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— EST 1978 —

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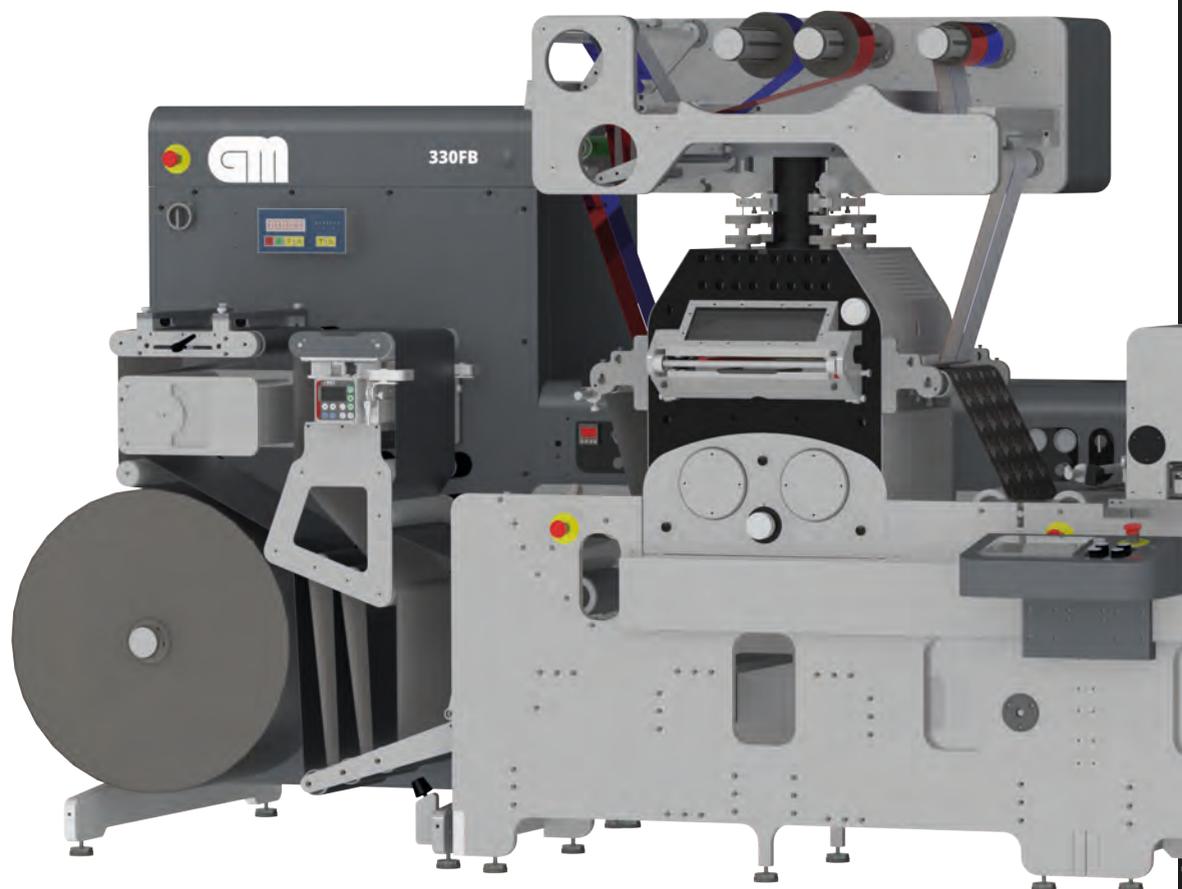
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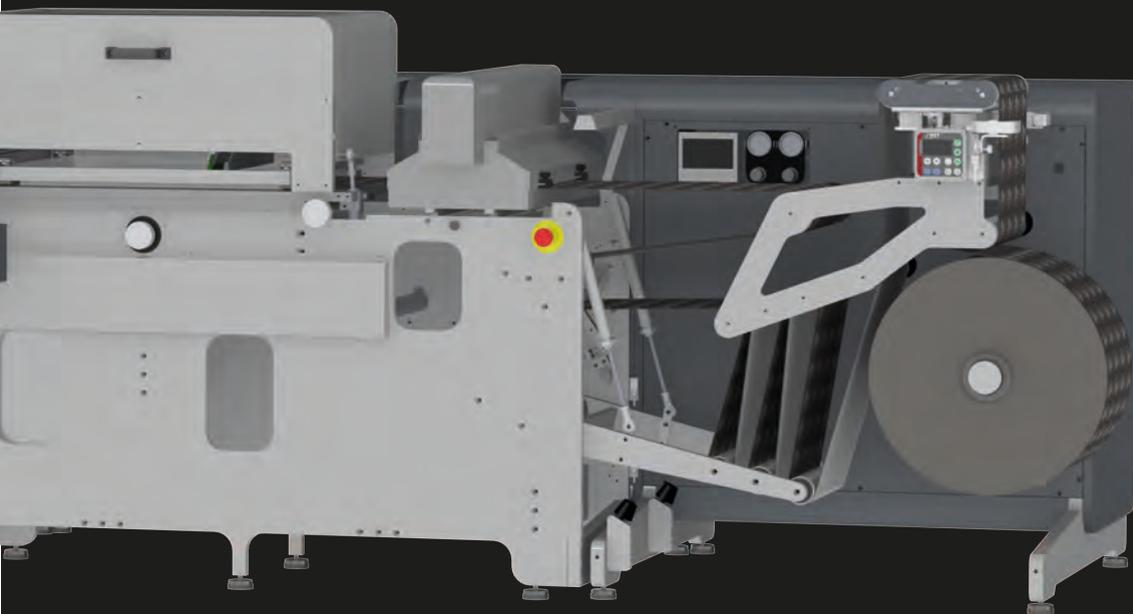
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L&L

– Meet the team

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Subscriptions

E: subs@labelsandlabeling.com
ISSN: 1478-7520

Printed by

Bishops Printers, Portsmouth, United Kingdom

US mailing

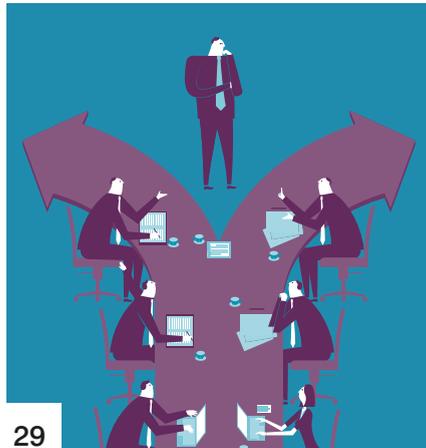
Labels & Labeling (USPS No: 002-914) is published
bi-monthly by Tarsus Exhibitions and Publishing Ltd and
distributed in the US by SPP, 95 Aberdeen Road, Emigsville
PA 17318. Periodicals postage paid at Emigsville, PA.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Labels & Labeling,
3175 N. Patrick Blvd. Suite 180, Brookfield, WI 53045

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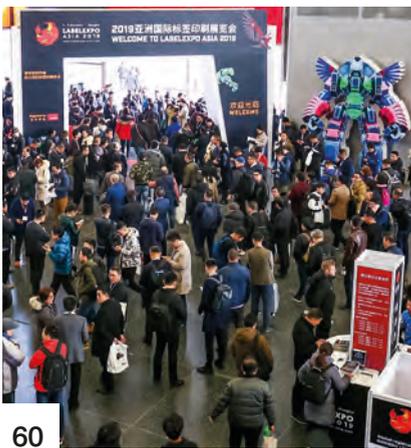
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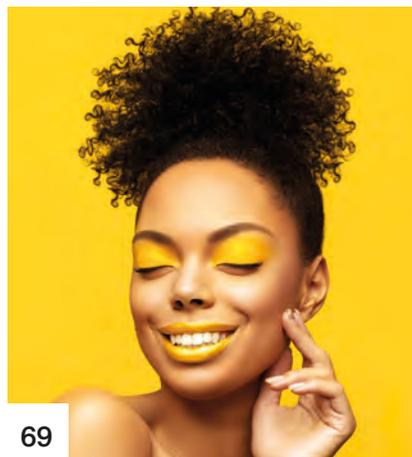
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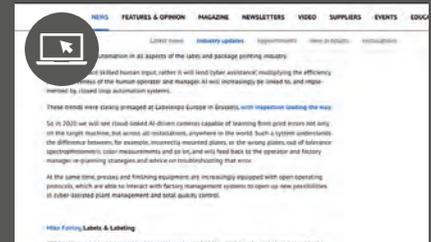


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In an extract from the 'Flexible packaging' book published by the Label Academy, Mike Fairley and Chris Ellison, MD of OPM (Labels and Packaging) Group, outline the applications and opportunities in this fast-growing sector

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Domino. Do more.

Thirty years ago (L&L issue 1, 1988)



P13 Labelexpo shows were already a major event for the European label industry since 1980. The organizers decided to bring this concept to the USA in May 1989 with the first edition of Labelexpo USA. The exhibitors list included names such as Mark Andy and Martin Automatic and an extensive list of speakers from North America and Europe.



P24 Mike Fairley visited Dennison Manufacturing Company in Massachusetts, USA, to evaluate its latest development – the fastest non-impact system for adding variable data, sequential numbers and codes to labels and tags. The technology had rapidly created a 15 million USD market and licensing opportunities around the globe.



P34 UVman, the world's first resource center fully dedicated to UV curing, opened in Pennsylvania, USA. In an era when virtually all rotary letterpress label presses were fitted with UV curing systems, the Newtown business was a pioneer in providing a total service including information, training and full technical support.



P38 L&L visited Creative Labels, based in Hereford, UK, to investigate its success with the Tackyboy press manufactured by Wood Machines. The converter had its early beginnings in 1974 with the purchase of the first Tackyboy. Over 14 years later, the converter was pleased with its interchangeability and easy set-up, running eight such presses in day-to-day operation.

Opportunities for growth

Editor's note

Why do you read Labels & Labeling? Since its foundation more than 40 years ago, this magazine has been privileged to be able to count on a loyal, global readership that continues to grow, particularly online. Working on our 40th anniversary edition in late 2018 was inspiring – countless readers contributed their thoughts, but one comment, from an Australian label converter, stuck with me: in the 1980s and 1990s, he actively looked forward to the arrival of each issue of the magazine, as it contained information and guidance that he could simply not acquire elsewhere.

In the age of the internet, of course, with smartphones deluging us with information at the push of a button, the role of a magazine such as Labels & Labeling necessarily evolves. It is ever-more crucial for us

“Could the commercial print sector be the new frontier of opportunity?”

not only to report on the label and package printing industry's developments, but to provide analysis and insight that can have a tangible effect on our readers' businesses. L&L and the Labelexpo Global Series (run by the same parent company) are a platform that brings the wider industry together, both physically and metaphorically, creating networks and disseminating information. Our *raison d'être* is to help the industry grow.

Over the years, these pages have frequently discussed opportunities for label converters in areas such as shrink sleeves and, more recently, flexible packaging. In the first of a new, regular column, Andy Thomas-Emans, editor of this magazine for

20 years and now director of strategic development for Labelexpo and L&L, looks at opportunities for label converters in the commercial print sector – an area that traditionally was considered a further step away from a label converter's natural remit.

New technology and a shifting retail landscape, Thomas-Emans argues, are opening up new opportunities for diversification. And a new portfolio of events, Brand Print – organized by the team behind the Labelexpo Global Series – is the place to learn about these opportunities.

Brand Print is an exhibition which looks at all the ways brands use print as part of an integrated omnichannel marketing campaign. This

hugely diverse range of products includes direct mail, brochures, outdoor and indoor graphics, fleet graphics, gifting and promotional packaging, collation packs, corrugated in-store display units, direct to container and 3D printing.

The label converting industry has always adapted to new decoration technologies, whether wet-glue label printers moving into self-adhesives and shrink sleeves, or self-adhesive label converters moving in the other direction into flexible packaging and shrink sleeves. Could the commercial print sector be the new frontier of opportunity? Turn to page 25 to learn more.

James Quirk
Group managing editor

News



The Xeikon Innovation Center is located in Shanghai Printing and Publishing College

Xeikon opens innovation center in Shanghai

Latest Xeikon digital technology on show

Xeikon has opened an innovation center in Shanghai designed to support the expanding Chinese market. The facility will enable visitors to test a variety of applications.

The new center will be fully equipped with Xeikon's front end workflow software, the X-800, as well as a Xeikon 3500. Fully trained staff will offer an expertise, guidance, and demonstrate creative solutions and applications for a variety of markets and sectors.

'We are seeing unprecedented global growth in the desire for digital printing solutions for labels and packaging,' said Klaus Nielsen, general manager of Xeikon Asia. 'We are very pleased to be able to open this important Innovation Center in Shanghai and bring our technology to this region. The Xeikon's high technology facility will play an important role in the development of our business in China and will support our Chinese customers in helping them to make considered decisions when investing in Xeikon's digital technologies. We would like to thank our teams in Shanghai for conducting such a successful grand opening event.'

The Innovation Center has been designed to bring the latest Xeikon digital technology to China. It has been planned as a technology hub for hands-on interaction and a 'go-to' demonstration center where personal care and attention will be given to customers looking for advice and expertise on new ideas to transform their business models.

'With over 30 years of experience pioneering digital label and packaging technologies, Xeikon has much to offer the Asian markets. With the opening of this much awaited center, visitors will now be able to experience 'real-life' examples and test the latest solutions using Xeikon's certified dry toner technology. They will be able to discover the true creative quality of the end-products and the opportunities in different sectors that this can offer them to differentiate and grow their business. The opening of this Innovation and Technology Center in Shanghai is going to help develop business both for Xeikon and its Chinese customers,' concluded Nielsen.

The Xeikon Innovation Center is located inside the Shanghai Printing and Publishing College.



L-R: Georg Keller; Dr Jan Breikopf, president EMEA; Herbert Forker, CEO; Alfred Keller, chairman of supervisory board; Franz Huhn, Mayor of Siegburg

Siegwerk opens automated production facility

New Blending Center at Siegburg headquarters

Siegwerk has opened a fully automated Blending Center, a facility for the production of customized inks and varnishes, at its headquarters in Siegburg, which is now claimed to be the largest automated production facility for printing inks in Europe.

'The opening of this facility is an unparalleled milestone for us. It is a key component in our global production network a big step forward,' said Herbert Forker, CEO at Siegburg. 'The topics of digitization and automation play a key role. We must also consider, at different levels, which opportunities we take, the direction in which we want to develop and where exactly we want to invest. The new system is one of the responses to this.'

A trial of the new Blending Center has been underway, and it will soon be running at full capacity. It is equipped with 'state-of-the-art, networked Industry 4.0 technologies', said the company. It complies with current legal requirements and offers the advantage of consistent product quality through reliable, standardized processes. Compared to the previous production set-up, the new process is said to be more efficient and transparent, contributing to the increase of the site's productivity. It also enables safer and cleaner production.

Maxcess to merge with RotoMetrics

Companies will trade as Maxcess International

Web handling specialist Maxcess has merged with rotary tooling manufacturer RotoMetrics. The companies will trade under the Maxcess International name. 'The merger of these two world-class organizations will further expand our one-stop-shop offering, providing our OEM and end-user customers with the most comprehensive product portfolio available for enhancing their productivity and efficiency,' said Odd Joergenrud, CEO of Maxcess.

According to Maxcess, customers will benefit from increased technological innovations and value-added Industry 4.0 technologies, expanded geographical markets, a global footprint of manufacturing, sales and service offerings, as well as a comprehensive product offering.

News



L-R: Virgilio Micale, Cartes sales director; Michael Debard, DGM president; Mario Lodi, Cartes chairman; John Paul Debard, DGM vice-president

Cartes opens US facility

Partners with Diversified Graphic Machinery for New Jersey site

Cartes, an Italy-based manufacturer of converting equipment, has opened a new North America facility located in Red Bank, New Jersey. The company has partnered with Diversified Graphic Machinery for the project.

'By affiliating with Diversified Graphic Machinery, Cartes USA is able to hit the ground running in North America by providing service, spare parts and technical support to our existing and future North American customers,' said Mario Lodi, chairman of Cartes. 'Along with DGM, Cartes USA will be able to deliver on promises which are fundamental to our goal of being a credible and reliable partner for your business.'

'Cartes recognizes the importance of the North American label manufacturing market,' said Virgilio Micale, sales director of Cartes USA. 'I look forward to meeting with companies all across America to understand their individual product requirements. I want to work together with customers to study their projects and offer new cost savings solutions that utilize our technology.'

'We introduced our laser die-cutting technology to the market over 21 years ago and we have installed over 300 machines in 45 different countries around the world. We have pioneered laser technology for die-cutting of self-adhesive labels and we are very proud to be the innovators of this technology.'

Michael DeBard, president of Diversified Graphic Machinery, said: 'It's wonderful to partner with a company like Cartes because they are committed to continually investing the required resources to advance the technology for embellished labels to the next level. We look forward to working together with Cartes USA as together we can bring our clients the most innovative, cost-effective label machinery solutions that are backed by a company that is willing and capable to stand behind it.'

'We welcome the opportunity to share and discuss how our innovative embellishment technology, with our exclusive patented semi-rotary die-cutting and laser technology for die-cutting and converting of labels can add value to your next projects.'

Cartes designs, engineers and manufactures label machinery which is modular in design and can be built in multiple configurations, including hot foil stamping, flatbed silkscreen printing, UV flexo printing and varnishing, cold foil, UV cast and cure, flatbed die-cutting, embossing, and the company's patented semi-rotary die-cutting and laser die-cutting units.

News in brief

Avery Dennison acquires Smartrac's RFID inlay business

Smartrac Technology Group has reached an agreement to sell its RFID Transponder Division to Avery Dennison, which is seeking expansion of its intelligent label portfolio.

Christian Uhl, CEO and chairman of the board at Smartrac, said: 'We are convinced that our RFID inlays and tags business will face a bright future as part of Avery Dennison's intelligent labels, which is set to thrive on the rise of the Internet of Things and the growing customer demand for connected products. At the same time, our successful Solutions Business Division will continue to independently build on its offerings supporting the digital transformation.'

As part of the transaction, Avery Dennison will acquire Smartrac's Transponder business and associated assets, including all manufacturing, R&D, sales and administration facilities, and will take over all affected employees.

CCL to acquire Polish BOPP films operation

CCL Industries has signed a binding agreement to acquire Polish BOPP film producer Flexpol for an estimated 22 million USD on a debt/cash free basis with closing expected in the first quarter of 2020. The deal is expected to close in the first quarter of 2020, following regulatory approvals, after which the new business will trade as Innovia Poland.

'This operation brings us new capability to deliver label films in Europe using the same technology we have in place at Innovia Mexico for the Americas complementing existing product offerings from Innovia's UK operations,' said Geoffrey Martin, president and chief executive officer of CCL.

Huhtamaki makes acquisition

Huhtamaki has acquired the majority of the business of Everest Flexibles, a privately-owned flexible packaging manufacturer in South Africa. The annual net sales of the acquired business is approximately EUR 40 million and it employs 460 people. The business was acquired for an enterprise value of EUR 58 million. The deal was paid partly in cash and partly in shares, as the sellers of Everest entered into a joint venture also with Huhtamaki's flexible packaging, foodservice and fiber packaging operations in South Africa. As a result, the sellers of Everest now own 30 percent of all Huhtamaki's activities in South Africa.

Sato expands to Mexico

Sato, a developer of auto-ID and labeling solutions, has established a new group company in Guanajuato, Mexico. Guanajuato is in the Bajío region, a dynamic economic zone where world-class automotive companies and their suppliers are clustered. The new company, Sato Productivity Solutions Mexico SA de CV, has a strategic focus on the automotive industry.

News



Altana is consolidating its three Brazilian facilities

Altana inaugurates new site in Brazil

New facility in São Paulo state

Specialty chemicals group Altana has inaugurated a new site for its Actega division in Brazil to merge administration, production and R&D activities from two offices in Guarulhos and Barueri into the new location.

The company invested around EUR 2 million (2.2 million USD) in 12,000sqm site in the city of Araçariguama in the Brazilian state of São Paulo in order to consolidate two older locations into new modern facility.

'South America is a very high-growth region for the packaging sector. With our investment in the new Brazilian site in the heart of the South American continent, we want to further promote and expand Actega's development for the benefit of our employees and customers,' said Thorsten Kröller, president of Actega division.

The company's third Brazilian location – in Santana de Parnaíba – will also be transferred to the new integrated location by 2021.

In the medium term, the new location will combine the technology and application center with 180 employees from 21 departments on a total area of 12,000 square meters. A new 500sqm research laboratory is also integrated. The new location will house new dispersion units for printing ink production and corresponding equipment for the production of water-based and UV coatings.

Faller Packaging acquires Pharma Print

Faller Packaging, a manufacturer of pharma packaging, has acquired Hungarian company Pharma Print. Pharma Print, a family-owned company with 70 employees, is a supplier of pharma package inserts to eastern European and international markets.

'Our management team studied Pharma Print for several months and was impressed by the quality of its products, its strong growth potential and compatible company culture,' said managing partner Michael Faller. 'We're happy to welcome the company to the Faller Packaging family.'

Thanks to the acquisition, Faller Packaging's European network now comprises eight locations. Together they cover the entire value chain for pharmaceutical packaging, including print data management, sophisticated supply chain solutions for manufacturing packaging material, and packaging services for the healthcare industry.

Domino launches in-house leasing program

Domino has introduced an in-house leasing program, which allows label converters of all sizes an easier path to adding a UV inkjet press. The in-house leasing program allows customers to pay for a new Domino N610i digital UV inkjet label press over a period of time, typically three to five years with fixed, monthly payments. 'Typically in the United States it's called a dollar buyout lease, in other part of the world it's called a finance lease, but effectively it's a capital purchase with the payments spread over a term. So, at the end of that period, the customer would then take ownership of that press,' says Mark Herrtage, finance director of Domino.

Alphasonics and Eaglewood partner

Alphasonics USA and Eaglewood Technologies have formed a partnership which sees the addition of advanced ultrasonic cleaning systems from Alphasonics added to Eaglewood's product range. Alongside its Sitexco laser systems and Sanilox blasting technology, the company wanted to add another technologically advanced method of anilox cleaning to their offerings and identified Alphasonics USA as a partner.

Eaglewood will offer Alphasonics USA's range to customers in both North, South and Central America. As part of the deal, Alphasonics has provided a Melanie duo cleaning system to Eaglewood's demonstration center in Minneapolis.

Omet appoints Mexico agent

Omet has signed a collaboration agreement with Manroland Latina to increase its presence in Mexico and the surrounding region. 'I am really excited to get back to this beloved market with exceptional quality and technology machines,' said Hans Ramón Hofmann, who will be heading the newly created business unit. 'We will be able to compete at the highest level in this very demanding market with a low total cost of ownership and an excellent value for money product.'

Manroland Latina is a Mexican subsidiary for Manroland Sheetfed with 45 employees mainly in service, sales of equipment and consumables and administration, with presence in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey.

Xeikon and Schaffner partner

Schaffner has added the Xeikon product line to its offering in Switzerland, Lichtenstein and the Austrian region of Vorarlberg. 'We were only going to get into digital print if we were completely convinced by the product, which is absolutely the case now with Xeikon,' said Cornelia Caffari, CEO of Schaffner.

Edale appoints agent

Edale has appointed Key as a new agent for Turkey and Germany to answer the growing demand in these countries and further enhance its global presence. 'We have an increasing number of customers in Turkey and Germany who have our Edale printing presses,' said Edale's Darren Pickford.



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New Products

01



02



04



**01 Jetsci ColorAqua
Monotech Systems**

The Indian manufacturer has launched Jetsci ColorAqua hybrid press, an economical label printing press with water-based ink, powered by Memjet inkjet technology. Jetsci ColorAqua prints at 1,600 DPI and runs at up to 45m/min. It enables label printers to adopt digital workflow at a low cost with features including high definition CMYK full color printing, micro text, variable data and security printing. Jetsci ColorAqua hybrid press can print on most general coated and uncoated labelstock materials without primers and many films substrates by applying primers.

**Clear Acetate Ultra
Destructible Facestock
Acucote**

The new 2mil Clear Acetate UD can be used to achieve a 'no-label look' for tamper-evident seals and labels. A gloss topcoat provides enhanced flexo printability and high stiffness

ideal for machine-applied labels. Acetate UD has good processing, die-cutting and waste removal characteristics when compared to other tamper-evident films. Further environmental advantages are possible when combined with certain adhesives and liners.

**02 62Rpw wash-off adhesive
Herma**

Herma has introduced 62Rpw, a wash-off adhesive for labels that will allow recycling operators to produce high-purity PET pellets that do not contain any detrimental residues – no remains of paper or film labels, and no residual adhesive. The new adhesive uses multi-layer technology. The intermediate layer enables the adhesive to bond securely with the label and allows it to be removed completely from the PET surface later. This new adhesive is to be made available initially with a wet-strength and alkali-proof paper and a PP film.

**03 PE Smart Matt film
Ritrama**

The new matt effect polyethylene film has been designed specifically for the creation of high-impact labels for the food, beverage and personal care sectors. The matt film effect is claimed to be more conformable than the traditional high-density polyethylene films on the market and has been developed to answer a demand for products of the highest quality, with rich and decorative labels, vibrant colors and technical performance. The PE Smart Matt offers soft-touch effects, reminiscent of the concepts of environmental sustainability and minimalism using pastel shades and colors. The top coating also allows overprinting for barcode creation.

**04 iCueLabel 420
Memjet and Coaso**

The new press has been developed by Coaso based on Memjet's DuraFlex technology and released in September 2019.

It uses modular single-pass print that is claimed to combine speed, simplicity, affordability as well as enhanced durability. 'Our iCueLabel press is an example of what an OEM can accomplish with DuraFlex technology,' said Frank Xu, general manager of Coaso. 'In less than three months, we were able to develop a new breed of label press that is a viable performance alternative to more expensive toner or other inkjet-powered printers.' The iCueLabel 420 offers 1600 DPI print quality and print speed up to 46m/min in production mode and 27m/min in high-quality mode.

**RevealPrint
Virtual Graphics**

The US-based film manufacturer has unveiled a chemical-free direct thermal label, RevealPrint, which is environmentally friendly and compatible with any barcode software and thermal printers. RevealPrint labels are produced using passive ingredients that are readily available from sources in

New Products



the US, eliminating any concern over supply chain disruption. The new technology is easily recycled.

Swift Publisher

DTM Print

DTM Print has released a free version of the design software Swift Publisher for all registered customers who use a label printer from DTM Print, Primera Technology or OKI or a Primera Disc Publisher with a Mac-based computer. It is suitable for label printers and disc publishers and replaces the outgoing programs such as Disc Cover and Labels & Addresses, which are no longer supported by the new operating system macOS 10.15 (Catalina).

05 Optima press

Soma

Soma has launched a new mid-web flexo press developed especially for short run jobs such as wraparound labels, shrink sleeves, sachets and pouches. The next-generation Optima is now available in a 41.3in width

and 25.6in length and has been developed for short runs, handling up to 20 jobs a day. It focuses on features that offer easy and fast job changeovers, print consistency and reduction in operating costs. Additionally, Optima can now be installed with the Arun system for automatic job setting, an off-line system that combines the advantages of a plate mounter with a fully automated device for plate topography and register measurement. The new Zero Meter waste set-up system helps with short runs.

06 BPA-free papers and films

UPM Raflatac

UPM Raflatac has unveiled new BPA-free thermal label papers and films as a response to the new European Union directive preventing thermal paper manufacturers from using the chemical Bisphenol A. 'BPA-free materials are soon to become an industry standard. We will continue to be at the forefront by investing in developing total

phenol-free chemistry solutions going forward. By adopting total phenol-free thermal label papers, printers and brands can stay two steps ahead of the competition and protect their market position in the long term for the years to come,' said Ville Pollari, director of business segment VIP and Prime at UPM Raflatac.

07 Duralite R

Coveris

Coveris's new shrink film is suitable for all secondary applications including multi-wrap cans and bottles. It contains up to 50 percent post-consumer recycle plus additional pre-consumer material top-up content, provided by Coveris' own zero-waste circular manufacturing process at its extrusion facilities. The new technology offsets the need for virgin materials while maintaining performance, optical clarity and line efficiency. The new material is available in printed and unprinted versions. The lightweight recycled,

recyclable polyethylene packs also offer a significantly reduced carbon footprint compared to cardboard alternatives.

08 BOPP UV inkjet labelstock

Polykote

Polykote has unveiled a 2.3mil labelstock produced with a permanent acrylic adhesive that complies with FDA CFR 175.105 for indirect food contact. The new high gloss white facestock provides strong print adhesion and high print quality developed especially for UV inkjet presses. 'As more and more UV Inkjet presses are being installed by traditional label converters, we want to offer our customers a high-quality UV Inkjet material with low minimum order quantities and short lead times,' said John Guzzo, president of Polykote.



For more new products, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/news/new-products



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Installations



01 Nilpeter FA-17
Grupo Lappi Etiquetas, Spain

The Spanish converter seeks to increase performance and capacity with the new investment. It has recently also purchased a Miyakoshi MLP offset press and acquired Gráficas Calpolense, one of the largest printers of food labels in Portugal. 'When we decide on a manufacturer and their technology, in this case Nilpeter, we also like to know what other possibilities the equipment can provide, in case of new challenges that we can undertake in other markets or business areas,' said Antonio Lappi, president and CEO of Grupo Lappi Etiquetas. 'Currently in Grupo Lappi we print several products reel-to-reel, pressure-sensitive labels, sleeves, and wraparounds, with different substrates and qualities. We are sure that our new Nilpeter FA-17 will bring us competitive improvements and great performance in our production center.'

02 Domino N610i
Unick Fix-a-Form, India

The 7-color digital press is powered by Esko digital front-end with color management and variable printing suite. The N610i can print at a speed of up to 70m/min and can achieve up to 92 percent of the Pantone gamut. Ajay RaoRane, assistant vice president, Domino Digital Printing, said: 'The speed and print quality are achieved because there are fewer moving parts in the machine. We put the two together, hence the throughput of the Domino N610i and the process improvements starts to increase a revenue capacity. That's our goal and will remain with every Domino installation.'

Comexi slitler
Multisac, France

'Comexi S1 DT allows us to offer our customers the highest converting quality at high speeds', said M. Januel, plant manager at Multisac. 'We save time between the two reels, as well as on

loading and unloading, resulting in high productivity'. The new slitler has been installed in the company's Chaspuzac, France facilities and replaced an older Comexi S1 DS model.

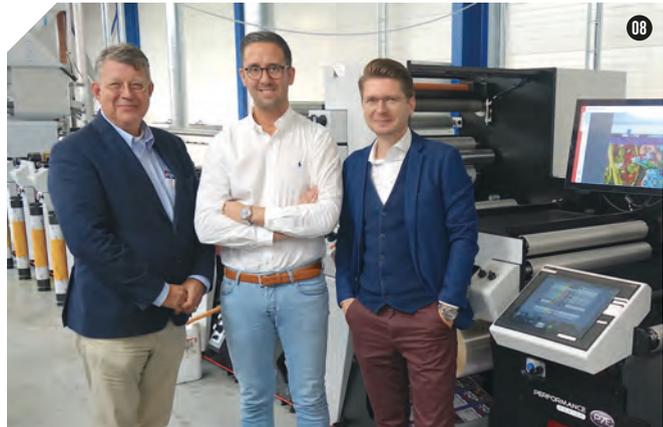
03 Grafisk Maskinfabrik
DC330Mini
Logo Label Printing, USA

The newly installed machine features UV varnishing, semi-rotary die-cutting, cold lamination, back score, slitting and dual rewinding on one compact platform. The DC330Mini works off-line and in-line with any digital press as well with other GM embellishment units. It is referred to as a 'Swiss army knife converter' as it is one of the smallest and fastest machines in its category on the market. Logo Label was founded in 2006 by Tim Oates, the owner of a bottled water company which had grown frustrated with its label suppliers and the availability of digital printing for short runs.

04 HP Indigo 20000
I Print Flexible & Digital, Hungary

I Print sees the adoption of the HP Indigo 20000 as a major step forward in supporting Generation Z's increasing demand for personalization, customization, specialization and ever faster turnaround times. 'Our experience gained over the years, the expectations of the modern market environment, and the tightened competitive environment encourage us to find new directions and implement changes accordingly,' said Márton Németh, managing director. 'Personalized packaging technology will be the biggest target for the Hungarian packaging industry, and our existing customers are already showing increasing demand.' The addition of an HP Indigo 20000 to I Print creates opportunities for Hungarian brands seeking to stand out with their packaging, and ultimately use their packaging as a marketing tool.

Installations



05 Lombardi Digistar Etic.a, Italy
 'The Digistar is the machine we have been waiting for because of its productivity and quality that can make us very competitive both in terms of product quality and price in the markets we are aiming to develop,' said Gianni Olivieri, one of the Etic.a founders. 'Our relationship with Lombardi started following in-depth market research at the beginning of 2014 when we evaluated all the main suppliers of flexo printing machines. After seeing a Lombardi machine at work with one of their clients, we felt it was the one with the best value for money on all fronts. Since the installation of the first Lombardi machine we have experienced their level of after-sales service and, therefore, it has been easy to continue with them.' With the purchase of Lombardi Digistar, the company is looking to increase its market share of higher value labels, especially for wine and cosmetics.

06 Screen Truepress Jet L350UV+ Temizis Ofset, Turkey
 The Turkish converter has expanded its digital offering with the new Screen inkjet press. 'The combination of the new press' superior quality with industry-leading print speeds brings a real competitive edge and puts us in the best possible position to be able to continue surpassing our customers' expectations and driving growth moving forward,' said Numan Gerçekerol, general manager at Temizis Ofset. 'There were a whole host of clever features and automations that also really impressed us and helped make our decision, and the press has definitely not disappointed since it has been up and running.' The Screen Truepress Jet L350UV+ offers speeds of up to 60m/min and a specially designed structure which ensures stability even at top speeds, according to the manufacturer.

07 Martin Automatic MBS unwind splicer Zolemba, Netherlands
 The MBS non-stop unit has been fitted to 530mm converting line with two flexo print stations and two die-cutting units. According to the converter, the new equipment has made a significant difference to machine downtime for roll changes with the line typically running at 120m/min. 'The MBS is working perfectly and performing as promised,' said Marthijn Kieneker, chief production officer at Zolemba. 'In fact, we're achieving even better figures than we had predicted with the Martin. With up to 16 roll changes per shift and a saving of around 10 minutes on each, the numbers add up to major savings. That is not even considering the part-used rolls of different sizes that can now be utilized, and the low residual waste on each that can be achieved with automatic splicing.'

08 Mark Andy P7E Flexprinter, Belgium
 Flexprinter is a start-up operation which has chosen to focus on roll-to-roll production of labels, pouches, sachets, shrink sleeves and flow packs, as well as other flexible packaging. The 22in (560mm) Performance Series press was installed in May 2019. It is a 9-color machine fitted with full GEW UV LED curing, a Vetaphone Corona treater, turn bars, and Mark Andy's laminating unit. It is the first 22in P7E in the Benelux region. 'We ran print tests at their demonstration facility in Warsaw and spoke with a number of Mark Andy users before committing ourselves to an order, but it was clear early on that the only decision we really had to make was not the brand but the specification,' said Michaël Thorrez, owner and managing director of Flexprinter.

 For more installations, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/news/installations

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Appointments



Rob Ferris
CEO
Konica Minolta
Ferris, who will take up the role in May 2020, will play a pivotal role in the company's ongoing transformation to a digital IT services company. Prior to joining Konica Minolta, he was a part of the executive leadership team at Canon UK and Ireland.

Eric Freidman
Sales manager
Vérico Technology
He has an experience of over 35 years in the printing industry, most recently as North American sales manager for waterless printing products at Toray International America.



Martin Sonnenschein
Chairman
Heidelberg
Sonnenschein is the new chairman of the supervisory board of Heidelberg. He was appointed a member of the supervisory board at the end of November by the Mannheim Register Court and has taken over as chairman of the supervisory board at the end of 2019.



Jennifer Heathcote
Business development manager
GEW
Heathcote has been working with the UV equipment and applications businesses since 1998 and with several well-respected suppliers. She has served as an executive board member for RadTech North America and most recently acted as a consulting advisor to the UV curing industry.



Nicola Reynolds
Marketing manager
Edale
Reynolds has vast experience in marketing and brand management having worked with multinational companies and entrepreneurial businesses. She holds an MA in Marketing from Southampton Solent University and is an active Chartered Marketeer, MCIM.

Lee Charles
Commercial director
Premier Coating & Converters
Charles brings a wealth of knowledge developed over the past 20 years in the PSA industry.



Nicolas Ahlburg
CTO
Vétaphone
Ahlburg has extensive experience in the technical and service field from previous positions at Nortec, where he was a business development engineer, and went on to become a Master of Science (MSc) specializing in technology-based business development.

Özgür Yazar
Sales director for Europe
CGS
He joins CGS from Electronics for Imaging, where, for over a decade, he was in charge of sales development as a manager for eastern Europe.



Mike Rottenborn
CEO
Global Graphics
Rottenborn, who founded Hybrid Software in 2007, spent 30 years working in the graphic arts industry and began his career as an electrical engineer with DuPont Printing & Publishing. He also worked at PCC Artwork Systems focusing on pre-press workflow software for packaging and commercial printing customers.



Emma Winton
Regional sales manager
ePac UK
During the last 15 years working in various sales and marketing roles, Winton has helped FMCG brands bring products to market and scale up their offering. Her most recent position as business development executive at a packaging print company gave her an inside knowledge of digital technology, including the HP Indigo 20000 digital press.



Tom Bamrick
Vice president, sales and marketing
for TTR Americas
IIMAK
Bamrick will drive the growth of IIMAK's thermal transfer ribbons and direct thermal films. He is based in IIMAK's headquarters in Amherst, New York, reporting to IIMAK president and chief executive officer, Doug Wagner.

Paula Birch
Global sales director
Parkside
Her new role will involve the identification and commercialization of business opportunities in Parkside's key packaging markets.



James Xue
Country manager for Greater China
Michelman
Hired in 2017, he has led the company's sales over the past two years, developing customer relationships and building Michelman's regional sales team. Xue has over 20 years of experience in the advanced materials industry sector, having spent time with several leading international chemical companies.

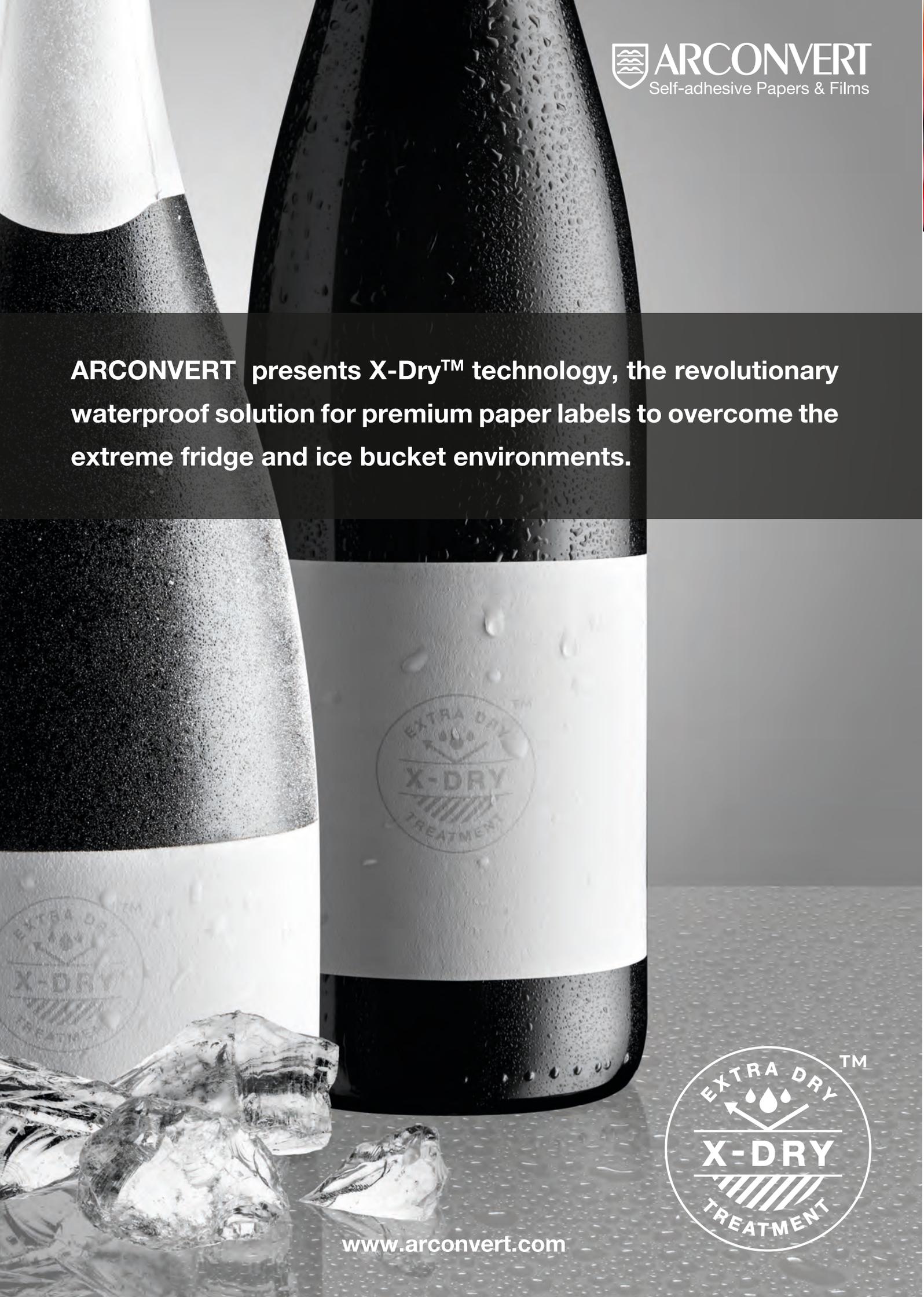


Liz Calhoun
Senior vice president of HR
PPC Flexible Packaging
Calhoun will be responsible for driving the company's strategy for management and development of over 900 employees across seven manufacturing facilities in North and South America. She has over 25 years of experience in human resources with global manufacturing and consumer goods companies including Pepsi.



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The Andy Thomas-Emans column

New opportunities in commercial print

New technology and a shifting retail landscape are opening up new opportunities for diversification

To what extent should label converters look to diversify their businesses beyond the self-adhesive label core?

I pose this question because the retail landscape is undergoing a seismic shift, with start-up 'challenger' brands taking on the established global players and carving out new niches, especially amongst younger, more social media savvy and lifestyle-conscious consumers. These brands do not have the in-depth technical knowledge or networks of the bigger brands when specifying labels and packaging, and this opens up opportunities to offer a wider range of products alongside labels.

The label converting industry has always adapted to new decoration technologies, whether wet-glue label printers moving into self-adhesives and shrink sleeves, or self-adhesive label converters moving in the other direction into flexible packaging and shrink sleeves. Could the commercial print sector be the new frontier of opportunity?

I am currently involved in organizing a new commercial print show called Brand Print which will run alongside Labelexpo Americas in Chicago in September. Brand Print is an exhibition which looks at all the ways brands use print as part of an integrated omnichannel marketing campaign. This hugely diverse range of products includes direct mail, brochures, outdoor and indoor graphics, fleet graphics, gifting and promotional packaging, collation packs, corrugated in-store display units, direct to container and 3D printing.

So are there opportunities for label converters in what, up to now, has been regarded as the 'commercial' print market?

Applications

For some years I have seen an increasing take-up of wide format inkjet printers by label converters, and suppliers like Roland DG have been promoting these machines at Labelexpo for many years. Typical applications have included ultra-short runs of self-adhesive label sheets and color-managed proofs for offset, flexo and digital presses.

But what about the applications typical in the commercial wide format market, like in-store point-of-sale (POS) displays, floor graphics, outdoor graphics and so on?

Label converters are unlikely to find a market for these products with global brands, who either have their own inhouse operations or established commercial print suppliers. But the 'challenger' brands are far less likely to have an established supply chain for their full range of marketing collateral needs. These might include in-store display units, signage, indoor and outdoor graphics, and

“Does this mean less emphasis on labels? Not at all. Just as with flexible packaging, diversification into new sectors of brand-related print supports and enhances a converter’s label business”

even stand graphics and brochures to take to trade shows.

So wide format is the most likely crossover point for the label and 'commercial' print sectors, but it is not the only one.

Digital technology is opening up new opportunities to play in print sectors which previously required a huge investment in conventional print and converting equipment. Short run, high value cartons are a great example. Expect to see at future Labelexpo shows – particularly where co-located with Brand Print – an increasing presence of digital carton presses and digital embellishment technology.

Does this mean less emphasis on labels? Not at all. Just as with flexible packaging, diversification into new sectors of brand-related print supports and enhances a converter's label business. The more products you can offer, the 'stickier' your business becomes.

Widening your range of products also makes it more likely a customer will accept you becoming manager of their digital assets. This of course means investment in digital asset management (DAM) infrastructure, but these products are widely available from existing suppliers of pre-press or MIS software, and you are probably already responsible for version management, sign-off and archiving, so offering a full DAM is not an impossible leap.

For the client – particularly the smaller challenger brand – this is a big weight off their shoulders. You are now handling their brand image across multiple products and substrates, ensuring correct color management between labels, flexible packaging, instore displays and outdoor graphics. Rapid changes can be made to all these assets as the brand shifts marketing focus or introduces new product variants.



For more information on Brand Print Americas, visit www.brandprint-americas.com

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The Mike Fairley column

A business review for success

A new year business efficiency and environmental audit could be the difference between success or failure

As retail groups announce their Christmas period, monthly or annual sales performance results, it is evident that sales growth and profitability have become harder to attain. Yes, there are some success stories that defy the trends, especially for the discount groups and those that have successfully developed their on-line shopping experience, but overall retail sales growth, footfall and profitability are largely in decline.

Retail sales in the EU28 countries are up just 0.4 percent – and that includes eastern European countries that are generally doing better. The US has also reported declining retail footfall; international retail sales are said to be down by around 1.6 percent, while the UK recently announced year on year retail sales down 3.1 percent – the biggest decline in 23 years.

Retailers will look at these results and vow to make cuts and savings wherever feasible. Rationalization of products and brands is often a first step. Perhaps closure of some stores, a reduction in point-of-sale or back office personnel; working with fewer suppliers – all are tried and tested fallback solutions. For many, their ongoing stated aims now include operating for less and buying for less.

Added to the pressures of declining retail sales are ongoing, and growing, demands regarding ethical sourcing, and a focus on sustainability. It is not an easy time for the world of retail (or their suppliers) – unless you happen to be an on-line retailer, where growth in many countries is well into double figures.

These retail trends will have implications on label converters and package printers, particularly in the world's developed markets where GDP forecasts for the coming year have been lowered to one to two percent. Likely challenges the industry may face include more shorter runs, ongoing product and brand rationalization, decreasing time to market, fewer new product launches, pressure on print and packaging budgets, continued push towards compliance and sustainability, more reliance on printers and converters for testing and compliance, further pressures to reduce carbon footprints, materials substitution, more action to eliminate waste in the supply chain, more demand for recycling, and ever more pressure to develop cost-effective linerless labeling solutions.

Many converters could continue adding to this list. Things that they are already being asked about or pressured into doing, not just by their customers, but by local authorities and, indirectly, by pressure groups and environmental activists.

Challenges

The beginning of this new year is an ideal time for each label and package printing company to undertake an internal – or even customer – audit to determine what actions will need to be taken to ensure their ongoing customer loyalty, their business performance, productivity and efficiency, their future growth and profitability requirements, their environment and sustainability

“Retailers will look at these results and vow to make cuts and savings wherever feasible”

credentials, and what these mean for the company in terms of investment, personnel and training.

Many successful companies have already undertaken such studies. They have invested in sophisticated MIS to efficiently manage their business, providing them with 'live' information on every aspect of customer management, production and systems control, workflow – right through to accounting, invoicing, financial control, and using statistical analysis tools to improve the business

Connect the latest sophisticated MIS software with investment in the latest Esko pre-press and Value Stream Mapping (VSM) systems and then link in automated press, inspection and finishing-line set-up, and business efficiency and profitability can be improved by up to 30 percent. An undoubted starting point target for any business improvement strategy.

The benefits of Value Stream Mapping look particularly interesting. It focuses on a company's value creation workflow, exposing waste and delays based on numbers and insights gathered from employees, and revealing opportunities to improve productivity and throughput. It does this by considering workflow as a system of steps and activities which are all connected, helping executives to establish a long-term zero waste strategy rather than undertaking singular actions.

The development of a zero waste strategy by label and packaging producers, together with the recent launch of an industry matrix recycling program, the introduction of wash-off adhesives for PET recycling, and soon to be announced, new liner waste initiatives, also all fit in well with ongoing developments that look set to further create a circular and sustainable economy for the industry and aims to minimize its environmental impact. Challenges that all converters will undoubtedly increasingly face during the 2020s.

Undertaking a new year business efficiency and environmental audit now, and implementing any necessary investment, employee, training, customer liaison and environmental recommendations without delay, could be the difference between an ongoing and successful future, or declining profitability, possible loss of customers and, perhaps ultimately, failure.

What better reasons to make a business audit and review part of your company's new year resolution?



For more Mike Fairley columns, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/michael-fairley

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To sell or to hold

Bob Cronin of *The Open Approach* looks at the top four considerations when deciding whether to sell (or hold) your business

Sometimes the simplest advice can glean the greatest rewards. To this end, I always start our consulting and M&A ventures with this mantra: look ahead. Envisioning the future is far wiser than pondering on the past. Outside of evaluating the last 12 months' trends and what they may mean to you, any other reminiscing is a waste of time.

Everyone wants to know what the future will bring. But over my 40+ years in the business, I've learned that it's you who brings your future. Your actions and innovations are what drive your organization. For better or worse, the things you do are the determinants of how you'll succeed.

As we start the new decade, we've been contacted by numerous owners who are debating whether now is the time to sell. Borrowing rates are still low, there's competition for acquisitions, and multiples remain attractive. But economic data portends that changes are looming. Selling should not just be about timing the market. This decision should be about achieving a goal that's right for you. Even if your company is positioned to charge ahead, an owner might not be. Here are the top four considerations in deciding whether to sell or hold in 2020.

1. How do you feel about your business? Having served as CEO of a number of notable organizations, I've learned that the cardinal rule of creating a great company is enjoying what you do. If you're not having fun, none of your staff are either.

If everyone looks forward to each day, then it's not 'work' but rather a chance to fulfill visions and accomplish new milestones (for both staff and clients). The satisfaction of running a company where employees come in energized every day and clients want to be part of the brand is invaluable.

If the opposite is true, then it's time to revamp it or go. Think through the causes of your lack of fulfillment and evaluate whom it

“Selling should not just be about timing the market”

affects. Many owners can grow dispassionate about their businesses as they age and priorities change, even when they have a stellar business in hand. If it's just you, you may wish to distribute/sell ownership stakes to management or operating family members. If dissention is widespread, it may be better to sell. In either scenario, don't be afraid to make a move. With today's low interest rates and available capital, you have plenty of options. There are many unique opportunities in selling, succession planning, family ownership distribution, and earnout plans that could be right for you.

2. Are your company and people embracing change? The label and packaging industry by nature is rife with innovation. But even in the most exciting venues, things can become mundane. Businesses can vary on their pioneering spirit or risk tolerance, and thus can get caught up in doing the same old thing, day in and out.

As leaders in our industry, owners need to push change and provide guidance on how to proceed. More important, you need to take into account emerging trends, competitive products and entities, new technologies, and everything else that could affect the course of your business. With these insights, you will not only tap your greatest potential but also enjoy the significant energy and excitement that comes with being part of a growth organization.

3. What's the state of your management team? You've worked hard to build a great brand for your business. If you leave, will your people be able to champion it for the future? The strength of the (remaining) management team is always a factor – whether you're selling to another entity or just making an exit.

I always recommend that our clients review their executive line-up before making a decision on trajectory. Private companies often employ FOTOs (friends of the owner) or other discretionary staffers who aren't actual drivers of the business. If you have too many of these, they may affect your value or future growth opportunities. Likewise, if you're Mr or Ms Cronin, leaving Cronin Labels, you may want the legacy of your name brand protected. A solid leadership team is essential.

4. How much are you willing to invest in the business this year? Your customers expect you to be offering them the latest and greatest. To do so, you must be making continued capital investments, or you'll risk falling behind. Dollars should be spent here with confidence and in clear alignment with your growth strategy. If you're not sure about your plan or continued investment, it might be time to sell.

Consider expert guidance as you make your choices. The Open Approach has orchestrated dozens of lucrative transactions and exits for label and packaging company owners. We've also helped owners stay put, and exceptionally positioned to achieve a greater, long-term vision. Having been there ourselves, we know the weight of your decision – and we know the relief of a path well-chosen. Whatever you decide, make sure you're looking ahead.



Bob Cronin is managing partner of *The Open Approach*, an M&A consultancy focused exclusively on the world of print. To learn more, visit www.theopenapproach.net, email bobcronin@aol.com, or call (001) 630 323 9700





Q&A

Suresh Gupta, former executive chairman of Huhtamaki PPL, nurtured the company for more than three decades before retiring on December 31, 2018. He discusses Indian flexible packaging market, challenges and solutions in an interaction with Aakriti Agarwal

L&L: What is your prediction for the label and packaging industry in 2020 and beyond?

SG: The label and packaging industry is linked to the status of the economy, because we are involved in every sector. The industry is doing better than the Indian economy as we continue to increase the market size and find more usages of packaging such as in e-commerce. Flexible packaging, which constitutes of packs and pouches used to protect and promote products, is currently growing at 5-7 percent in the country in volume. I don't see it shooting up in the short term. The current size of the Indian flexible packaging industry is estimated at almost 40,000 crore INR (approximately 57 billion USD) in terms of value and over 2 billion kilos (2.2 million tonnes) in volume.

L&L: With flexible packaging runs becoming shorter, do you see technologies such as CI flexo and digital gaining popularity in the Indian market?

SG: Technologies to efficiently produce short runs are becoming more popular. Digital, in many ways, is suitable for short runs provided presses get faster and materials become more suitable for flexible packaging in terms of adherence properties, scuff resistance, among other things. Changes are also occurring in CI flexo as well as gravure to make them more efficient for short runs. All technologies including web offset, CI offset and others are being modified to enable short runs efficiently. Downstream processes of lamination, slitting and so on are similarly being modified for short runs. Having said that, a manufacturer can always choose to specialize only in long runs and offer commoditized laminates to customers at the best or the lowest price. So, one has to decide one's business model. Packaging material manufacturers have to define their own strategy and choose to focus either on short runs, long runs or both in separate factories. Make sure you have the knowledge and expertise to manufacture efficiently if you want to stay competitive.

L&L: Gravure printers trying to print on flexo presses say that gravure samples are tough to match on flexo. And when they do, brands want their other converter suppliers to deliver the same quality using flexo, which is not always possible. In this scenario, how do printers grow with flexo and other new technologies?

SG: I think it's really more related to competence. In 1994, I brought a specific flexo technology to India for printing high quality labels. To start it off, I went all around the world looking at the best quality label printers, plate makers and ink manufacturers. I decided to import plates and inks of a

quality which was not available in India. Then we printed on flexo presses and matched the quality of the best gravure printing. A lot of people don't realize that it's little to do with the technology type and more to do with the quality and application of the technology used. Since India has been more of a gravure-based printing industry, the result is a lack of knowledge in the fundamentals of flexo versus gravure. However, this is gradually changing. Some companies are doing some very good work now.

Having said that, printing a label using any technology – gravure, flexo, letterpress, or any other – will result in a slightly different output. Printing is an art and each artist draws the same portrait with a bit of distinction because each hand has a unique motion. If I print on a press that has a certain tension capability, then it is very difficult for another machine with different tension capabilities to get the same registration quality. But the print matching can be very close and to an acceptable level.

L&L: What will be the impact on the Indian packaging industry of the expected multilayer packaging laws and the ban on single-use plastic by 2022?

SG: Multilayer packaging can be recycled. We can segregate materials through chemical processes and divide them into their components. Or companies can use special extruders to convert these multilayer laminates into homogenous pellets, or another intermediate form which can then further be converted into bricks for construction, or other geometrical forms for conversion into pallets, furniture products and suchlike. This business can be commercially viable. Similarly, there are other attractive uses of multilayer waste such as an additive to coal for producing energy, or in enabling stronger road construction, and so on.

More systematic, well-thought-out efforts must be made by Indian society as a whole including, most importantly, the government. But efforts and actions have been a bit haphazard. Instead of jumping into disconnected solutions we need to look at the subject of waste management in terms of simple, real-life actions. To start, are we collecting, segregating and carrying the waste efficiently to centers for further processing by the right methods relevant to the end-use?

We need to make infrastructure process changes which other countries have successfully implemented. For instance, some Scandinavian countries have stopped using coal because they convert all their waste into energy. They have an energy surplus, so they export it. They have run out of domestic waste and are now importing waste from other countries to feed their power plants.

“The Indian flexible packaging industry is estimated at almost 40,000 crore INR (approximately 57 billion USD) in terms of value and over 2 billion kilos (2.2 million tonnes) in volume”

Homo sapiens will cease to exist without good packaging. It is here to stay. It's not so difficult to organize collection, reuse, recycle and disposal as may be needed. Sustainability has become more of a fashion statement among the public. People think they understand the gravity of the situation but they don't really understand it. It requires huge commitment and resources of the right technology and logistics, applied with common sense and commitment. If the commitment is there, waste management can be a huge opportunity. We need to create the same kind of excitement and enthusiasm as created by the smartphone. This trillion dollar industry around the smartphone is hardly 15 years old but what a revolution it has created in our lives. If only half the effort and resources put into the smartphone ecosystem are applied to an effective waste management ecosystem, we can create a revolution – imagine a planet without waste, the oceans without waste, all materials continuously reused, recycled. When the profitability is seen by everyone, it will happen – the consumer will make it happen. We need education, political will and the combined effort of the people. If smartphones can be a trillion-dollar industry so can waste management.

L&L: Paper versus plastic is a constant point of debate. What's your view?

SG: People don't realize that paper packaging waste is very dangerous if not 100 percent collected and recycled. For example in India paper is mostly not made to the best global standards. Waste paper lying in the ground has dangerous chemicals, inks and coatings which leach into ground water and poison it. So, there is no 100 percent correct solution to any form of packaging. You have to work on solutions. Once waste is properly collected and segregated, the reuse, recycle or safe disposal process must go into effect in a highly planned and efficient way.

Incidentally, in the late 1980s I was accused of damaging the forests by increasing the demand for paper made from



Suresh Gupta (center) with the Huhtamaki PPL team

trees. And then, because I worked on plastics in packaging as a better material, I was praised as a savior, but here we are.

“Genuine recycling is going on, but these are small steps that do not make enough of a difference to the big picture. Everyone needs to come together to really be able to make a change”

L&L: How important is it for the industry to develop and use more eco-friendly materials?

SG: It’s very important not only for our industry but for all industries.



Suresh Gupta

Consider the amount of plastic used in ballpoint pens, produced in mass quantities, used and disposed without much thought. Take for instance 3D printing – who’s asking the manufacturers of powders used in 3D printers if the powders are truly eco-friendly?

In the packaging industry, eco-friendly material is often not used properly. Some companies use 20 percent biodegradable components in a film and companies call it good for the environment. What difference will the 20 percent make?

Biodegradable materials are either too expensive, or they are still lacking the necessary properties for package integrity. Of course, these problems are being worked upon in the larger industry. The point is the amount of resources and effort to find practical solutions. And how much genuine demand is in the market? Demand comes when people want to pay for it. In that context, smartphone companies have done a great job by ensuring that everyone is willing to pay for a smartphone.

Having said that, genuine recycling is going on, but these are small steps that do not make enough of a difference to the big picture. Everyone needs to come together to really be able to make a change. You need the same madness as the demand for a smartphone to really make a difference. But I look forward with hope that things will change and efforts being made will become more practical, logical and produce real results.

“Biodegradable materials are either too expensive, or they are still lacking the necessary properties for package integrity”

L&L: What are your hobbies outside of work?

SG: I am an angel investor and mentor of start-ups, primarily in the social impact space.

I am also a patron and collector of art and support interesting initiatives in this area.

And, of course, I am actively involved with the Indian Flexible Packaging and Folding Carton Manufacturers’ Association (IFCA).



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Workforce woes

A widespread talent shortage in manufacturing is squeezing the printing industry. Chelsea McDougall reports

A low unemployment rate may be something to cheer about, but for entrepreneurs, particularly those in manufacturing, it's a bit of a curse. Near-historic low rates of unemployment in the US have created what some experts are calling 'the tightest labor market in recent history'. It's not only making hiring incredibly difficult, it's holding back the industry. All of manufacturing seems to be struggling under the weight of more open jobs than people looking for work.

The National Association of Manufacturers says that 522,000 US manufacturing jobs remain open, and a Deloitte survey estimates a potential shortage of 2.4 million workers in the next decade. This hiring squeeze is putting pressure on label converters trying to meet production demands. In a survey of its converter members, TLMI found that a lack of workers is leading to a production backlog and a reluctance to add capacity. 'A number of medium-sized converters report that their backlogs are rising due to an increase in sales coupled with the challenge of finding qualified labor that would enable them to increase capacity in order to bring down label delivery times,' the TLMI report found. In other words, converters are saying they would add capacity – either by adding another shift or adding new machinery – but they simply don't have anyone to run pressroom equipment.

Can automation save the day?

When it comes to automation, the conversation in the label industry has largely centered around making workers more efficient, but not replacing them entirely. However, as the widespread talent shortage permeates the printing industry, and the skills gaps continues to threaten growth, the conversation appears to be shifting. Equipment manufacturers are responding to label converters looking to find efficiencies wherever possible and to automate repetitive tasks.

'Finding skilled labor is a challenge for us because it's our company policy not to poach people from competition,' said Jai Chandra, managing director at Veepee Graphics Solutions, based in India and Sri Lanka. 'Therefore, it's always a struggle to maintain quality and service without skilled workforce, the only other way out is automating processes wherever possible.'

Veepee Graphics employs 100 people in three locations and has always believed in having employees work across departments. Chandra himself works in marketing, business development and finance. He admits it's getting harder to operate business that way.

'Customers are getting more demanding and the turnaround

"The National Association of Manufacturers says that 522,000 US manufacturing jobs remain open"

times are reducing drastically. The only solution was finding ways to increase the productivity or bloat the team. Improving the work efficiency of the team is an ongoing process in our company, which in turn puts a lot a pressure on the them to come out of their comfort zone and improve their output. We found that this was not well accepted by the older team members who were already used to a certain way of working.'

Older workers struggling to adapt to change isn't the only issue. Many businesses find it challenging to hire younger workers as an increasing number of press operators approach retirement age. Some companies use digital printing to attract a younger, video game and computer-oriented generation. 'We communicate the digital element of printing and from our experience, our younger operators prefer the cleaner, computer-driven equipment,' said Adrian Brown, managing director at UK-based Olympus Print Group (for more on that company see page 43).

Meanwhile, flexo press manufacturers are making their systems more efficient. Mark Andy has invested in pressroom efficiencies with its automated print head redundancy. Nilpeter is marketing its 'clean hand technology' with its machinery. Bobst offers fully automated change overs with no operator intervention. MPS is exploring automated intelligence in its press with its 'Talk To Me' connectivity technology. Omet's automation features include plate pre-registration, multiple-camera registration adjustment and automatic adjustment of print pressure.

Many converters are realizing automation gains on press with inspection equipment, and with front-of-the-house software and workflow systems. L&L's James Quirk wrote in a review of workflow software shown at Labelexpo Europe 2019: 'Artificial Intelligence-driven factory automation is key trend, using intelligent systems to help run a plant. The fully automated factory is where we are headed. Not working autonomously but working as a cyber assistant to human skills and judgment.'

Global response

Workforce woes are not a problem unique to one region. Rather,

“Finding good, enthusiastic young people who want a career in print is difficult and getting older staff to adapt to digital technology can be frustrating”

TLMI members receive Label Academy discounts

TLMI association members will receive major discounts when purchasing Label Academy training program books. The books are available at discounts of up to 50 percent in at the tlmi.com 'Engage member' portal within the workforce development section of the association website.

The goal of the Label Academy, created by L&L founder Mike Fairley, is to offer a standardized training process for label converters across the globe, in addition to specific modules that focus and address individual applications and technologies.

There are 18 Label Academy books, covering topics including environmental label practices, digital and conventional label production, shrink sleeves, flexible packaging, die-cutting and tooling, workflow automation and more. The Label Academy also hosts Master Classes at Labelexpo Global Series events.

label converters across the globe are lamenting more open positions than people interested in filling them.

In Europe, the shortage has caused hourly wages to substantially

increase in recent years, where rates have almost doubled in the last 10 years. According to the European Chambers of Commerce and Industry, there are increasing signals that Europe is headed toward a skills shortage that 'may impact its competitiveness and create a bottle neck for further growth.' 'Labor costs and lack of skilled workers are the main concerns of European business,' the chamber said in a report. 'Europe's competitiveness is largely built on human capital. This model is not viable if businesses cannot find staff who match their needs.'

In the US, where student loan debt is estimated at 1.5 trillion USD, a career in the skilled trades is offered as a path to avoid that crushing burden. TLMI and its members are reaching out to young people in high school and college to get them interested in print. They have even begun reaching out to primary schools.

Heidi Bollin, co-chair of TLMI's Workforce Development Committee, says: 'In the United States we have a whole generation that went to college whether they wanted to or not, student debt and all. When we talk to high schools and technical colleges, we try to express that we can give you a great career that's fulfilling with little to no student debt. We want to make sure they know about Bollin Label Systems.'

Many European companies employ apprenticeship programs to find and train workers, like Adrian Brown and Olympus Print Group. The British Printing Federation send assessors to Olympus' site to ensure that the apprentices achieve the modules required to build their portfolio and that they reach the required level to pass their apprenticeship. 'Finding good, enthusiastic young people who want a career in print is very difficult and getting older staff to adapt to digital technology can be frustrating,' says Brown. 'The days of lifelong careers in an industry are rarer than they were a generation



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ago. At our company, the number of years employed is not a guarantee of pay levels – ability is. We also suggest a two-week “look at us while we will look at you” work induction which does what it says and enables honesty and sharpens perception both in the office and shop floor.’

Hiring is the one of the biggest threats facing label manufacturing, and one that calls for a comprehensive, thoughtful and measured response. And in the label and packaging printing industries, no worker is more sought after than a skilled press operator. Rob Daniels, president of Georgia, US-based Quality Tape & Label, says: ‘You have to treat your employees like your

customers. Because if you don’t have employees, it doesn’t matter how many customers you have if you can’t produce the product. Your employees are as crucial as your customers are.’ (For more on QTL see page 51.)

Heidi Bollin is president of Bollin Label System in Toledo, Ohio. She has advanced degrees in human resources, which is a big boon in an industry where human capital is so key. She advises being intentional when it comes to hiring. ‘Company culture isn’t built by bean bag chairs and potlucks. It’s the daily little things that companies do to build culture. Having an intentional company culture is important. Whether

you want to admit it or not, you have a culture – whether it’s good or bad. Once you acknowledge that, then you can start making decisions with company culture in mind and making it work for you.’

TLMI has made workforce development a key pillar in its strategic plan. The North American label association has partnered with Affinity HR as its official workforce partner. The committee also created DIY hiring toolkits to help members with their hiring needs.

European label trade association Finat has developed a Young Professionals Network, designed for members under 40 years old, to have lasting careers in the label industry. Mikaela Harding, president of YPN, and technical sales support representative at Avery Dennison, told L&L in a recent interview: ‘Retention of young people in the industry is a massive issue and everyone is talking about it. For our generation, it’s not necessarily about the job, and it is not necessarily about the money. For most of us it is the support we receive from our companies, and the work-life balance.’



For more information on the Label Academy, go to www.label-academy.com



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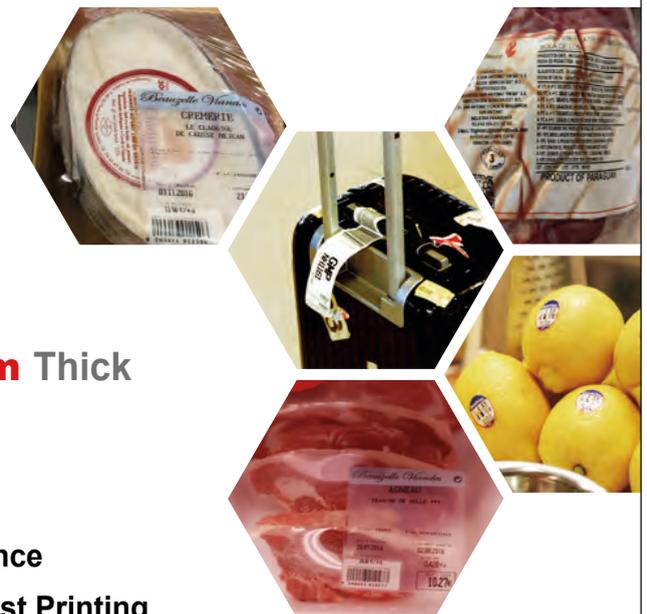
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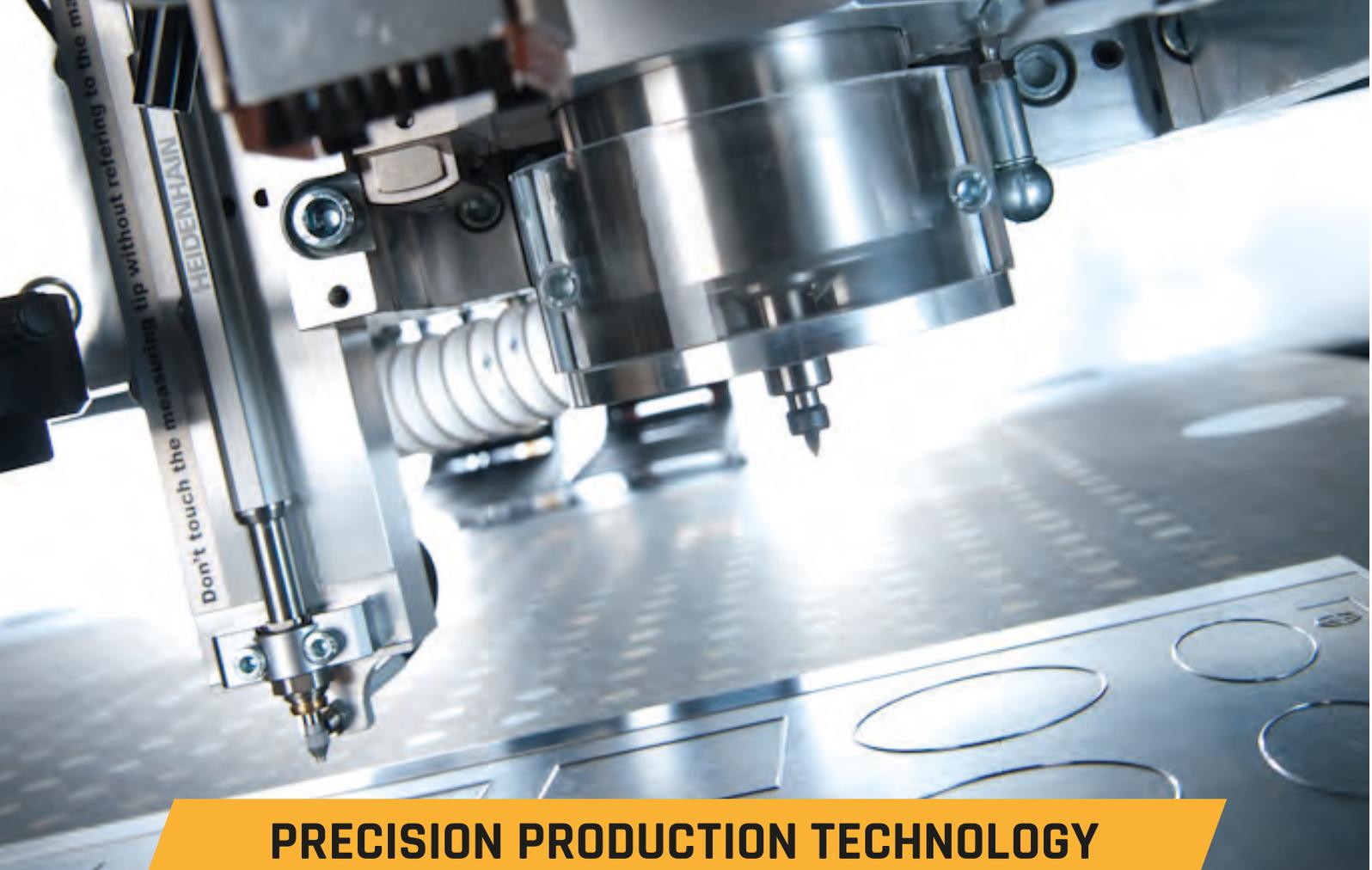
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ePac revolution

Formed four years ago to give small and medium businesses access to short run, high quality flexible packaging, ePac now runs 12 production plants and has plans for continued expansion. Piotr Wnuk reports

Our strategic plan is to populate ePac locations in as many as 15 locations around the United States. It's really just a question of which one goes next,' said Carl Joachim, ePac's chief marketing officer in August 2016 at the opening of its second production plant.

His prediction became reality in less than four years. The company runs 10 locations in the US, and one each in Canada and the UK. The ePac revolution now spreads globally. Plans are in place for a second location in the UK and one in Indonesia. Further expansion is planned in the US, additional European expansion is possible and a site as far afield as Australia has also been mooted.

ePac was formed in May 2016 as a greenfield business with one HP Indigo 20000 press. It is led by CEO Jack Knott and COO Virag Patel, who have plenty of experience in flexible packaging. Knott is the former CEO of Coveris, and Patel is former vice president of global market development at the same firm. Together with Joachim, who has years of marketing experience bringing digital printing technology to market with Xerox and other suppliers, the three partners had similar views of the market opportunity and complementary skills to execute the creation of ePac.

The main principle behind the company is that digital technology will significantly disrupt the service and manufacturing models that have served the flexible packaging industry for decades. ePac's main driver is to serve small and medium size businesses by providing customers a fast and easy way to buy flexible packaging by specializing in short and medium runs.

'We've seen a tremendous market response to ePac's unique value proposition, which is built on providing a complete solution from pre-press through converting,' said Patel in 2016, shortly after opening the first location in the US. 'By providing turnaround time of 10-15 business days, and offering low minimum order quantities, we can offer our customers solutions that, until now, were just not available.'

Business model

Each ePac production site has been built on the same principle. Each exclusively uses HP Indigo 20000 digital presses, and facilitates the buying process from ordering to shipping. Being built from the ground up



ePac helped Cole Schaefer to package his line of healthy snacks

“The meteoric rise of ePac in just a few years, with its business model based on HP Indigo digital printing technology, is truly amazing”

on a digital platform enables production of competitively priced short and medium run length orders, delivered within 10-15 business days from the date artwork is approved, with photo quality graphics.

The company prides itself on fast time to market, variable data printing, low minimum orders, order-on-demand and no plates fees. To complement the HP Indigo 20000 presses at each location, ePac offers a full range of pre-media services including die-lines, color matching and optimization for digital print, solventless lamination and multi-format pouches such as stand-up and lay flat formats.

The company's values and focus have remained the same since inception, with small and medium businesses at the center of its strategy. 'Our mission has been to serve customers and communities by providing a high quality flexible packaging with record speed to market,' says Knott. 'For years I have watched as large companies and large brands consolidate and create massive conglomerates. Of course, this trend is pushing flexible packaging firms to buy bigger pieces of equipment to fulfill the demand. This takes away the ability for the smaller to medium entrepreneurs to grow their business professionally.'

'We wanted to provide the tools to change that. In addition, we wanted to give converters the tools to grow jobs back in local communities. And the way to do that is to create a model that is based in each community to service small or medium businesses in that region.'

'In every market we enter, we experience a similar reception. Local small and medium businesses partner with us to help them grow into bigger brands, and as they grow, they see opportunities to bring new products to market rapidly and run more targeted promotions.'

One such example is Smackin' Snacks. The sunflower seed company was founded in April 2019 by Cole Schaefer. He is the definition of a one-man company – seasoning, roasting, packaging, marketing and selling the seeds all by himself. Schaefer rents out space in a commercial kitchen near his apartment, putting in hours every chance he gets.

When it was time to find a packaging company, Schaefer knew he needed quality and a partner with the right technology to accommodate the needs of his small start-up business. 'The low minimum quantity and fast lead time is great for a small company and allows us to have

multiple SKUs in a single order,' says Schaefer.

ePac ultimately delivered the convenience of a local company, a wide selection of pouches and films, and a fast turnaround. In fact, Schaefer took his proof of concept to full-on product in a matter of weeks. 'The ePac team gave us great feedback on the packaging and offered suggestions. Plus, they were able to work around my busy schedule and timeline,' adds Schaefer. 'My goal is for us to be a large, healthy and flavorful snack company. We aim to provide quality ingredients in quality packaging that people will enjoy and continue to come back and eat over and over again.'

Today the seeds are sold at Bobby & Steve's Autoworld stores, the largest gas station chain in the Twin Cities area. This year, Smackin' Seeds will be available to purchase in all their stores across the US and online.

The future

'Based on our success, we've decided to accelerate our business plan with an additional investment,' says Knott. 'We have figured out how to drive the digital transformation within the flexible packaging market for short, medium and even longer strategic runs with this game-changing technology provided by HP Indigo.'

In November last year the company announced a new wave of HP Indigo 20000 digital presses planned for 2020 to continue disruption of the global flexible packaging market. A new order of 24 presses is the largest packaging deal to date for HP Indigo. It will nearly double production capacity for ePac, growing from 28 presses in 12 locations to over 52 operating at 20 sites. The investment has been valued at over \$100 million USD, including hardware, supplies and services over several years.

'The meteoric rise of ePac and its business model based on HP Indigo technology in just a few years is truly amazing,' says Santi Morera, general manager and global head of Graphics Solutions Business, HP. 'Thanks to the continued collaboration between HP and ePac, brands of all sizes can obtain high-quality, digitally printed flexible packaging in quick turnaround times, with low minimum orders, high variation and personalization options.'

According to Johnny Hobeika, MD at ePac Holdings Europe, setting up smaller and agile sites in each region allows the company to build close relationships with local producers, add value and then continue to support them as they grow.

'We are community focused and committed to giving our customers a chance to compete against larger rivals,' says Hobeika. 'Although ePac is now a global company, it is not run like a big corporation. Each facility is managed by local partners who have invested their own equity and are engaging directly with the community. At the same time, we all collaborate and support each other. This ensures our customers can rely on ePac to deliver on time, every time, and it is what makes us unique.'

With a clear vision to take this philosophy global, the company has created ePac Holdings Asia Pacific, located in Singapore. The first site in that region will be ePac Indonesia, in Tangerang to the west of Jakarta, scheduled to be operational in the second quarter of 2020, with orders being taken from early this year.

'The short-run, quick turnaround philosophy of ePac will bring tremendous benefits for many local businesses that currently do not have the scale, capital, or expertise to compete,' says Hadi Widayat, director of ePac Holdings Asia Pacific. 'We will start with a base in the Indonesian market, then moving forward to Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand.'

In 2016, with just one production site, Joachim was predicting 15 plants across the US. Now the UK, Canada and Asia have been added to the list, with Australia on the horizon. With such global expansion plans, 2020 will be an interesting year for ePac. Meanwhile, it continues to spread its ideology of helping small brands take the leap to full-scale production and packaging their products to the same standard as global brands.

“The low minimum quantity and fast lead time is great for a small company and allows us to have multiple SKUs in a single order”



Example of personalized short run packaging from ePac



Berres Brothers, based in Wisconsin, uses ePac to print packaging for its coffee beans

ePac creates unique flexible packages for EF Pro Cycling team

Skratch Labs, the maker of sports nutrition products for endurance athletes, is breaking away from its traditional packaging with a special edition to show support for the EF Education First Pro Cycling team competing in the Tour de France.

ePac Flexible Packaging printed the resealable pouches using the HP Indigo 20000 digital press and HP SmartStream Mosaic automated variable design software.

'ePac has been a great packaging partner for the past two years. They came to us with an opportunity to do a short-run packaging design using an HP technology that gives each package its own unique twist on our design. We jumped at the chance to highlight one of our key partners – EF Pro Cycling Team – and their breakthrough jersey design for a limited-edition packaging run,' said Elliot Freeman, vice president of marketing at Skratch Labs. 'The whole thing came together from idea to reality in three months, just in time for the Tour de France. Cycling fans are going crazy for it.'



Turn to page 73 to read more about flexible packaging

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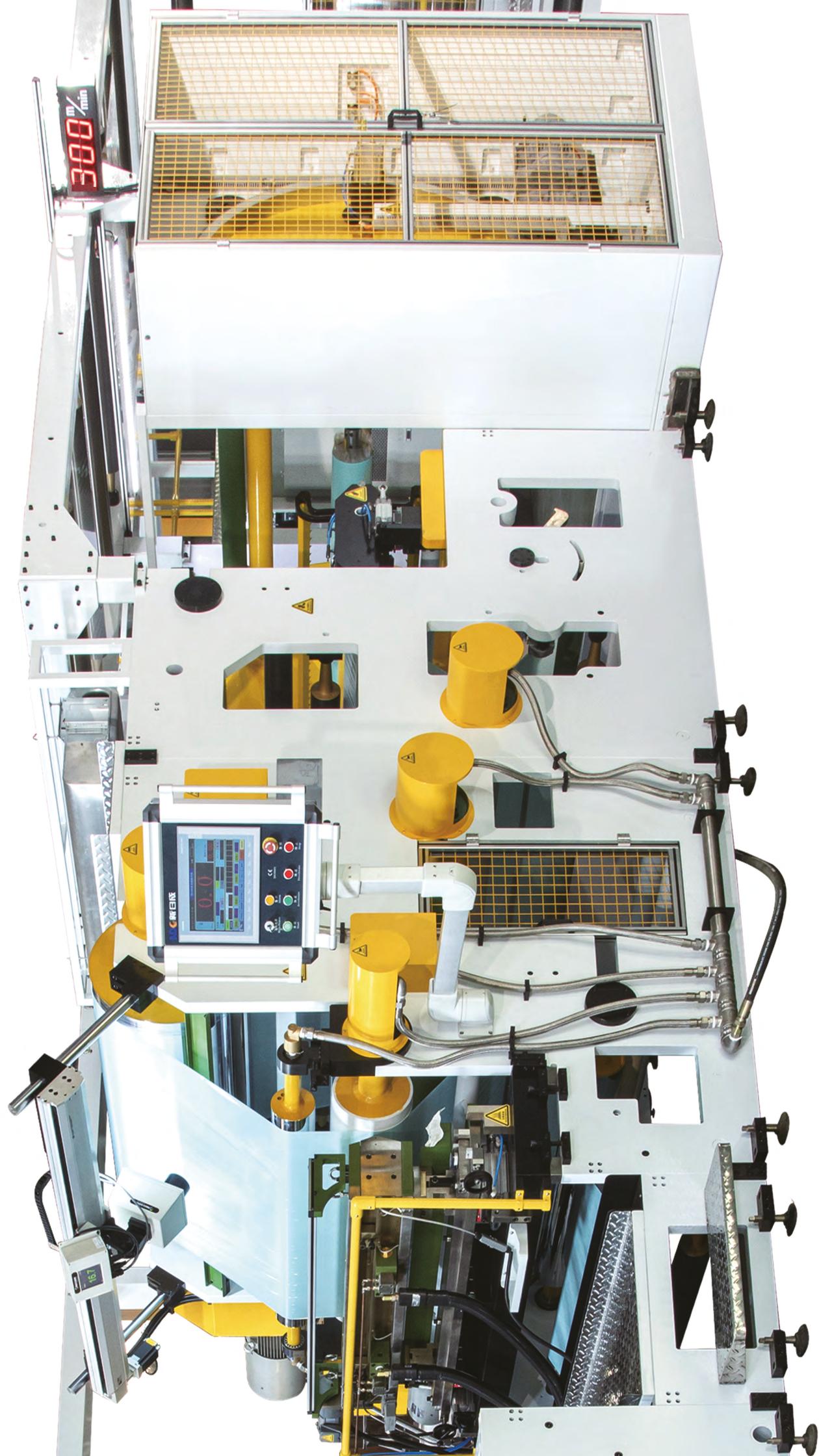
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Olympus Print Group embraces hybrid future

Hybrid LED/Arc curing and a uniquely configured flexo-inkjet press shows 'future proofing' at work at the growing UK label converter. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Olympus Print Group has embarked on a new round of investments which includes a pioneering installation of GEW's LeoLED UV system and a 12-color Nilpeter-Domino hybrid press with in-line foiling, now offering shrink sleeve as well as label production.

Since L&L's last visit to Olympus, the company has moved into a new, bigger factory in Pudsey near Leeds with a 55,000sq ft floor space. A phased program of expansion has seen a new press installed every year for the last four years. Olympus now boasts a fleet of six modern Nilpeter FA-4* presses configured with rotary screen and foil/embossing, and a growing digital capability including a new hybrid press line and a wide format point of sale division. To maximize efficiency a new MIS was recently installed.

Although Olympus' main target market has been high-end health, beauty and cosmetics (HBC), it operates across a wide range of sectors including premium beers, wines and spirits and household products and is BRC certified.

Managing director Adrian Brown takes the long view in growing the Olympus Print Group, placing a great emphasis on future proofing wherever possible.

'I have to anticipate where my customers might go,' explains Brown. 'Then we are speaking all the time to our suppliers to understand where they are going, as you do not want another surprise around the corner. They are all helping to make sure we go down the right road for the future.'

Hybrid curing

Olympus's decision to become one of the first users of GEW's LeoLED hybrid LED/Arc UV system, launched at Labelexpo Europe 2019, reflects this approach and helps promote a number of goals which are central to the company's future direction.

LeoLED employs GEW's established ArcLED hybrid UV technology, which allows the use of a conventional UV arc lamp or LED array on the same print unit. Both arc and LED cassettes are compatible with the same power supply and fit in the same housing for ease of change. GEW's Rhino control enables any combination of curing technologies to be used on the same press.



Adrian Brown with the new Nilpeter-Domino hybrid press

LeoLED brings several new features to the ArcLED system. The wider 50mm window gives a longer dwell time and is waterproof-sealed for easy cleaning. It is also resilient to dust and ink ingress. The LED array delivers electrical power at 88W/cm and an intensity of 25W/sq cm, with minimal light loss due to the direct UV path. A water-cooling system is integral to the unit.

'Reducing energy costs and our carbon footprint are both very important, and LeoLED has already had a great impact,' says Brown. 'We are seeing power savings of 55 percent and at the same time we can run our presses faster. Results on white and cold foil with LeoLED have been superb.'

'UV LED also means a better working environment. Lamps don't have to heat up or cool down and do not waste energy on standby like conventional UV. With LED it's instantaneous power, on and off.'

Although the initial costs of a UV LED array are higher than an arc lamp, lamp replacement costs are dramatically reduced due to the longer life of the LED diodes. GEW's UK sales manager Chris Nuttall says the expected lifetime of a UV LED array is around 20-30,000 hours, 'but since introducing LED in 2014, not a single LED lamp in the field has reached end of life, so

"Reducing energy costs and our carbon footprint are both very important, and LeoLED has already had a great impact. We are seeing power savings of 55 percent"

Staff development

A striking fact about Olympus Print Group is the young age profile of its 90-strong workforce, with an average age of just 23 in the technology teams. There is a solid apprenticeship scheme which started 20 years ago, and to date 12 apprentices are either going through training or are now full-time machine operators. This program is fully supported by the British Print Industry Federation (BPIF).



LeOLED hybrid curing unit on Nilpeter FA-4 converting unit

“This is an exciting initiative for us, as for the first time it allows designers to specify unique combinations of flexo, digital and cold foil on shrink sleeves”

even greater lifetimes are likely possible. Add that to the other advantages of LED-UV lamps, like less maintenance and they do not have to be specially disposed of, plus lower power consumption and no emissions to deal with. For all these reasons we are seeing a big upswing in LED adoption, with the sheet-fed market growing particularly strongly.’

One of Olympus’ 8-color Nilpeter FA-4* presses is equipped half and half with conventional arc and LeOLED cassettes, which has allowed useful comparisons to be made. ‘We saw 30 percent cost savings just from those four LeOLED units,’ reports Brown. ‘We are always mixing and matching, plugging lamps in and out. Typically, on metallics we will use arc and LED for varnish and white.’

Up to now one of the barriers to the wider adoption of UV LED has been the price premium on inks and coatings, but Brown is optimistic. ‘It’s true that the inks are still more expensive than conventional UV, but prices are being driven down – in fact they have halved in less than six years. The cost of ink will come down further as more printers adopt LED.

‘Our positive experience with the LeOLED-equipped flexo press gave us the confidence to buy our new hybrid press with LeOLED UV LED curing throughout. In the future as prices go down we will put more LED lamps on more presses, and if we got another press now it would get fully fitted with LeOLED.’ Increased use of UV LED curing, with its reduced heat load on the web, also fits well with Olympus’ recent move into shrink sleeve production – and could eliminate the need for chill rolls in the future.

Hybrid press

The other significant ‘future proofing’ investment at Olympus Labels has been a new 12-color hybrid press. This is uniquely configured with a Domino N610i 8-color print engine, four Nilpeter FA-4 UV flexo print units and FA-4 converting units including in-line foiling and Nilpeter’s new semi-rotary die-cut unit. This

Sustainability

Olympus Print Group has a strong practical commitment to sustainability and uses this as a key selling point for its brand customers. Olympus calculates that last year it reduced its carbon footprint by some 350 tonnes, with the new LED lamps contributing to this.

The company has a strict zero waste to landfill policy, working closely with the BPIF and Primm, which collects matrix waste and processes it into fuel pellets. Olympus estimates this program has already diverted 500 tonnes of waste from landfill. ‘There is no cost benefit to us, but it is cost neutral,’ explains Adrian Brown.

Now the company is targeting paper, cardboard and plastics for recycling to remove a further 10 tonnes a year from landfill. Meanwhile company car policy now states that company cars must be at least hybrid.

Olympus also works closely with its suppliers to deliver sustainable materials options. These include Avery Dennison’s Clean Flake technology which allows labels to be cleanly removed from PET bottles, and a range of bio-based films.

operates at speeds up to 120m/min, so is well able to handle the Domino N601i’s top speed of 70m/min.

Before installing the new press, Olympus already had six years of digital printing experience under its belt. The digital print division consists of a standalone Domino N610i digital press, working with a highly specified off-line ABG Digicon 3 converter. Olympus also runs a wide format POS division mainly producing signage and other marketing collateral.

‘The standalone digital line was whipping through work, but there were still some inefficiencies from two machines which are solved by putting work straight through in one pass,’ says Brown. ‘One of the main reasons for sticking with Domino is that its double-hit white capability and high resolution mean it fits very well into our main market, which is health and personal care. The digital white competes well against conventional screen whites in most applications.’

The unique configuration of the hybrid press once again demonstrates Brown’s commitment to strategic future proofing. ‘We agreed on 420mm wide print converting units, in line with Domino’s 350mm wide digital printer. When we are then ready to move up to next generation 420mm Digital Units that come to market, we will be already prepared.’

Brown also believes that in the future more digital print units will hit the 100m/min mark, and the semi-rotary die-cutting unit will still more than match those higher speeds.

Olympus has now announced the start of shrink sleeve production on the Nilpeter-Domino hybrid press. ‘This is an exciting initiative for us, as for the first time it allows designers to specify unique combinations of flexo, digital and cold foil on shrink sleeves,’ says Laura Quigley, sales and marketing executive at Olympus.

Despite inkjet now being such a well-established technology, Brown says some customers in the HPC sector remain unconvinced about quality levels compared to conventional print processes. ‘One example was a major relaunch for a retailer where it was specified the labels must only be printed UV flexo. However, after consultation and a range of trials the range was successfully launched printed fully digital and indeed subsequent sub ranges were specified to be produced digitally.’



Read more about GEW’s LeOLED curing system at www.labelsandlabeling.com/news/new-products/gew-unveil-next-generation-uv-led-curing

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Not the biggest, but the first

'Don't aspire to be the biggest, simply be the first,' is the philosophy of Danish converter Color Label's CEO Erik Grønning. Piotr Wnuk reports

Color Label stands today as one of the leading Danish suppliers of self-adhesive labels for the food, chemical and retail industries. It's an innovative, service-oriented company that prides itself in solving any label challenge regardless of print method and delivery requirements.

The company was established in 1980 by Erik Grønning, who continues to lead Color Label. From the beginning, his ambition was to create a modern printing company focusing on self-adhesive labels, the latest technologies and offering flexibility to meet customer demand. The company's unique set of priorities – quality over quantity, innovation, strong relationships with employees and suppliers – proved the right recipe for success.

'When I began 40 years ago there were many other companies starting up in the label industry. Almost all of them were led by people who previously worked for Avery Dennison,' recalls Grønning. 'I saw several start-ups coming to the market, very small businesses with just one printer and one salesperson. Because many of these people were somehow previously associated with Avery Dennison, they were simply mimicking its business model, including pricing and delivery structures.'

'I established Color Label as a "next generation" company and focused on just three simple business rules, which I believed would come as a great benefit for the potential customers and differentiate my business on the saturated market. First rule: always deliver on time; second: offer competitive pricing; third: produce outstanding print quality. These rules quickly became our most important values and the backbone of our success.'

COO Lonnie Melskens, who joined the company 25 years ago, confirms: 'Color Label's DNA and values are deeply rooted in our daily routines and work ethics. I am certain that Erik's basic but important principles follow us each day. They are built into our reputation on the market and will definitely be part the company in the future.'

Green Line Street

'When I decided to establish my own company, I contacted Nilpeter because I had previous experience with the F200 which was then using an innovative flexo system,' says Grønning. 'In the early days, Nilpeter only produced letterpresses. I came from the graphic industry with a background as a printer and had worked on Heidelberg letterpresses, so flexo was totally new for me as well.'

However, Grønning spotted the massive potential of the new printing technology and decided to start his label company with a Nilpeter machine. 'We started with one press and quickly expanded to three Nilpeter presses,' he says. 'Right from the start in 1980 we had a fantastic cooperation with this company and throughout the first years we have developed together a new flexo system that we internally named Green Line System. It enabled us to offer offset quality on our flexo presses. Our close cooperation has never stopped. With our latest purchase of a newly refurbished FA-2500, we now have a total of ten Nilpeter presses on our factory floor, ranging from 10 to 17 inch widths.'

The company currently runs eight 10-inch Nilpeter presses with additional modules for varnishing, lamination and foil. This large number of machines provides extreme flexibility and eliminates the risk of production bottlenecks. The Green Line Street also houses two 17in servo machines used to produce a wide range of classic labels, film printing, flexible packaging and cardboard packaging,



Nilpeter press at Color Label

"We grew our companies at the same pace, always focused on the best customer service, the best quality and innovation"

enabling the company to print films from as low as 15 micron in thickness to cartons with up to 350gsm.

'For us Nilpeter is the Mercedes of label printing presses and we have never considered investing in anything else. It is essential for us that our equipment is highly reliable, as it is in our DNA to always deliver on time,' comments Grønning.

'We are proud of the cooperation with Color Label, which is based on core pillars of mutual trust and loyalty,' says Lars Eriksen, president and CEO of Nilpeter. 'We work closely together for the benefit of customers, and of new developments here at Nilpeter, too. Thanks to the good working relationship, the customizations we worked together on, haven't resulted in any major challenges, as many of the solutions have been applicable in our own development projects. We've had a very close dialogue throughout the process.'

FlexoWash is another example of close business relationship. The cooperation between both companies again goes back to the start of Color Label 40 years ago. Henning Kongstad, founder and president of FlexoWash, based just a few miles away from Color Label's headquarters, reflects on the beginning of this cooperation: 'I started my business exactly at the same time as Erik. Right from the outset we formed a great team. We grew our companies at the same pace, always focused on the best customer service, the best quality and innovation.'

'We have the latest FlexoWash machines and a clean

environment is very important for us, because we also work for the food industry,' adds Grønning. 'Similarly, FlexoWash is and always will be a vital part of our business. We understand the importance of keeping tools clean in order to deliver the quality that our customers require and expect from us. FlexoWash equipment also extends the life and productivity of our equipment.'

The company's size, on the other hand, has never been Grønning's priority. On the contrary, he focused on maintaining a small but dynamic organization, where each employee takes full responsibility and is prepared to contribute their own talent to provide the best possible quality of print and customer service.

Over the years, of course, factory capacity has been multiplied by investments in new and more efficient machines. Following the latest expansion, Color Label occupies a 3,600sqm (38,750sq ft) factory.

'When Erik opened Color Label, he imagined a company with eight employees at the most. Our changing rooms and our lunchroom, for instance, were built with this number in mind,' says Melskens. 'We have 25 people working for us now, and growing this number is not our priority. Instead, we

"It's a privilege to have the opportunity to learn and be taught by one of the pioneers in the Danish label industry"

focus on more important aspects of running the business, like innovation and staying on top of new technologies to offer our customers the best possible effects.'

Responding to the rapid development of digital printing, the company invested in two HP Indigo 6800 presses to answer to a demand for shorter runs, personalization and fast delivery. As an innovative company, Color Label is at the forefront of digital development and invests continuously in the latest technology in the field. Its goal is to always offer the market's strongest digital print concept and competitiveness in price, speed, print quality, color and finishing.

The company has been also producing



L-R: Lonnie Melskens, COO, and Erik Grønning, CEO at Color Label

linerless labels since 2002 and recently invested in a production line for shrink sleeves.

The power of a good leader

'The first thing you notice when visiting Color Label is how well organized everything is,' says Lars Eriksen. 'The factory and the production are always very presentable and neat. You feel very welcome. Color Label is known for never turning down a new job or challenge, and they're very innovative and forward thinking. Erik never turns down

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'Not the biggest, but the first' is written on company uniforms

a challenge, and he fights hard to turn his ideas into reality. He's very charismatic, business savvy, and has a great sense of humor, which can be beneficial when you need to "save the situation".

'Erik is one of a kind. He knows what he wants, and what he demands from employees and suppliers. It comes naturally to follow Erik's leadership, and there's a great deal of respect for Erik and his

industry experience.'

Melskens adds: 'I can only say that in the last 25 years of my career, the years spent next to Erik have been extremely exciting and it a privilege to have the opportunity to learn and be taught by one of the pioneers in the Danish label industry.'

Indeed, the values implemented by Grønning in his business 40 years ago are still alive in every aspect of the company

"We have 25 people working for us and growing this number is not our priority. We focus on more important aspects of running the business"

and are clearly visible everywhere from reception to production. When in 1980 he purchased his first press, one of his friends gave him a small gift: a metal plaque that reads 'jordforbindelse må ikke fjernes', which translates as 'always keep your feet on the ground'. The plaque remains on his desk to remind him that a good leader walks on the same ground as his employees – who are as important as he is in achieving success.

For more information about Color Label go to www.colorlabel.dk

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Quality Tape & Label says 'yes' to innovation

The Georgia, USA-based label and packaging converter is all about pushing the envelope, and its production technology helps them do it. Chelsea McDougall reports

Here's the thing about Rob Daniels, the third-generation leader at Quality Tape & Label: He's a 'yes man' in the best sense of the phrase.

There is not a job that's too small, a project too complicated, or a cutting-edge printing technique that Daniels won't implore his team to at least try.

“Flexible packaging is going to overtake shrink because now we're able to do more in-house. Now having a laminator in-house, I just cut production time by two weeks”

Even a 30-inch bag with variable data, matte gloss, cast and cure, raised varnish and finished in a single pass. (If that wasn't clear – Quality Tape and Label produced it.)

To put a finer point on it: QTL is easy to do business with. 'I never want any customer to have a barrier when they're ordering from us,' says Daniels, the company president. 'Our customer service is what sets us apart. We try to be easy to work with, we try to offer high-end packaging that no one else can do and at a reasonable price. We're not the cheapest guys on the block; we're not the most expensive either. We try to fall in that middle range and service the heck out of our customers.'

QTL's production capabilities allow the company to surround its customers with complete packaging offerings, including pressure-sensitive labels, flexible packaging, shrink sleeves, wraps and folding cartons.

Quality Tape & Label's forward thinking is proving to be a competitive advantage for the 40-year-old company, which has been on a steady growth trajectory in recent years. Today, the company has 42 employees across 2.5 shifts and annual turnover of 10.2m USD.

In late 2019, QTL moved to a 38,250

sq ft facility that triples the size of its previous headquarters and adds twice the production floor space.

When it comes to its suppliers, Daniels expects that same kind of 'can do' attitude that he employs at QTL. 'We dream, we innovate, we go outside the box and we want suppliers who are the same way,' he says. 'We do a lot of things that are unconventional.'

Equipment

Since 2012, QTL has averaged a new machine every 12 months. The oldest piece of equipment on its production floor is a 2008 Delta ModTech converting unit.

Important to its production capabilities are QTL's HP Indigo digital press line-up: a 6900, an 8000 and 30-inch HP Indigo 20000, and a legacy Aquaflex flexo press. For converting QTL has two Delta ModTech units, a CEI machine and its newest equipment – a custom-made 30-inch Gonderflex machine for thermal laminating with flexo stations for in-line embellishments of bags and pouches coming off the HP Indigo 20000.

'Gonderflex was the first company that said yes to me,' Daniels says. 'They told me they could build it, and boy, did they.' He beams as he shows off his newest purchase. Previously, QTL sent its printed rolls to a trade shop in Chicago for laminating. Bringing these jobs in house shaves two weeks off its flexible packaging lead time.

At QTL, the front of the house technology is just as important as its production capabilities. QTL adopted pre-press workflow from Hybrid Software that is fully integrated with Label Traxx. The automation provided by Hybrid has allowed the company, which produces 94 percent of its jobs digitally, to address a growing docket of short to medium runs. The success of QTL is built largely on processing smaller orders, and it needs a workflow to power them.

With Hybrid's Cloudflow system, QTL can change text, images, barcodes, colors and other elements linked to variable data sources, to produce a file optimized for fast printing. Cloudflow can be used to turn any PDF package or label design into a VDP design by simply indicating which elements are dynamic and linking them



QTL president Rob Daniels with the HP Indigo 8000 digital press

QTL prints with Collage for King of Pops

Quality Tape & Label produced the world's first HP Collage packaging product for its customer King of Pops. QTL was hired in 2019 to produce tens of thousands of unique, custom-designed wrappers for King of Pops' natural frozen treats. From concept to delivery, the project took only eight business days.

King of Pops was founded in 2010 on an ice cream pushcart by brothers Steve and Nick Carse, with the mission of becoming a positive food influencer. It has branched out with its carts for sporting events and festivals into wholesaling across the southeastern USA. The project used HP Indigo digital printing and HP Collage to feature unique wrappers for five flavors: Pumpkin chai latte, Spicy red devil, Caramel apple, Witch's brew, and Booroero cheesecake.

'Thanks to this specially designed edition, we were able to motivate our sales force. Regional managers pre-booked events and we sold out quickly,' says Leonard Jenkins, King of Pops production director. 'We asked QTL to urgently print additional wrappers in one week so we could prepare our facility for additional production.'

The first print run of five SKUs on the HP Indigo 6900 digital press totaled 18,000 wrappers, with an additional 25,000 printed in one week.

to the data source – without having to create a template for the label designer first. Hybrid VDP is applied at the pre-press stage, not in the pressroom, eliminating the up-front template and an online proofing tool allows QTL to send press proofs directly to the customer.

QTL was able to save time and reduce head count thanks to the level of automation. Further, it saves its valuable pre-press team from time-consuming data entry. The out-of-the-box workflow offered by Hybrid means the automation can be customized to meet QTL's needs. 'That's what we found with Hybrid – everything we asked them to do, that answer was yes. Their customer service is what stands them apart.'

Are you sensing a theme yet?

“Flexible packaging is going to overtake shrink because now we're able to do more in-house. Now having a laminator in-house, I just cut production time by two weeks”

Past and future

Rob is the third generation Daniels at the helm at QTL. The business that began 40 years ago by his grandparents Cecil and Myrl was then run by his father Rick, who today serves as company CEO. It was the youngest Daniels who had the vision to go after new digital markets when he joined the company in 2005.

The recent headquarters move not only gave QTL more space but will help as the company moves from traditional labels to shrink and flexible packaging. Pressure-sensitive label production accounts for 43 percent of the jobs produced at QTL, with 42 percent shrink sleeves and about 15 percent flexible packaging, though that ratio is changing.

'Flexible packaging is going to overtake shrink as far as growth percentage because now we're able to do more in-house,' he says. 'Now having a laminator in-house I just cut my production time by two weeks. It's huge for us because we're turning pouches around so much faster.'

QTL's customers include food, beverage, nutraceuticals, craft beer and cannabis companies. In 2017 the company printed 450 million labels for the Share a Coke campaign. It was a high profile project for one of the largest beverage companies in the world. QTL printed customized Coke labels around the clock for four months and when it was over, hard lessons were learned.

'I'm glad we did it, it was great exposure for us and Coke is still a great customer of ours,' Daniels says. 'But it opened my eyes to what I needed to do with my business. I want to stay in my lane and focus on small to medium-sized businesses and high-end packaging. Coming out of that project, we expanded our customer base and we work with more small and medium size brands that have unique opportunities to produce all kinds of packaging. With these brands, we changed the conversation from price to the value we offer. We are able to bring them to shelf faster and put more revenue in their pockets faster.'

To make this strategy successful, QTL had to work hard to build trust with a lot of small and medium brands in the hope that when they rise, they take QTL with them. Daniels talks about a customer who started ordering a couple of thousand labels here and there, and is now QTL's biggest client. 'They're ordering six million sleeves a month from us. They've just blown up.'

QTL's digital assets allow it to be nimble enough to respond to

projects both big and small. 'We have a customer for whom we started producing labels. Now we do their shrink sleeves and their flexible packaging. Recently they asked us to do a bundle wrap application. They came to us in a pinch and said, "I've got to have it done and I have to have it done right. And you're the only guys I trust",' Daniels says. 'It solidified that business. Now they see us not only as a competent printer, but now when they need something, and it has to be done right, they know to come to QTL.'



A new Gonderflex machine was recently installed at Quality Tape & Label



Quality Tape & Label produces custom Coke labels



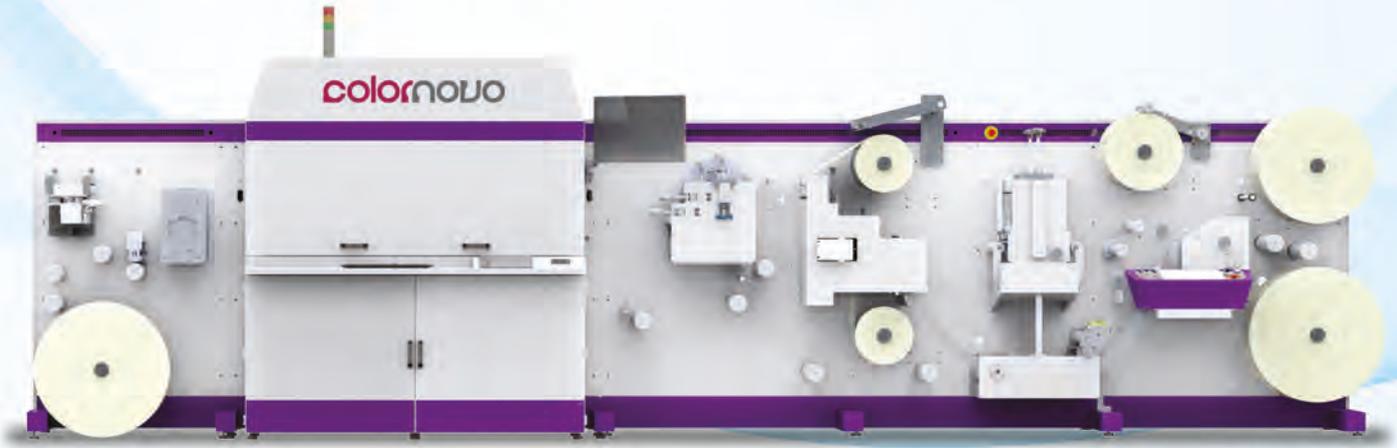
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Heidelberg highlights Gallus Labelmaster 440 in India

The press manufacturer has installed a new Gallus Labelmaster 440 at the Avery Dennison Innovation and Knowledge Centre in Pune, India. Aakriti Agarwal reports

Heidelberg India organized a two-day event, 'Labels & More', at the Avery Dennison Innovation and Knowledge Centre (ADIKC) in Pune, with the spotlight on the Gallus Labelmaster 440.

The knowledge-sharing sessions and live demonstrations of the Labelmaster 440 were showcased to more than 80 converters across the labels and packaging segment, and ADIKC partners including Esko, DuPont, Flint, Royal Coat, RotoMetrics, Univacoco and tesa.

“With shorter run lengths leading to several job changes and potential material waste, there is a greater need than ever for a resource-efficient label press with shorter set-up times”

Ferdinand Rüesch, senior vice president, global key accounts, Gallus, said: 'The Labelmaster 440 fulfills some critical criteria for label printers. With shorter print run lengths leading to several job changes and potential material waste, there is a greater need than ever before for a resource-efficient label press with shorter set-up times. The Gallus Labelmaster 440 fits the bill perfectly, while also addressing key performance demands for producing self-adhesive labels, mono films, shrink sleeves, in-mold labels and cartons.'

During the two-day forum, multiple jobs were printed on the Labelmaster 440 to underscore its dexterity in handling a broad array of substrates. The print demonstrations included a multi-color carton printed on a 200gsm board with matt gloss varnish and



Ferdinand Rüesch, senior vice president, global key accounts, Gallus (center), and Samir Patkar, president of Heidelberg India (second from right), inaugurate the installation of Gallus Labelmaster 440 at ADIKC in Pune

die-cut, all in one pass; a cosmetics label printed on 50 micron transparent shrink substrate with reverse printing in a single pass; and a self-adhesive label with matt and gloss varnish and die-cut.

Samir Patkar, president of Heidelberg India, said: 'This press ensures low wastage, high performance and high efficiency. Configuration flexibility and agility facilitate the quickest adaptability to evolving market conditions. This futuristic design of the Labelmaster protects the investment of the printer, while providing competitive differentiation and profitable returns.'

'The modular design of the Labelmaster 440 makes it a compelling value buy. The press can be configured to meet distinct business needs. You can add a screen printing unit, gravure print unit, hot foil stamping unit, multilayer, a die-cutting unit in print position, quick-change front-loading die-cutting system and more

ADIKC to empower the PS label industry

The Avery Dennison Innovation and Knowledge Center (ADIKC) in Pune is an end-to-end training facility for both conventional and digital label printing technologies. The center houses a research and development team with material science and analytical capability. The label converting facility is primarily used for training, product benchmarking and product development.

It operates on six platforms to grow the industry. Firstly, to develop new products according to market requirements and introduce them to converters. Second is long-term projects where a team works on structural and core components of products. The third platform focuses on introducing future technologies to the industry. Fourth is coating process optimization where teams prototype a product and scale it up for commercial purposes. The fifth platform is dedicated to troubleshooting for converters and brand owners as they continue work on analytical and physical properties of product. Lastly, the program management team keeps tabs on all six sigma processes and compliances.

The center, up to December 2019, had conducted a total of 220 training sessions since its inception in 2012. 'Through these sessions we, in collaboration with all our technology partners, have trained 1,500 people for the label industry,' said Naveen Serrao, manager, Labels and Graphic Material, SAPSSA Knowledge Centre, Avery Dennison Innovation & Knowledge Centre. Training modules include pressure-sensitive label training, advanced technologies, and a customized module for converters, printing and packaging institutes, industry partners as well as end-users.

The ADIKC also houses an I.Lab which was officially inaugurated in 2019. It is an interactive facility that provides customers and partners with hands-on experiences, live demonstrations and technical support, to help them explore the opportunities surrounding intelligent labels and RFID adoption. 'We have started an RFID Academy as well, where we conducted first training on RFID in 2019 and will conduct the second in the first quarter of 2020,' concluded Serrao.

“It is all about how a business takes strategic decisions and complements its production with different printing and finishing technologies”



to produce premium labels or cartons,' Patkar added.

According to the company, the Labelmaster 440 supports printing speeds of up to 200m/min and produces premium print quality at high speed with high-end finishing, as the printed image is always in register. At all times, an ink chamber optimized for high speeds facilitates optimal ink transfer to anilox rollers with minimal splashing and foaming.

Labelmaster 440

Discussing the Indian label industry with Labels & Labeling, Patkar said: 'There is a lot of light left in self-adhesive label printing.

Each segment is very unique. Labels are so fragmented in the way they are printed and finished that there are still a lot of opportunities in this segment.'

Explaining the category of printers who should opt for Labelmaster 440, Patkar said: 'Any label printer with either the volume high enough to run on a 440mm wide press or with certain value-addition jobs that can run efficiently on a 440mm wide press, should opt for it.'

Printers ideally should be able to use the wide width of the press instead of investing in it to follow a trend,' he cautioned. 'The press is well-equipped to print cartons, however, as I stated at LMAI Conference in

2019, each printer must calculate cost of printing on a flexo press versus a sheet-fed press to make a sound business decision. If they want to print screen, lamination and other value-added features in-line then the Labelmaster 440 is a great investment.'

In the flexible packaging segment, there is an increasing demand for short runs and converters are challenged with producing them profitably. 'Technology on conventional presses has advanced so printing 1,000sqm of run length can also be made profitable. A while ago, when a printer was challenged, the only option was digital technology. It is all about how a business takes strategic decisions and complements

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Around 80 converters attended the event in Pune

its production with different printing and finishing technologies,' said Patkar.

The Gallus Labelmaster 440 is equipped to print on pressure-sensitive labels, cartons, flexible packaging, flexible aluminum applications, mono-foil labels, wraparound labels, in-mold labels, shrink sleeves, multi-layer and coupon labels, as well as mono paper for wet-glue labels, among others. The press has more than 100 installations worldwide since its debut in 2017.

Patkar's thoughts resonated well with attendees at the ADIKC. Nirav Shah, director of Indian converter Letra Graphics, commented: 'We thoroughly enjoyed the live job runs, especially the multi-substrate

printing with coating and finishing all in one go. It is exciting to see label printing move beyond the best.'

Echoing similar thoughts, Bhrigav Jain, owner of Monarch Graphics, added: 'Heidelberg has always strived to create bespoke brand experiences for clients. This event was no exception. The Labelmaster 440 demonstrations were impressive.'

Ferdinand Ruesch said: 'The ADIKC was a great platform to interact with CEOs operating in flexo, gravure and sheet-fed offset segments, and understand their challenges and needs. The forum also led to some interesting discussions with printers exploring a foray into labels, as well as

converting cartons by flexo.'

Sustainability

Discussing sustainability, Patkar said that Gallus launched its ECS press with a granite base back in 2009 and introduced UV LED in 2011. 'It is one of the lowest carbon-emission presses in the market,' he said. 'Today, we are focusing on low migration inks on Gallus Labelfire. Therefore we as a company are very focused on offering sustainable presses with short web path and UV LED units and many other features to printers. However, sustainability is primarily driven by brand owners.

'Sustainability is a trend, as was very clear at Labelexpo Europe 2019, and it will get stronger with government regulations on environment in various parts of the world. There will be early adopters in the industry, similar to what we are witnessing with adoption of digital technology, but the industry will eventually come together for a greener planet,' Patkar concluded.



Information on Gallus's presses sold in India during Labelexpo Europe available at this link www.labelsandlabeling.com/features/labelexpo-europe-show-floor-sales

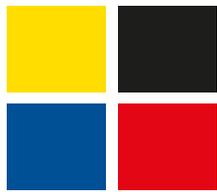
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All4Labels ramps up capacity in South Africa

Enjoying buoyant business in shrink sleeves, the All4Labels subsidiary has made significant investments. Gill Loubser reports



Uwe Bögl with operator Anda Boyta. Bögl describes the DCM ATN Sleeve3 as a 'gamechanger' – particularly for the production of shrink sleeves for the cosmetics market

Over the years, your correspondent's visits to All4Labels' South African subsidiary in Cape Town (previously Rako) have revealed fresh investment news; a recent encounter shows that the trend continues.

But the good news, admits MD Uwe Bögl, is somewhat tempered by the fact that 2019 proved disappointing.

'We ended 2018 on a high note,' he remarks. 'We saw a significant leap in sales volumes, and had a feeling of excitement engendered by last year's election of Cyril Ramaphosa as president (and the prospect of a less corrupt government), but the excitement dissipated early in 2019 as the business climate deteriorated with power outages and the onset of a recessionary environment.'

Uwe Bögl remains undaunted, however, and reflects on recent positive changes within the international All4Labels group following investment by a new equity partner, Triton.

Importantly, despite current challenges to doing business in South Africa, Bögl has managed to push through some exciting investments designed to improve capacity and to reduce waste.

Surging demand

Two years ago, a second Gallus press was inaugurated to meet ever-surging demand for shrink sleeves – a sector of the business that's risen to account for some 50 percent of turnover. This second 8-color Gallus ECS 340 handles both self-adhesive label and shrink sleeve production and offers excellent set-up efficiency.



All4Labels' second Gallus press has been upgraded with the installation of an AVT Helios S system

And now the press has been upgraded, particularly for the sake of consistency of output for customers in the personal care sector, with the installation of an AVT Helios S system. This automatic inspection system delivers 100 percent quality assurance, detecting any type of defect, including color misregister or variations, misprints, text errors, spots, splashes, die-cut problems, barcode errors and missing labels. It works seamlessly on any substrate including self-adhesive labels, embossed metallized substrates, highly-reflective holographic foils, and laminates.

Further enhancing shrink sleeve production is a second high-speed cutting machine from HCI Converting Equipment (currently being shipped to South Africa), and a newly-installed high-speed seaming machine – a DCM ATN Sleeve3.

'We doubled our capacity when we bought our first HCI machine, and expect to double capacity again when the second machine is commissioned,' reveals Bögl.

The recently-commissioned DCM ATN Sleeve 3 seaming machine is described

“Two years ago, a second Gallus press was inaugurated to meet ever-surging demand for shrink sleeves – a sector of the business that's risen to account for some 50 percent of turnover”

by Bögl as 'a gamechanger'. He focuses especially on the exceptional quality of the seaming and the soft shoulders achieved – particularly relevant in the personal care market where on-shelf aesthetics are of paramount importance.

This investment, says Bögl, is further boosting the company's market share for shrink sleeves. 'It has improved our output by a factor of four, and has significantly reduced our waste levels,' he declares. 'In turn, these waste savings are minimizing our payback time on this vital investment.'

'Thanks to these additions, we're pumping out shrink sleeves in ever increasing numbers and ever-improving quality,' he continues. 'These significant investments in printing and finishing technology and ongoing staff training are factors that help us to open new doors, not only in the Western Cape and South Africa but further afield. We now have customers throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and continue to grow our business by providing a more complete and competitive portfolio of products.'

After four years of consolidation since the formation of the global All4Labels group, the Cape Town subsidiary has seen notable development, but, as Bögl sums up, the key focus remains on improving efficiency and diversifying into new markets, using its HP Indigo digital press to tackle short runs and flexo printing excellence for medium runs.



For more from Gill Loubser on the African market, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/gill-loubser



Labelexpo Asia 2019's opening ceremony

Labelexpo Asia breaks records

The event in Shanghai saw an 18 percent growth in attendees, reflecting the continued development of the Chinese label market. Yolanda Wang reports

Labelexpo Asia, held in December 2019, was the largest edition of the show to date with 18 percent growth in attendees and a 26 percent larger floor space than its previous edition.

A total of 23,636 attendees from 90 countries flocked to the four-day show, compared to 20,084 visitors from 81 countries at the 2017 edition. Over 350 leading suppliers exhibited in Shanghai.

Lisa Milburn, MD of Labelexpo Global Series, said: 'We are delighted with the success of this year's Labelexpo Asia. The huge leap forward in buyer visitors consolidates the show's position as our largest show in Asia, a growth that is truly inspiring.'

The show's new feature areas included Flexpack Asia, which displayed the latest flexible packaging technology. The returning Smart Zone displayed products including the next generation 3D holograms, nanomaterials, special inks and RFID/NFC labels.

The educational program, introduced at this year's event, also proved popular. Two half-day sessions – a workshop and a master class – took place during the show. Led by the Label Academy, a three-hour workshop covered shrink sleeve technology and a four-hour master class focused on digital label and package printing.

The master class on digital printing looked at the different technologies, the importance of pre-press and workflow automation, choosing the right substrates, different finishing options and hybrid technology. Representatives from Brotech, Cerm, Domino and Esko were among the speakers.

Liu Haifeng, general manager of Tianjin Teda Great Print, said: 'As a Chinese label converter, such professional training classes help us learn about advanced technologies and solutions, which is very important to enhance our own companies and integrate with the world.'

Conventional technology

Chinese manufacturers were behind the earliest intermittent offset presses customized for label printing. Many domestic offset press manufacturers demonstrated their latest equipment, including Weigang's ZP-480 rotary offset press. It adopts a variable diameter

pneumatic sleeve-type print roller that allows a changeover time of each color set within two minutes.

With a maximum print speed of up to 180m/min, it is aimed at medium and long runs of labels and short- to medium-run flexible packaging. Thanks to its integrated design, it can apply flexible combinations of multiple printing and finishing processes including offset, flexo, gravure, cold/hot stamping, die-cutting and slitting. The machine can run a variety of materials including paper and BOPP, PET, PP and PVC films. Weigang has applied for more than 20 local and international patents for the new press.

Wanjie showed its WJPS series semi-rotary offset press, which uses shaftless servo motors to control the machine. The WJPS350PS model on the show floor was mainly targeted at label printing, while a WJPS660PS in the Flexible Packaging Arena was running flexible pouch jobs. Both models can feature stamping, laminating and inline die-cutting for one-pass production.

Other machines on display – including Weigang's ZX350

“China has been a relatively slow adopter of digital, but a leap forward was seen at Labelexpo Asia with some 55 companies exhibiting equipment relevant to digital label printing”

semi-rotary offset press, Zhongte's ZTJ-330/520 PS label press, and Nickel Printing's FS350 PS rotary press – adopt shaftless servo motors, UV curing and in-line converting options. Features such as remote and touch screen control, and automatic cylinder positioning, were also common on presses on show.

The joint exhibition stand of **Codimag** and **Toray** made waterless offset printing technology a highlight of the show. Codimag has produced waterless semi-rotary offset technology since 1999 and launched its breakthrough Aniflo technology in 2007. An anilox roller replaces the rollers used by water-based offset systems, allowing more stable and high-definition print quality. It integrates in-line finishing units and an expanded color gamut into a digital workflow. The printing technology and in-line finishing units can include multiple processes such as offset, flexo, hot/cold stamping, screen, embossing, die-cutting and laminating.

Demonstrating the technology's increased adoption in the Chinese label market, multiple domestic manufacturers showed flexo presses, including **Weigang**, **Hongsheng Machinery**, **Ako**, **Label Source**, **Taiyo Kikai**, **Olger**, **Jmetech**, **Minghui**, **Jingda**, **3Gflexo**, and **Spande**. International manufacturers **MPS** and **Mark Andy** promoted their equipment offering through videos and brochures, while **Bobst** updated visitors about the latest additions to its portfolio for label and packaging printing, including hybrid and DigiFlexo presses.

Omet featured live demos of an iFlex production line on its

“Hybrid printing was a talking point at the show”

stand. Omet's iFlex press was equipped with full LED curing provided by Shanghai-based CoolUV. It featured 12 LED curing units, a dual cold stamping unit and Easy Change Die Station for quick changeover.

Olger Precise Machinery displayed its fully servo-driven OG330-CL8+1A flexo press, which features a temperature-controlled embossing roller for precise control of even very thin film materials. The company also has a wider version of the press which allows flexible packaging production.

Letterpress, formerly the leading label printing technology in the country, had a smaller but still significant presence, and featured on the stands of **Haotian**, **Labellong**, **Tujiate**, **Qianrun Machinery**, **Huada Huahui** and others. **Yutian Machinery** featured a letterpress machine on one booth and a digital press on another.

Screen printing technology was on show from **Silk Star**

Flexpack Asia

With increasing demand for personalization and short runs in the flexible packaging segment, its appeal to label converters is broadening. Jantan is one example of a Chinese label converter which has entered flexible packaging production, following the installation of a Bobst Master M6 press.

Debuting at the show, the new Flexpack Asia feature area displayed the latest in flexible packaging technology. Exhibitors included **Flint Group**, **3G flexo**, **GMG**, **Haozhun**, **Lingtie**, **Dongguan Menroland**, **Jiangsu Shuangxing**, **Yidao**, **Siegwerk**, **Tide**, **Leco**, **Boyuan**, **Yinjinda** and **Qianrun**. Products on display covered pre-press software, materials, printing equipment, finishing machines and inspection systems.

Guangdong Olger launched the OG330-CL8+1A narrow web satellite flexo press, designed for flexible packaging printing. **Weigang** debuted its newest ZP-480/680/900/1200 rotary offset press which targets medium and long runs of label production, as well as short and medium runs of flexible packaging.

Within this feature area, the Flexible Packaging Arena hosted live demonstrations each day of a **Xeikon** 3030 press and **Wanjie** 660 press producing flexible pouches.



Omet featured live demos of an iFlex production line on its stand

Machinery, **Jingda**, **Wangle** and **Lingtie**, among others. The CS-350R2C flatbed screen printing machine from Silk Star Machinery claims a print speed two or three times faster than conventional flatbed screen, and is equipped with in-line inspection.

Jingda's JD-3032 roll-to-roll screen printing machine adopts a shaftless drive to achieve faster, more accurate and stable print speed. It features remote network access so that operator training and troubleshooting can be undertaken online.

Wangle demonstrated its WL-350D single-color high-speed screen printing machine using a new automatic motion control system.

SPGPrints, which has a subsidiary in Wuxi, is seeing growth in luxury label applications in the country, according to the company's Hank Guijens, as well as in RFID and flexible circuit board printing. The company recently began to supply screen units for Spande's flexo press, and reported that the first units have been sold.

Digital

Digital label presses account for nearly 40 percent of new global label press installations, but China has been a relatively slow adopter. But a leap forward was seen at Labelexpo Asia, with some 55 companies exhibiting equipment relevant to digital label printing, including **HP Indigo**, **Xeikon**, **Domino**, **Konica Minolta**, **Durst** (though local agent **Shanghai Haoxi**), **Dilli**, **Epson**, **Winbosc**, **HanGlobal**, **Haotian**, **Runtianzhi**, **Dragon**, **Terminator Image**, **Hefei Saga**, **Mark Andy**, **Shanghai Guanzhong**, **Wuxi Lida**, **Leipeng**, **Trojanjet**, **Vorey**, **Printop**, and **Brotech Digital**.

Amica Systems' high-speed UV LED roll-to-roll inkjet label press, the LZ dual color and LZC color series, come in 54/75/108mm web widths and can be used for medium- and short-run printing of labels, tags, tickets and aluminum foil packages. TTRR770 is an industrial roll-to-roll and flatbed UV-LED inkjet printer which allows both roll to roll and flatbed operation. The versatile LPS330 inkjet press can be used for medium- and short-run printing of packages, labels, industrial decoration and variable data.

Beijing Stone's 130-4/130-5 color rollfed laser press prints in five colors (CMYK plus white) at a native resolution of 1,200 DPI. It incorporates a fixed length cutting system and is configured with a maximum outer web diameter of 8 inches, maximum web width of 130mm (5in) and minimum single sheet cutting length of 101.6mm. A wide range of materials are suitable for the machine including label paper, PET film and synthetic paper.

Dilli launched its upgraded Neo Picasso UV inkjet label press, which comes with a web width up to 330mm in CMYK+W or seven colors (CMYK plus white, orange and green). It is equipped with re-registration, corona treatment and software for fully variable data printing. It runs in full color at speeds up to 50m/min

Smart Zone

A dedicated 1,000sqm area of the show, the Smart Zone, featured various kinds of intelligent label technology from exhibitors including **Color Stamp**, **Meteor Inkjet**, **Shanghai Liandian**, **Shanghai Lion**, **Shanghai Skilt**, **Unity Shanghai**, **Yuanmingjie**, **Testram**, **Xinjinglu**, **Tysin Technology**, **Highlight Software**, **Voyantic**, **Wing Singa**, **Trojanjet Intelligent** and **Osrfid**.

Among the products on show, **Ada** introduced its new A6000W wide format RFID lamination machine, aimed at the plane luggage label market. With a modular design, it can integrate multiple processes in one line including inlay waste discharge, multi-layer composition, gluing, die-cutting and inspection.

Avery Dennison demonstrated RFID label technology for the aviation sector.

Candibell is an intelligent sensor technology supplier that provides a remote, real-time monitoring and commercial automation platform. Its patented pouch sensor can be easily integrated into packaging. The intelligent sensor will automatically record customers' motions and gestures during the purchasing process for review by brand owners, suppliers and customers.

Chankey's RFID tag laminator can laminate inlays with different material lengths, and features die-cutting, waste discharge and winding as well as inspection.

Muehlbauer's DDA 40K RFID system features a 30 percent smaller footprint, while its increased productivity is claimed to reduce RFID label production cost by 80 percent.

UPM Raflatac showed a variety of products used for RFID label production including substrates, double-side tapes and silicone coated base papers. Also on show were removable RFID labels and smart labels for refrigerated goods.

with a resolution of 1,200 DPI. Coated or uncoated paper, white transparent film, PP, PE, PVC, PET and BOPP foils can all be handled.

Epson showcased desktop printer models including the CW-C6530, TM-C7520G, and TM-C3520, and showed examples of applications for warehouse management, customized wine labels, household chemicals and wristbands.

First-time exhibitor **HanGlobal** showcased its LabelStar 330 UV inkjet label press. With print speed of 50m/min, web width of 220 to 330mm and resolution of 600 to 1,200 DPI, it comes in a 4-color (optionally five colors) configuration and supports a wide range of materials including PET, PVC, PP, PE and BOPP films, synthetic paper, coated paper and aluminum foil.

Konica Minolta held an unveiling ceremony for its new AccurioLabel 230, a roll-to-roll digital label press designed for short-runs of high quality labels with a variable data capability. With the latest Konica Minolta toner technology, it prints at 1,200 x 1,200 DPI with a maximum print width of 330mm and maximum speed of 23.4m/min. A wide range of materials are available, and do not require coating or pre-treatment. It is equipped with near-line intelligent converting options newly developed by **Brotech Digital**.

Visitors were able to see value-added label products finished on an MGI Jetvarnish 3D Web digital spot varnishing press in Konica Minolta's booth. With a fully digital workflow and an array of DOD inkjet heads, the machine can apply digital varnish and stamping. A cooperation ceremony between Konica Minolta and **Changrong Laser Technology** was held on December 3.

Shanghai Haoxi, **Durst's** distributor in China, showed the Durst Tau RSC inkjet press for the first time in China. The system includes Durst Workflow, Durst Analytics and Durst Smart Shop, offering a completely automatic production and workflow system from



Weigang's ZP-480 rotary offset press

design to final output. **Durst** provides its own customized ink supply system for the RSC platform. Equipped with eight colors (CMYK + W + OVG), the press produces up to 95 percent simulation of Pantone colors. The press is certified for weather resistance printing, and can print at speeds up to 80m/min. **Durst** has developed low migration inks specially for food and beverage, cosmetics and pharmaceutical applications, widening the scope for label converters.

The SDW-330 from **Shenzhen Runtianzhi** is the second generation of its full-color UV inkjet label press. Using Kyocera inkjet heads, it has a maximum web width of 330mm and a print speed of 50m/min. It has eight color channels and supports full variable data printing as well as on-site upgrade to 1,200 DPI. Easy to run and maintain, it has a one-key clean function and highly integrated operating software. A wide range of films and papers are available, including PET, PP, PVC, PE, BOPP and coated paper.

Dumax-330 is a roll-to-roll high-speed full-color inkjet press manufactured by **UPG** and **Dragon**, based on Memjet's second generation Duralink inkjet technology. It features a top print speed of 100m/min, print resolution of 1,600 x 1,580 DPI. The 10 liter capacity 4-color cartridge system allows quick changeover between jobs, while a fully automatic cleaning system prevents blockages in the inkjet head.

“With increasing demand for personalization and short runs in the flexible packaging segment, its appeal to label converters is broadening”

Vorey exhibited the Color DLP VP320C digital label press, VD3350 digital label die-cutting machine (intelligent edition), VD320 digital label die-cutting machine (practical edition), VD240 digital label die-cutting machine (compact edition) and SC340 digital label die-cutting system. The Vorey Color DLP VP320C has a print resolution up to 1,200 x 2,400 DPI. A wide range of printing materials can be handled with no need for pre-treatment, including woven label materials and PVC special media.

First-time exhibitor **Winbosc** brought a variety of technologies for inkjet label printing to the show, including combinations of printing, digital stamping and varnishing as well as full workflow solutions. On December 3, Winbosc held the product launch of Digi



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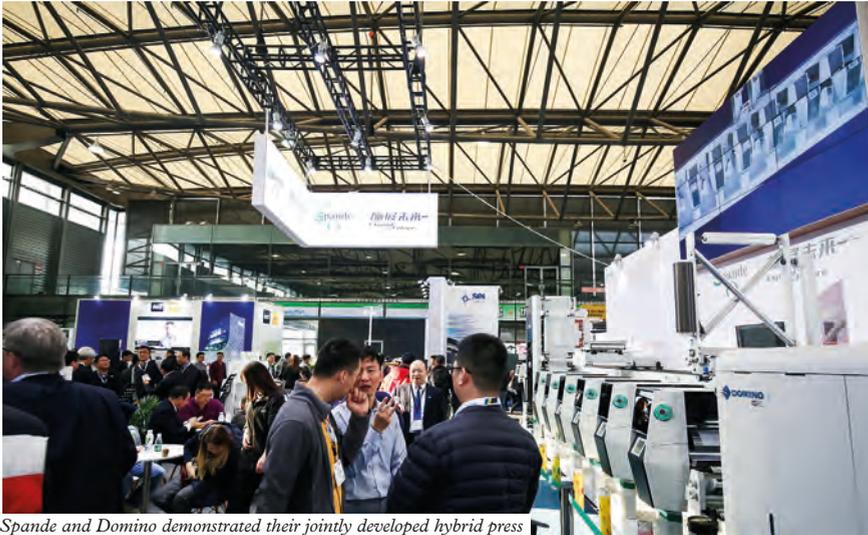


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Spande and Domino demonstrated their jointly developed hybrid press

Spark digital stamping machine at its booth. This machine offers spot varnishing, cold stamping and embossing.

Wuxi Lida COASO iCueLabel 420 color digital label press made its world debut. This digital is specialized in the printing of security labels in medium and short run orders. Print speed is 27-45m/min with print resolution of 1600 x 1600 DPI on a maximum web width of 420mm -or effective print width of 324mm. Maximum repeat length is 600mm and substrate thickness of 0.05mm-0.35mm can be handled on a wide range of substrates including PS paper, PET, PVC, PE and PP.

Hybrid

Hybrid printing was a talking point at the show, with demos of the new S7 flexo/digital press developed by **Spande** and **Domino**. The Chinese press manufacturer's hybrid press features an N610i UV inkjet unit from Domino, and can be equipped with multiple in-line finishing units. Newly developed by Spande, the integrated intelligent control system allows the entire assembly line to be started at the push of a button. The highly automated press can handle films down to 12 micron and features automatic register control and pressure adjustment. Visitors watched print demonstrations of a PE self-adhesive label for household chemical applications and a 50 micron shrink sleeve for beverage applications.

Wanjie showcased for the first time a hybrid press developed in cooperation with **Jierun Technology**. Multiple processes are integrated into this one machine including full rotary flexo, cold stamping, 4-6 color digital printing, full rotary UV varnishing, laminating, semi-rotary die-cutting, and semi-rotary flatbed die-cutting. The digital printing unit uses Fujifilm Samba DOD piezo inkjet heads, producing minimum ink drop up to 2.5pl. The maximum print speed is

100m/min at a resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI.

Winbosc showcased the Cloud Hybrid RG Series inkjet label printer and Cloud Hybrid GM Series modular inkjet label press. The RG series label press integrates multiple processes including pretreatment, flexo printing, digital printing, hot stamping, die-cutting, and waste removal. It can handle personalized or customized orders, variable data printing and anti-counterfeit printing in one pass, offering a fully automated label production from printing to post-press finishing.

Materials

Many Chinese and international material suppliers gathered at Labelexpo Asia, including **AKO Printing**, **Antac Label**, **Guanhao**, **Jinda**, **Kinglabel**, **Symbio**, **UPM Raflatac**, **Yasite** and **Zhongshan Fuzhou**.

Arjobex, manufacturer of Polyart synthetic paper, showcased its new range of tamper evident security products. This range includes security features such as UV fibers, taggants and UV watermarks. These features are embedded in the film, thereby preventing the possibility of tampering with them, or forging with printing processes.

Armor featured its inkantio thermal transfer ribbon range. On show was the new AXRTX ribbon for textile label printing. Armor is supplementing this offering with a range of ten print substrates. Specially designed for the textile market, they are made of nylon (three), polyester (two) and satin (five). They offer a variety of properties: printable on one side, printable on two sides, treated to avoid curling up during washing, stain resistant and in widths between 10mm and 120mm.

'The AXRTX ribbon has been well received by our customers, and the garment industry is particularly strong in this part of the world,' said Wesley Alves, VP and MD for Asia-Pacific for Armor.

Avery Dennison divided its stand into four sections: science, sustainability, imagination and connected products. Products on show included recycled PE(rPE) substrates, recycled PET(rPET) base paper and CleanFlake adhesive technology.

Fangda Packaging displayed seven product lines, including thermal transfer labels, thermal labels, three-layer electronic face sheets.

Kurz presented its latest Cold Foil KSO, which allows high edge definition transfer and easy release.

Lintec focused on its rebranded Livasta range of materials. Most of the company's filmic materials are manufactured in China, with some specialty products made in Japan.

Ritrama showed its RI-Move series of self-adhesive materials developed to meet the most stringent requirements for recycling and reuse of glass and PET containers.

UPM presented CCK, a range of papers suitable for demanding and diverse label converting processes including solventless, solvent emulsion, and UV silicone coating processes. It needs no PE coating, which reduces consumables costs and use of plastic.

Labelexpo expands Chinese show portfolio

Tarsus Group, the organizer of Labelexpo and Brand Print Global Series trade shows, has announced a further two three-day events in China for 2020: Labelexpo South China and Brand Print China.

Returning to South China for the first time since 2014, Labelexpo South China 2020 will take place in Tanzhou International Convention and Exhibition Center, Foshan City, Guangdong Province, in 2020. This region is part of the Pearl River Delta Economic Zone, South China's major industrial hub, which currently accounts for 60 percent of China's printing industry.

Labelexpo South China will be co-located with the inaugural edition of Brand Print China 2020. As with other Brand Print shows, which are aimed at printers of all types of signage, promotional materials and collateral for brands, the Chinese show is intended to be a one-stop shop for all large format and digital printing needs, focusing on point of sale, point of display, fleet graphics, sampling packs, collation packs, corrugated luxury packaging and promotional graphics.

UPM Raflatac showed Raflex Pro, a flexible film offering high transparency for contoured and shaped containers which have previously been reliant on polyethylene (PE) labeling materials. The Linerless series of products uses 40 percent less raw materials than common adhesive materials, and all the raw materials are originated from FSC-certified sustainable managed forests.

Yupo exhibited its range of in-mould label synthetic materials, which need no peel-off and can be recycled along with containers.

Converting equipment

Flying Man exhibited the Enzo-320CCD die-cutting machine.

GCC, jointly with **Legend**, exhibited the AFJ-24S automatic feeding system, LabelExpress laser die-cutter, and DFS laser cutting and finishing system.

SEI Laser presented the latest enhanced version of its Labelmaster modular system in two models, with web widths of 350 and 600mm. This complete modular system for roll-to-roll and roll-to-sheet digital die-cutting and finishing is suitable for the production of self-adhesive labels in all sectors: industrial, wine, food and beverage, beauty, textiles, flexible packaging, promotional, converting and many others.

Reborn showed a digital die-cutting system with integrated Rexroth servo motors.

Rhyguan exhibited Plus-330, a modular digital finishing line including flatbed silkscreen printing, flatbed hot stamping and semi-rotary die-cutting. Another digital converting line, Top-330-Plus-2, combines flexo, semi-rotary die-cutting and inspection.

Miscellaneous

BST eltromat focused on the promotion of its Tubescan inspection product, and the company's Martin Betting reported that local converters have begun looking for higher quality inspection systems. 'The Chinese market previously was not very strong for us due to our pricing,' he said, 'but it has really picked up in the last year or so.' The company has a factory in Shanghai.

Flint Group Narrow Web focused on Vivo Colour Solutions, launched in early 2019. The system is a database of colors and mixing recipes for any combination of ink type, and is designed to increase the converter's color accuracy and reduce press downtime and substrate waste. Since its launch, Vivo Colour Solutions has been expanded to include 180,000 ink formulations and pantone references.

"We were highly impressed with the large number of visitors at our booth and the detailed discussions"

Vivo Colour Solutions will translate all type of color targets and will work with multiple print methods and substrates. Label and packaging converters can enter the color target for their print jobs into the Vivo system and select ink type, printing method and print media, and the system sends a recipe on how to mix the right ink.

'We were highly impressed with the large number of visitors at our booth and the detailed discussions,' said Andrea Glawe, regional sales director for Asia-Pacific at **Kroenert**, a first-time Labelexpo Asia exhibitor. 'The focus of Kroenert was to show the new developed double-side silicone coating system. The reactions from the visitors were very open minded. Additionally, we saw the interest in new label solutions, recycling trends, integration of RFID and NFC technologies in labels as well as new environmentally friendly concepts for chemicals.'

Lundberg Tech, manufacturer of waste extraction systems, will showed its MatrixCompactor 140 all-in-one waste extraction unit.

Show floor sales

The many deals announced during the show included first-timer **HanGlobal**, which sold two digital presses with Zhiqin Printing investing in its second digital press, and Kunshan Mingting purchasing its 12th machine.

During the exhibition, **Vorey** held talks with 128 visitors from all over the world and received dozens of purchase orders. Vorey vice general manager Jiang Jiuying told L&L that they sold fifteen VD320 digital label die-cutting machines, eight VD320 digital label press, seven VD3350 digital label presses, three SC340 sheet-fed digital die-cutters, one LC1000 digital die-cutter and several other systems.

Weigang sold 28 flexo presses and eight ZX offset machines, alongside a dozen potential lines of its new ZP-480 rotary offset press.

Winbosc, which signed deals with six clients on site including Guangzhou Meikei, Taiyo Kikai, Donghong Print, Citic Guoan Wine Package (Ningxia), Tai'an Qingtu Laser Security Label, and Brazilian converter Megalabel.



Konica Minolta held an unveiling ceremony for its new AccurioLabel 230

Luster launched the Label Roll-Web series system which features a high-speed image processing system and high-stability motion platform. **AVT**, **Pulisi**, **Daheng Image**, **Sino-MV** and **Isra Vision**, among others, also showed inspection systems at the event.

Meech International showed its latest technological developments to support label production, including CyClean R, Hyperion IonCharge50 (75W) and IonCharge30 (15W), and the Hyperion 960IPS. Meech also exhibited its other Hyperion static control and contact and non-contact web cleaning products.

RotoMetrics has a strong presence in Asia, with manufacturing in Australia and Bangkok – the latter has doubled in size in the past year – as well as a service office and exclusive local distributor in China. RotoMetrics' Keith Laakko reported that the company is seeing increased use of thinner liners in the local market, for which RotoMetrics 'has the ideal tools'. 'There is also an increase in shipping labels, which uses lots of thermal transfer ribbons,' he said. 'Our AccuStar Life flexible die is the longest-lasting die in the market for this application.'

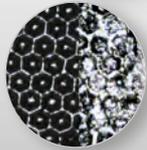


The next edition of Labelexpo Asia will take place in Shanghai in December 2021. Go to www.labelexpo.com for more information



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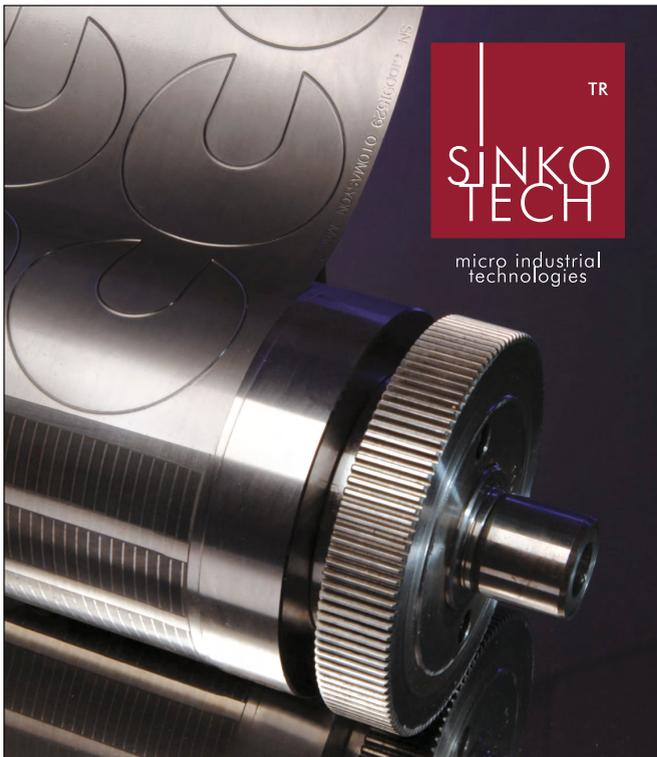
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Four factors shaping today's cosmetics label market

Converters supplying labels to cosmetic brands are under pressure to keep up with new finishing technologies, relay the brand message and meet expectations of eco-conscious consumers. Piotr Wnuk reports

Beauty and personal care products' labels perform a difficult task. They must comply with regulations. They must conform to often small packages of varied and tricky shapes and sizes. They have to perform through the entire supply chain, in the store, and in the consumer's home. Finally, the labels must convince a consumer to reach for the product displayed on a crowded shop shelf. So what factors are shaping today's cosmetics label market?

1. Functionality

According to Angel Harvey, senior product manager for films at Avery Dennison, the most important aspect is to choose the right label material that will work with the variety of pack types in the cosmetics market.

'We offer a range of prime film materials that have increasing levels of conformability and squeezability, and are built to handle applications like tubes as well as tight mandrel or low surface energy applications that can be common in the cosmetics industry,' says Harvey. 'Additionally, due to the nature of the cosmetics market, labels must maintain their integrity and be resistant to moisture and oils and they can't wrinkle, tear or scratch from heavy handling.'

'As the cosmetics, beauty and personal care sectors grow, attractive opportunities are available for narrow web printers,' adds Tony Martin, technical sales manager at Pulse Roll Label Products. 'However, as label designs get ever more complex and sophisticated, there are certain challenges that exist for label and packaging converters. Suppliers of inks and coatings, not forgetting plates, anilox and substrates, can all play an important role in providing solutions for label printing companies active in the cosmetics market. From an ink and coatings perspective, finishing for functionality as well as for embellishment and visual effect, plus achieving accurate brand and product colors, all play a key role in creating the perfect cosmetics label.'

2. Regulatory compliance

The cosmetics industry is highly regulated in terms of what must be included on the label and packaging. A significant amount of information, such as ingredients and consumer warnings, must legally be integrated into the packaging.

'Without sacrificing the brand's aesthetic appeal and identity, peel and read labels provide a valuable solution for brand packaging and labels in the cosmetics, personal-care and beauty-care markets,' comments Martin. 'Allowing room for on-pack brand graphics, additional text can be included in booklet labels that simply peel and then reseal. These multi-layer labels do, however, require an adhesive coating that provides repeatable release and good adhesion to multiple substrates for application on packaging, containers and bottles. Our PurePeel UV flexo peel and read release varnish is formulated to do just that.'

Cosmetics frequently come in smaller packages, resulting in smaller labels – then the print quality and readability of fine text becomes even more critical, as cosmetic

product labeling must be indelible, easily legible and visible. 'High definition inks for HD flexo printing are the recommended choice for narrow web printers to achieve optimal print quality for both readability and eye catching, bold and colorful graphics to help cosmetic brands stand out on the shelf,' adds Martin.

'In the crowded cosmetics market, shelf presence is key for our clients. The quality of the label has an important role to play in representing the quality of the product in the pack,' adds Martin Hughes, head of sales at UK converter Royston Labels. 'One of the key challenges cosmetics brands face is that label colors truly represent the product and they rely on us to consistently match between production runs. We achieve this with our digital color management system.'

“More than 75 percent of purchasing decisions are made at the store shelf. Innovative packaging is therefore essential for product differentiation”





Kat+Kleo packaging and labels designed with Avery Dennison products

3. Shelf appeal

With more than 75 percent of purchasing decisions made at the store shelf, innovative packaging is essential for product differentiation. Also, consumers expect personalized experiences and interaction with the brands they love. 'We see many cosmetics brands choosing a more luxury or premium look and feel. Many want the clear on clear or no-label look, which lends itself to attractive high-end appearances and is available through our prime films portfolio,' says Harvey.

According to Chiara Tomasi, marketing manager at Arconvert, market trends used to develop in a linear, steady fashion. But nowadays the cosmetics industry must keep up with the customer's increasing desire for diversification. 'This incredible variety of products makes it quite challenging, even for renowned brands,

to stand out and end up in the cart,' she says. 'The consumer, facing the shelf or a screen, has to rely on product image, without really knowing the content. Hence the importance of premium packaging.'

'There are two specific moments where the packaging and label design is incredibly important to the brand image – and to our buying decisions,' says Vicki Strull, L&L's branding and design columnist. 'One is when we're shopping in-store or online. The packaging and label design must catch our eye, stand out from the other products, and, in the case of in-store, entice us to pick it up, touch it, and ultimately purchase it. We see foil, substrates, tactile materials, holographic, bright colors or subtle tones, shiny paper or sustainable materials.'

UK-based converter Amberley Labels has produced labels for the personal care sector for over 40 years. It has seen an increasing need for innovation and diversification, with competition intensifying between proprietary and private label brands, and brand owners using more sophisticated marketing techniques to reach their audiences.

'Our customers are always looking for a tactile finish, but where this doesn't suit the technical requirements, embellishment remains key to the label development process,' says David Richards, managing director at Amberley. 'The quality of the papers and films in our market is of such a high standard today that a product meeting the requirements of application and adhesion are a given. It is more about the print technology such as the HP Indigo digital process, offering exacting photographic quality or the embellishment of hot or cold foil, emboss/deboss and raised varnishes that lead the way.'

'Better design and use of premium papers help to achieve a premium look with a small investment,' says Tomasi.



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“Environmental responsibility has become an essential element for cosmetics and personal care brands”

‘A self-adhesive paper, even the most luxurious, won’t exceed 20 percent of the label’s total cost.’

According to Strull these aren’t random choices, because the label and packaging design must also match the brand message and tell the brand story. ‘Label design doesn’t work in isolation; it must work with all the other marketing brands are doing in support of the product. Protecting our bodies includes using non-toxic ingredients such as paraben-free and sulfate-free formulas, and no animal testing. This is a secondary brand story, and it should be told in the look and feel of the label and packaging. So as much as a brand wants to stand out using foils and colors, they must also consider environmentally friendly factors,’ adds Strull.

4. Environment

Beauty pollution is worse than ever, warns Zero Waste Europe, a climate change agency based in Brussels. The sector creates 120 billion units of packaging every year. According to Amberley Labels, one of the biggest challenges is to deliver the most sustainable product packaging available which meets end-user requirements while mirroring the sustainability targets set by the largest players in the market. ‘2025 is a key target for most customers, in a market where a large number of products are placed into the bathroom environment and the move from filmic to paper products isn’t always the solution,’ says Richards. ‘Bathroom products, diffusers

or anything containing essential oils are best suited to filmic label materials and this is where the need for greater access to recycled and more eco-friendly films would be welcomed. Here at Amberley, our starting point is to ensure all our filmic products have a paper liner that is FSC-approved.’

Avery Dennison also focuses on sustainability. ‘The biggest opportunity we see is in clean cosmetics. Brands and consumers have an increased focus on clean ingredients in cosmetics and are working hard to clearly display that on their packaging,’ says Harvey. ‘We believe there will be a continued focus on sustainable packaging and choosing labels in support of the brand’s initiatives. More beauty brands are embracing refills and redesigning their product to make it a luxurious proposition.’

Royston Labels works directly with UK recycling services to offer innovative technologies and clear practical advice for its clients. ‘Manufacturers are looking at how they can move away from single-use plastics and transition their packaging to sustainable materials,’ says Hughes. ‘The consumer market is looking for brands to use packaging which is easily recycled without compromising design appeal.’

Research from McKinley confirms that over 65 percent of consumers will pay more for sustainable products. Environmental responsibility is therefore an essential element for brands. Cosmetics consumers want brands they can trust to protect the planet, the same way as they trust them to protect their bodies.



The Label Academy book ‘Label Embellishments and Special Applications’ explores the processes used for adding decorative finishes and functionality mentioned in this article. www.label-academy.com

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Flexible packaging continues to experience one of the highest growth rates across all printing sectors. Narrow- and mid-web printing using conventional and digital technology has opened up the market for both label converters and new customers entering this industry, who have never previously had a solution for short-run flexible packaging orders.

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Flexible packaging: applications and opportunities

In an extract from the 'Flexible packaging' book published by the Label Academy, Mike Fairley and Chris Ellison, MD of OPM (Labels and Packaging) Group, outline the applications and opportunities in this fast-growing sector

Flexible packaging has one of the highest growth rates across all printing sectors, achieving an annual global growth of close to five percent. For the label converter looking to move into flexible packaging it is interesting to note that all the key end-use markets and the drivers of growth are virtually the same for both labels and flexibles. The label converter will often already be supplying labels to the same customers who are sourcing flexibles.

“There are undoubted opportunities for narrow and mid web label converters to capture a growing portion of the flexibles market that is not suited to wider web CI flexo or gravure presses”

Flexible packaging buyers are certainly now looking for more cost-effective (or added-value) solutions, faster job turnarounds, versioning and variable data, just-in-time and on-demand printing, and reduced inventory costs. Something that the self-adhesive label converter has long been called upon to provide to his customers.

This all means that with flexible packaging run lengths and pack sizes getting smaller, as well as the possibility of adding in-line value and perhaps personalization, multi-versions and variations, there are undoubted opportunities for narrow and mid web label converters (using both flexo and digital technology) to capture a growing portion of the flexibles market that is not suited to wider web CI flexo or gravure presses as they struggle to print the smaller and higher added-value print and finishing run lengths economically.

Indeed, research in the US has already shown that jobs with the shortest run sizes are in pouches of any kind, as well as single serve and one-dose packs and sachets. These are key areas where label converters can most readily enter the flexible packaging market. Narrower and mid web (especially in the 430-450mm range) conventional and digital printing has effectively opened up the market to a whole range of new customers who have never previously had a solution for short-run flexible packaging orders.

Traditionally, lead times for flexible packaging printing on wide format flexo and gravure presses have been anything up to 40 or more days. Today, narrower and mid web flexo and digital production technology has been able to bring this down to nearer ten days, or even less.

Certainly, there are many narrower and mid web in-line style printing presses (servo-driven machines in narrower web widths) today that are now able to handle these shorter flexible packaging pouch and sachet runs that fit within the press web widths. Servo drives and controls have helped overcome the main challenges that have historically plagued the flexo market, such as gear marking, while ever-more sophisticated web handling and temperature control features on narrower web presses have made the handling



The largest market for flexible packaging is in food products and food snacks

and printing of thinner films far more accurate and precise.

The main market sectors for flexible packaging are food and beverages, consumer and household products, pharmaceutical and medical, healthcare, cosmetics and toiletries, retail non-food, industrial applications, nutritional and supplements, agricultural, horticulture and veterinary and pet foods.

Most of these sectors are already well served by the narrow and mid web label converter, so will be well-known to them in terms of market requirements, lead times, service, quality performance and, probably, with many of the same customers or buyers also sourcing flexible packaging. For the label converter therefore, it maybe is not so much about finding new customers, but about understanding and servicing the shorter-run, smaller-size, added-value and niche flexible packaging requirements of existing customers – something which a growing numbers of label converters have been successfully and profitably achieving in recent years.

Food and beverage

Food and beverage flexible packaging, both retail and institutional, is said to account for a near 60 percent of all flexible packaging applications, with some market studies claiming a market share as high as 80 percent. It largely depends on exactly what a specific study includes. Does it include shrink sleeves or not? Does it include industrial applications?

Whichever way the market is analyzed, food and beverages are by far the biggest markets for flexible packaging. Indeed, as they are for labels. They therefore provide the biggest opportunity for the narrow and mid web converter.

In particular, the rising demand for snack and convenience foods in small or single size portions, increased spending on bakery and cereal bars, short-run ready meals and coffee or hot chocolate sticks and pouches, dehydrated and dry foods (instant soup, gravy and sauce packets, rice, food mixes), snack foods and nuts, spice foods, chocolates and sweets, ice-cream novelties, bakery products such as cookies (biscuits), cakes and chips (crisps).

Stand-up gusseted pouches and pillow pouches are widely used as flexible packaging products in the food sector. Pillow pouches have also witnessed high gains due to their increasing usage in the food, beverages and dairy industries. Low cost, high sealing ability and cost-efficient transportation are some of the key properties positively influencing product penetration.

Stand-up pouches have become one of the most preferred flexible packaging products, owing to their versatility and features such as high barrier properties against oxygen and moisture, low material consumption, and cost-effectiveness.

Thermally processed foods are packed in these products to extend the shelf life. Other flexible packaging products used in the food sector include retort pouches, four side seal pouches, a wide variety of lidding, and portion packs. Lidding is also widely used for yogurt, cream and dessert pots.

Lidding films not only seal and protect the product but can perform an important decorative function. Most lidding films are designed to be peelable to allow easy access to pack contents.

Pre-printed wrappers and decorative bands are another effective way for flexible pack branding and packaging of foodstuffs. Flow wrappings are typically used on confectionery, sweets, butter packs, etc. In many cases products are completely over wrapped in paper or film to form an airtight seal.

A steadily shifting preference for aesthetically appealing food products is also fueling flexible packaging market demand. Increasing extended shelf life requirements along with preservation from contamination also open new avenues for industry growth in the food and beverages sector, along with rising consumer consciousness pertaining to food safety and hygiene.

Health, beauty and personal care

The healthcare, cosmetics, toiletries and personal care markets have long provided a wealth of opportunities for the label converter. Now, they also offer the opportunity to diversify into the production of high quality sachets, pouches and packs for many different – often shorter run lengths of multiple versions and variations – types of flexible packaging for the whole health and personal care market that includes toiletries, hygiene, shampoo, liquid soaps, creams, lotions, gels, cosmetics products, beauty products, wipes and packs.

Flexible packaging technology is one of the key sectors predicted to witness significant growth over the coming years owing to growing middle-class populations, rising disposable incomes, and

“Stand-up pouches have become one of the most preferred flexible packaging products, owing to their versatility and features such as high barrier properties against oxygen and moisture, low material consumption, and cost-effectiveness”



A ready meal lidding film application. Source: OPM Group

the escalating demand for all types of healthcare, cosmetics and toiletries products. New product launches by major brands in emerging markets (such as in India and China) are also projected to motivate the growth of the global cosmetics sector.

Ongoing innovations and applications in this sector which are predicted to continue to drive growth opportunities for label converters include all kinds of creams and gels (used extensively by the cosmetics, personal care and haircare industries), impregnated hand and tissue wipes, nutricosmetics, travel-sized creams, bath soaks, non-free-flow powders such as talcum powder – many of these applications being in sachets.

Pharmaceutical, nutritional, nutraceutical, veterinary and medical

The pharmaceutical and related sectors are variously recorded as the second biggest application section for flexible packaging, with both trends in healthy living and increasing incidences of lifestyle related diseases among the working population expected to boost the demand for pharmaceutical, nutraceutical and medical items – which in turn will optimistically affect the flexible packaging and narrower web markets of tomorrow.

This sector is quite diverse in its array of products, which today ranges through all kinds of pharmaceutical products and ointments to weight loss and dietary supplements, sports nutrition supplements such as protein drink mixes and shakes, pre-workout powders, energy bars, foods for special dietary needs, powdered energy or vitamin drinks, spices, effervescent tablets, capsules and powders.

Single-dose packaging such as single-use pouches and stickpacks provide today's on-the-go consumers of nutritional and nutraceutical products with portability and convenience.

Stickpack packaging in particular, is widely used by many leading nutritional brands for products such as drink mix supplements and protein powders, especially offered with easy open or tear propagation or laser scoring.

Animal care

A PCI Wood Mackenzie study of flexible packaging in Europe identified pet food as being the best performing flexible packaging



Flexible packaging wraps and sachets used for beauty and personal care. Source: OPM Group



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Single-use supplement and nutritional pack. Source: OPM Group



Pet and animal products. Source: OPM Group

“The more successful narrower and mid web flexible packaging converters today are creating a new type of service model that makes the selection and purchasing of high quality flexible packaging in smaller sizes and shorter runs as fast and easy as possible”

category. Pouches for pet foods and pet products are identified as the fastest-growing segment of the animal care market, due to them being easy to carry, store and re-seal to ensure freshness.

Within the whole animal care sector are a wide range of products suitable for printing by label converters that include pet foods, pet care products, pet treats, veterinary powders and animal products, wild bird and wild animal feeds – with a great many short-runs of single serve pouches and gusset bags being produced on a regular basis for wet, semi-wet and dry pet foods.

Pet food packaging can be a challenge. It needs to prevent spillage, stand-up to multiple use, and maybe offer convenience features, such as re-closure or handle options.

Retail non-food, home and garden

Depending on the particular market study viewed, the whole non-food, home, DIY and garden sector accounts for up to 10 percent of the flexible packaging market, with products that include household items, laundry detergents, soaps, bath salts, under-the-sink packs, paints, pastes and plaster, lawn care, fertilizer, pesticides, grass seed, compost and bark.

Many of these products are packed in large bags and not suitable for the narrow and mid web converter, but smaller-sized flexible pouches and bags – both stand-up

and flat – are also widely used and do provide an opportunity for single-use situations, such as flower and vegetable seeds.

Industrial applications

With some studies showing industrial applications for flexible packaging being as high as six percent of the market, there are undoubtedly some opportunities for the label converter, especially for companies that are already supplying labels into this sector and have potential customers that would also buy stand-up pouches and bags or sachet products from them.

Flexible packaging for industrial applications may require custom-made bag and pouch films and laminated rollstock specifically constructed to handle industrial powders, granular chemicals, lubricants, agricultural products and other such applications.

Making the most of the opportunities

As a number of label converters are already proving, flexible package printing represents an opportunity for PS label converters to widen their product portfolio, compete on short-runs and smaller packs, and utilize high quality flexo, digital, combination and hybrid press technology (plus in-line lamination, added value embellishing or cold foiling), to increase the range and variety of high quality printed products produced.

Put together, the right width narrow and mid web presses, both conventional and digital, now offer label and flexible packaging converters the opportunity to target new short-run flexible packaging applications, multiple SKUs, to drive differentiation and personalization, offer faster turnaround and quicker delivery and reduced stockholding – and become more profitable.

As can be seen, the possible opportunities cover almost all types of consumer food, pharmaceutical, health and beauty, nutritional, garden, DIY, leisure and other retail market applications, as well as increasingly moving in to the industrial, automotive, agricultural, horticultural and medical sectors. Packaging types open to the label converter for this variety of products and applications are largely found or seen as being in stand-up pouches, lay flat pouches, sachets, lidding, and roll flow-wrapping materials.

But it's not just about the print opportunities, successful converters targeting the flexible packaging market are particularly finding new business opportunities with the independent and more regional brands, helping these smaller and medium-sized company buyers to simplify how they buy their flexible packaging, and guiding them in understanding the specifications, tolerances, materials, origination, color technology, inks, and print requirements.

Quite simply, the more successful narrower and mid web flexible packaging converters today are creating a new type of service model that makes the selection and purchasing of high quality flexible packaging in smaller sizes and shorter runs as fast and easy as possible.



For more information, go to www.label-academy.com



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- An inside look at **print quality scoring from a brand that requires it**, agencies who monitor it, and printers who control it
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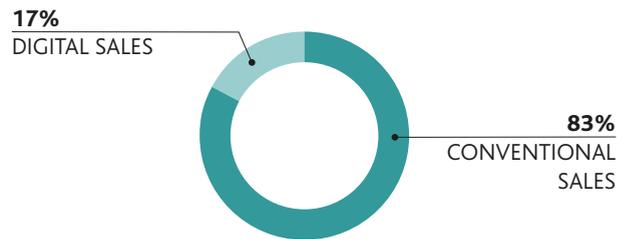
More than 80 TLMI converter members participated in a 2019 Market Watch Survey compiled by LPC

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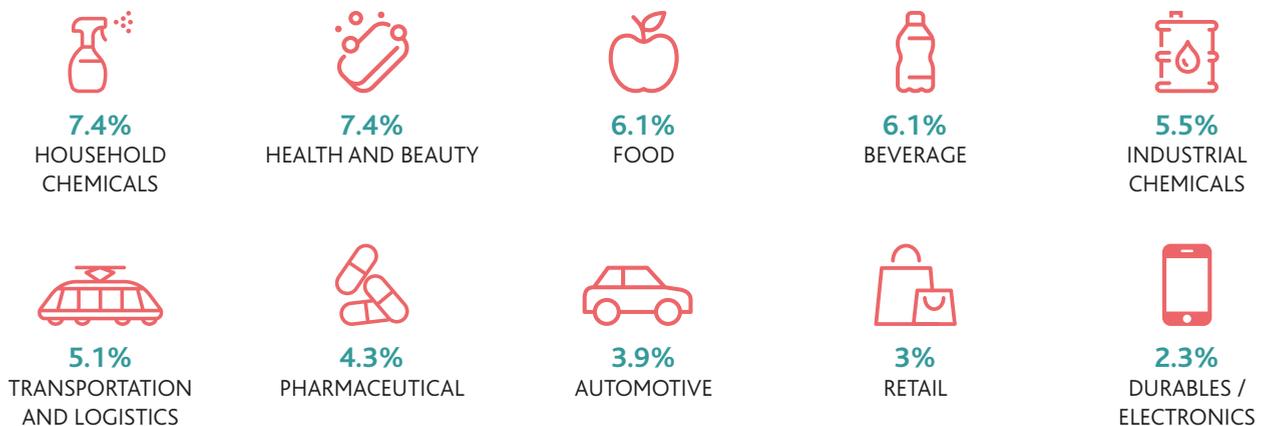
6.9%

Compared to 6% for 2018

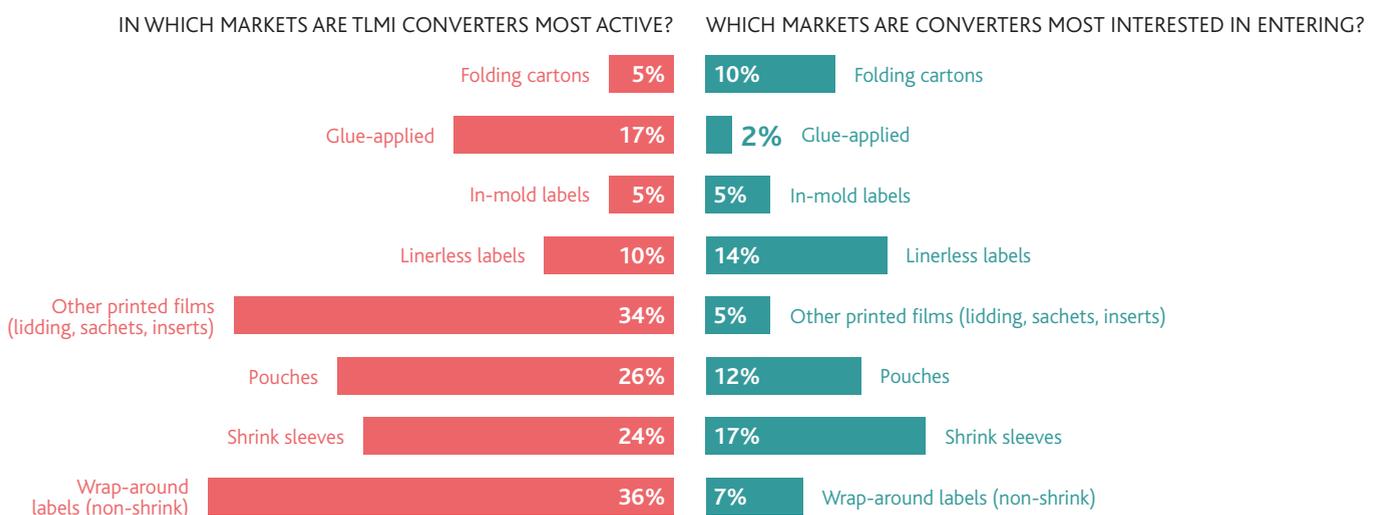
Annual revenues by format



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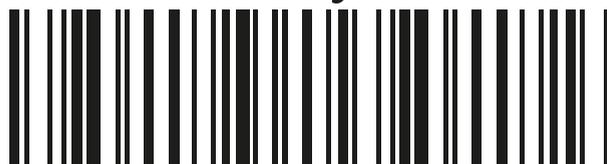
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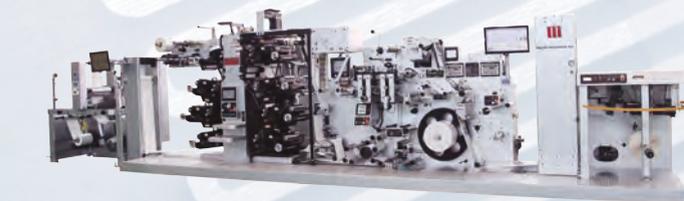


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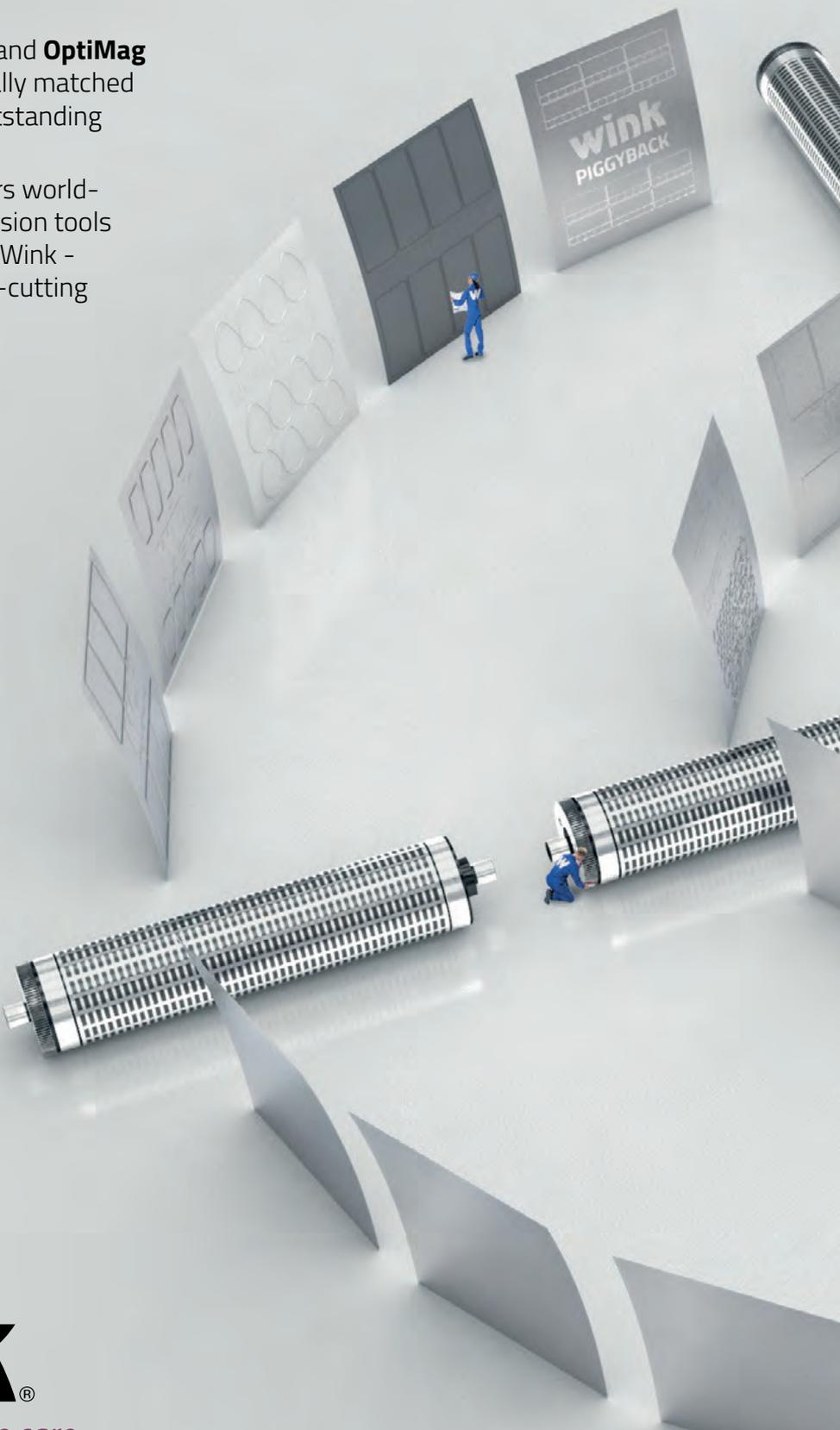
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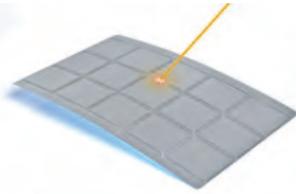
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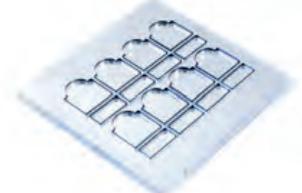
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