock bottles has become a popular way to achieve differentiation on the shelf without the cost of paying for a custom bottle.' Amcor's PowerFlex technology is a patented panel-less design. As they don't have sidewall vacuum panels, the bottles, used for All-Natural Coconut Water, are easier to label and packers don't experience the 'ripple effect' created when labeling over panels.

On the other hand, Avery Dennison is enabling brand managers and packaging designers to use bespoke contoured bottles. Irregular shaped bottles stand out from competitors but don't suit self-adhesive labels. Polyphane Fit, a roll-fed shrink film that delivers shrink ratios up to 50 percent, presents converters with an alternative solution. At the same time, Avery has launched its S7200 adhesive, offering quick stick for high-speed dispensing lines and improved chest performance and wet stick, overcoming condensation issues in the bottling process.

Chadwicks Sleeves has seen a lot of activity in the non-alcoholic beverages sector, and recently created innovative sleeves for the launch of a new health category drink, AloeVit. The 50 micron film is seven-color UV flexo printed with subtle color tone work to provide a quality finish and enhance shelf presence. Richard Cutworth, business development manager, said 'We produced a sleeve that would distinguish AloveVit from other fruit water drinks while also being appealing to customers. The low cost origination for UV flexo shrink sleeves makes them a viable option for new healthcare products like AloveVit.'

The Coors Light thermochronic label



The virtual mock-up of a vodka box created by EskoArtwork Studio

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LEFT: Prati's new 3,300 sq m HQ and manufacturing facility. Top R: The plant was manufactured using a range of environment-friendly solutions. Bottom R: L-R Annalisa Prati, area manager at Prati, and Chiara Prati

Prati plans for the future

PRATI has opened a new headquarters and production center in Italy with the capacity to build on the company's global success. Carol Houghton reports

Founded by Pietro Prati in 1973 and now a key global supplier of label finishing equipment, Prati has over 1,000 machines installed worldwide by a network of distributors. The company specializes in supplying modular converting lines equipped with rewinders, inspection units, slitters, die-cutters and overprinters.

In March, Prati held an Open House event to celebrate the grand opening of a new headquarters in Faenza, Italy, built to high standards of sustainability, both in materials and in plant operation.

The move to the 3,300sqm site in the Ravenna district - four times larger than the previous premises - will enable Prati to increase production capacity. Claudia Fabbri, area manager, estimates that 25 machines have already been sold this year and says the new building has the capacity to double last year's sales of 70 machines.

The new Faenza headquarters houses six production lines: VEGAplus, Pharmacheck, Jupiter, Saturn, Nepture and Uranus. More efficient production of the Jupiter and Saturn machines means delivery times will come down to around one month, with a target of 12-16 weeks for other machines in Prati's range. Currently production is sold out until Labelexpo Brussels in September.

Chiara Prati, sales director, explains 'We've significantly increased our activities in Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the Americas, so we needed production facilities that could service burgeoning demand. 2010 was a great success for Prati. With larger premises and an ever-growing presence, we are optimistic that our solid growth will continue.'

Prati's turnover almost doubled between 2009 and 2010 from €5.9m to €10.5m, with a notable increase in export sales, taking the number of countries where Prati machines are installed to 50.

Over 140 guests, including label printers, distributors and press, came from across the world to the Open House, which stretched over three days in the impressive 650sqm showroom and showcased demonstrations of all Prati's latest equipment.

The Open House was the occasion for Prati to unveil its Saturn Plus, a new version of the Saturn inspection machine. It is equipped with a servo rotary die-cutting unit and a new NIKKA compact inspection system with an iPhone touch-screen interface, for which NIKKA has given Prati the sole rights.

The VEGAplus 450 at the Open House was configured with rotary die-cutting station - using magnetic die technology from Kocher+Beck - for blank or printed labels, an inspecting station to control missing labels with a BST camera, and a glueless turret rewinder.

A VEGAplus Booklet machine percent was also demonstrated, along with a GMP certified Pharmacheck pharma label finishing line, including100 percent inspection, OCR, edge guide inspection and final label presence check.

DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENTS

Prati announced an extension of its European distribution agreement with Nilpeter to cover the Benelux region. The agreement currently covers Germany, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, where Nilpeter also provides service and technical support to Prati systems' users. Máquinas Materiais Gráficos Gutenberg will take on representation of Prati in Brazil.

Chiara Prati says 'these new partnerships mean we're perfectly placed to develop new business opportunities and increase our market share in Europe, and South America. We have a strong presence in most of the areas around the world, and further expansion in the future will enable us to achieve our goal of global distribution.'

Last year the company set up Prati Automation, a wholly-owned US sales and service company located in South Indiana, close to Louisville, Kentucky. Prati plans to start manufacturing its machines at the plant.

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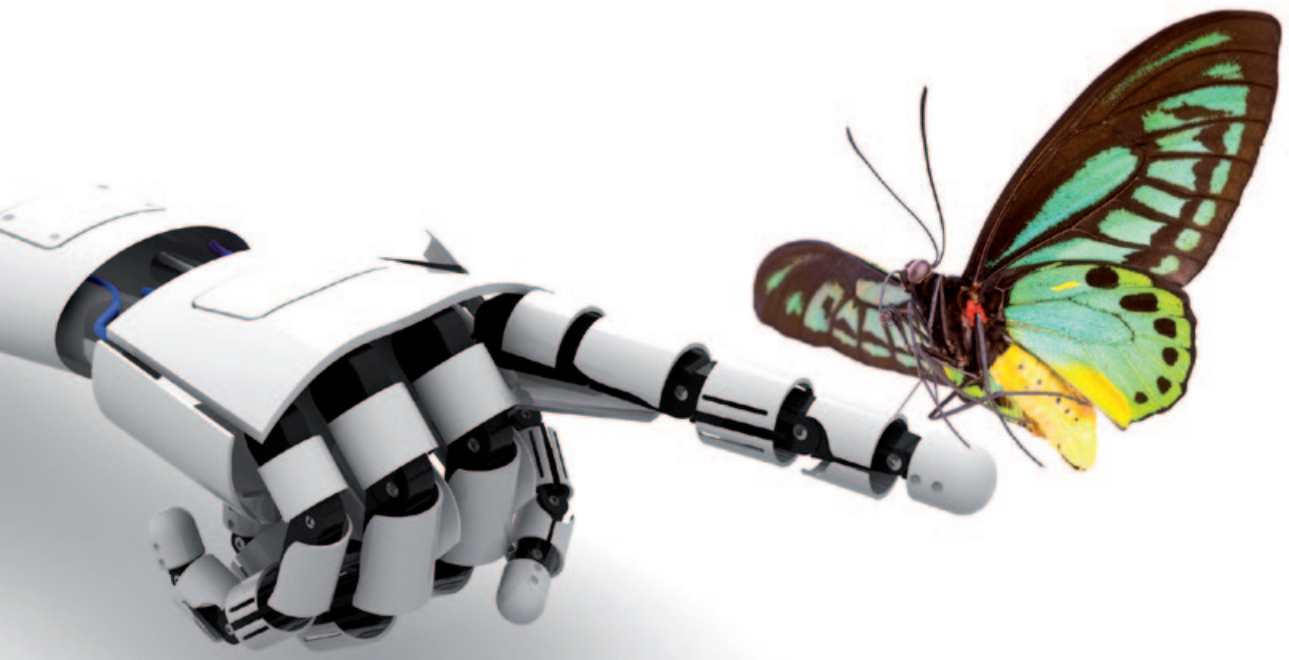

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Changing generations

MIKE FALCO, former CEO and director of the Topflight Corporation, looks at the benefits of peer advisory groups for the next generation of label industry leaders

Family businesses typically evolve through three stages, and the type of leadership required at each stage is different. In the start-up, entrepreneurial stage, the business is designed around the founder. It is driven partially by personal goals and dependent on the leader's intuitive direction. The second stage is 'managerial', where the company is more organized, but still like a family. Many of the longer tenured line workers have become managers within the company.

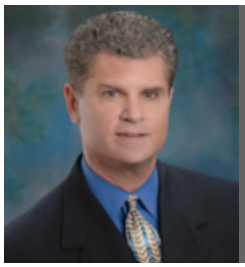
The third, 'professional' stage, can sometimes be the most challenging. More is required of the management staff in terms of their leadership capabilities, especially learning things outside their comfort zones. Decisions are driven more by what is in the best interest for the business.

During the professional stage, the time has come for the second or third generation leadership of the family to take the reigns of the business. This often becomes a challenge for the senior-generation business owners who still spend too much time making the day-to-day financial decisions and are still an influential part of company management meetings.

By age 40, the next generation leaders should be making these types of decisions and gaining leadership influence within the company.

It is also at the professional stage, where the next generation leader can benefit from joining a peer-to-peer advisory group. A study from the Small Business Administration showed that, between 2005 and 2008, business owners with a peer advisory group grew 44 percent, while those without one grew 25 percent over that three-year period.

Joining a business peer advisory group typically involves attending professionally facilitated small group meetings on a monthly basis. The meeting members are all business owners or company leaders. Each month, among other things, members discuss their current business challenges, with each person getting feedback from other members on how they might tackle a given business challenge.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Falco is currently a partner and moderator with The Executive Peer Forum advisory group (www.execpeerforum.com). He is the former CEO and director of the Topflight Corporation and TLMI Board Member. He can be reached at michael.falco@execpeerforum.com.

TRADITION

In family businesses, it makes sense to honor those traditions and practices that have helped the business prosper. However, in an ever-changing world economy, you want to guard against traditions ('we have always done it that way') that conflict with the future prosperity of the business.

Peer-to-peer advisory groups can challenge this 'traditional' thinking among company leaders, allowing them to see situations from different angles and make better decisions.

Next generation leaders often spend too much time working in their business, rather than working on their business, and a peer-to-peer advisory group forces members to take the time to think about their business direction on a monthly basis.

Strategic progress is discussed with the group, who in turn serve as a sounding board, providing invaluable insights on the direction of the company and assisting the business to get to the next level of growth. Indeed, simply having to report current status to other members has the effect of creating accountability for a business owner that might not otherwise exist.

For example, if a business owner or executive tells his peer group that he will finally have that difficult 'performance' discussion with a staff member; the expectation is that they will do what they say they will do. In this way, the group members hold each other accountable for forward progress on their business challenges.

It goes without saying that improving your business is often the fastest path to improving your life. Without the headaches of a given business problem, you will likely have more time to spend with family and to attend to your own personal needs.

In almost every case, members is a peer advisory group become friends. Beyond the positive impact of making more money, peer advisory group members support each other through personal challenges, learning to lead more fulfilled lives. At the end of the day, that may be the biggest payoff of all.

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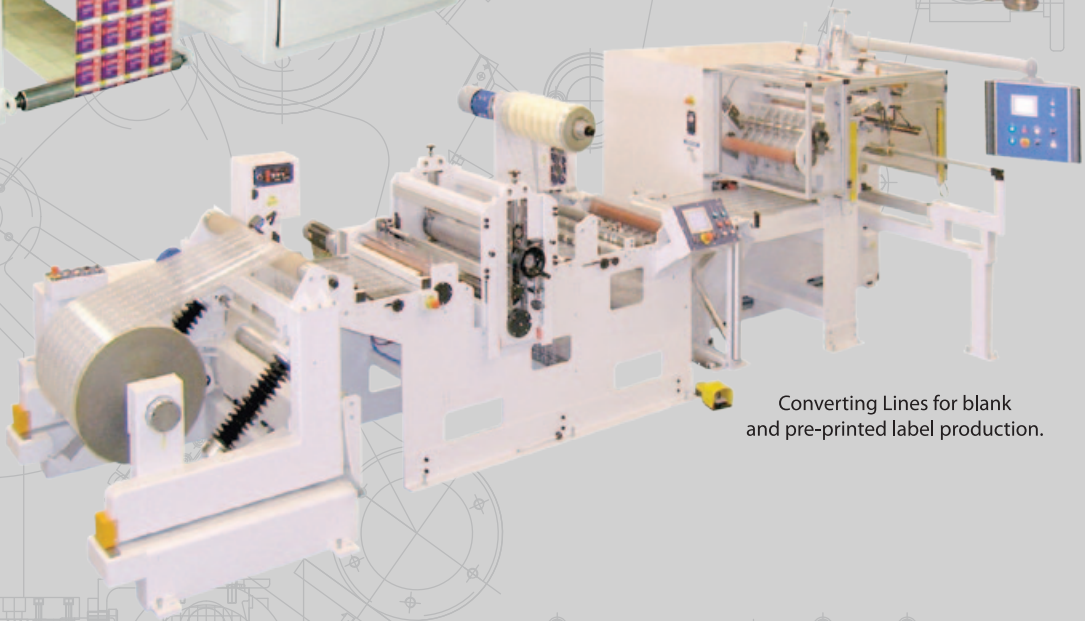

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Technology Center launched

NILPETER'S new Technology Center aims to be both a training academy and a place where converters can trial new applications and test the latest press technology. Andy Thomas reports

Nilpeter has opened a Technology Center at its manufacturing site and global headquarters in Slagelse, Denmark. The new building is said by Nilpeter to be far more than a demo center – converters can use it for operator training and to trial new applications.

Jakob Landberg, vice president sales & marketing at Nilpeter comments: 'We've had a demo center for quite some time, and we've done demonstrations on presses in our production facility. But here we have created a new environment for inspirational training, for demonstrations, for servicing. Our customers and partners can use this to innovate new products, procedures and test new applications. We will also train our own people here, as well as our agents.'

For the opening ceremony Nilpeter flew in 50 'Top Gun' sales people from agencies servicing 64 countries. 'We wanted them to go back with a buzz about what's happening here, as well as contribute ideas how we can use the Technology Center,' said Landberg.

There are five full-time print experts employed by the Technology Center and converter training will be a key focus for them. 'Printers can come here for training, so it will develop into a training academy,' says Jakob Landberg.

The Technology Center is set up to resemble a 'perfect print house', showcasing efficient ways to store and bring tooling to the press using job change trolleys, with assembly of the job components handled away from the press.

'We have demonstrated how converters can reduce wasteage and downtime by as much as 60 percent,' continues Landberg. 'But Lean manufacturing is 70 percent attitude, 20 percent hardware and 10 percent training. It is wonderful what the press can do for you, but the attitude of the person operating it is so important. It is also important to remember that the press will not stand alone – it is part of a system, and training must take account of this.'

The 1,200 sq m building can also be made available to converters' customers or co-suppliers who want to host their own meetings.

As well as converters, Landberg said industry suppliers will be able to use Nilpeter's state-of-the-art presses to test their new inks, coatings, materials and converting equipment.

In terms of equipment, the Technology Center houses Nilpeter's leading edge offset, flexo and digital combination presses as well as a full range of support equipment from plate mounters to anilox and plate washing machines.

'This is the first time we have the Dream Line concept in one room,' said Jakob Landberg. 'In this system everything is standardized so you can mix and match. Previously we focused on, for example, offset – on a particular press. Now we change our focus to being a total system supplier and partner in the future growth of our customers.'

The Technology Center presents digital printing as one unit in fully modular conventional press.

'We have been in the digital market for many years but we have been very quiet about the Caslon since we introduced it in 2007 in Brussels,' said Landberg. 'In these years we have matured the product and I am sure that we have a good solution now. UV inkjet is very good for certain applications – for example where UV resistance is required. We will focus on how digital printing can be integrated into our product program of offset and flexo presses. We think the future is that everything will be on combination machines.'

The opening of the Slagelse Technology Center follows the commissioning of a similar facility adjacent to Nilpeter's manufacturing plant in Cincinnati, Ohio in North America, which houses Nilpeter's print service and customer support groups. A Technology Center in South America is now under development.

Interpack preview

ALTHOUGH Interpack 2011 is more targeted at packaging machinery and materials buyers, some labels and package print-related companies are exhibiting. Andy Thomas reports

Heidelberg will be presenting its Linoprint inkjet unit for packaging applications at Interpack 2011. Linoprint digital inkjet printing systems are targeted at packaging applications requiring customized flexible packaging and label printing. Heidelberg's stand focuses on applications for the pharmaceutical, cosmetics, and manufacturing industries, such as the chemistry or DIY sectors. With regard to pharmaceutical applications, Heidelberg will be using the Linoprint Driveline B to demonstrate options available for printing on aluminum foil and typical pharma label materials. The core concept is 'late stage differentiation', which Heidelberg defines as differentiation in downstream packaging production, where short runs need to be printed on demand.

'The flexible Linoprint solutions are making it possible to integrate digital printing into packaging lines,' says Daniel Dreyer, head of Linoprint at Heidelberg. 'When integrating inkjet systems at customer sites, we factor in both the existing production environment and the inks and substrates to be used in our systems.'

Interpack 2011 will see global product identification and traceability specialist Domino add to its new i-Tech intelligent Technology product range with launches including a high performance scribing laser and a cassette version of its V-Series thermal transfer overprinter.

The D620i 60W scribing laser debuting at the show is a high-performance addition to the D-Series i-Tech line-up. Despite housing Domino's most powerful laser yet, each component of the modular system is compact, making for easy integration on host machines.

The D620i also offers a new high-speed option – now available across the D-Series i-Tech range – which allows users to achieve 20 percent greater throughput.

The addition of the V220i to the company's range of thermal transfer overprinters brings Domino's patented ribbon economy to a wide range of potential applications in flexible packaging. The potential uptime of the V-Series receives a boost thanks to the cassette mechanism of the V220i: this allows high capacity ribbons (1040mm in length) to be exchanged in seconds. The new V-Series uses up to 60 percent less ink ribbon than its predecessor and weighs half as much.

A further Interpack highlight is the A320i continuous ink jet printer, which uses 90 percent less system ink and 50 percent less ink solvent than its predecessor. The A320i is also 40 percent lighter and incorporates energy-saving software.

The new products feature QuickStep, a new, simplified graphical user interface that will become the standard platform for all Domino coding equipment.

The Atlantic Zeiser Group will showcase its Omega 20/25 printing module along with a new air-cooled LED curing technology unit. The module can be used for inline marking, coding and serializing in late-stage customization, as well as product track & trace and anti-counterfeiting applications.

Sun Chemical is promoting its complete portfolio of low migration inks and coatings designed for the printing of packaging for foodstuffs, as well as sensitive applications such as tobacco and pharmaceutical packaging. The company launches 'Print for packaging – A Printing Low Migration Best Practice Guide', which is claimed to be an industry-first in terms of practical guidance. The company also launches two new low migration ink systems.

Taghleef Industries demonstrates a wide assortment of label films. LIM and LIS are designed for In-Mould labels. Available in 45-60-65μm and LIT 55μm, the films are designed to simulate the transparent "no label look". LIG and LIH 70μm are white voided IML films which give a shinier finish and are particularly appropriate for larger size containers. For the Self Adhesive Labels (SAL) sector, Ti film LSA 25-30-50μm is a face film featuring high levels of transparency for "no label look" applications. LSE 40-60 μm, is a white voided SAL film with a high yield combined with white opaque appearance, targeted at simple decoration applications in the household and body care markets. WAL reel-fed and cut-stack applications are also demonstrated.

Brigl & Burgmeister will demonstrate papers for flexible packaging and label applications involving the following new paper grades: NiklaSelect S, NiklaSelect V, NiklaPET V and PackPro 3.5. Information will be available on sustainability aspects such as CO2 footprint, water consumption in the production process, and especially reusability / recyclability. B&B is also taking part in the 'Heatlh' themed section of the innovation parc, where it will be promoting the 'eco' credentials of paper, and how they can be communicated to manufacturers in the food and beverages industry as well as to consumers.

THE NEW-LOOK LINOPRINT DriveLine B is designed to print on a wide range of packaging and label substrates

Digital first for Greece

AWARD WINNING converter Forlabels has installed the first HP Indigo WS6000 in Greece. Andy Thomas reports

Forlabels was founded by entrepreneur Avgerinos Chatzichrysos in 1986, in a small building in the centre of Athens. It produced adhesive labels for both small and medium-sized customers.

Avgerinos was soon joined by Vasilis Chatzichrysos, and with the motto 'strength in unity', the company witnessed rapid growth through the 1990s, moving into larger premises, first in Metamorphosi, Attica and in 2003 to a new factory on an industrial estate in Schimatari, strategically located just outside Athens.

The company now employs 40 people and converts labels and packaging solutions for a wide range of product categories, including foods, beverages, agricultural products, health and personal care products, clothes and shoes, logistics and promotional applications.

To what does Avgerinos Chatzichrysos attribute the company's success? 'It is our management philosophy that makes us different,' he says. 'This means we are constantly on the look out for new ways to serve our costumers, to suggest new applications, and we do everything possible to make our cooperation the best it can be. All our people have been trained in this way of thinking and working.'

Forlabels moved into digital label printing two years ago with an HP Indigo WS4500 and Digicon finishing line. The company's strength in innovation was demonstrated when it won a Digital Label award during Labelexpo Brussels 2009.

These machines sat alongside two UV flexo presses, four slitter-rewinders and a fully equipped graphic design studio including in-house digital platemaking. Processing capabilities include thermal printing, cold foil and silk screen printing, lamination and printing directly on the adhesive.

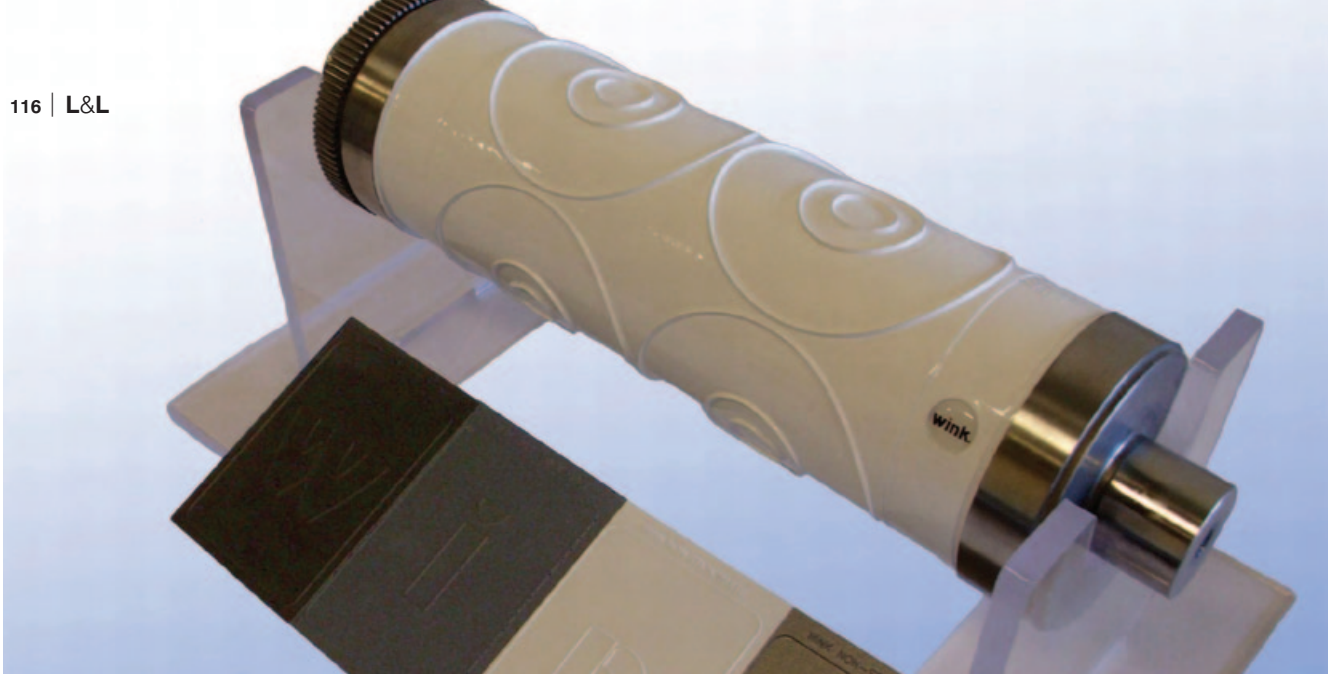
The WS6000 was installed last October through 3print Hellas, HP Greek agent. 'The new press will make us more flexible, and this in turn will allow us to respond even better to the needs of our customers,' says Avgerinos. 'It will further improve delivery times, which was already our company's competitive advantage. It is like finding you have an eighth day of the week, since our customers often want their jobs done by yesterday!'

Avgerinos believes a key service for existing customers will be product prototypes and samples. 'This will allow them to make professional presentations of new product samples, to optimize the launch of new products.'

Running a sustainable business is important for Avgerinos - current initiatives include recycling waste materials. 'The new press provides significant advantages concerning our impact on the environment, such as saving resources and the raw materials used in printing,' says Avgerinos.

Looking to the future, Avgerinos is anxious to make sure that levels of customer service are not threatened by the company's rapid growth. 'We want to grow in steady steps, and our criterion is how we can be equally close both to our small and to our large customers, the same as we did on the day we first started.'

AERIAL view of the Acropolis in Athens



Wink launches non-stick coatings range

FOUR non-stick coating variants for flexible dies, solid rotary dies and press accessories have been rolled out by Wink following an extensive development field testing program. Andy Thomas reports

German cutting tool manufacturer Wink has extended its range of non-stick finishes for cutting tools. Its established black and silver non-stick variants have been improved, while the new white and gray variants are now commercially available.

Wink's non-stick coatings can be specified for both flexible dies and solid rotary dies as well as on ancillary machine components.

Non-stick coatings incorporate a repellent action against adhesive and ink residues, meaning that cutting tools stay 'clean' - especially on the cutting surfaces of rotary tooling. This not only minimizes cleaning costs, but also increases production speed and efficiency. 'Because of the non-stick coating, hardly any labels adhere to the web or tool after cutting, which significantly increases the production rate,' says product manager Fransz Verbeek. 'The coating does not in any way affect the flexibility, magnetic adhesion and precision of the flexible dies.'

Development of the new range of coatings was carried out in close cooperation with material manufacturers and converters, allowing Wink to fine-tune the properties of the coatings, each of which is designed for specific applications.

'Over the years, we have tested and optimized various coatings. It has emerged that there is no single variant that can satisfy all our customers' requirements,' notes Fransz Verbeek.

The black non-stick coating for flexible dies is recommended for die cutting standard labels with less aggressive adhesives, while the gray variant is an all-round product for difficult materials, optimized for applications such as flexible dies cutting multi-layered labels and hot melt adhesives.

The white silicon-based non-stick coating is the best option for coating solid rotary dies, but can also be used for flexible dies, also providing added protection against ink residues.

Wink's silver coating provides non-stick protection for ancillary products, such as ink troughs and guide rollers, where its ink-repellent properties make machine components significantly easier to clean. Silver is also recommended for Wink protector plates, which are used in sheet-fed offset printing machines.

The black, gray and white variants can additionally be combined with Wink's established MC coating and laser hardening to maximize the life of flexible dies.

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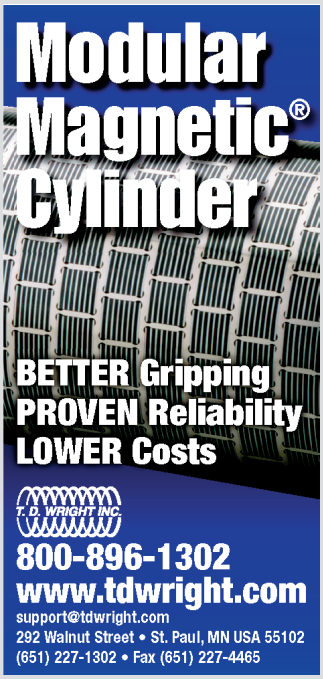

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WE'VE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD?

SIMON WHEATLEY, partner at Carr-Michael, business growth specialists, comments on monthly management issues

As you will have read in the press over the last few weeks we live in a country that has just woken up (again) to growth in the SME sector as a solution to our country's economic problems.

The Prime Minister has just announced the 'Startup Britain Initiative', a series of measures designed to create an environment to make the UK the 'World's best place to start a business'.

Entrepreneurs and small-business leaders have been summoned to rise to the challenge and drive the UK economy forwards. But is it that easy? I have often thought that if starting and growing a business was so simple we would have been able to buy the 'how to do it' off-the-shelf software package by now. It is difficult, but not impossible, to grow a business. Whilst experience will always help, there are some simple practical things to consider when looking to grow (or start) a business.

BE ORGANIZED

You have to make the right choices on how to invest your time and money for growth. You also have to manage the running of the existing business effectively and efficiently. We call this the 'two hats' approach.

HAVE A PLAN

Surprisingly few companies plan growth in a structured way. It is perceived as something that happens to you rather than something that you can control. Growth should be considered a process. It starts with methodical identification of opportunity, a considered prioritization of options and the careful execution of detailed plans.

THINK LONG-TERM

Even in this day and age of instant gratification, business takes time to evolve. The development of a product or service, the recognition of a brand that delivers sustainable real profit are not goals you can achieve quickly. Long term commitment is essential.

KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

The hardest lesson to learn in growth is admitting what you don't know. Be honest about your own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the company's. The sooner you recognize what is missing from your team, the sooner you can add that missing piece to the jigsaw.

EMBEDDING GROWTH

Be wary. What has worked in the past may now be inefficient as competitors catch up. Starting and growing a business can be a fantastic adventure. By applying some practical structure and being honest about your team you can take control of the growth process and significantly improve your chances of success.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Simon Wheatley, partner at Carr-Michael is a new contributor to *L&L*. He has worked in a wide variety of sectors and managed several SME companies through significant change.

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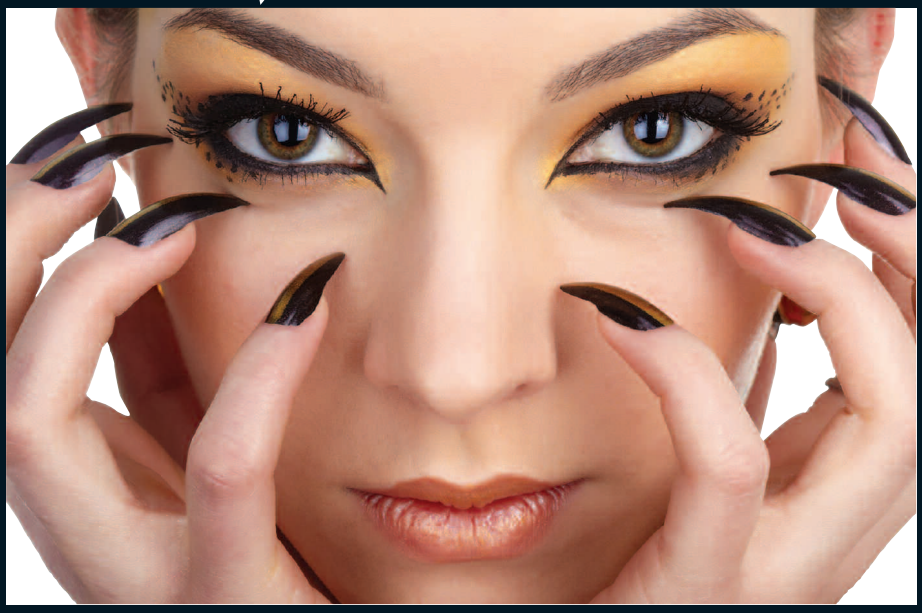

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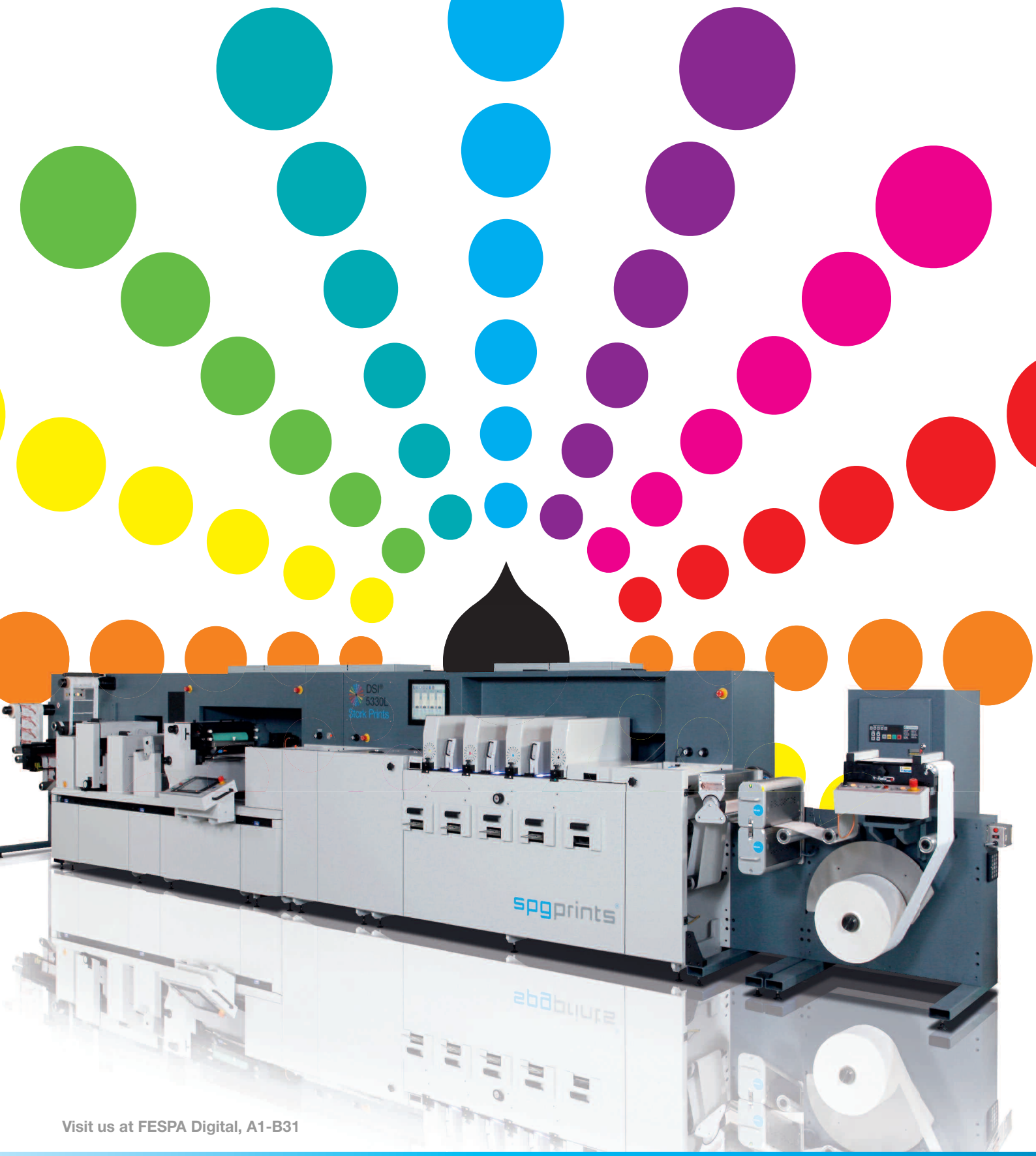

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