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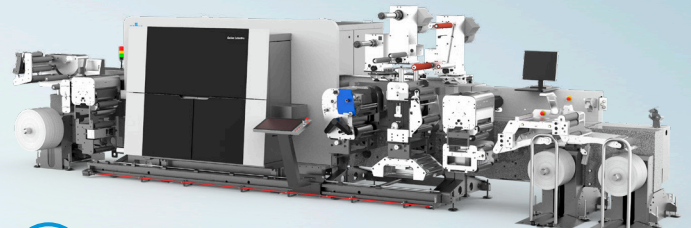
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D2 New 7-colour direct digital roll to roll inkjet printing system



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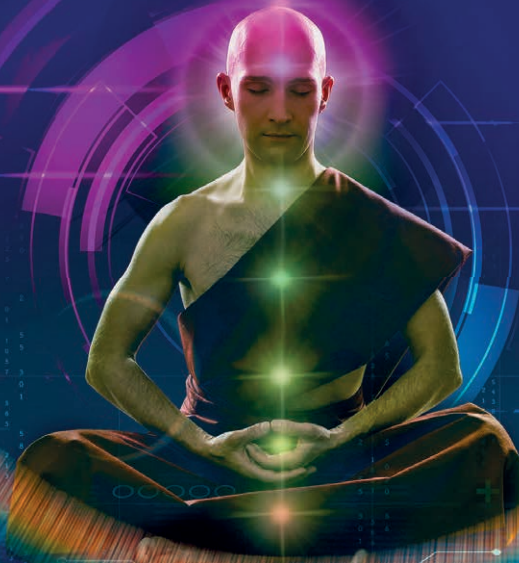
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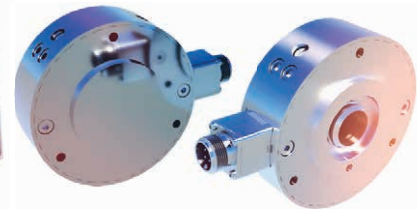
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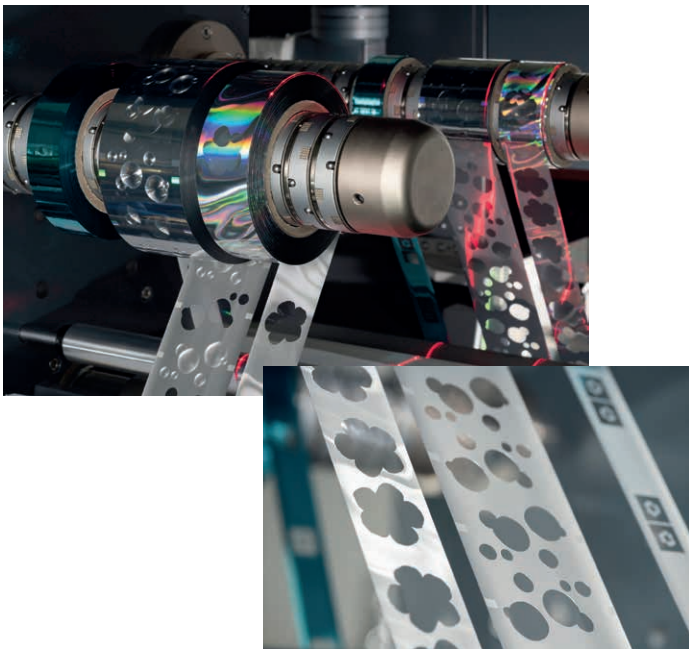
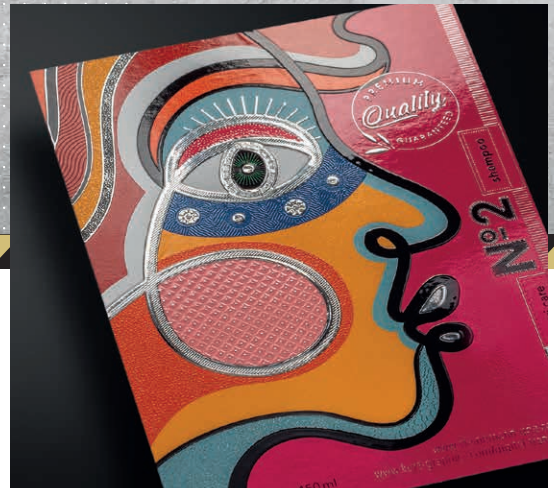


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L&L

– Meet the team

Labels & Labeling is the leading global information source for the label and package print converting industries with an editorial team and network of correspondents spread throughout the world



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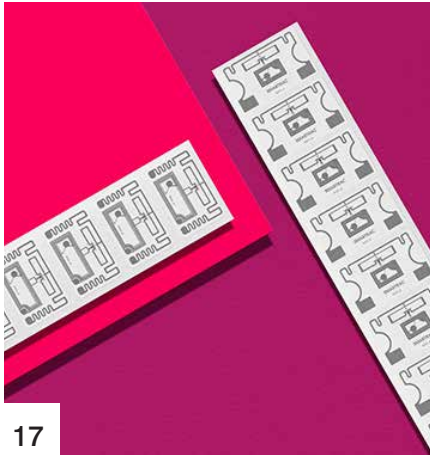
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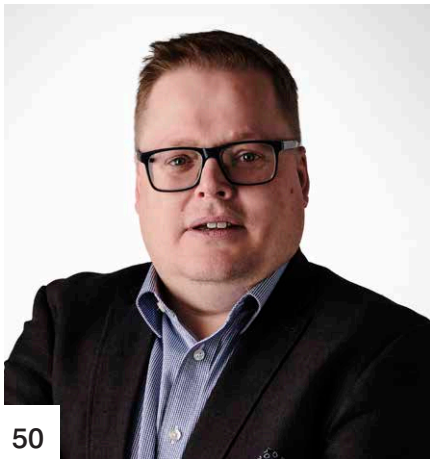
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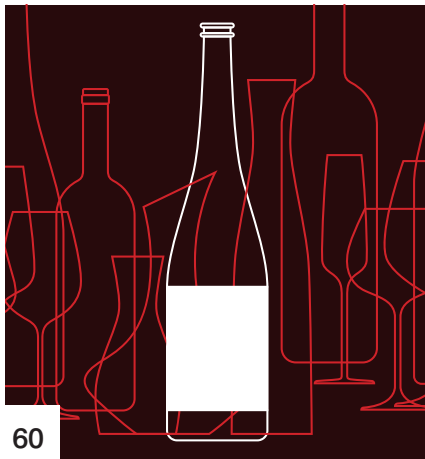
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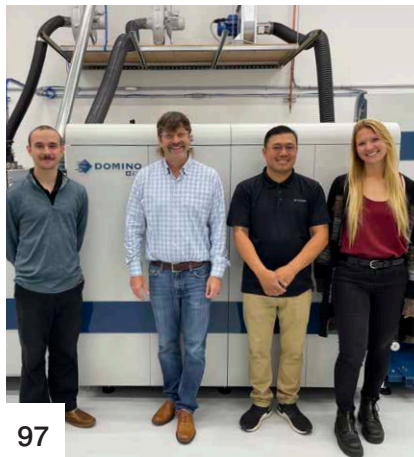
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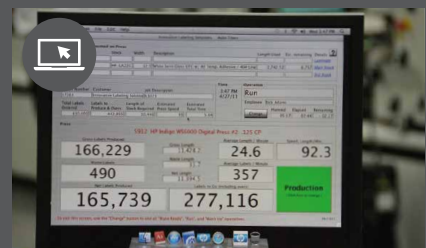
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Robert Kohl discusses software for printing tool management (video)
Owner of The Grey Elephant talks about products for ERP, pre-press, press and tooling



Read L&L issue 1 online (magazine)
Previous issue of L&L is now available to read online



Job costing and shop floor data collection (Label Academy)
All you need to know about costing and invoicing processes when using MIS



Adding value to pre-press (online exclusive)
Mike Rottenborn, CEO of Hybrid Software Group, discusses pre-press automation

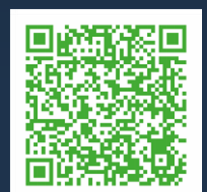
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L&L looks back (L&L issue 6, 2012)



P29 L&L visited Etiquetas Anro, a Mexican label converter run by the Silva family. The company purchased its first printing press 25 years earlier – a Mark Andy 810 that was still producing 2-color pricing labels. The second generation had taken over and reinvented the business by acquiring new technologies and adopting modern production techniques.



P43 Sustainability was on everyone's mind at Brigl and Bergmeister's ninth annual Label Conference, which attracted 180 printers and industry suppliers from 27 countries. CEO Michael Sabltanig highlighted the need to make companies more sustainable in a time of global economic instability and tumbling stock markets.



P51 L&L reported on leading Spanish converter Germark which worked with industry partners to help a shampoo manufacturer recapture lost market share. The labels featured three layers. The first was peeled off to reveal a middle layer of die-cut stickers which can be removed and replaced whilst the primary brand label remained intact.



P72 James Quirk visited Cochabamba-based Flexo Print, the first narrow web converter in Bolivia, which was taking advantage of a gap in the market as local end users were used to importing their labels from abroad.

See our online archive at labelsandlabeling.com/magazine/archives

The next phase of digitalization

Editor's note

One of my early assignments as a junior reporter for Labels & Labeling magazine, some sixteen or seventeen years ago, was covering an event in London which featured representatives from HP Indigo and Gallus debating whether the future of label printing lay with digital or conventional printing technology.

At that time, this discussion was often framed as a debate – 'digital versus flexo' – and positions adopted by technology suppliers and industry commentators alike were frequently absolutist: one would ultimately triumph over the other. Since then, the technologies have settled amicably alongside each other, each with its own advantages and niches, to the extent that it is rare to find a label converting operation that cannot call upon both of them.

Indeed, like all great rivals,

“How this new generation of digital presses reframes the relationship between digital and flexo technology will be fascinating to watch”

each technology has spurred the other to even greater heights. As digital presses gained market share thanks to quick changeovers and adept handling of shorter runs, flexo fought back by incorporating digital technology to automate job set-up, increase productivity and reduce waste.

Now it is digital's turn to lean on conventional technology. One of the key topics covered in this issue of Labels & Labeling, my last as editor, is the emergence of a new generation of digital presses which, as Andy Thomas-Emans writes in his column, are closing the speed and productivity gap with flexo.

As his coverage of recent press launches from HP Indigo, Durst and Bobst shows, these machines 'can reach new levels of productivity broadly comparable with narrow web flexography'. They do so by leaning on advanced and automated conventional technology to convert the digitally printed label. 'There remains a close synergy between digital and flexo/conventional technology, with advances in conventional technology automation reflected directly in the productivity of the digital press,' he writes.

Interviewed for our Q&A feature in this issue, David

Richards, managing director of UK converter Amberley Labels, a digital pioneer now part of Coveris Group, is well-placed to have a view on the future of digital and flexo technology. The majority of Amberley's output might be digital, and Richards admits to always assuming the company would one day become a fully digital operation, yet he is no longer convinced by his own prediction and is effusive in his praise for flexo's ability to handle high-speed, long-run work.

How this new generation of digital presses reframes the relationship between digital and flexo technology will be fascinating to watch.

James Quirk
Group managing editor

News



Print Against War is a new initiative from the Meaningful Print Foundation

Print Against War delivers support to Ukraine

New initiative from Meaningful Print Foundation

Print Against War, a new initiative to provide support and assistance to the citizens of Ukraine, is calling upon printers, publishers, and suppliers to the printing and packaging industry to join forces to support their colleagues during this incredibly difficult time.

Print Against War, a non-profit initiative of the Meaningful Print Foundation, will help Ukrainian printing and packaging companies continue to operate, or provide support when they can again start up their productions. Together, Print Against War and the Meaningful Print Foundation are designed to mobilize the global printing and packaging industry to help stakeholders cope with wars, natural disasters, epidemics/pandemics, and other damaging and disruptive occurrences.

In addition, the Meaningful Print Foundation will work on long-term projects empowering the printing industry to make a positive impact on the planet by addressing gender equality, carbon neutralization, sustainable manufacturing, education for students in need, and inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce.

The program is open to offers of help from vendors, printers, and any other printing community members. To encourage the collection of donations from a broad base of users, Print Against War proposes that online printing and packaging businesses add a voluntary checkout donation option to their e-shops.

This will allow a broad base of designers, agencies, print-service providers and individuals around the world to contribute. In addition, direct donations or offer other forms of material help are also encouraged (for example, provide consumables, paper for free or at special prices). Finally, Print Against War is working to create alliances between printers in the European Union and those in Ukraine so that the former can share jobs with the latter.

The Meaningful Print Foundation is setting up an application system to make resource allocation transparent. Through its supervisory board, it will evaluate case by case the eligibility of the applicant and the goodness of the projects to be supported. All funded projects will be made visible. Lorenzo Villa, co-founder of the Meaningful Print Foundation, said: 'Beyond the humanitarian efforts that individuals, families, and businesses are making to support the Ukrainian population and refugees, we believe that an industry-wide response is essential.'

Learn more and join the Print Against War global community at printagainstar.org.



Olympus Print Group becomes All4Labels' first UK subsidiary

All4Labels acquires UK converter Olympus Print

First UK subsidiary for global converting group

All4Labels Global Packaging Group has acquired Olympus Print Group, one of the leading label manufacturers in the UK. Olympus Print Group will become the first subsidiary of All4Labels in the UK.

The company offers labels for a range of markets with a focus on personal care as well as wine and spirits and beer. The former owners will become co-shareholders of the All4Labels Group and will continue to manage the business. Terms and conditions of the transaction were not disclosed.

Adrian Tippenhauer, CEO of All4Labels, said: 'This transaction represents a new milestone for All4Labels as we will get access to the important and dynamic UK market with a strong partner who can cater existing and future customers with high-quality label solutions. The acquisition marks the beginning of our strategy to build a leading business unit in the UK through investments in organic and acquisitive growth.'

Steve Cartwright, director at Olympus Print Group, said: 'After 28 years of building the Olympus brand, we are proud of our reputation for technical expertise, high quality and strong focus on customer service. The decision to join a partnership with a global, likeminded and innovative packaging group was made easy as All4Labels shares the same strong values as Olympus Print Group. The full senior management team and employees look forward to working with All4Labels in the future.'

Grafiche Pizzi joins All4Labels

All4Labels and Petrone Group signed an agreement to make Grafiche Pizzi, a pharma packaging company in Italy, part of the All4Labels family. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Antonio Iannone, president at All4Labels Italy, said: 'We are extremely pleased and proud to welcome the entire Grafiche Pizzi team as new members of the All4Labels Global Packaging Group. We believe that All4Labels' global footprint and Grafiche Pizzi's experience will strengthen our diversified platform across products, markets and regions. With Grafiche Pizzi's additional capabilities and long-term expertise we aim to consolidate our presence in the pharma industry, and to support our strategic, global growth.'

Grafiche Pizzi has operated exclusively in the pharmaceuticals, healthcare and cosmetics segment for more than 50 years, producing packaging inserts, brochures, and folding cartons.

News



The investment is in Avery Dennison's facilities in Champ-sur-Drac, France, and Luxembourg

Avery Dennison invests EUR 60 million in Europe

Major investment to expand capacity in France and Luxembourg

Avery Dennison has made two major investments aimed at expanding its manufacturing capacity and improving factory efficiency in the European market. The company said it is one year into a three-year, EUR 45 million expansion of its facilities at Champ-sur-Drac, France. Enhancements include five new logistical buildings covering more than 8,700sqm, a new automated warehouse, and an additional high-speed hotmelt adhesive coater, scheduled to come online in 2024.

At its Luxembourg facility specializing in labels made with acrylic emulsion adhesives, Avery Dennison has undertaken an EUR 15 million project to redesign operational flow and add a new emulsion specialty coater. The coater is expected to come online during the first quarter of 2023.

'Our investments at Champs-sur-Drac and Luxembourg will allow us to meet customer demand now and into the future by freeing capacity throughout our European manufacturing network,' said Tim Presto, vice president of supply chain and operations for EMENA at Avery Dennison.

The expansion at both Luxembourg and Champs-sur-Drac is expected to enhance the reliability of service for customers by strengthening the company's network of manufacturing plants and distribution centers across Europe. According to Avery Dennison, these expansions will also take it closer to fully embracing Industry 4.0 practices by increasing efficiency, reducing operating costs, and freeing employees to perform safer, higher-value tasks.

UPM Raflatac Tampere resumes production

UPM Raflatac and the Finnish Paperworker's Union have signed a collective labor agreement on April 22, 2022. As a result, the Paperworker's Union's strike at the Tampere factory in Finland ended on the same day and employees returned to work on April 25. Antti Jääskeläinen, executive vice president at UPM Raflatac, said: 'We are pleased that a new business-specific agreement is now reached with the Finnish Paperworkers' Union, enabling us to better serve our customers in the future. The agreement allows for additional production flexibility at our Tampere factory and gives us the ability to better respond to demand peaks. Increased capacity utilization also opens future opportunities for employment.' UPM Raflatac said the agreements between the Paperworkers' Union and other UPM businesses will result in improved supply security for the global label industry.

Fortis acquires Profecta Labels

Fortis Solutions has acquired Profecta Labels, a Canadian flexo and digital manufacturer of labels and flexible packaging. Fortis now has more than 1,100 employees across 17 manufacturing sites.

News in brief

Brook + Whittle makes further acquisitions

Brook + Whittle has agreed to acquire the Custom Labels Group within Cenveo Worldwide Limited, enhancing its position in e-commerce and digital label printing in North America.

Brook + Whittle has also acquired Diamond Flexible Packaging in Northbrook, Illinois. Diamond is a third-generation, family-owned business with over 90 years of experience producing high-quality flexible packaging. The acquisition strengthens Brook + Whittle's wide web printing capabilities.

PCMC opens innovation center

Paper Converting Machine Company (PCMC), part of Barry-Wehmiller, has opened a new Packaging Innovation Center that will serve as a resource for training, demonstrations, trials, and research and development. Located at PCMC's headquarters in Green Bay, the facility features the latest equipment for plate mounting, anilox roll laser cleaning, and central impression and in-line flexographic printing.

PCMC's partners at the center include 3M, APR, AV Flexologic, Clean Planet, Fox Valley Flexo Services, Harper Corporation, Interflex Laser Engravers, INX International Ink, Miraclon, Rossini, Sandon Global, tesa, Wikoff Color and XSYS, in addition to Hudson-Sharp, which is part of PCMC.

Rotometal in management buyout

Rotometal, a Polish manufacturer of magnetic cylinders, printing cylinders, anvils and rotary cutting units, has completed a management buyout from Highlander Partners, which had the controlling interest in the company since 2017. CEO Grzegorz Dołbniak has become the controlling shareholder. 'As a business, we'd like to thank Highlander Partners for its support and trust in us since 2017. Highlander Partners invested heavily in new and innovative products, expanding manufacturing capabilities and building a new international sales team with direct coverage for key markets across Europe, the US, and Asia to get to this point,' said the company.

News



Optikett is Optimum Group's 17th member

Optikett becomes part of Optimum Group

German converter is group's 17th member

German self-adhesive label converter Optikett has become the 17th member of Optimum Group. The current management remains in place within the organization.

The addition of Optikett fits well within the European growth ambitions of Optimum Group and will significantly expand its presence in Germany. As part of the Optimum Group, Optikett will benefit from increased capacity, a wider range of self-adhesive labels and flexible packaging and greater delivery reliability as part of an international printing group.

For Optimum Group, the addition of Optikett expands its footprint in Germany and strengthens its position as one of the leading players in northwestern Europe in the field of labels and flexible packaging. With the addition of Optikett, the group now consists of 17 member companies located in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Denmark, with each member company having its product and market combination.

'For Optikett, the acquisition by Optimum Group represents the next step. Scale is becoming increasingly important in our industry: to achieve efficiency gains, but much more to supply our customers professionally, flexibly, and reliably,' said Daniel Ostendorf, managing director of Optikett.

Agfa reenters packaging print market

Agfa-Gevaert Group has acquired Inca Digital Printers to strengthen its position in high-speed digital printing and bring an additional focus on packaging printing markets. Inca Digital Printers is a Cambridge, UK-based developer and manufacturer of advanced high-speed printing and production technologies for sign and display applications as well as for the rapidly growing digital printing market for packaging. Inca brings a complementary portfolio of printing technologies and a solid technological platform to launch single-pass printing presses for the packaging market. 'The Inca acquisition is a major step in Agfa's transformation. Digital printing is a profitable growth engine for the group with tremendous potential that will be further accelerated by the addition of Inca,' commented Pascal Juárez, president and CEO of the Agfa-Gevaert Group.

Wacker opens Michigan innovation center

Wacker Chemie has opened a new regional Innovation Center in Michigan, which will develop high-margin biotech and silicone specialties for high-tech applications and serve as the headquarters of Wacker Chemical Corporation, responsible for North and Central America. The research campus is part of the company's growth campaign announced at the end of March. Wacker intends to significantly expand its market position in the USA and other target regions through investments in research and development, additional production capacities, and accelerated growth. The investment for the research building, which also acts as an administrative center, amounts to around EUR 40 million.

INX launches venture capital fund

INX International Ink has established INX Venture Capital to make minority investments in technology and materials science start-ups with strategic relevance to the printing inks and coatings value chain. INX Venture Capital will be a USD 50m investment program focusing on sustainability and circular economy technologies, digital printing, business and manufacturing automation, and services for brand owners. The fund is jointly run with Touchdown Ventures, a providers of corporate venture capital managed services.

LemuGroup acquires Mida

Converting equipment specialist LemuGroup has acquired fellow Spanish manufacturer Mida Maquinaria. Founded in 1993, Mida Maquinaria manufactures equipment for printing and digital finishing and embellishment. In recent years, it has specialized in the high-end wine label, cosmetic and nutraceutical label sectors. Jokin Iruretagoiena, sales director for the Label Division at LemuGroup, said: 'This is a very important step in positioning LemuGroup as a key integral supplier of solutions for the label industry worldwide.'

Durst appoints Africa distributor

Durst has appointed Masaka Business Solutions, based in Casablanca, Morocco, as a distributor for its Tau RSC digital label press in north and west Africa. Masaka Business Solutions is headed by Houssine Chekkar, who has more than 20 years of expertise in the printing industry and has held senior positions at Xerox and HP Indigo in the region.

Xaar expands Swedish tech center

Xaar's new technology center in Sweden was opened by CEO John Mills at a ceremony held along with chief operations officer, Graham Tweedale, and members of Xaar's advanced applications and technologies team. Based at Campus Solna in Stockholm, and at nearly 400sqm, it is twice the size of the previous facility and houses a state-of-the-art laboratory with new equipment, offices and meeting spaces.

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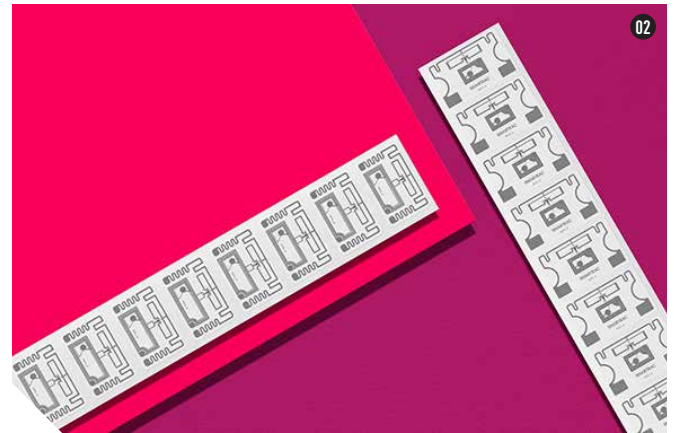
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New Products



01 Omega SRI3 finishing system
A B Graphic

ABG has launched the next evolution of its Omega SRI label finishing system. Which is said to deliver high performance slitting, rewinding and inspection, the updated model offers a range of new and adjustable options to meet future requirements. With a larger unwind diameter at 830mm, and increased nip roller wraparound, waste is reduced and tension control improved, preventing slippage and interweaving of the web and providing unparalleled versatility. The upgraded features, which include a lower splice table, allow operators greater flexibility and increased ergonomic comfort, thereby improving productivity and efficiency. The SRI3 provides 100 percent print inspection with ABG's fleyeVision camera system. Other enhancements include an arm that enables a right handed operator to easily cut the reel, and a tape holder, which is built-in as

per ABG's Digicon range. Manual slitting can now be upgraded to autoslit, which was not possible on the previous SRI, and the rewind module can be taken out and replaced with a turret at a later stage.

02 DF inlays
Avery Dennison

Avery Dennison has launched AD Medio Web DF EM4425 and AD Web DF EM4425 V12, two additions to its expanding dual-frequency (DF) range of RFID inlays, designed for brand protection, supply chain management and customer engagement. AD Medio Web DF has been developed for pharmaceuticals and healthcare applications, while AD Web DF focuses on retail use cases. Based on Avery Dennison's AD Web RAIN RFID product line, both products combine excellent performance with a unique dual-frequency capability. Operating in both HF and UHF RFID frequency

ranges, they offer significant cost advantages compared to using two separate, single-frequency inlays. Dual-frequency capabilities provide all-in-one technology for inventory management and product authentication, enabling a consistent customer experience regardless of channel.

03 Extended SurePress range
Epson

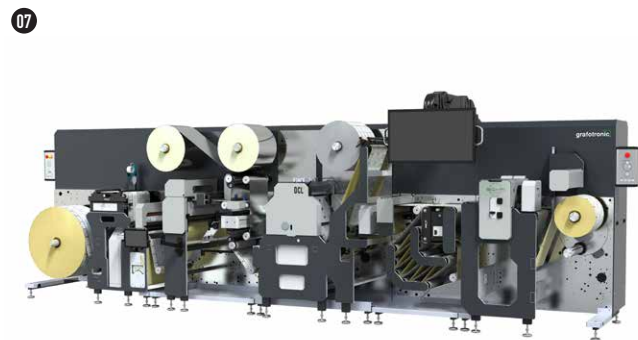
Epson has extended its SurePress series of digital label presses by announcing two developments. First is the addition of a new SurePress L-6534VW with orange ink, offering an extended color gamut. The other is an upgrade to the SurePress 4000 series with the new L-4733A/AW models. With a new ink system and refinements to the drying process, this new press will deliver higher productivity on filmic substrates. The new SurePress L-6534VW with orange ink complements the existing L-6534VW with digital varnish and can deliver

print speeds up to 50m/min for high-volume applications. By using CMYK plus orange ink to widen the color gamut, plus a high-opacity white ink included as standard, users can reproduce spot colors more accurately. An upgrade to the 4000 series is the introduction of the SurePress L-4733A/AW. Its AQ ink system has been further developed to offer improved wettability. The SurePress L-4733A/AW uses a CMYKOG ink set, offering a large color gamut for excellent color accuracy and saturation, and the inclusion of white and uncoated black inks expands substrate flexibility. Newly automated maintenance features further reduce downtime to improve productivity and reliability.

04 Gold and silver metallic toners
Zeikon

Zeikon has introduced gold and silver metallic toners for the Cheetah 2.0 Series. The new gold and silver are part

New Products



of Xeikon's Creative Toner series. Launched a few years ago, the first Creative Colors were Palladium Silver and Matt Silver. Xeikon is expanding this toner family with new Metallic Gold and Metallic Silver as digital alternatives to flexo-printed gold or silver that measure 6–8 on the Flop Index (a measure of the reflectance of a metallic color). The new metallic colors slot into the fifth color station on the Xeikon Cheetah press, meaning the addition of metallics can take place during the main printing step. This also eliminates any secondary processes, as dry toner technology allows for hassle-free color swapping by simply replacing the toner dosing unit and the developer unit. Furthermore, there is no extensive cleaning process required; a quick brush with a vacuum cleaner between jobs is sufficient to be up and running again quickly.

05 RotoMetrics AccuAdjust dual adjust anvil

Maxcess

Maxcess has launched the RotoMetrics AccuAdjust dual adjust anvil, featuring easy-to-use digital controllers on the front of the die stack, quick installation into a press and automation-ready motors that ship with the unit itself. 'We designed the new AccuAdjust from the ground-up with our global R&D team to give customers an intuitive and powerful tool to control liner variation that our customers are seeing on a daily basis,' said Nadine Powell, global product manager for RotoMetrics, a Maxcess Brand. 'With shortages in skilled labor, liner variation changes and material supply issues that every press operator is facing, the new AccuAdjust will be a welcomed solution to cut perfect labels, while reducing scrap from common liners such as PET, glassine and kraft.'

06 SP1 flexo press

Etirama

The new Etirama SP1 is a flexo press up to 350mm wide and has a modern and efficient mechanical transmission system, which is composed of cardan shafts and gear boxes manufactured in Japan, claimed to offer high precision and free from periodic preventive maintenance. The equipment is claimed to emit low noise. It includes features such as a rail system for cold stamping/lamination and touch screen for general control of the machine with remote connection.

07 IQ and The One

Grafotronic

Featuring four high-definition cameras, automation features and controlling software, Grafotronic IQ is a workflow automation suite that enables the Grafotronic DCL modular finisher to perform job changes autonomously, handling all job settings automatically. It works with a set of cameras

that monitor the web and automatically adjusts what's needed. Sensors are automatically moved into the right position without any manual interference. The One single anvil design is superior to twin anvil systems when it comes to set up times and waste at job change, according to the company. The One die-cutting module can be set up within just 30cm and is developed to handle short runs as well.

08 NX series UV LED curing system

Hoya

Hoya has launched the NX series, its latest air-cooled UV LED curing system for flexo printing, featuring innovative digital features such as status indicators, neuron microchip network system, digital AC/DC converter and data logging. The NX Series features an intuitive control panel that contains easy-to-use symbols



Air-cooled UV Curing System



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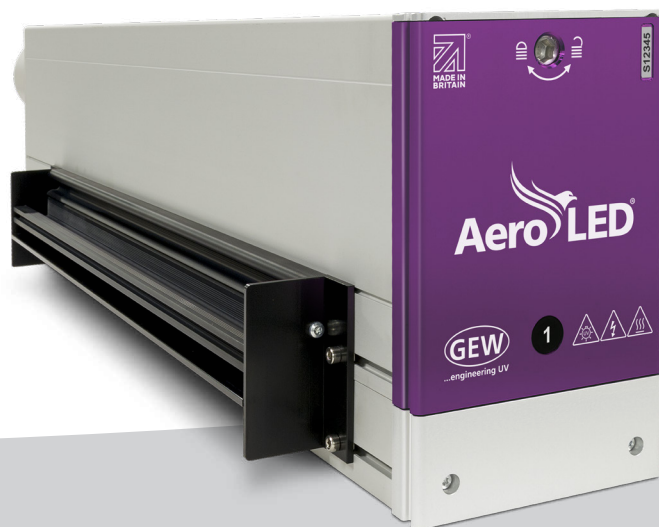


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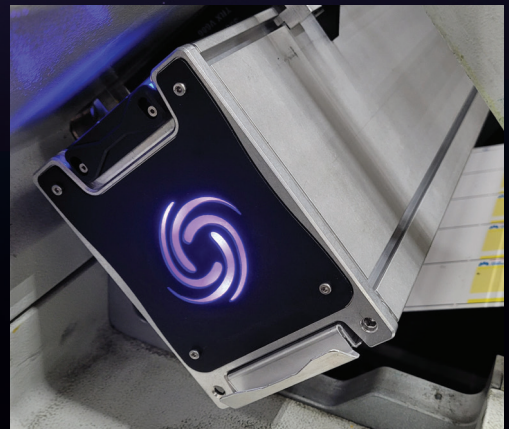


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New Products



and diagnostic tools, offers a space-saving design, reduces electrical cost and eliminates heavy metals bringing additional advantages to retrofit installations.

09 Integrated corona treating system

Enercon
Enercon has launched a fully integrated, turnkey corona treating system that improves surface energy of films for printing, coating, and laminating for narrow web applications up to 32in. This free-standing, off-line surface treating system includes unwind, rewind, corona or plasma treater, power supply and high voltage transformer. The turnkey option is available for narrow web applications up to 32in wide, featuring Enercon's CoronaFlex for standard corona treating applications. The system is also available with Enercon's Atmospheric Plasma3 treater.

10 Recyclable pouch Sun Chemical and HP Indigo

Sun Chemical and HP Indigo have developed stand-up pouches printed on the HP Indigo 25K digital press using monomaterial polyethylene (PE) and polypropylene (PP) substrates and laminated with Sun Chemical SunLam. The all-PP pouch was certified by Germany's Institute Cyclos-HTP after being tested for a recyclability rate of 96 percent. The PE and PP laminated structures were produced with HP Indigo using SunLam Adhesives ZA-1000+ZB-301 on standard mono materials with lamination on the Nordmeccanica Super Simplex E-800 solventless laminator.

Esko Release 22.03

Esko

The release includes new features such as next-generation Color Preflight with Automation Engine and ArtPro+, assembly

instructions with ArtiosCAD claimed to reduce assembly time by up to 20 percent, Native Apple Silicon support for ArtPro+, DeskPack and Studio, ArtPro+ Digital Edition for digital print workflows and improved WebCenter user experience and reporting.

11 Security label for vials

Schreiner MediPharm

The new label wraps around the vial up to the level of the cap. To open the vial, a label-integrated tear strip must be peeled off and cannot be resealed. A warning message clearly indicating that the vial has been opened also emerges. As an optional, additional layer of protection, this first-opening indication can be boosted by a void effect feature in which previously invisible lettering or symbols separate from an indicator field. For enhanced security, verification features for proof of authenticity also can be incorporated into the label.

12 INXShield coatings

INX International Ink

INXShield is formulated with BioCote antimicrobial technology that protects the coating by inhibiting the growth of odor and staining microbes on its surface. INXShield UV Flexo Coating is suitable for application over dry water-based and cured UV inks. It provides a uniform layer with excellent gloss, slip and general resistance properties. Low viscosity levels provide rapid flow and leveling on higher speed presses, with minimal dwell time for systems with anilox coaters. INXShield GS Slip Coating is a solvent-based gravure coating for use on shrinkable film labels. The overprint varnish is formulated for shrinkable printing for OPS, PETG and PVC.



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Installations



01 *Bobst Digital Master 340 press*
Geostick, Netherlands
 Geostick Group has purchased a Bobst Digital Master 340 label press, a fully digitalized and automated production line from printing to embellishment and die-cutting. The deal is part of Geostick's focus on enhancing its digital printing capabilities, led from its new Digital Printing Center in Uithoorn, Netherlands. 'I'm strongly convinced that the label printing company of the future will rely on flexo, liquid-electro photography and inkjet technologies to be able to respond to the rapidly changing market conditions and brand requirements,' said Cees Schouten, operations director chief operations officer at Geostick. 'We believe that Bobst is our best choice as the strategic partner to develop this new production stream in our new Digital Printing Center.'

Kodak Flexcel NX System
Raqam International, Pakistan
 The subsidiary of Raqam Industries has expanded into Pakistan and invested in a Flexcel NX Mid System from Miraclon, provided by local channel partner, DigiPrint Technologies. The packaging and label converter, based in Hattar, required a plate imaging and processing system that could produce both flexo (60 percent) and offset (40 percent) plates. Flexcel NX System's hybrid option met all its requirements.

02 *Mark Andy Digital Pro 3 and Evolution Series E5 presses*
Daymark Labels, UK
 The two new presses have been installed at the company's production facility in Worcestershire. Currently employing 30 people and aiming for a GBP 3.5m turnover (4.3m USD) this year, Daymark is keen to grow its label business rapidly

in the food and beverage sector and as in pharmaceuticals and the electrical industry, as well increasing its output of tags and tickets. 'We aim to make life as easy for our customers as possible, and do it with an environmental conscience,' said Jon Bird, who runs Daymark Labels. 'It's a matter of educating the market about sustainability and what is actually achievable. We believe our partnership with Mark Andy will help us to achieve that and grow our business organically.'

03 *Cartes Gemini GE363V7L*
Printela, Lithuania
 Lithuania-based Printela has installed a Cartes digital finishing system, which combines a flexo varnishing unit, Jet D-Screen digital embellishment and a laser die-cutting unit with dual laser source (350 Watt+350 Watt), a turret rewinder and a system for the digital embellishment of flexible packaging.

04 *Konica Minolta AccurioLabel press*
Etiqu'Lyon, France
 Konica Minolta has reached its 1,000th installation of the AccurioLabel 230 toner digital printing press less than seven years after entering the label market, with French converter Etiqu'Lyon, a generalist producer of adhesive roll labels employing seven staff at Caluire, near Lyon, purchasing the machine. 'As we continue to invest in digital technology, which we see as the future, we are extremely proud to have become the 1,000th customer of the AccurioLabel 230 toner press,' said Bertrand Genin, owner of Etiqu'Lyon. 'This investment will enable us to offer many other new business solutions for our customers spread across all industrial trades, thanks to the support we receive, very good color stability of the machine and fast production speeds. Additionally, Konica Minolta has

Installations



been extremely good at listening to us and working together in partnership to deliver on our exacting requirements.'

Jetsci KolorSmart+ UV inkjet press

Intercomo Doo, Serbia

The Serbia-based label converter has invested in a 6-color Jetsci Global KolorSmart+ UV inkjet label press for short and medium runs. Saša Jovanović, director of Intercomo Doo, said: 'Intercomo Doo was looking for a suitable solution to enter the label printing industry. After connecting to the Monotech Systems team we found Jetsci Global KolorSmart+ digital label printing presses a suitable solution matching all our requirements for short and medium-run length print jobs.' This UV inkjet press is equipped with UV inkjet unit offering 4 droplet size (greyscale) printheads. It runs at a speed of up to 50m/min.

05 Gallus Labelmaster 440 Advanced Nordvalls, Sweden

Nordvalls has ordered its fifth Gallus Labelmaster 440 Advanced, a 10-color flexo press with two screen printing stations, as part of its five-year plan to drive increased press consistency. According to Nordvalls, its choice of Gallus was due to confidence in the supplier relationship – one that began in 1965 and with 24 press installations to date. The decision to choose the Gallus Labelmaster came down to three key competitive advantages – press flexibility, high print quality, and increased efficiency.

06 Grafotronic Hi³ inspection machine and a DCL² converting line

Etiprint, Portugal
Etiprint, one of Portugal's leading label converters, has once again invested in Grafotronic equipment. The new systems will join an existing

Grafotronic inspection slitter rewinder purchased in 2017. The Grafotronic Hi³ 450 was chosen primarily for its inspection functionality and the BST TubeScan systems integration. Grafotronic's machines are sold and serviced in the Iberian region by Spanish company Lapeyra y Taltavull Comercial.

07 Screen L350UV Luminar, Australia

The Australian converter has invested in a Screen inkjet press to expand its digital operations. 'With a diversity of customers, we needed a solution that would increase our printing efficiency without sacrificing quality or attention to detail. The decision to select the L350UV came about after a long association with Jet Technologies, where they systematically proved the L350UV's unrivaled reliability and high productivity,' said Matt Ellis, managing director of Luminar. 'Since working with the new

system, we have found that it is incredibly efficient and agile; offering a wide range of material solutions that are used to service our existing customers while also supporting our growth trajectory as a business.'

08 Three Nilpeter FA-17 presses Catapult Print & Packaging, USA

The Florida-based converter has added three Nilpeter FA-17 9-color presses. The first was installed in January, another is due in May, and a third is scheduled for July 2022. Ambitious expansion plans are also in motion with a modern 100,000 sqft facility. Mark Cook, CEO, said: 'I call our press pool Southwest Airlines – they're all the same, for maximum familiarity and production flexibility. We can print any job, anywhere, on any press.'

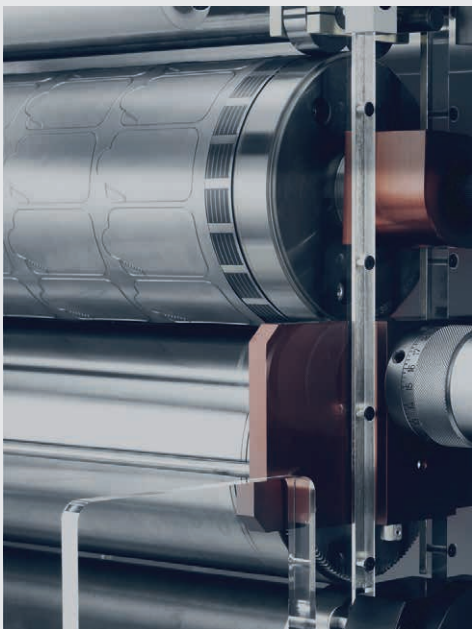
ArrowJet Aqua 330R Hulco Printers, USA

Thanks to the move to ArrowJet



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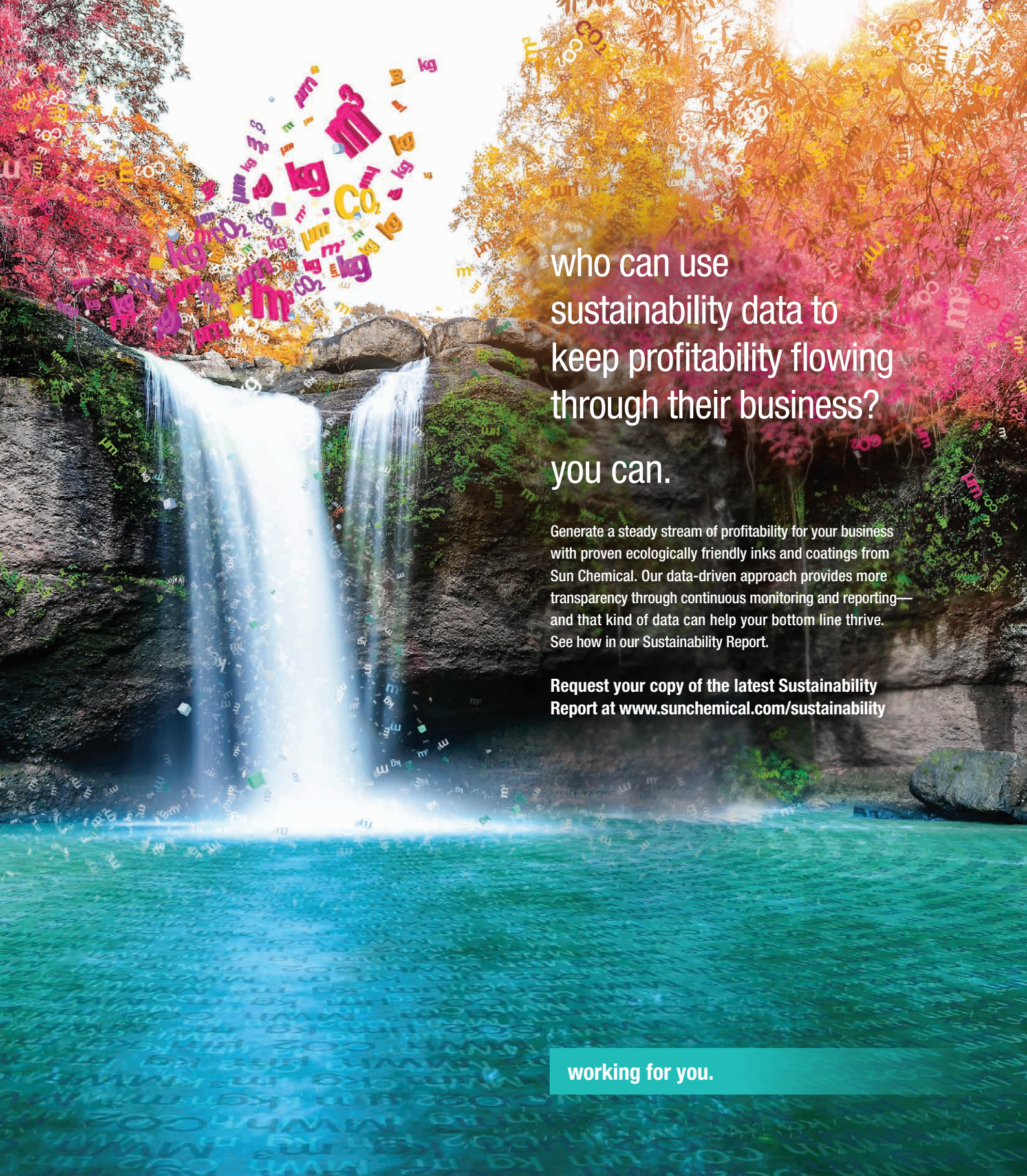
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Installations



Aqua 330R, Hulco can print high-resolution labels with eco-friendly, aqueous inks. While working directly with food products, the pigmented inks won't transfer, effectively protecting the contents inside.

09 Lemorau MEBR+ Intellistor, South Africa
The South African converter has added a Lemorau MEBR+ modular digital finishing system to increase production capacity and better serve its clients. 'As a company developing the label brand Ruxo Labels in Southern Africa, we are constantly looking for ways to innovate and provide our customers a competitive edge in order to stay ahead of the competition,' said Chris Roux, MD at Intellistor. 'With the help of Lemorau technology, we can take blank label conversion to the next level. By including the appropriate modules in the future, we will even be able to provide RFID labels.'

10 HP Indigo 12000 HD Graphica Digital, India
The Indian print business has installed a new digital press at its facility in New Delhi to meet the growing demand of B2 size printing. The new press will allow the company to venture into sheet-fed labels, light packaging in short to medium run lengths, high-end gift boxes and wedding cards, and personalized amateur photo books. The press features HP Indigo's liquid electrophotography (LEP) technology and a fifth ink station for white ink and spot colors.

11 Durst RSC E digital press West Michigan Tag & Label (WMTL), USA
WMTL has installed a Durst RSC E digital press, the first of its kind in Michigan. With maximum print speeds of 170 ft/min (upgradeable to 262 ft/min) and 1,200 DPI native resolution, the RSC E provides high-quality print capabilities. Up to eight

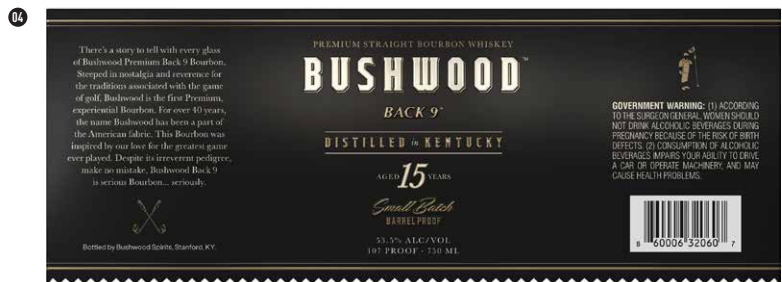
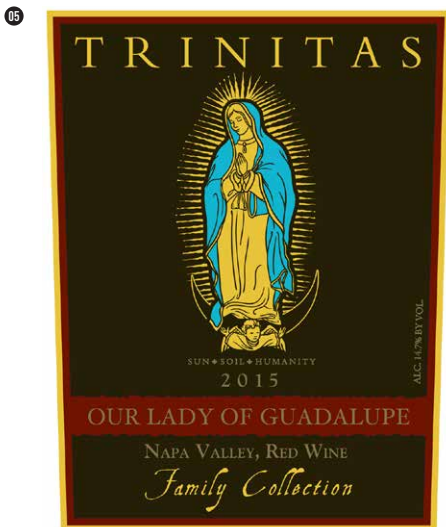
color options are available, and high opacity white ink delivers a smooth white which is ideal for printing on metallic and clear materials. All Durst printers are equipped with Durst's workflow and analytics software.

12 Lundberg Tech central waste handling systems Optimum Group, Netherlands
The group has invested in waste handling systems for three production facilities in the Netherlands to gain a higher throughput and reduce the need for manual handling of trim and matrix label waste. They will be installed at Optimum Group Belona, Etiket Nederland and Telrol will help increase productivity by reducing the number of machine stops for the handling of matrix waste. At the same time, they will reduce the need for manual handling of trim and matrix label waste.

13 Xeikon Panther PX3300 press Aniflex, Poland
Polish printing specialist Aniflex has invested in a Panther PX3300 UV inkjet press. 'The investment in the new Xeikon press has significantly increased the technological capacity of our plant and allowed us to exploit the sales potential for low- and medium-volume orders, as well as helped us cut delivery time – all of which enable us to stay competitive,' said Maciej Wojtaszek, co-owner of Aniflex. The machine prints on substrates up to 350 mm wide at a maximum speed of up to 50 m/min. The PantherCure inks allow the company to deliver durable and abrasion-resistant labels with high gloss, and apply two layers of white ink, to produce attractive tactile and haptic effects in-line.

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

Label & packaging showcase



FTA 2022 Excellence in Flexography Awards – Narrow Web

Gold & Best of Show

01 Jergens Body Butter Sandalwood Tube

Berry Global

Gold Award – Narrow web, process, film

Gold Awards

02 Glitch Energy Matrix Cyber Sunrise Wrap

McDowell Label

Category: Narrow web, line, film

03 PS Gain Super Mass Gainer Chocolate Cake Label

McDowell Label

Category: Narrow web, line, metallized

04 Bushwood Back 9 Small Batch Bourbon Label

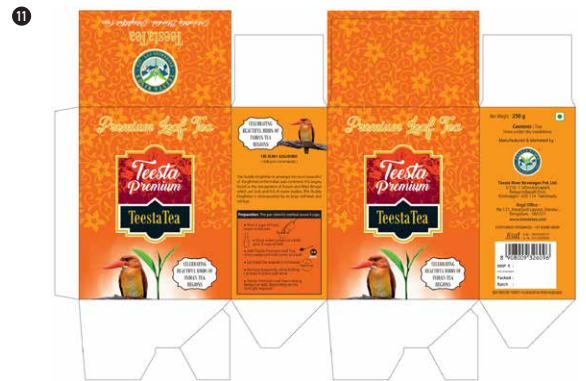
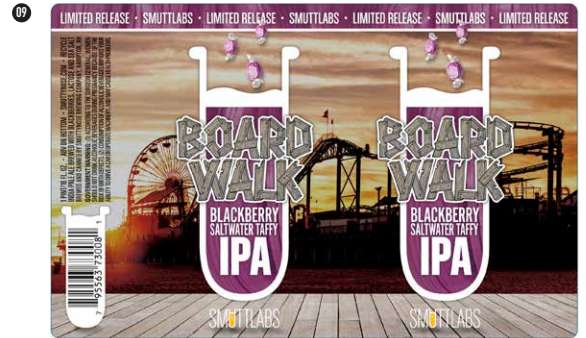
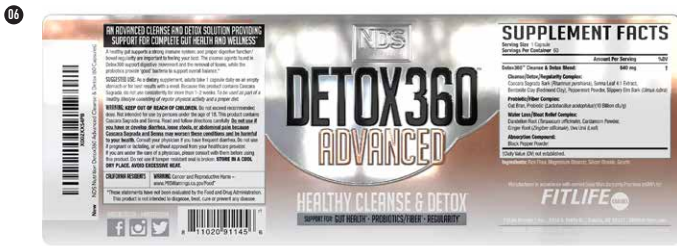
McDowell Label

Category: Narrow web, line, coated paper

05 Trinitas Out Lady of Guadalupe Wine Label

Labeltronix

Category: Narrow web, line, uncoated paper



06 Detox360 Healthy Cleanse & Detox Label
 McDowell Label
 Category: Narrow web, screen, film

07 PreLift Pre-Workout Orange Pineapple Label
 McDowell Label
 Category: Narrow web, screen, metallized

08 Seekrat Bay Chenin Blanc Label
 Labeltronix
 Category: Narrow web, screen, coated paper

09 Smuttlabs Boardwalk Blackberry Saltwater Taffy IPA Label
 Label Tech
 Category: Narrow web, process, metallized

10 Chews's Omega 6 Eggs Label
 Mega Label (Malaysia Sdn Bhd)
 Category: Narrow Web, process, coated paper

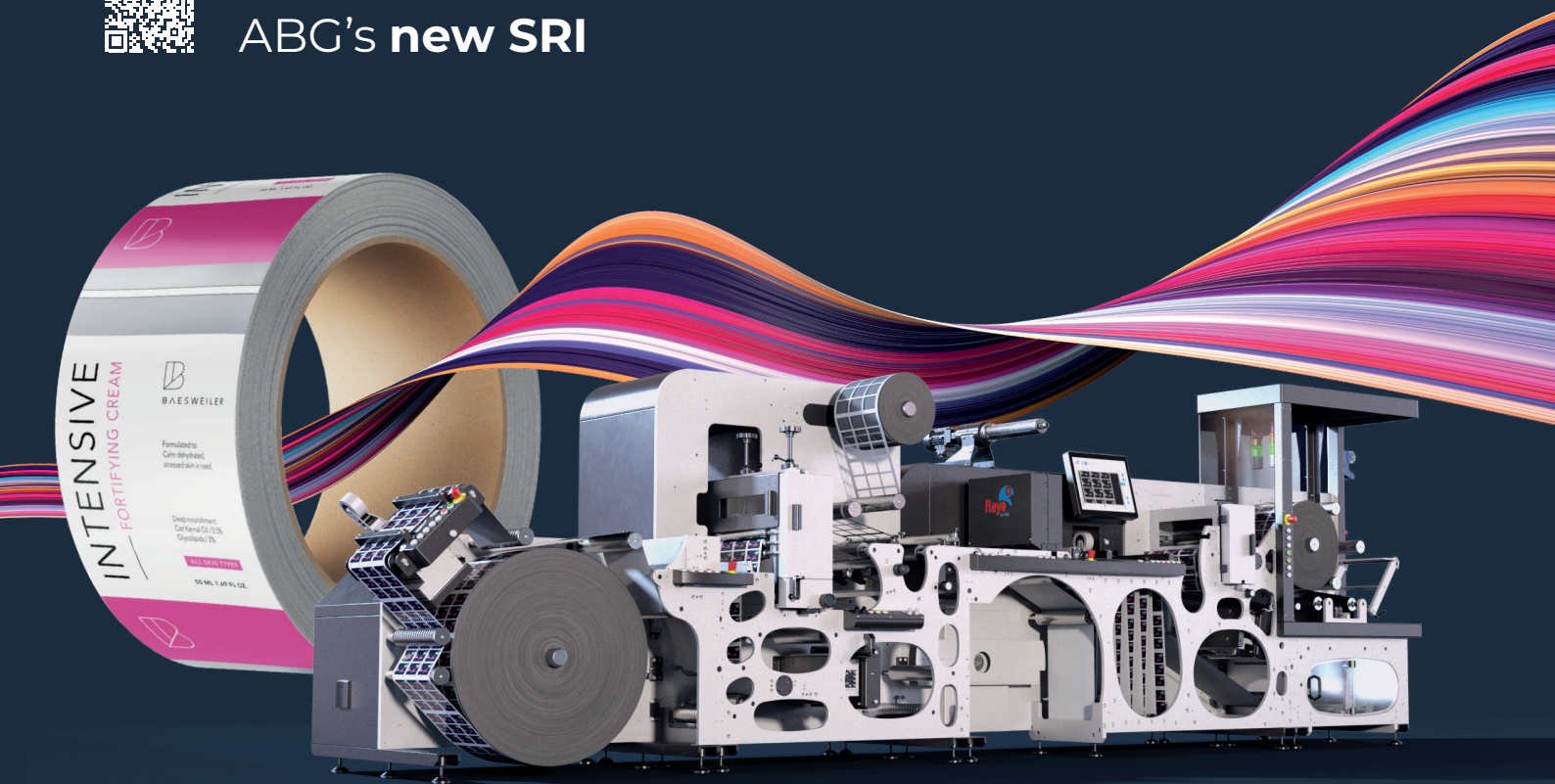
11 Teesta Premium Teesta Tea Pack
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 Category: Narrow web, process, paperboard



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The Mike Fairley column

A challenging year ahead

After two years of pandemic restrictions, the industry has a new set of problems to face over the next 12 months

Just when the label industry thought it might be coming to the end of the, virtually global, Covid pandemic and the various lockdowns, the working from home restrictions, materials and labor shortages, supplier bottlenecks, extended supplier lead times, and cost and price increases, so along come another set of challenges that need to be faced and overcome – a war in Ukraine, even greater shortages of all kinds of products and materials, distribution problems, and rocketing energy prices, leading to inflation rates surging across the developed markets at a level not seen for many a long year.

Indeed, inflation was already running above target in the developed economies at the end of 2021, and that was before the Russia-Ukraine crisis which is bringing further inflationary pressures on commodity prices – particularly for energy and food – and a likely continuation of the supply chain disruption issues that the label industry has been facing during the past year. Agustín Carstens, the global central bank boss, expects policymakers may soon have to raise interest rates to levels not seen for many years.

These latest energy, commodity and inflationary factors are already having a major impact on not only businesses and households and the amount of money they have for investment and spending, but also on lifestyles, leisure, entertainment, household products, food and drink and, in turn, will undoubtedly have an increasing impact on the world of label and package printing – especially in the area of production, energy and investment costs over the coming months.

Leading international economic forecasters expect energy prices to remain high, possibly increase further, even if the war ends soon, and are already indicating that supply chain bottlenecks will tighten due to sanctions and companies cutting ties with Russia, while Ukraine's role in producing components for Europe's automotive industry has already led to vehicle factory shutdowns in several eurozone countries.

Changes to food labels

Global food prices – already up by a third or more over the past year – are continuing to increase across Europe and the wider world. In particular, Russia and Ukraine are among the world's

“These latest energy, commodity and inflationary factors are already having a major impact”

leading producers of grain and sunflower oil. Indeed, Ukraine was exporting almost half of the world's total supply of cooking oil before the conflict began. A significant reduction in supply of these products has impacted supermarkets and food manufacturers, both leading to rising costs and shortages of supply, as well as a possible need to adjust food product ingredients or cooking methods – and a subsequent need to reduce label run length orders and either increase food prices, reduce costs or change their labeling to reflect ingredients changes.

In this respect, perhaps some words of encouragement to label converters can come from the UK's Food Standards Agency who have given temporary approval to substitute coconut oil, soybean oil, or fully refined palm oil in place of sunflower oil. It has also said that, given the 'extraordinary circumstances', manufacturers may also use rapeseed oil instead of sunflower oil and, at least for now, they will not have to print new labels or update their ingredient lists if they do make these substitutions. Hopefully other countries might make similar dispensations.

As a consequence of supply chain problems and cost increases, supermarkets and food manufacturers, who were already facing inflationary pressures of their own, are now being faced with consumer, and media, pressures on the rising cost of foods. What answers do they have? Try to cut costs? Minimize or simplify the product range? Reduce portion or pack sizes? Try and add value? If the label industry wants to minimize the possible impact of their key customers demanding cost cuts in the supply of labels and packaging, then they will likely have to spend more time working with them to find acceptable and new solutions.

Yet isn't this what the label industry has always tried to do? It's one of the reasons why label converters and industry suppliers have largely continued to achieve above inflation levels of growth for many years and, according to a recent Finat report, even continuing

to attain quite good growth over the past Covid pandemic year and the problems that has created.

However, that continuing growth is now being countered by significant and persistent self-adhesive materials shortages that – if the Ukraine conflict continues without a successful resolution for any length of time – are likely to bring further supply chain disruptions during the second half of 2022.

So, what are the key issues and messages that the label industry needs to take on board to continue creating a profitable future?

Managing costs

Firstly, rising and high energy costs are not going to go away any time soon. They are a big part of label production, with presses, ancillary equipment, heating, lighting, offices and distribution costs being a key element of label pricing. But are all these factors now being adequately updated and accounted for in the label costing and pricing process. If not, they need to be looked at urgently. The same applies to materials costs. Are higher materials prices being incorporated into costing and accounting systems quickly enough when they occur?

Are there things that a label company can do to minimize or better manage manufacturing costs? Not leaving machines, computers, or electronic equipment on standby? Installing more energy efficient lighting? Provide lights that automatically turn off in cloakrooms, restrooms, warehouses, etc, when not actually in use? Turn off, remove or reduce lighting in non-essential areas? Maybe one or two degrees lower on heating thermostats, perhaps even installing a programmable 'learning' thermostat that will automatically adjust to the current temperature of the workplace and avoid energy wastage? Take advantage of off-peak periods



wherever possible?

Regular cleaning and planned maintenance of electrical and mechanical equipment will undoubtedly optimize its performance and lifespan. Reduce the operating pressure of any air compressors and check for leakage and turn off when not in use. Another key point to consider is to make sure and involve the workforce, emphasizing the importance of reducing energy consumption. Explain that savings can benefit the whole company, enabling

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“It would be nice to think that investment can be made from retained profits, but rising costs, inflation and squeezed margins will likely make this harder to achieve”

investment in new equipment that will makes factory life or jobs easier.

Secondly, something which has not always been high on the must-have list when investing in new label machinery – energy-efficient equipment. Is the proposed investment designed to conserve energy? How does it compare with other makes or models? Does the manufacturer know what the energy usage of the machine is at different running or idling speeds? What is the optimum press performance? Maybe we will eventually get to the stage when label presses come with their own energy smart meters.

It has certainly been encouraging to note over the past year that a number of label press, ink curing and ancillary equipment suppliers have already been increasingly promoting energy saving and/or environmentally optimized capabilities, on-off functions to eliminate energy use in stand-by mode, or real-time data collection from hundreds of events per second to identify bottlenecks and optimize performance. Expect more of the same in the coming year.

The same kind of approach should be applied to minimizing waste. Optimum handling and storage of labelstock needs to be emphasized to reduce materials wastage before it even gets to the

press. Effective and efficient press set-up, better press management, the latest control and label inspection systems, accurate label counts, and careful handling, storage and packing of finished rolls, can all have an impact on reducing productions costs.

Thirdly, what impact will rising interest rates and high inflation have on the label and packaging industry? Certainly, any label converter or industry supplier looking to borrow money for a major investment can expect steadily rising interest rates over the coming year, probably even longer, bringing with it a decreasing purchasing power. It would be nice to think that investment can be made from retained profits, but rising costs, inflation and squeezed margins will likely make this harder to achieve.

Prepared

A further impact of inflation is that most materials and labor will increase in price, in which case the label business will need to charge accordingly to stay afloat. This will mean assessing the goods and services that bring in business the most and the least in value. Noting what competitors are doing. Always have an emergency plan. It is best to be prepared.

To add a word of support and encouragement, the label industry has seldom achieved annual growth below GDP, even during the most difficult of times. It continued to grow last year, and is expected to achieve growth again in 2022 – but few forecasters expect life to be easy. But, as Gloria Gaynor might sing, ‘We will survive.’



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

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Is your business ready to take on counterfeiters?

The issue of brand counterfeiting has grown to account for 3.3% of all global trade¹ and efforts to fight against fakes have escalated in tandem, with the print industry working tirelessly and collaboratively to remain one step ahead of counterfeiting activity.

Brands and organizations have begun addressing these challenges publicly, pledging commitment to adapt in line with increasing threats. They are also working more closely with print service providers, as well as technology suppliers, to continually improve security solutions.

In 2021, the value of global e-commerce grew by 16%,² propelled by the impact of COVID-19 on retail. The raise in global ecommerce and the impact on the global supply chain and has led to an increase in counterfeiting. In fact, a recent study found that counterfeit pharmaceuticals traded worldwide reached €4.03 billion since the start of the pandemic.³

As part of the collaborative effort of the print industry to stay one step ahead, digital security printing has become an instrumental tool against this reality. Even the most sophisticated counterfeiters find it extremely difficult – often impossible- to replicate these features, and counterfeit goods are easier to spot, which helps authorities track them down and stop them from travelling any further.

Security Printing as an emerging trend

By 2026, the value of the global market for security printing is expected to grow to \$35 billion.⁴ As it expands, the industry is also diversifying to incorporate an ever-wider range of features to serve the needs of different actors and accommodate different use cases.

One of the main applications is **advanced brand protection**. Enterprises use secure-printing features to demonstrate the authenticity of a product. This helps to keep low-quality, often dangerous, counterfeit goods out of the supply chain, and in turn, will not only keep consumers safe but also protect brand revenue streams and reputations.

Another use case is **security printing**. This is used by governments, regulators and other institutions which produce printed materials, such as forms and documents, which they and their partners must be able to track, authenticate and often identify at different points in a workflow. For instance, the state needs to identify a passport not merely as a valid document of its type, properly issued, but also as belonging to, and unique to, a single named individual.

HP Indigo digital presses support the widest range of features and technologies for both applications.

That's why more and more print service providers (PSPs) around the world are relying on HP to enable and power their activities in the high-growth, high-revenue secure digital printing market. In 2021, for instance, world leader in security and brand protection printing OpSec Security announced that it was installing Europe's first HP Indigo 6K Secure Digital Press to increase efficiencies and incorporate high security features in single pass productivity to clients across the world. As part of its offering, OpSec incorporates on-product and online protection solutions to form the most complete, fully integrated brand protection and authentication solutions available today. These include highly personalised solutions that ensure complete transparency to their supply chain, such as unique identifiers, track & trace options and serialisation.

The most common threats brands currently face

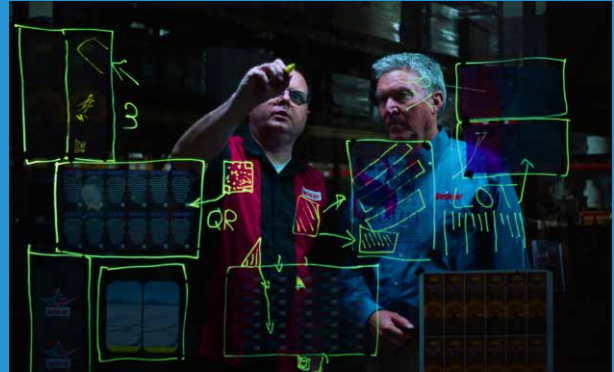
All of this change is great for e-commerce merchants. And it's often good for consumers, who are discovering new brands and new ways to shop. But it can also be good for counterfeiters. With people trying new and unfamiliar channels, retailers and brands can be easier to deceive.

Brands in this situation face not just lost revenue, but also the concern that consumers will be harmed by fake versions of their products. This is particularly worrying in sectors such as pharma as well as for health and wellness brands.⁵ Applying multiple layers of security to documents, labels and packaging can help create safer pharmaceutical packaging and labelling. Nosco Inc., for example, prints variable barcodes invisibly so that customers can scan and trace the barcodes across any country to ensure they're legitimate.

If they can't prevent the passing off of fake goods as their own, brands face a tough time in many markets. Consumers' poor experience with fake goods damages the brand equity of the real thing. If they cannot be sure of the authenticity of goods, particularly sensitive goods such as medicines, consumers and authorities may simply refuse to accept them altogether.

For brands faced with these problems, secure digital printing features such as invisible and color-shift inks or visible security and authentication features, can help keep fakes out of the supply chain. By using HP Indigo printing presses which support secure digital printing, print service providers (PSPs) will be able to help their customers to protect and verify product authenticity at every point in the supply chain.

Find out more about HP Secure Digital Printing solutions at reinvent.hp.com/IndigoDigitalSecurity



HP secure digital printing

HP Indigo printing technology support a range of secure digital printing features that help PSPs provide their customers with the security, brand-protection and authenticity features they need.

These include:

- Overt security features such as holograms and color-shift inks.
- Semi-covert features, such as QR codes or microtext, to be authenticated with another device.
- Covert features, including invisible inks, which are authenticated by experts or purpose-built devices.
- Forensic-level features, detectable only in a lab and always authenticated by expert inspectors.

Case study

American Label, a US-based PSP, used HP Invisible Ink to help its customers fight against the damage to business caused by counterfeit products. "The problem with counterfeiting isn't just loss of revenue – it can create a black mark on their reputation", said Thor Rasmussen, Director of Sales and Marketing, American Label.

By using Invisible Ink, applied through the PSP's HP Indigo presses, American Label was able to offer security features such as watermarks, micro text, serialized numbering and micro QR codes, among others. "Implementing the Invisible Ink security features is extremely easy on our end. It's just like adding another color" added Rasmussen. "It's amazing the business you get when you have that capability. Five years ago, Indigo labels represented 5% of our business – now it's 50%. It was just a matter of saying 'yes' to our customers."

¹ <https://www.banklesstimes.com/news/2022/05/01/the-global-value-of-counterfeit-goods-represents-33percent-of-global-trade/>

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/379046/worldwide-retail-e-commerce-sales>

³ Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the global trade in fake pharmaceuticals - OECD

⁴ <https://www.smithers.com/en-gb/services/market-reports/security/the-future-of-global-security-printing-to-2026>

⁵ <https://www.nutritionaloutlook.com/view/combating-counterfeiting-in-the-dietary-supplements-industry>



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The Andy Thomas-Emans column

Closing the flexo-digital gap

A new generation of high-speed digital presses is closing the speed and productivity gap with flexo

A new generation of digital presses operating at speeds of 100m/min (328ft/min) and upwards is closing the speed and productivity gap with flexography and changing the way we view the conventional-digital equation.

During recent open houses at Bobst, HP Indigo and Durst, a new generation of digital presses were demonstrated reaching new levels of productivity broadly comparable with narrow web flexography in real world operation.

At its Expo Label event Durst showed the Tau RSCi, a 510mm-wide (20in) UV inkjet press printing at 100m/min in CMYK+ mode. Adding digital white takes the speed down to 52m/min, but the press was also equipped with a UV flexo station before the digital print unit which could be used to print a first down white at full press speed. A second flexo unit after the digital print station would typically be used for a varnish.

On a 510mm web width at those speeds, the productivity of the Tau RSCi press certainly matches narrow web flexography at real-world speeds, but a major obstacle to longer UV inkjet runs has been the additional cost of the ink compared to UV flexo, variously estimated at between two-to-three times as much.

Durst has sought to address this with its Save Ink mode, which uses some impressive color management algorithms to re-formulate the colors required to make up an image to produce ink savings up to 12 percent while staying within a delta 2 of the original. In practice the two images are virtually indistinguishable.

The final part of the high productivity jigsaw was provided by A B Graphic, which demonstrated a 530mm-wide Digicon unit equipped with the Fast Track high speed semi-rotary die-cutting unit capable of operating at speeds up to 150m/min. The Digicon can be used in-line with the Tau RSCi, although a near-line configuration remains the preferred approach for maximum flexibility.

At the HP VIP event the V12 press was demonstrated publicly for the first time. The press at the HP technology campus is still an alpha development machine, with the first beta contracts now being signed. But the potential for HP Indigo's new rotary blanket architecture was immediately obvious, with the press reaching speeds up to 120m/min in 4-color mode on a paper substrate.

The V12 can print at full speed in up to six colors, with any additional colors halving the speed. But as CMYK work probably accounts for upwards of 95 percent of the average label printer's workload, this is unlikely to be a significant limitation.

ABG is currently developing a converting line to match the V12, including a butt splicer for greater productivity. Again, the configuration is much more likely to be near-line than in-line, although that possibility definitely exists.

Bobst has taken an all-in-one approach with the launch of its new high productivity digital press series. The 510mm-wide Digital Master prints at speeds up to 100m/min in up to six colors with printing, embellishment and cutting in a single pass. The press is fully modular and incorporates Bobst's own highly automated flexo

“There remains a close synergy between digital and flexo/conventional technology, with advances in conventional technology automation reflected directly in the productivity of the digital press”

and converting modules. A modular architecture allows customers to configure the machine from a digital-only version to a highly customized configuration.

So, what does this tell us about the changing balance between flexography and digital label printing?

Firstly, it seems clear that the days of the 'entry-level' flexo press – typically 8-color, shaft driven, no value-adding units – are numbered. There is a very large legacy installation base of such machines, and their one-to-one replacements are quite likely to be digital.

But one should not write off flexography. Flexo technology has itself undergone a revolution in the last ten years. Digital control of conventional print and converting operations has opened up completely new possibilities for shorter runs with minimal waste and a high level of automation and autonomy during the print process.

Indeed, to achieve their high levels of productivity all the digital presses mentioned above still rely in different ways on advanced, automated conventional technology to convert the digitally printed label. Whether they are in-line hybrid systems like the Bobst Digital Master, or whether they use ABG's converting technology, there remains a close synergy between digital and flexo/conventional technology, with advances in conventional technology automation reflected directly in the productivity of the digital press.

In addition, the cost of digital inks will always be more than UV flexo inks – although clever systems like the Durst Save Ink are seeking to reduce the gap. The answer could be a UV flexo station used to lay down the color with the highest coverage, greatly increasing the run length economically viable with a high-speed digital press.

So digital and (digitally-controlled) conventional technology will continue to work together to greatly increase the productivity of the high-speed digital press.



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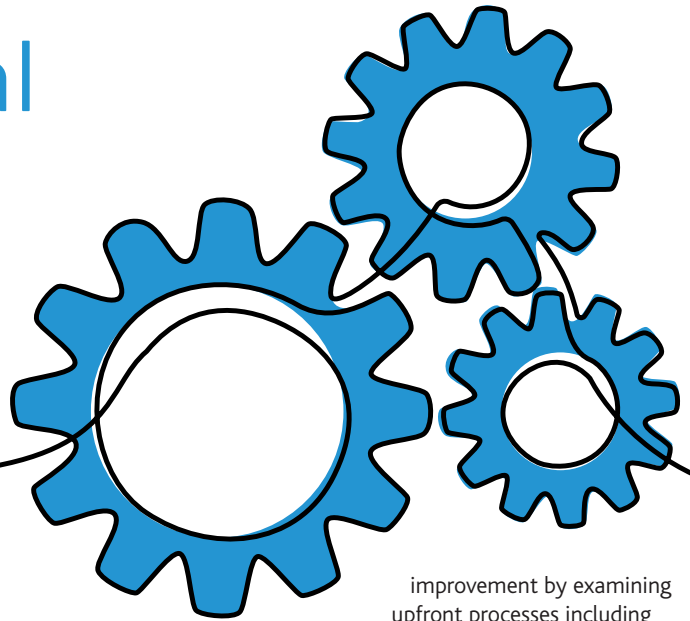
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Simplify internal logistics with Kanban

Supply chain disruption has put a focus on converters' internal logistics, writes Paul Brauss



The supply chain issues impacting delivery from raw material paper and film suppliers have caused an extreme distraction for converters and are impacting their business focus. There have been several articles written explaining the cause for this inability to satisfy demands but it is tough for converters to be empathetic to the suppliers when their end customers are feeling the stress caused by outages and outrage from consumers. The bullwhip effect of supply chain drama and fatigue has fractured many relationships, jeopardizing business taken years to obtain.

“As converters wrestle with problems outside their control, they are also learning that their internal logistics controls are wanting”

Everyone is looking for relief, often pulling people away from their typical jobs to help expedite and find alternative solutions to the missed delivery or missed opportunity. These special activities are called workarounds or substitute processes. Substitute processes are put in place, often accidentally, and have a costly impact on productivity. An example is a salesperson who has to repeatedly call a client to inform them of another delay when they should be spending their time making sales calls. At the same time, the salesperson is explaining another round of pricing impact to an already irate customer. Some organizations' salespeople are reporting a 40 percent loss of productivity in these types of activities. When the material finally does arrive, scheduling yields in expediting drives activities like breaking production runs, duplicate set-ups, overtime, air freight, and loss of the plant's cadence to a standard demand. All of these substitute processes cost the converter significantly. A problem with one customer can easily lead to a problem with many if the substitute processes are not eliminated quickly. There is nothing more costly than the loss of a customer.

Logistics

As converters wrestle with problems outside their control, they are also learning that their internal logistics controls are wanting. Many converters have never had sophisticated inventory management systems, relying heavily on the supplier's distribution channel to satisfy quick demands from multiple warehouses. Variability of supply was of little consequence and converters focused their efforts on the demand side of the business. The growth patterns of the market provided ample opportunity for all converters and continuous improvement activities primarily focused on lead time reduction by improving set-up times and working on press operational efficiencies.

I've demonstrated there is a dynamic opportunity to gain

improvement by examining upfront processes including material availability and

presentation. The amount of waste generated by damaging raw material from overhandling can easily add 5-15 percent to overall waste. The current fragile raw material supply chain has exacerbated the problem. Raw material suppliers are pushing lead times and missing committed ship dates often communicated just days before. These problems have persisted for two years with little relief in sight. As a result, converters trying to take a global perspective of material availability are forecasting demands in hopes they can take preventive action and avoid costly material shortages. It has also become difficult to discuss longer-term growth opportunities when the organization is focused on keeping the customers.

Operation leaders are taking action by looking to substitute materials and are busy trying to qualify other material suppliers. Just-in-case purchasing has ensued and we are now seeing stockpiles of raw material show up on the docks. The facilities are not prepared for an influx of raw material, with little room for storage and often lacking an inventory control system. These stockpiling substitute process steps are now driving a need for unscheduled spending for material handling equipment such as narrow web fork trucks, rack systems, and even mezzanine construction. Unprepared material control groups are staging material in any nook they can find in their facility including the office area, where I have seen rolls of raw material in the lunchrooms and between desks. This is not the normal safety stock practice but rather a case for hoping they have the right material. Longer-term, all of these shops are also looking for IT investments for software solutions to help manage the situation. IT projects often call for a different set of expertise than most converters have in-house.

Separating external focus from internal focus needs compartmentalization. Internally some steps can help control some of the chaos. Many material management systems 'push' demands based on forecasts in addition to real orders. This requires a fully accurate bill of material and extensive computer system knowledge that may be working blindly to what is actually occurring on the production floor. The push process assumes all the pick sheet data is accurate and backflush driven by closed orders is occurring timely. Unplanned variables introduced during production also play a factor, such as damaged rolls in transit, quality issues during the production run, stock outages caused by late delivery, unreported material substitutions or other uncontrolled factors. This push leads to overbuying inventory. The better answer is to implement a simple 'pull system' less dependent on forecast accuracy and sensitive to real-time behavior in production. The better software solutions have learned how to incorporate pull demands but there is no need to wait for a new software system to get started. The

first rule of any improvement step is to simplify a process before automating a process. Setting up a pull system with a Kanban process allows us to simplify demand management, maintain visual control of material, and signal order replenishment needs.

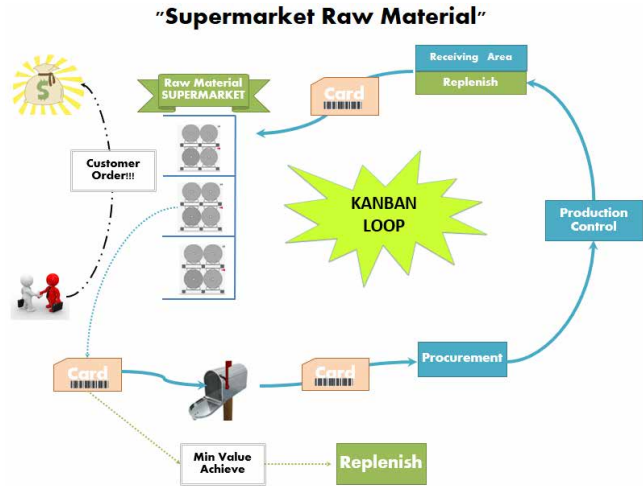
Kanban

A Kanban system is a demand management system that starts with a visual signal that links actual demand with production needs instantaneously. The visual alert of the need is typically described as a Kanban card. Starting with a Kanban system today provides a converter time to study future software needs that will complement the material management responsibilities in the future. The best software systems can use the learning from Kanban to provide a better all-around solution for material management.

Getting started is simple and a material Kanban can be set up with a kaizen event in just a few days. It starts with organizing a few people including the person responsible for materials or purchasing of the items. The team should examine part use patterns, replenishment lead times and order multiples. The team can use a simple formula to calculate a recommended Kanban quantity: **Kanban Qty = (Daily Demand x Lead Time X (1 + Safety Factor))/Qty of Cards.**

The typical number of cards in a Kanban formula depends on the replenishment speed. The calculation outcome can be checked with simple reasoning and common-sense factors.

The successful process requires a very good understanding of 5S with defined locations for each of the raw materials. Inside the converter's facility, they will need to identify fixed location areas, sometimes referred to as supermarkets, in concert with their determined quantity. The team will define how many pallet



locations are required based on volume. A card hangs at the area, typically on the rack. The number of pallets typically determines the number of cards. Initially, the material presenter receives a signal to pull raw material to a particular cell of the staging area. The material presenter pulls the material and the corresponding card. The material is delivered and the card is placed in a designated mailbox area for procurement. Purchasing places the order for material and forwards the card to the receiving department. When the material is received, the material presenter puts the material away and replaces the card. This Kanban loop is simple and visual. If a converter has room for sideline storage at the press location, a simple 'mini mart' can be established as well. The mini-mart Kanban

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“We can’t let the disorganization of raw material in our facility impede our response to our customer’s demand”

works the same way and can be refilled from the supermarket area.

Due to the current fluctuations in availability, it may be a good idea to implement a ‘spike control’ card in the process. Production control can be forewarned of a large spike in demand for a particular raw material from the quoting group or sales updates. By simply adding a spike card into the flow, the procurement team receives a notification to increase initial storage areas for the product. In a visual-managed operation, nothing is completed in a vacuum. In a Kanban system, the visual signals, as well as identified areas, are part of the management process. As leaders of Gemba, they can see the voids and signals making everyone accountable at all times.

A converter can build the basics of inventory management using Kanban. Kanban can be used to set up reorder signals for ink, plate roll tape, packaging materials and many other high-use items. A Kanban process can be an anchor to equipment maintenance programs as well. Material availability is going to be sensitive through the remainder of 2022. Converters need to accept this and take on material management activity that puts in place business processes that are stable, instead of the fire drill activities that typically accompany a short-term problem.

A visual management process with 5S as an anchor is important.

Operation executives need to review current layout plans, making room for more raw material storage. Every time you move raw material you risk damaging rolls and this adds to waste. Better to review the layout and make the plans for the area that is needed. Converters remind me they are short on space and developing a storage plan is difficult.

As a site preparation activity, I generally recommend a 5S kaizen in the current warehouse and storage rack areas. The beginning of this process is to ‘Sort’ using a red tag method to identify items mothballed over the years. The red tag signifies disposition is needed and the items can be removed permanently. Every facility I have toured has old furniture, old materials, old inks, and old tooling taking up valuable real estate that could be redeployed to help with the current material management needs. There is no time to push unnecessary items to the back of the shop; they have to go. There is a new demand for space and it is cost-effective to organize this space to be productive. The supplier variability today is driving this need and addressing it will help your organization maintain productivity to stay focused on the growth opportunities this year. We can’t let the disorganization of raw material in our facility impede our response to our customer’s demand and we don’t have to wait to implement a more productive material management process.



Paul Brauss, former CEO of Mark Andy and a past board member of TLMI, is a consultant and executive coach. See Braussconsulting.com, and buy his book at amzn.to/2NFzXkB




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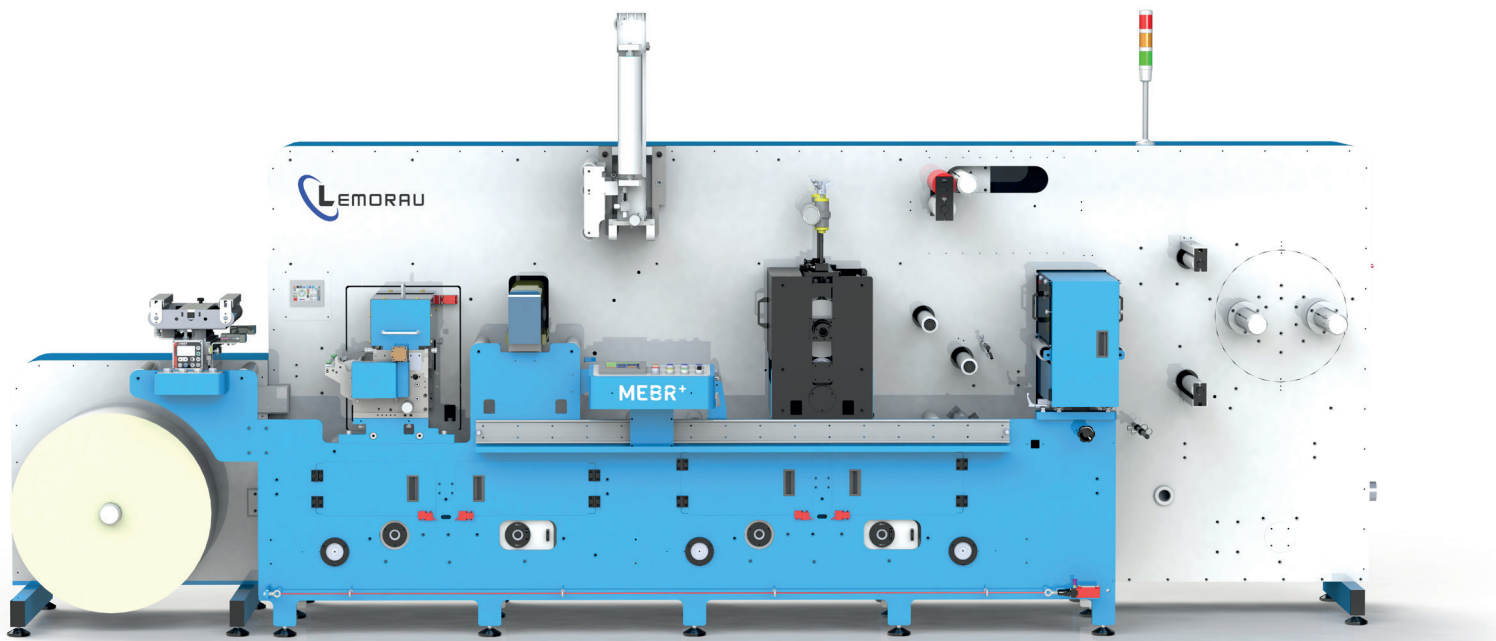
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Sensory significance

Vicki Strull on how packaging haptics and the power of touch build brand loyalty

How many Apple product boxes have you saved? In your home. Right now. If you're an Apple fan, I bet you have at least one empty box sitting on your office shelf or in a closet. So, how many have you saved? I'll go first: 21.

Saving Apple boxes is a thing. Just ask the internet. A 2021 tweet about the collectible packages collected nearly 700,000 likes and fans created their own hashtag: #TeamKeepTheBox. And whether its boxes from Apple, Samsung, Hermes, Tiffany's or Target, I've heard of people who use their saved boxes for keepsakes, drawer organizers, art collages, and even as a tiny coffin for a deceased hamster.

Sometimes we save packaging because we find uses for repurposing it, upcycling it, or creating art with it. Other reasons are more subtle; for example, the nostalgia factor – the clean, glossy white iPhone or Mac box reminds us of the first time we bought an Apple product. For others, the packaging feels too premium to throw away. And still others simply love the box design as much as they love the product itself.

But there is a broader answer to the question of why we save Apple boxes, or any packaging that we deem too precious to toss. To understand, we need to go all the way back to pre-historic times, when humankind went from walking on all fours to walking on two legs. Standing upright freed our hands to explore. Receptors in our hands, and particularly in our fingertips, caused the rapid development of our haptic sense and triggered the evolution of our brains to accommodate that incredible sense of touch.

In *The Neuroscience of Touch*, an extensive piece on 'neuroscience, communication, paper, persuasion

and touch' conducted by Sappi North America in conjunction with Dr David Eagleman, studies found that nearly half of the brain is devoted to processing sensory input, and much of that sensory receptivity focuses on touch – the only faculty distributed throughout the body.

From brain imagery and scans, scientists have discovered that more than half the brain is devoted to processing our sensory experiences – sight, smell, taste, sound, and touch; much of that is focused on our sense of touch, which is exactly why I – a brand and design strategist who specializes in print packaging and labels – am talking about the brain and haptics. Haptics, the science of touch, influences what we buy, how we feel about our purchase, our brand perception and our brand loyalty.

Let's begin at the end

To understand the impact of touch on packaging and purchasing, let's begin at the end of the buying process: the unboxing

experience. Unboxing videos and influencers are a huge trend on social media and have become an important extension of the consumer buying journey. Brands want you to feel happy, engaged and connected to them when you unbox, unwrap and reveal their product nestled in its packaging. Interestingly, watching an unboxing video is not a passive activity. It activates our brain's 'mirror neurons', an experience discovered by Italian researchers in the 1990s.

Mirror neurons are what make us feel or think that we are actually doing something by watching someone else do it. For example, when someone yawns and you yawn, even if you're not actually tired. Your body is physiologically empathizing, and so you yawn.

Mirror neurons are activated when we watch unboxing videos. Part of our brain thinks we're unboxing the product, too. That can trigger two other phenomena: Psychological Ownership and the Endowment Effect (more about those

“What is it about touch that connects us with brands and how we experience a brand's content? One theory is that the physicality of print and packaging has a powerful effect on the way we consume, comprehend and retain messages, as compared to digital mediums”



below). What's even more powerful is that 62 percent of people watching unboxing videos are watching with the intent to purchase.

So now the package is not only powerful when an initial consumer buys it, but it takes on even more significance when shared online. Its value went not only from my engagement but also to yours. And in the case of many Apple unboxing videos that have gone viral, the value is attributed not only to the owner of the package (and the video) but extends to millions of other people who have viewed it and experienced an emotional connection. In one particular video with 15 million views, research shows that 9 million viewers watched as part of their research to purchase their next iPhone.

What is it about touch that connects us with brands and how we experience a brand's content? One theory is that the physicality of print and packaging has a powerful effect on the way we consume, comprehend and retain messages, as compared to digital mediums. Different and greater parts of your brain are active when reading on paper vs on a digital device. That creates more memories and stronger emotional connections, including happiness. Physical objects make us happy because we can hold them and touch them. It's real, so we trust it. And trust is essential to building brand loyalty.

Psychological Ownership and the Endowment Effect

You might not have given it much thought, but touching a package is also very persuasive. Two phenomena occur: Psychological Ownership, and the Endowment Effect.

First, what is Psychological Ownership? It means that merely touching a product increases our feeling of ownership. When we see something in a store and we pick it up, we start to feel as if it's ours – even before we've purchased it. That's Psychological Ownership. If you've ever been with a toddler who grabs something off the shelf in a store and immediately says, 'Mine!' you know what I'm talking about. The adult brain feels the same way – we just express it slightly more subtly.

You can imagine the impact on Psychological Ownership with graphics, tactile effects, embellishments and so on. If a package on the shelf looks like it would feel good to touch it, and you pick up and it does feel good, then you feel as if it's already yours – well, the next logical step is to put it in your shopping cart. That whole cognitive process happens in a matter of seconds.

The second phenomenon, the Endowment Effect, links what we touch to how much we value it. Once we feel as if we already own a product (Psychological Ownership), the Endowment Effect speaks to the fact that we attribute more value to it.

According to a sensory marketing study by Martin Lindstrom and Millward Brown, 'the more sensory touch points consumers can access when they're thinking about buying a brand, the higher the number of sensory memories are activated. And the higher the number of sensory memories activated, the stronger the bond between brand and consumer.'

If we connect all the concepts I've mentioned so far, the extended consumer journey looks like this: Customer in store > touches packaging > better memories > stronger emotional connection > Psychological Ownership > stronger trust > Endowment Effect > increased value perception > sale / conversion / purchase > brand loyalty.

The power of packaging as it relates to the brand product

I've already shared a few studies showing that various graphics and special effects can attract consumers initially and encourage them to pick a product off the shelf. Then touch can drive a sale and even impulse buys. But how does packaging influence product perception? Consider how you react to a bottle of wine with a cork versus a screw top, or a product in a sturdy box versus a flimsy carton. The materials we touch influence our perception of quality, and are much more persuasive in the customer experience than

“Marketers can leverage an array of sensory elements, such as shape, special effects, embossing, debossing, foil stamping, and other tactile embellishments and finishes”

most marketers realize.

Marketers can leverage an array of sensory elements, such as shape, special effects, embossing, debossing, foil stamping, and other tactile embellishments and finishes. For example, embossing activates our fingertip receptors. Signature shapes create memories and increase retention.

Take the Toblerone chocolate bar, with its triangular shape inspired by the mountains of Switzerland. You could touch that in the dark and know exactly what it is. And we can't talk about signature shapes without mentioning the Coca-Cola brand. A Coke bottle is perhaps the most recognized iconic shape in the world. It beckons you to hold it; its center curve is designed to fit your hand perfectly. The thickness of the glass and the green hue speak to its quality.

Other sensory marketing signature elements include color, typeface, texture and coatings, (i.e. soft touch, grainy or super glossy). These signature elements are powerful in a way that transcends the product's graphic design or logo. How do I know? Because if those elements were not there, we would still associate that product with that particular brand. Brands can indeed 'own' a shape, texture, material, graphic style, or color palette.

At the beginning of this article, I asked you the question: why do we save packaging? The reasons vary, but clearly, packaging is powerful to purchasing. In fact, 72 percent of American consumers say their purchasing decision is influenced by the product's packaging design.

The most successful brands know this and continue to find powerful and unique ways to appeal to the haptic senses in our brains by creating packaging that:

- Connects to more parts of our brain
- Makes more memories
- Creates more emotional connections
- Develops trust
- Triggers Psychological Ownership
- Elicits the endowment effect
- Engages customers to touch the package
- Persuades them to buy
- Builds brand loyalty

The physical, psychological and emotional connections we have toward packaging and objects that we can touch move us, engage us, drive purchase intent, increase sales, create share-worthy unboxing experiences and build brand loyalty. What value do you place on a package that can do all that?



Vicki Strull is a packaging designer and strategist who advises top-tier and emerging brands on how to leverage the power of print and packaging within their omnichannel marketing strategies. Through MarketWise Academy Vicki teaches master classes on next-gen print + digital marketing strategies and techniques for designers, marketers and brand leaders. Join fellow trendsetters at vickistrull.com, sign up for a master class at marketwiseacademy.com, or follow Vicki on LinkedIn @vickistrull

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If you're not selling, how does M&A affect your business?

You still need to take action to ensure your future, writes Bob Cronin of *The Open Approach*



The M&A locomotive shows no signs of slowdown. Barely two weeks go by without another notable transaction. Big companies, mid-sized entities and small businesses are all getting in on the action – shedding off some lesser-known and family names to forge brands that will become the next major players.

Indeed, labels and packaging remains one of the most sought-after platforms for investors. Despite all of the changes and turbulence we've seen over the last 15 years, the economics and durability of our industry prevail. Businesses and consumers still want – and need – the value made possible on their labels and packaging (information, security, trackability, etc.). Moreover, they depend on it. Pricing is strong, and profitability follows suit, thus making just about any entrance into the business lucrative.

Our industry is consolidating, and M&A is redefining the landscape. Private equity (PE) firms such as Sole Source Capital, Wynnchurch Capital, Warburg Pincus, Clayton, Dubilier & Rice and others have become formidable names holding notable investments. With more money going in manufacturing technology – and rising expectations from our purchasers – it's tougher to compete. What was once a welcoming venue for entrepreneurs and start-ups is now a venue where the players with the most capabilities and solutions win.

As the market toughens, no entity can afford to sit idle. So, if you're not ready to buy or sell, you still need to be taking action to ensure your future. Let's discuss the three primary areas impacted by M&A activity and what they may mean to you.

Customers. Customers are facing the same changing landscape that you are. But on their side, the looming threat is about partnership. They're concerned about the new ownership and their commitment to the customers' businesses. They're being told that all will remain the same, but what's actually happening is largely different.

This business has always been one built on relationships. But as companies

get larger, the connection often wanes. Customers who used to work directly with owners or family members are getting reshuffled with reorganizations of the business structure. Where customers once felt valued and taken care of, their new contact points are making them feel insecure. And some of them now are being pushed to ordering portals that provide no consultation at all. Add to that the industry chatter about where the new entity is going, and there are more unknowns than customers should feel comfortable with.

This adjustment period can be a game changer. Stay in close contact with shared customers – and prospects – and do what you can to allay their fears. Further, assess your weak points compared to the new transactions and make sure you're truly taking care of your own. As new entities complete integration, sales and marketing will ramp up. Show your loyalty to your customers' businesses through meaningful efforts and you can secure their loyalty to yours.

Manufacturing reliability. In today's market, everyone is concerned not just about your capabilities but also your reliability in getting the base material and substrates to execute orders – and securing the freight to deliver them. How does your story compare against your newly growing counterparts? While larger players may have more general purchasing power, they may not have the personal relationships and 'feet on the street' to have leverage. And for those that have long operated under a Just-In-Time model, operations may need significant retooling.

In addition to these issues, the challenges of hiring and retaining top labor talent remain. Regardless of industry advancements and quality controls, craftsmanship will always be a demanded feature.

How can you respond to these issues now, while your larger counterparts work to mobilize their strengths? The small, nimble, and intuitive label enterprises have a huge opportunity to carve real advantage.

Innovations. Finally – like all great success stories – those who innovate dominate.

“If you're going to remain a small independent, make sure you have the customer confidence, stability, and inventiveness to sustain a growing and profitable business”

Despite all of the other drivers, people want to be aligned with the energy, excitement, and potential that comes from innovation. What beyond-the-box thinking and creative solutions are you offering to enrich your customers' businesses?

This consideration is not typically the focus of a large M&A deal. Use your size and flexibility to get a leg up. Sit down with every client (that you want to keep) and find out your value now and where you could improve. Then develop a plan to extend your advantage. The new players are promoting their strengths and will continually become stronger. Your salesforce needs to be out there, working even harder to protect your existing customers – and finding ways where you can gain new ones.

M&A is bringing great change. And change brings great opportunity. Size isn't the only factor in success. But if you're going to remain a small independent, make sure you have the customer confidence, stability, and inventiveness to sustain a growing and profitable business.



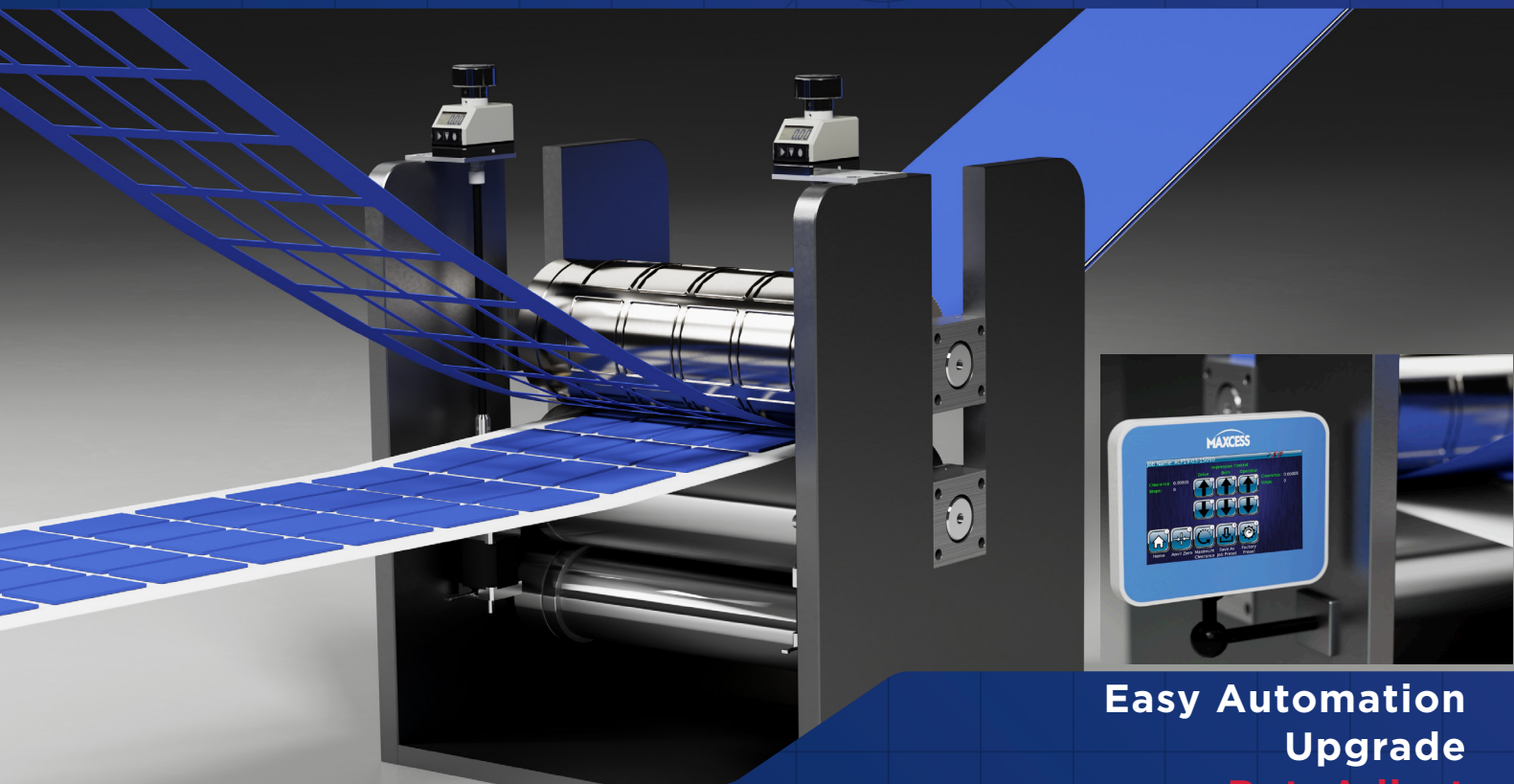
Bob Cronin is managing partner of *The Open Approach*, an M&A firm focused exclusively on the world of print. To learn more, visit www.theopenapproach.net, email bobrcronin@aol.com, or call (+1) 630 542 1758

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Young managers – Ginnie Gandy and Alex Hoffman

Channeled Resources Group's Ginnie Gandy, account manager, and Alex Hoffman, purchaser and account manager, on their journey within labels and the company's sustainability focus. Interview by Jordan Hart

Ginnie Gandy: Alex and I have similar experiences in getting into labels because our families got us involved. Channeled Resources is a family company started by our grandfather, Calvin Frost. My mom is the CEO, Alex's dad is the COO, and his mom works in customer service, so all our family is very involved and that is how I got plugged in. I was home for a summer and my mom started talking to me about the business, and lo and behold here I am a year later.

Alex Hoffman: My story is very similar. The pandemic actually helped facilitate my entrance into the company. I was supposed to go to Amsterdam and intern for AWA, and I obviously could not make it over there. I was interning for them and living at home and my dad, just like Ginnie's mom, started talking to me and I ended up joining the company. I've been with the company for eight months now.

Ginnie Gandy: My favorite part of the industry is the people. I was working for a tech company in HR before this, and I worked with a lot of software engineers. It was a great experience, but the people weren't as genuine or down to earth as I'm experiencing here.

It's something about our industry. Anybody I talk to, whether its purchasing, sales, or customer service, everyone is just kind – even if you screw something up and they are mad at you, they are still patient and understanding. The people really differentiate this industry and make it comfortable to work in and easy to connect – no matter where they work or what company they are part of.

Alex Hoffman: Being in purchasing and building relationships with raw material suppliers, it has been really nice interacting with a whole range of different people and how willing they are to share their knowledge with me. As I'm new in the industry, they have been willing to help me learn and grow.

In terms of trends, I'm looking forward to seeing how linerless labels grow. Right now, it's globally growing about six percent a year. It is a great way for companies to reduce waste and facilitate more efficient shipping patterns, so I look forward to seeing how that develops. This growth is



L-R: Alex Hoffman, purchaser and account manager, and Ginnie Gandy, account manager

“The people really differentiate this industry and make it comfortable to work in”

customer driven. It is based on what the end users want and need. While we don't interact that much with end users, I think there has to be that drive to switch from liner labels to linerless. As that continues to develop, and technologies continue to improve, then it justifies the potentially higher cost.

Ginnie Gandy: I work more on our release liner side of the business, and I am looking forward to seeing how we can get more efficient. I want to see how we can get more throughput, reduce waste, and maybe one day be able to reuse liner.

In terms of sustainability, the biggest thing that our grandfather Calvin has been focusing on is waste to energy – how can we take all the matrix waste or release liner discards and convert those into fuel pellets that we can then use to convert into energy. At our manufacturing plant we collect all our waste and send it to be converted into fuel pellets. It seems like it is a fantastic closed-loop offering that has a lot of potential.

Younger people are really interested in impact and culture. There are a lot of different initiatives around sustainability and our industry knows that is where we are trending and that is what consumers want. To get more young people, we

need to emphasize sustainability efforts and that we offer a good place to work with managers who respect them and where they can be comfortable in their office with coworkers who care about them. Office environment and employee to employee culture are really important. That is what our industry is really good at. The employees at our Chicago office, some of them have been there for over 25 years. I think there is something really special about the culture in our industry and people stay for a reason, and that reason is the people.

Alex Hoffman: It is easy to see the paper industry as not very sustainable and old. That mindset as a young person can make it seem archaic and uninteresting, but it really is an interesting industry. It takes good training programs and a good culture to bring people in. The ability to work remotely, and how Covid has enabled more people to work from a wide range of geographic locations, has probably benefited the industry in many ways. Now you don't necessarily have to live in Wausau or somewhere like that to be in the paper industry.



Watch the full interview on the Labels & Labeling YouTube channel



Q&A

David Richards is managing director of UK converter Amberley Labels. The company was founded in Dorset in the early 1980s and became part of the Coveris Group in 2019. A digital print specialist, it serves high-end brands mainly in the cosmetics sector. Interview by James Quirk

L&L: Amberley Labels was acquired by Coveris in 2019. How has the business changed since then, and what have been the advantages of being part of a multinational converting group?

DR: At the time of the acquisition, it was recognized that Coveris and Amberley Labels operate in quite different business sectors. They focus on fast-moving consumer goods, while Amberley Labels is in a completely different sector. Dennis Paterson, president of the Paper business unit at Coveris, allowed Amberley Labels to be Amberley Labels. Fast-forward to today and we still have our identity, people recognize what we do and what we have done for many years.

Our primary focus is cosmetics labels – we are one of the leading suppliers to a world-leading cosmetics and fragrance brand – and this brings a high quality standard that we have to work towards. Dennis and the team saw that the business was running well and left us to it. What we haven't lost is that small family business mentality. Our customers still get that. We've been allowed to trade as we are and act as we are – a local supplier.

A huge advantage of being part of Coveris Group has been the support of Dennis and the team. For example, there has been a massive improvement in health and safety, because part of the Coveris stance is 'safety first'. That's the first thing we think about, so we put some real investment here in the site. We're over five years without a lost-time incident – two and a half years either side of the acquisition – so it is a safe place to work.

The extra support in human resources and marketing has been a great advantage too. The rebrand of the Amberley brand is fantastic – I absolutely love it. What comes from the acquisition is the resources that can be thrown at supporting such a well-known brand, and actually take it to another level. The perception from the branding is fantastic, and I do believe we match it.

In the context of the recent strikes and paper shortages, the differences between being a privately owned business today, to being part of Coveris, is huge. Our buying power and importance to the likes of UPM Raflatac and other suppliers means that of course we do get priority. So that has been a huge benefit.

Coveris Group has a very clear plan that comes directly from our CEO Jakob Mosser – and it's about safety, and people, and the ethics and sustainability of the business. We communicate that well to every member of staff no matter what their role.

And of course it's not just our site in Blandford, Dorset, anymore,

“What we haven't lost is that small family business mentality. Our customers still get that. We've been allowed to trade as we are and act as we are – a local supplier”

with the addition of Coveris' site in Boston, Lincolnshire, to the Amberley brand. We work across the two sites and the integration has been fantastic. We were three salespeople and now we are up to eleven. It's a complement to the business and helps us be a one-stop shop to our customers. It's a great strategy. The Amberley name, since the acquisition, has got bigger and bigger and more people know about us, for sure.

L&L: Amberley has long been known as a digital pioneer, installing the UK's first HP Indigo ws4000 press in 2003. What percentage of your work is produced digitally, and what are the specific advantages that the technology has brought?

DR: Eighty percent is digital, on three HP Indigo presses, and the remainder is flexo, printed on the Edale press. That figure did rise to around 90 percent during the pandemic because most of our business was going through the HP Indigos. On our Edale press we mainly print peel and read, or coupon labels, of three and five pages. This is mostly for lipsticks and make-up, so during the lockdown no one was out there buying these products because it was all retail. There was less demand. But today we are back to our 80/20 split.

As for the advantages: it's not just that it's digital technology, but that it's HP Indigo technology. Firstly, because of the market we are in – high-end cosmetics labeling – the quality has to be as close as possible to litho. The in-line priming means we can literally use any substrate we want, so there are no restrictions. The technology has worked well because many of our customers have multiple product lines. One of our most famous pieces was for Neal's Yard Remedies. There are hundreds of products and color schemes, so all that color-matching, all those varieties, how else would you want to do it? They also required a very flat-looking matte design. You're not going to



Amberley Labels' site in Blandford, Dorset, houses the Kurz DM-Jetliner in-line with one of three HP Indigo presses

get that from inkjet. The HP Indigo works perfectly from that point of view.

It gives the customers the ability to drop certain product lines and change as they see fit. We're getting back to weekly visits from customers doing sign-off. They love it. They're in our new customer viewing room, they literally see their job running, they make a change and ten minutes later, they see the change. It's a way to move quickly through the approval process. And if new customers and new brands want to get to market quickly, there's no faster way. It has been fantastic for us.

L&L: You added a Kurz DM-Jetliner in 2021 – the first in the UK. What has been your experience with the system and what benefits has it brought?

DR: As soon as I saw the Kurz system running in Israel – at an HP Indigo event – I said: that's Amberley. I knew straight away that I wanted it. One of the main reasons for going with this technology was because Kurz was backing it. That was the first thing. You know that they do things well. The machine is well-built and there is real focus when there's any support needed. They were fantastic during the installation. The quality of foil is second to none in the market.



Amberley Labels' Boston site added hybrid printing capability with an MPS Symjet press with in-line Domino inkjet unit

From day one, the support they have offered in helping us to get what we want out of the system has been fantastic. To have hundreds or thousands of different foil colors on one label, normally you'd have to use silver substrates and tint them to achieve that. So that sold it to me quite quickly.

They've been brilliantly supportive.

You can have it as an off-line process, but we do so much embellishment and we have A B Graphic Digicons which you'd love to run very fast, but obviously with hot foil that's not the case. The difference it has made for us is that you are starting up your HP



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David Richards bio

David Richards joined the label industry in 1998, starting in the raw materials supply chain selling for self-adhesive manufacturer Jackstaedt (JAC UK). When Avery acquired JAC, he moved into more technical roles working with customers to modify existing products but also create innovative PSA products for the market. A short stint at Intercoat was followed by eight years as general manager of UK converter Baker Self-Adhesive Label Co before joining Amberley Labels as commercial and technical manager as part of a new management team. He was also the company's business development manager before being appointed managing director in 2019.

“It’s not just that it’s digital technology, but that it’s HP Indigo technology. It has been fantastic for us”

sustainability benefits. We’re not buying lots of copper and brass blocks anymore because we don’t need them. There are no plates.

It has made a real change to the way we think. We can say to customers: you can have any color you want, anywhere on the label, and you can have it on clear.

L&L: Flexo remains an important part of your business. What work do you produce on your flexo press?

DR: On our Edale FL-3 press the vast majority of work is peel and read labels for cosmetics. And we make some special constructions where we’re printing full-color on the adhesive side.

But mainly it is peel and read labels all day long. What has changed is that so many people are trying to cram so much more information onto labels, and often in multiple languages. Something we are involved in at the moment is the Cosmetics Supervision and Administration Regulation in China. They are going to add more text to

peel and read labels, but it’s in Mandarin. My operators don’t speak Mandarin and a small change to a symbol might change the meaning of the word completely. That gives you an example of how it’s not just a simple peel and read – some of it is getting much more complicated and the demand to meet the quality is growing and the expectations are higher.

L&L: What area of technology are you likely to invest in next?

DR: Pre-acquisition, we would have been looking at a hybrid press. But the Amberley site in Boston has installed an MPS Symjet press with the Domino inkjet unit, so now that we have that in the group, it’s fantastic. And they also invested in the Pantec Rhino foiling system, so when you combine that with the Kurz DM-Jetliner at Amberley Blandford, we’ve got everything covered from multiple hot foil to digital cold foil.

The technology between the two sites is complementary in that respect. That’s

Indigo and after printing the roll goes onto a Digicon Lite and just gets finished. Whereas before, that would have to then come off and go onto a flatbed. We literally have one silver foil and a few other colors, but we are creating all our own colors now, so we don’t need hundreds of different foils. That has

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The Amberley Labels team

“With the addition of Coveris’ site in Boston to the Amberley brand, we work across the two sites and the integration has been fantastic. It’s a complement to the business and helps us be a one-stop shop to our customers”

where the decisions on Capex for the future are: a joint discussion. For example, we might pick up a project tomorrow where silkscreen is dominant, and we don’t have silkscreen on site here. But Amberley Boston has silkscreen. We don’t have RFID inlays; Amberley Boston does. Digital foil – Amberley Boston doesn’t have it; Amberley Blandford does. It’s a dream come true, really. From a salesperson’s point of view, you have no reason to say no.

Being so heavily in the digital arena, every new technology I think about has a digital link to it. I don’t think about investment in conventional technology unless it is for special finishing equipment. That might be something like the ability to produce pouches or sleeves, and be able to finish them onsite. But of course, within the group we have businesses that do that kind of work already. We have a plant that does in-mold labeling and shrink and stretch. Other sites can do folding carton and flexibles. It’s such a huge group, so it’s about understanding where the technology can be brought in to maybe fill that gap between the big users of some of these products.

For example, if our Films and Flexibles divisions are printing hundreds of millions of labels for a soft drink company and tomorrow

they want to do a special run, a bit like we did a few years ago – we did Share-a-Coke but we also did ‘Bru’s your clan’ for Irn-Bru, then there is not an easy way to only run a few hundred thousand or a few million specials with variable data, competition info etc. So the drive from my side would be to focus on those areas where the technology can support the initial start-up and link in with either existing larger-use customers within the group, or get customers into the Amberley portfolio by offering more of a digital experience where previously they were used to wide format, litho or gravure printing.

L&L: When you talk about the digital experience, does that extend to the workflow processes in the company and customer ordering, for example? How will that evolve with increased digitalization and automation?

DR: Yes, absolutely. It was fortunate timing, but just a couple of months into the pandemic we installed Sitaline from Label Traxx. It allows customers to not only place orders from their iPhone or iPad, wherever they are in the world, but also to upload files and create new products. That then goes through the Automation Engine workflow and – with some intervention – into our digital presses. They are seeing a web visual of our own MIS. Some of our customers are wowed by it, some think: yes of course we going to be able to order our labels online. But we’ve gone to the next level with Sitaline. They can see all their products, all their specifications.

L&L: In a recent Q&A with Cristian Reyes of Mexican converter Mayapack, he said he sees this as an alternative to setting up an operation abroad because you can take orders through the Cloud and supply labels abroad as if they were being printed locally.

DR: I completely agree. Many consumers who upload their photos to Photobox or Vistaprint for personalized t-shirts or mouse mats, for example, have no idea that they are being printed somewhere in



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“As soon as I saw the Kurz DM-Jetliner running I said: that’s Amberley. I knew straight away that I wanted it”

Europe and shipped on a special service within a day or two. I can have a customer in Australia and if they have access to Sitaline, they can place the order in the same way I place an order for material from a major raw material supplier – I don’t care where it comes from. It can be produced anywhere in the world, as long as I get it quickly and it is made to the same quality.

L&L: What has been the impact of the recent supply chain disruption?

DR: There has been an impact, no question. It has been the most stressful time that I’ve ever known in the label industry. As much as you communicate to customers, there are still people who don’t fully understand what is going on. They might think that it only affects self-adhesive labeling but the impact is on a much bigger scale. I have heard of other printers finding it hard to source material and even losing orders. But for us, fortunately, we haven’t not shipped a single order. One of the positives is that we are mostly a film user. But it hasn’t been easy. The team here has done a fantastic job but there have been sleepless nights. You would place an order and feel comfortable about it, and then the day before you’re told it’s not coming for another three months.

L&L: How is your production split between end user sectors?

DR: Cosmetics and toiletries make up a large percentage of our business. Another category is household paints – we do a lot of work for Farrow & Ball and its parent company – and we are a big supplier to the artist paints market. This is because there are multiple product lines and requirement for perfect color match, which the HP Indigos have worked really well for.

L&L: How did the lack of trade shows during the pandemic affect how you researched and sourced new equipment, and are you looking forward to their return?

DR: They are hugely useful. I think it’s something I have been brought up with in the industry. If you’re going to buy a press or you have interest in particular equipment, then Labelexpo is where you go. During the pandemic, many suppliers were offering virtual tours and demos. But looking down a camera and really trying to understand if that’s good for me – it’s difficult. The guys who are sitting next to me in the call want to get their hands inside a machine, get to know the kit and speak directly to an operator about it. Seeing something at a show gives you a much better idea about it. If you go to a stand such as A B Graphic, for example, you think there must be something good here because it’s absolutely full of people and the buzz is there. You can get an idea of who is doing what and who is moving forward.

I would pretty much plan our processes around Labelexpo Europe, so every other year makes good sense to me: I have a year to really think about it, plan the business, place the order. But it has changed slightly for us because as part of the Coveris Group we are going to purchase with a group plan, or an Amberley brand plan. We would only make a purchase once all of us are ready and we know what is



Spirit labels printed by Amberley Labels



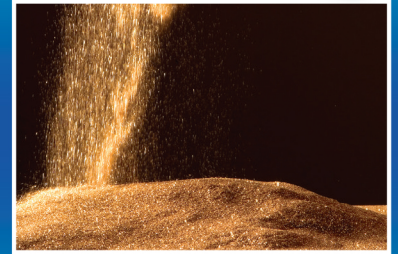
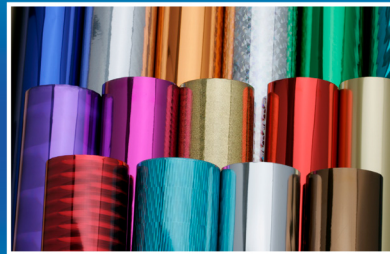
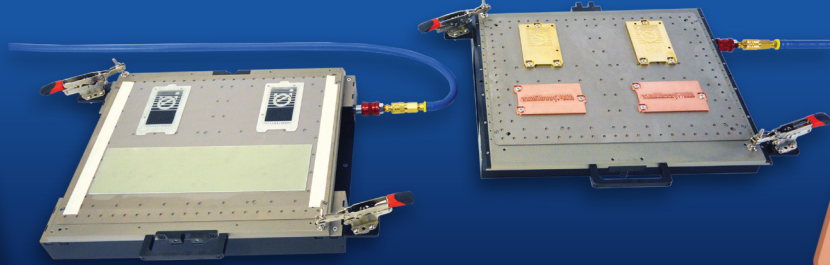
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Cosmetics and toiletries are Amberley Labels' biggest market

About Amberley Labels

Established in Blandford in Dorset in the early 1980s, Amberley Labels is now part of the Coveris Group. Continued investment in pioneering production technology has long established the Blandford site as a leader in digital print, achieving multiple award wins, industry accolades and some of the world's most iconic brand campaigns. Amberley was selected as the only UK partner for Coca-Cola's 'Share a Coke' campaign in Europe because of its experience and capability in digital printing using HP Indigo technology. A clear-on-clear label for Fortnum and Mason Still Blenheim Palace Natural Mineral Water won Finat and World Label Awards trophies.

Amberley joined Coveris' pan-European packaging group in 2019 as its luxury labels brand. Supported by multi-million investments in additional state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure, the Amberley brand was extended to Coveris' Labels site in Boston, Lincolnshire, UK, in 2020.

Its dual facilities now offer a platform of unique support services including Europe's largest independent platemaking facility, integrated studio, reprographics suite, and award-winning Recycling Center. Additional satellite services within the group also include multiple innovation centers, creative and development platforms, cartonboard, film extrusion and printed flexible film products.

“We tell the customer we’re tracking their color, and in two years’ time we’ll be able to guarantee that color will look exactly the same”

required for a particular site. But we have really missed the shows. I miss the networking and meeting people.

L&L: How do you think the label industry will evolve over the next decade?

DR: If we look at automation, I think there is untapped potential in personalization. We have customers who still haven't made the most of it. People love having a product with their name on it, we all do. I think the time will come where – a bit like Label Traxx's Sitaline – you almost have web shop fronts arranged for all your customers, through which they are selling their products but actually it is us in the background, producing the personalized labels for the products. But there are campaigns you see where you buy a personalized product and it's just a label stuck over another label, or generic names that have been printed. It's not the same. I don't fall for it. But I would buy something personalized, for sure.

I always used to think we would become 100 percent digital one day. But I just can't see it. I still see flexo in the market because there are some things it can do amazingly well compared to digital. When you are talking about high-speed long runs, flexo is still the leader for sure.

Everyone talks about label printers having to diversify. I think there will be so many more of us that are doing pouches, sachets or folding carton. Many brands talk about moving away from labels and into direct printing onto containers. It's going to happen more and more. Companies who buy massive amounts of product because they are pre-printed – they're stuck with those bottles. These options will slowly open up to them because they'll be able to buy less quantity, they'll be able to get it quicker, and therefore direct printing onto containers will become more popular.

There's a little business book I loved reading years ago called 'Who Moved My Cheese?' It's a great story. Two pairs of mice are in a massive warehouse with lots of cheese. Two of the mice just continue to eat the cheese that's around them, and the other two take it in turns and go out to search for more cheese further away. And the ones who live are the ones who keep searching from day one. The industry has to have a 'Who Moved My Cheese' moment.

The digital arena is still so young. There is still so much more to do. I love being impressed by presentations from HP Indigo: look, now there's a way to print a spot color for a customer and actually send a Delta E report to them straight off the press, linked to the ticket. We tell the customer we're tracking their color, and in two years' time I'll be able to guarantee that color will look exactly the same. And that's why we continue to evolve. But for me, it's all still in the digital arena.

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

DR: I have three children, who are all grown up now, and we have season tickets at Reading Football Club which I really enjoy. My wife and I love to travel. We're only 15 minutes away from Heathrow airport, so on a Friday night sometimes we just make the decision and jump on a flight for a weekend break in Europe. And I enjoy going to nice restaurants.



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Perfecting the wine label



The wine market is a crowded space. How to stand out? With the perfect label. Piotr Wnuk reports

Over the last 20 years wine has become a high value drink, leading wineries to focus on the quality of the product, its packaging and market research.

'Research shows that 64 percent of consumers try new products because the packaging catches their eye,' says Vanita Marzette, senior product manager for wine and spirits at Avery Dennison. 'You have about three seconds to catch a consumer's eye at the shelf, which makes packaging and label design crucial. Choosing label materials that help you stand out can greatly impact whether a consumer grabs your bottle.'

However, according to a recent wine market survey, 36 percent of US consumers said they are confused by wine labels. Seventy-five percent said that even when they like a wine, they usually can't remember its name. More than half of those surveyed said they find wines with humorous labels appealing, and 81 percent said they want clear and easy-to-understand labels.

'The perfect wine label represents the brand authentically and speaks to the consumer in a language they understand,' says Matthias Vollherbst, managing owner of Germany-based Vollherbst, which works closely with wineries around the globe to produce striking and memorable wine labels.

'Reports often say that a specific design style and specific colors sell better – such as a black paper with gold foil and embossing. This is probably true if you look at the wine market in general. But every wine and, therefore, every brand and label are unique and general rules rarely apply to them – that is what makes wine marketing so interesting and fascinating,' adds Vollherbst.

It's about understanding the people behind a brand, their values, and the values they are seeking to share, says Vollherbst.

'Unlike other categories, like food, the wine label has a much more difficult task. It needs to describe the taste and the personality of the wine without showing it or using obvious cliches. It's a bit like the perfume industry: the design must make you feel rather than see,' adds Giuseppe Mascia, visual design lead at Milan-based branding agency CBA Design, who has completed several projects in the wine and spirits space. 'The perfect label can tell a story and create an intimate connection between the wine and the consumer. Of course, different markets need different approaches. The New World wines are usually less related to ancient traditions than the Italian or French ones, so they can be bolder and more expressive.'

Global converting group All4Labels has recently launched Motherland, a marketing campaign dedicated to wine and spirits that displays each product's unique essence and shows off its local heritage through eye-catching label designs. In the coming months, the group will produce eight label concepts for wine and spirits from Argentina, France, Italy, South Africa, Mexico, Russia, China and Germany.

'We are embarking on this campaign to highlight our presence as a main player in the wine and spirits market and to show our high premium solutions,' says Adrian Tippenhauer, CEO of All4Labels. 'Motherland will demonstrate in very real terms how All4Labels is pioneering innovation with bold creativity, high quality and sustainable packaging for local and global wine and spirits brands.'

'Setting the standards of perfect labels is a question of sensitivity, as we need to connect with the time we live, and to link our capabilities together with the instances of the regional regulations and the changing demands of the end-users,' adds Paola Iannone, vice president of marketing and communications at All4Labels. 'It requires a deep connection with the industry in which we act and strong sociological know-how to interpret reality with extreme fluidity, accordingly to the trends of the moment.'

In a retail environment, the label is crucial when consumers make

“Every brand and wine label are unique. General rules rarely apply to them - that is what makes wine marketing so fascinating”

a purchasing decision. But, how to develop a label that will not only stand out on a crowded shelf but also build an intimate relationship and engrave the brand identity in the consumer's memory?

'Decorative design elements such as foil, screen ink and interesting label shapes accomplish this task,' answers Darren Hudson, president of Multi-Color Corporation in Australia and New Zealand, the region placed in the top 10 wine producers globally. 'Once seen, it must invite tactile engagement, so it is picked up. This is achieved by incorporating texture into a paper label or selecting a unique material such as felt. Lastly, the label is a visual cue of quality and value. A well-designed and printed label foretells the premium experience the consumer can look forward to.'

'There are also values attached to the wine industry, like history, culture, comfort, a certain image of sociality, but also sustainability. A label is then the main way to convey a message and these values, whether by the material, by the embellishment, and by design: a simple chateau design, the reproduction of a work of art, or even a graffiti,' suggests Louis Rouhaud, global marketing director of Arjohex Synthetic Paper, part of Polyart Group, who often helps wineries and printers to create branding experience suitable for the wine and region it represents.

'I always find this to be a great question as many would assume it is the best design, the most intricate label, or a highly embellished label,' says Kevin Frydryk, vice president responsible for markets and products at US-based Resource Label Group, who oversees the development of wine labels. 'I believe the perfect wine label considers the total package and finds the right intersection between the story the brand wants to tell and the image they want to create to maximize the experience for the customer. The product can be limitless as that story may translate into a highly decorated label or something straightforward.'

Design evolution

To better understand what makes the perfect wine label today, we can consider its evolution over the past few years.

'There has been a revolution in the winemaking as volumes had been stalling, and producers had to venture to other consumer populations,' explains Polyart's Rouhaud. 'This has been impacting the labels. The wine industry opened itself to new markets, new generations and new countries. And thus, labels have accompanied this change with different substrates and designs: to appeal to young consumers, they couldn't use the traditional chateau label. They had to appeal to different values and cultures of those new target markets.'

Ten years ago, premium wine labels were printed on an uncoated material with a more natural look and feel, some metallic effects, high build varnish, preferably on the brand name and key brand elements. These effects are standard on today's wine labels.

'Two major developments have led to what is often described as premiumization in wine packaging: first, the understanding of consumers and brand owners that wine is a luxury good where people want to treat themselves and experience consumption as a pleasure,' Vollherbst. 'Secondly, the ever more efficient and increasingly sophisticated materials and finishing options mean that ever more extraordinary visual and tactile effects can be



New brand identity for an Italian sparkling wine. V8+ developed by CBA Design does not talk about history or heritage, but about the process that makes this wine unique

achieved within a reasonable budget.'

'The printing technologies and innovative materials have given new opportunities to the design,' agrees CBA Design's Mascia. 'Having said that, I guess what has not changed (and will not in the future) are the emotions a label must bring. You can change the frame, but not the painting.'

Multi-Color Corporation (MCC) wine labeling specialists note that stocks and embellishments have gone to the next level in the last decade and continue to evolve. There is more diversity in design, using digital print technology for variable images and consumer engagement features such as augmented reality or QR codes and moving away from traditional stocks and embellishments to engage a younger demographic.

'Over the past ten years, it has been increasingly difficult to stand out on the shelf, which has increased decorative effects such as foil embossing and technologies such as QR codes and augmented reality,' confirms Bill Knopka, vice president of sales and marketing for wine and spirits at MCC North America.

'Labels have gotten more complex,' admits Avery Dennison's Marzette. 'You may not be able to notice right away, but when you see that subtle glimmer of foil or feel the raised clear varnish, the label execution is more complex than it was 10 years ago. Materials have also evolved from different shades of white with deckled edges to an array of bright colors made from high quality facestocks.'

Resource Labels Group's Frydryk also noticed that wine labels have evolved significantly over the past few years,

"I believe the perfect wine label considers the total package and finds the right intersection between the story the brand wants to tell and the image they want to create to maximize the experience for the customer"

changing from traditional design to a true brand extension. Highly decorated labels were once considered to be exclusive to high-end wines. Those requirements are now across all price points. Storytelling through design or packaging is one of the most significant changes he has seen. What used to be a straightforward substrate selection or foil enhancement has evolved into non-traditional embellishments and unique substrates.

What's trending

'We can see the emergence of three main packaging trends: personalization, co-creation, and consumer interaction. Setting a brand experience through connected packaging is a big demand from brand owners. Consumer interaction is now adding a layer of experience to consumers' purchases in many segments, and QR marketing is the key to a new world,' says Nicolas Günther, general manager of the Smart+Secure division at All4Labels Group. 'Our QR Tags not only activate but unleash the full media, marketing, solutions, and analytics potential of a label. QR Tag solutions enable extended, multilingual, multi-amblyopia, multimedia content without using extra space instead of

unveiling extra marketing space on the label. QR Tags hypercharge every marketing department by providing astonishing consumer insights and are the fuel cell of super optimized selling and cross-selling opportunities. QR Tag-charged labels are the cleaner version of "landscape" labels.'

In the age of lightning-fast information, digital marketing has established itself as one of the biggest revenue opportunities for businesses, adds All4Labels' Paola Iannone. She thinks that whether a call-to-action is a special offer, loyalty coupon, sweepstake, recommendation, or how-to guide, the important thing is that each scan provides value to the target audience in the form of money, fun or information.

'I guess the biggest opportunity is to design an ecosystem rather than just a label. If you have a story to tell, you can use multiple touchpoints to make it alive,' agrees Giuseppe Mascia. 'Doing it in the right way brings an incredible added value to the brands. The challenge is to keep a very high standard one every single touchpoint. Interactive labels are exciting, but they need to tell something more than the label itself and be relevant to the consumer. If it is just a matter of showing off the technology, it does not make sense.



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Label developed by Völlherbst for German wine brand Herz über Kopf, designed for a young target group that values lifestyle



There is an increasing number of brands adopting unique papers that help set them apart from competition

“Over the past ten years it has been difficult to stand out on the shelf, which has increased decorative effects such as foil embossing and technologies such as QR codes and augmented reality”

Unfortunately, brands often push for innovative solutions without a soul, not just in the wine and spirits sector.’

Digital printing is emerging as a key enabler of consumer interaction. ‘With digital printing, brands can use their packaging as a platform for storytelling, which evolves from a mere marketing prospective to a sharp brand position,’ says Massimiliano Martino, chief technology officer at All4Labels Group. ‘Use storytelling to supercharge wine and spirits is enhanced by digital transformation.’

‘Interactive labels present an excellent opportunity for winemakers to connect directly with consumers, particularly if done as part of a strategic campaign rather than just for the novelty factor,’ adds MCC’s Knopka. ‘Offering access to unique content can help build brand relationships and encourage loyalty, particularly for international markets.’

MCC says that there will be greater use of interactive technologies in wine packaging as wineries seek to connect with their customers and drive repeat purchases more intimately.

‘There have been great recent examples of this. The 19 Crimes line-up [see boxout] does a very nice job using augmented reality (AR). We’re getting more and more inquiries around near-field communication (NFC) technology. This technology physically implants an antenna in the label. When a smartphone comes into range of the label, the phone takes the consumer to a brand web page where more information about the wine is presented or promotions offered,’ comments MCC’s Hudson.

‘Not only using labels to make the brand story come to life with the use of NFC, but also the ability to track orders, validate varietals using blockchain technology,’ adds Avery Dennison’s Marzette. ‘Blockchain helps build transparency and trust between the producer and the end consumer.’

German converter Völlherbst believes that cool technologies like augmented reality will have only a limited influence on wine marketing, despite their enormous potential.

Says Matthias Völlherbst, ‘Fancy animations attract interest from new consumer groups who may find wine too traditional. Interactive menus can foster interaction between consumers and wine brands. Sounds, real voices and videos can increase credibility and give consumers a face to the anonymous product.’

‘Generally speaking, however, we perceive the wine category to be too traditional to be influenced by such trends. Trendy packaging is not something that most wine consumers want, and we saw many great, progressive and trendy packaging concepts fail – simply because consumers don’t understand or expect them on wine.’

‘This is especially true in more traditional consumer markets like Germany, Switzerland or France. Here, you rather see mid to long-term developments that come into the game and stay for several years, like the use of uncoated materials or more colorful yet highly refined color foil finishes. Color-changing varnishes that show ideal wine drinking temperature is something that has also worked well recently as it is easy to understand and delivers practical benefits to consumers.’

‘There are an increasing number of brands that are adopting more unique papers that help set them apart,’ adds Avery Dennison’s Marzette. ‘They are using glossy papers like we have in our luminous collection in addition to papers with tactile finishes like you would find in our sensorial collection.’

Völlherbst sees sustainability as another important development for wine labels. The company pioneered craftLabel, a method of adding natural resources like soil or sand into a label, offering wine producers the potential to tell the true brand story and bring it closer to consumers.

‘Winery owners and brand owners increasingly recognize the importance of utilizing sustainable packaging for their wines. They are requesting label materials with post-consumer waste and seeking assistance in recovering liner materials once bottling is complete,’ agrees MCC’s Hudson. ‘We are also seeing our customers request ways to reduce the number of materials used. We help them by suggesting smaller label sizes in ways that do not negatively impact the brand image. This also saves money.’

Sustainable materials are becoming more popular as consumers demand sustainability from brands.

‘There has been an increase in requests for materials that are FSC, recyclable or made from organic materials that are sourced in a responsible manner. Avery Dennison has met these needs with sustainable options that have 30 to 100 percent recycled content in addition to including material made from cotton, citrus, hemp and



The ability to stand out on the shelf is more challenging than ever

“We can see the emergence of three main packaging trends: personalization, co-creation and consumer interaction”

barley,’ says Marzette.

‘We’ve seen trends on textured substrates, also on durability (resistance to ice bucket); we’ve seen labels with unique numbering or even bottles with unique label designs (with HP indigo Mosaic software design), but one of the trends that is coming through now is sustainability,’ agrees Polyart’s Rouhaud.

This trend has gone along with a move towards simplicity in design, adds CBA Design’s Giuseppe Mascia. ‘Even historical, well-established brands embrace the idea that less is more and having less cluttered design helps to go to the point.’

Opportunities and challenges

The task of good design is to translate the ideas, values and passions of winemakers into a visual language.

‘The essence and character of the winemaker is always in the foreground. One must avoid putting on expensive new clothes that do not fit them. They should be staged as they really are – with all their fascinating strengths and weaknesses,’ says Matthias Vollherbst.

‘Nobody can doubt the level of expertise needed to create a truly effective new packaging design. An ability to “wow” consumers and customers is part of that expertise, but so is balancing a huge range of practical, cost, sustainability, and logistics issues,’ states Tobias Rug, head of All4Graphics, the design division of All4Labels Group.

‘Designers should forget about what has come before and work on a new blank canvas without restrictions while cooperating with label converters to unlock the extensive range of print innovations and capabilities,’ says MCC’s Knopka. ‘The ability to use multiple tactile elements starting from material selection to use of screens, foiling, sculptured embossing to present something beautiful not only to look at but to engage the sense of touch.’

However, as much as the increasing number of modern technologies, machinery, and available substrates can present enormous opportunities for wineries and designers, they can also quickly become a sea of chaos.

‘As a designer, the possibilities are endless. You can print on transparent labels, textured paper, hemp paper, and cotton paper. They are truly endless. Perhaps that’s why the biggest challenge is to choose,’ agrees Rouhaud.

‘The most recent challenge many businesses face is supply channel constraint,’ adds Kevin Frydryk. ‘It has really hit everyone across the board from the availability of material and inks to other packaging elements such as the availability of glass and other packaging materials. It is more critical than ever that designers and printers work together and adjust based on supply constraints. There is always a solution, it just may take some additional discussion to get to the right one based on the customer’s needs.’



All4Labels has recently launched Motherland, a marketing campaign dedicated to wine and spirits

The next big thing

How to get ahead of the curve? We asked our respondents to pinpoint what might be the next big thing for the print industry serving wine label clients.

‘Digital finishing and metallization opportunities will become standard in the next years, allowing for even more individualization and personalization of wine labels. Sustainable material and finishing technologies will boom soon,’ answers Matthias Vollherbst without hesitation.

‘Finally, digital wine labels, be it for practical reasons to allow the consumer or trader to trace the supply chain – or for more fun related reasons like augmented reality, will be further pushed,’ he adds. However, the next big thing, surprisingly, could be a return of the traditional wine label, or something very similar. That is the beauty and secret of wine marketing.’

Polyart’s Louis Rouhaud thinks sustainability will be the prominent trend in the future. ‘Today, when you choose a material, you don’t only question its physical specs, whiteness, texture, durability to an ice bucket, or even its design... but you ask yourself what is its impact on the planet; what is its CO2 footprint? What can I say about my sustainability endeavor, and is it conveyed by the label? And that will be more and more part of the equation.’

This approach is also echoed by the wine specialists from All4Labels Group, who think that designing packaging specifically to be



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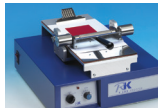
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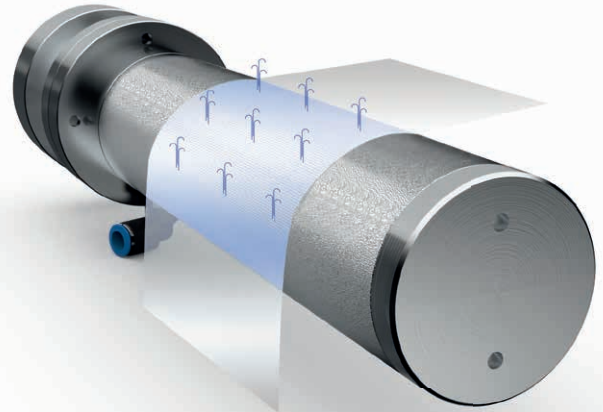
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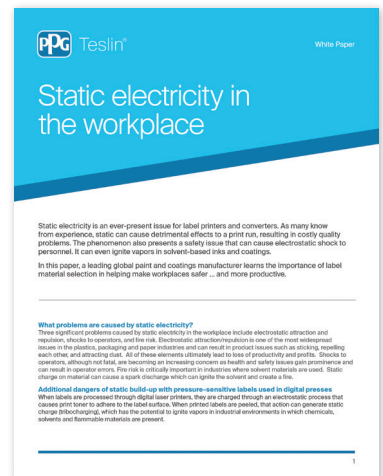
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What is the most unusual wine label you have seen on the market?



Matthias Vollherbst, Vollherbst
Orpheus & The Raven by the Vinoneers. It is a label that thoroughly covers the bottle – but in a way that you don't see a start nor the end – infinite label beauty. There is so much to explore, so much detail – from two different gold foils to a traditional letterpress numbering that makes each bottle a unique piece of art. The unusual style very cleverly speaks wine language and therefore attracts wine as well as design lovers likewise.



Giuseppe Mascia, CBA Design
American, South African and Australian wineries are more expressive and unusual. 19 crimes uses 'living labels', a technology in augmented reality that brings the experience for the consumers to a new level. What is excellent is the technology itself and the remarkable story that you can experience through it.



Louis Rouhaud, Polyart
We've seen labels made of wood. Even though the printing is not the most elaborate, it conveys a lot of value on sustainability, but also the way wine is made as it is aged in wooden barrels. But the most striking trend we see is bottles without labels; that is, with a design directly printed on the bottle; that might be the future, or one future of the prime labeling industry, as sustainability seems to be driving the whole industry now, and direct print saves one operation, saves energy, saves materials.



Kevin Frydryk, Resource Labels Group
This may seem like a surprising response from a company that produces labels – but one of the unique labels is from Saldo, which uses a very minimalist approach for its label. They have purposely chosen a path that they think best represents their brand and as I mentioned before, telling the brand story is what I believe a great label should do.

“Sustainability will play a major role in wine and spirits where the highly complex design should comply with new materials promoting recycled content, renewable sources and supporting recycling”

recycled will become vital.

'Packaging serves multiple functions – protecting and preserving products, differentiating and positioning brands and connecting with consumer values,' adds Gabriela Neves, head of sustainability at All4Labels. 'But we can foresee sustainability will play a major role even in wine and spirits where the highly complex design should comply with new materials promoting recycled content, renewable sources and supporting recycling with dedicate solutions.'

'I think the number of SKUs and packaging options will continue to grow,' adds Resource Labels Group's Frydryk. 'And as the demographic changes a bit towards the younger wine drinker, I believe we will see a change in design and delivery method as well as an emphasis on sustainability to complement the brand story.'

More luxurious materials married with sustainability is the future according to Avery Dennison's Marzette. 'You don't have to choose between the two,' she says. 'Not only are labels becoming more sustainable, but brands are looking at overall packaging. Recycled glass, paper etc. in addition to boxes and other formats.'

What is clear is that wine packaging is a powerful tool that can change buying preferences and consumption patterns in significant ways.



For more information, read the Label Academy's *'Label Embellishments and Special Applications: Exploring the techniques and processes used for adding decorative finishes and functionality to labels'* book, available on Amazon or through the Label Academy section of labelsandlabeling.com



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HP Indigo demonstrates V12 digital press

Visitors to HP Indigo's VIP event in Israel were able to see the new V12 digital press in action printing at speeds up to 120m/min. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

When HP Indigo announced the V12 press two years ago there was a huge buzz of excitement. The V12 uses a new press architecture to achieve print speeds up to 120m/min on a 340mm-wide web, replacing the LEP imaging system which has powered all HP Indigo label presses to date.

The LEP imaging engine found in the 6k-series press transfers up to seven colors sequentially onto a sensitized semi-rotary drum imaged by a laser writing head. This allows speeds of 30m/min using four colors. The greater the number of colors, the slower the print speed.

The new LEPx technology, by contrast, consists of six imaging engines which simultaneously deposit their own color separations onto a 6 meter-long blanket belt. The registered image is applied from the blanket belt to the substrate in one shot.

Each separation is generated by an LEPx writing head consisting of an LED array, a photo imaging drum (PID) and two switchable HP Electroink sources. Six LEPx imaging engines work simultaneously to apply each color separation and create a complete image on the blanket belt.

The V12 press incorporates a new design of photo imaging drum (PID), while the new LED writing heads consist of thousands of LEDs which compose an image as an electrostatic field at 1,600 DPI resolution. An integrated in-line priming unit runs at full press speed.

Up to six colors can be printed at full press speed, requiring one rotation of the blanket belt. If more than six colors are used the blanket requires a second rotation, halving the speed to 60m/min. Each color station can switch between two different inks on the fly.

An alpha version of the V12 press was originally to have been shown at drupa, but with the pandemic wreaking havoc on the global printing show calendar the recent VIP event held at the HP Indigo technology campus in Israel was the first chance converters and journalists had to see the press in action.

Step change

Eli Mahal, head of Labels & Packaging marketing at HP Indigo, said the V12



VIP event visitors taking a tour of the HP Indigo technology campus

“Typical makeready for a 5-6 color flexo job is one hour with around 400m waste. With the V12 makeready takes minutes with 90 percent less waste”

represents a major step change in digital printing. ‘Today flexo represents 95 percent of label print volume and digital just 5 percent. Out of that 5 percent, 65 percent is HP Indigo and we are still seeing 12-15 percent growth per year in print volume for our presses. But we believe our customers can continue outgrowing the market if they print more using our technology.’

The demonstration on the V12 was a 4-color PS paper label job running at 120m/min. Commented Mahal, ‘In practice 95 percent of jobs are CMYK, so will run at this speed with an additional white on clear film. However, having the 7-12 color option does give great flexibility in the number of colors and in the order of separations. For example if you want some colors doubled or to change the order of the white from first to last down for reverse printing.’

The press can run a wide range of material thicknesses from 0.5 to 18pt. Currently only PS materials have been qualified for the press, but other materials

Flexible packaging visit

Attendees at the VIP event visited digital flexible packaging converter DigiPack, owned by a senior manager from one of Israel's biggest flexpack groups. The company is using an HP 20000 press and Karlville thermal laminator along with a Chinese pouch-making machine.

The small footprint of this whole set-up and the medium-sized investment it represents have worked well for DigiPack, which has quickly built up a clientele of small to medium brands in Israel. ‘These brands now have all the advantages of unlimited changes to artwork, no minimum order, no tooling costs and greatly reduced lead times,’ said Eli Mahal. ‘This helps explain why all of HP Indigo's digital flexible packaging customers' print volume has more than doubled since 2019.’



Visitors were shown different routes to adding value with digital print



Eli Mahal, head of Labels & Packaging marketing at HP Indigo

such as shrink sleeve labels will be qualified before the press is commercially released.

To cater for the longer runs the press is expected to perform, the ink containers are now bigger, with most stations including two stations with an automatic revolver, increasing the interval between replacements.

The new imaging architecture means a different schedule for replacing press consumables. 'The new digital plate, for example, is a once a month replacement, while the blanket will need replacing every few days,' explained Mahal.

Looking at future changes from the Alpha version V12, there is likely to be an optional butt splicer and turret rewinder to allow nonstop winding.

In terms of commercial availability, the press at the HP Indigo technology campus is currently at Alpha level. Beta presses are

now in production and the first beta-testing contract has been signed with a major European converting group, with the press due for installation this autumn.

Converting end

A B Graphic has a Digicon converting line under development for the V12, built to promote high levels of speed and automation. Key elements include an auto die-cassette system capable of holding up to ten die plates with automated loading and pre-positioning of the die-cut, along with 100 percent print inspection, non-stop turret rewinding and non-stop waste handling. JDF/JMF implementation will allow for advanced integration with the press and workflow. Barcodes are printed between jobs and read with scanners on the Digicon to enable automated makeready of new jobs with minimal operator intervention.

The Digicon line will be configurable either in-line, with an integrated buffer, or near-line. Eli Mahal believes near-line will be the most common configuration. 'Around 98 percent of our presses currently run with near-line finishing, and we expect the same with the V12. Once you have in-line operation you work at the speed of the slowest element, and there's no way you will get a 120m/min converting speed for all jobs.

'If you had dedicated work for a major customer, you could see how in-line would make sense. But our customers most commonly serve multiple verticals and are changing materials four or five times a day.'

V12 vs flexography

A key question is how far the V12 will encroach onto mid- or even long-run flexo territory.

Mahal said running the V12 compared to running flexo 'is like driving through a city when all the lights are green'.

“Running the V12 compared to running flexo is like driving through a city when all the lights are green”

'It's all about makeready time and waste,' continued Mahal. 'Since not all converters are using pitstop working, typical makeready for a 5-6 color flexo job is one hour with around 400m waste. With the V12 makeready takes minutes with 90 percent less waste.'

'A typical V12 might run 10 jobs a day with a sweet spot between 2-7 linear kilometers per job. If the average job is 3km, total daily waste on ten jobs would be around 400m. The equivalent flexo press runs on average at 60-100m/min and produces 4km waste a day over ten jobs. So the V12 will print these ten jobs in less than half the time and cut makeready waste by around 90 percent. And all this is before we start talking about limited editions, variable data and so on.'

Mahal also sees a V12 with near-line finishing as a better configuration for most label converters than a hybrid (flexo + digital) press.

'The market share of hybrid is small – I see them at large customers who can allocate large volumes of the same job day in and day out. Only if you are setting up for spot varnish, relam/delam etc on the same media with the same die-cut can you enjoy the full productivity of the hybrid line.'

Spot Master

During the VIP event visitors were introduced to HP Indigo's latest Pantone matching system. Spot Master uses a patented algorithm for color matching, claimed to enable converters to reach brand colors within five minutes with an accuracy of less than 2 delta E and less than five meters of waste.

'Spot Master has been developed for converters for whom matching Pantone colors is critical,' said Eli Mahal. 'To match spot color and make sure it's consistent there are many factors which make an impact, like changes to humidity etc. We have customers who every time they load new media run a calibration and stop between jobs to check the color is right. Spot Master is designed for them.'

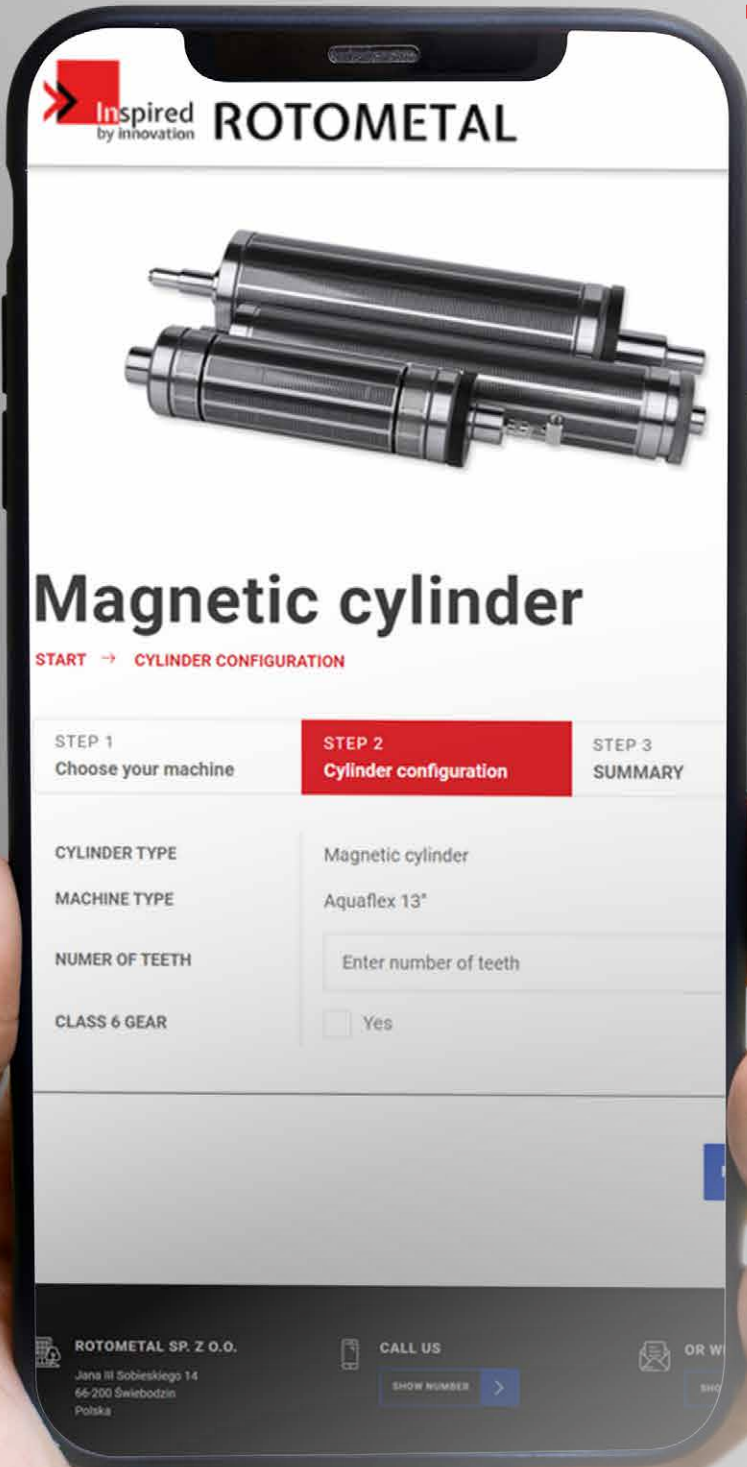


Read Andy Thomas-Emans' column about digital closing the gap with flexo on page 37



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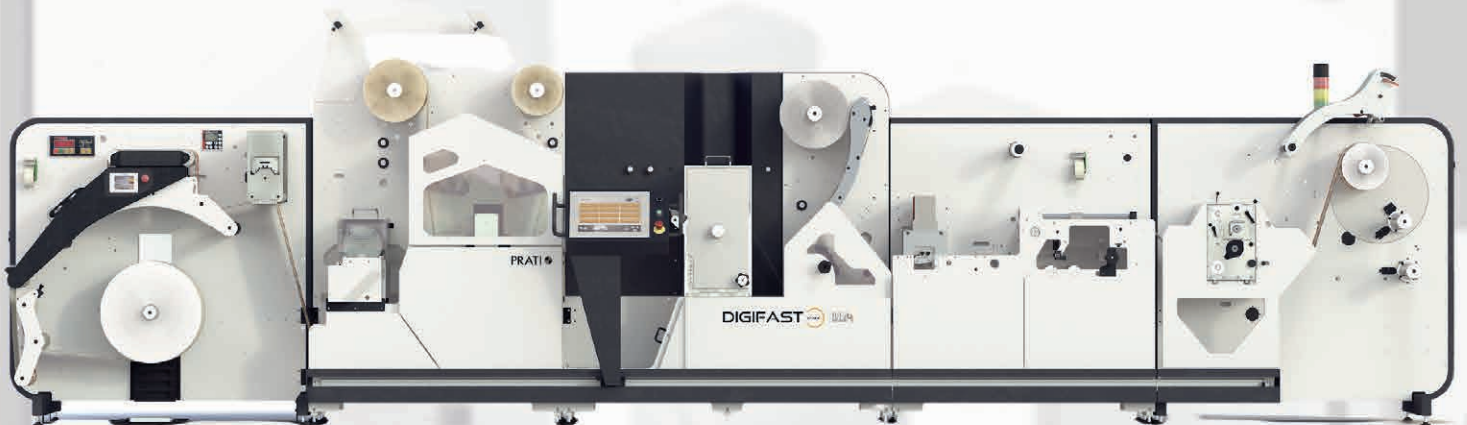
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Bobst launches Digital Master series

Following on from the DM5 'all-in-one' format digital press, Bobst has launched the next generation machine, the Digital Master in web widths up to 510mm. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Leveraging its proven flexo experience and recent innovations in inkjet development, Bobst has enhanced its in-line portfolio with the new Digital Master press series. Available in two web widths, 340mm and 510mm, the Digital Master is designed to be a fully digitalized and automated production line, from printing to embellishment and cutting. The Digital Master presses are based on a fully modular and upgradeable architecture, enabling customers to build their own press and evolve it over time.

'Developments in label production are moving at pace with brand owners looking for converters that have the ability to deliver faster, better and at more competitive prices,' says Bobst strategic marketing manager Patrick Graber. 'In this context, the Bobst All-in-One platform is a great answer as digitally printed labels can be produced in high quality, with exceptional productivity and at lower costs, from short to long runs.'

'With the Digital Master series, we want to solve our customers' challenges as they try to overcome the lack of skilled workforce while moving to industrial productivity and longer run lengths with digital equipment; and to bring more agility and flexibility to the production floor.'

The Digital Master series will be available in 340mm (13.5in) and 510mm (20in) widths, printing at a native resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI. The Digital Master presses run at speeds up to 100m/min (328ft/min) in four or six colors plus optional digital white.

Like the Master DM5 it supersedes, the Digital Master offers printing, embellishment and cutting in a single pass, with native integration between the UV inkjet engine and the flexo and converting modules. The introduction of a 510mm version adds new opportunities to expand application versatility into larger-sized labels, industrial and chemical markets, wraparound, shrink sleeves, and other special applications.

Adds Graber, 'The Digital Master 510 provides higher production volume but still only needs one operator to run the press. The press really bridges the gap between traditional digital and flexo machines. The Digital Master series stands for flexibility, fast turnaround, and inline end-to-end label production, with exceptional quality and productivity in increasing run lengths.'

Modular architecture

The modular architecture of the Digital Series presses allows customers to configure the machine they need, from a digital-only version to highly customized configuration integrating all modules available in in-line flexo. 'It also provides the possibility to be upgraded on-site at a later stage when new technologies for these platforms are released,' says Graber.

Typical applications for the flexo modules include priming demanding substrates, high-ink coverage jobs for long print runs to save on digital ink, applications with high white coverage, or for printing Pantone colors. Available embellishment features include varnishing, tactile and holographic effects, cold foil glue-applied, UV lamination, and security printing.

For end-to-end label production, fully automated semi-rotary die-cutting or rotary die-cutting are ready for integration. The semi-rotary die-cutting module has a repeat range up to 17in, while the rotary die-cutting module allows for full converting options



Bobst's new Digital Master press

“The introduction of a 510mm version adds new opportunities to expand application versatility into larger-sized labels, industrial and chemical markets, wraparound, shrink sleeves, and other special applications”

such as embossing and sheeting.

Also available are modules for special applications including multi-layer labels, back-side printing, coupon and others.

'Each print, embellishment and finishing module is digitally automated for high uptime, low waste, and repeatability regardless of the operator's skills,' continues Graber.

Quality control is handled by the inclusion of a Bobst Accucheck 100 percent in-line inspection system operating at full press speed. This technology checks registration, quality, and color consistency of digital and flexo print and all embellishments including foil and varnish.

The Accucheck system detects a broad range of print defects including spots, streaks, missing text, color variations, registration errors, substrate integrity and double printing. It also incorporates missing jet detection.

To maximize productivity during longer runs the presses are fitted as standard with 1,000mm (39in) jumbo unwinders and rewinders with automated roll-lift to reduce the number of roll changes. A single interface controls the whole machine, which can be connected to the Cloud and is open for MIS integration.

Other standard equipment includes web cleaner, corona unit, web-guide, simplex mark reader for second pass printing, splice detector, chilled roller and maintenance automation system along with Digital Front End server for fast data processing.



An in-depth review of the Digital Master press series will appear in the next edition of *Labels & Labeling*



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Durst's 510mm inkjet press takes on flexo

UV inkjet is now challenging flexography in terms of print quality and productivity. This was the main message from Durst's recent open house event, as Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Durst's Expo Label 2022 event, held at the company's impressive headquarters in Brixen, Italy, gave visitors a chance to look at the company's latest digital print technology.

The star of the show was without doubt the Tau RSCi, which takes UV inkjet print productivity to a level where it matches flexo on a wide range of medium and even long run work.

The RSCi press in the Brixen demo center is 510mm (20in) wide and was demonstrated printing at 100m/min in four colors. Press speed is 80m/min at full resolution and drops to 52m/min when printing white. A specialty white mode, achieving 80 percent opacity, is available at 40m/min.

The RSCi press is configured with high productivity in mind, incorporating a jumbo winder, including roll lift, capable of taking rolls up to 1,106mm (43.5in) diameter. For maximum material flexibility the press is equipped with a chill roll as standard.

“We have several customers which produce volume jobs on our presses. In 2021 we had customers printing in 12 months more than 2 million sqm on a single press”

The RSCi at Brixen is configured with two flexo stations positioned before and after the digital print engine. Typical uses for the flexo stations would include first down white and post-print varnish, although there are also interesting applications for mixing spot flexo and UV inkjet inks to extend the viable run length. The first flexo unit could also be used to add a primer for more challenging materials, or on uncoated stocks where color matching is critical.

The flexo units are fitted with slide in/out carriages to aid loading and unloading of the ink pan, pick-up and anilox roller.

Other features of the press include a hardware secure remote access facility and integrated inspection table.

ABG demonstrated a 530mm-wide Digicon finishing line to match the 510mm web width of the Tau RSCi. The Digicon line incorporated varnish, lamination and high speed semi-rotary die-cutting and stripping. It can be configured for either in-line or near line operation.

Martin Leitner, product manager, Label & Flexible Packaging, Durst Group, believes that systems like the 510mm Tau RSCi mark a turning point for UV inkjet digital printing. 'Digital is competing with flexo in terms of print quality – the Tau RSC print quality is as good or even better than flexo. Some customers compare it even with offset. Also, productivity-wise the presses are extremely competitive with low set-up times combined with high printing speeds. Keep in mind that the minimum printing speed on our presses is 40m/min, so the operator cannot go lower, which he is often doing on other technologies.'

Leitner says Durst already sees multiple customers substituting



Durst headquarters in Brixen, Italy

conventional flexo presses with UV inkjet technology. 'To give you some numbers, we have several customers which really produce volume jobs on our presses. In 2021 we had customers printing in 12 months more than 2 million sqm on a single press, or multiple customers with regularly daily productions between 20-25,000sqm, so 60-75,000 linear meters a day.

'I do not say that UV inkjet is today a full substitution for flexo. Each technology has its space and advantages, but in the past two years UV inkjet made huge steps forwards and provides customers with more and more advantages.'

Entry-level

Two more UV inkjet presses were on demonstration, representing different steps on the Tau ladder.

The Tau 330 RSC E is Durst's entry-level press, running at 52m/min, but with the ability to be field upgraded to the 8-color Tau 330 RSC running at 80m/min.

Although entry-level, the press shares key features with the most advanced of the Tau press series, including automated nozzle compensation based around an in-line camera. All the Tau machines print to a resolution of 1,200 x 1,200 DPI with 2 picoliter drop size using FujiFilm Dimatix Samba 3GL print heads.

Like its other stablemates, the RSC-E press allows either standard RSC UV inks or low migration (LM) inks to be used.

The next step up is the Tau 330 RSC, which runs at 80m/min (262ft/min) and includes the high opacity (80 percent) white mode, making the press particularly suitable for added value toiletries and cosmetics applications.

The press runs the extended gamut (CMYK+OGV) RSC ink set, but Durst's tests demonstrate that up to 85 percent of the Pantone range can be achieved with just CMYK to a delta of under 2 (the quoted test was conducted on HermaPE label material). Using the full CMYK+OGV ink set allows up to 95 percent of the Pantone range to be hit.

The RSC press at Brixen was demonstrated running low migration inks for food and pharma applications with an integrated nitrogen



Martin Leitner demonstrates the Durst Tau RSCi press with two flexo stations

“The Save Ink algorithm utilizes AI-assisted image analysis to change the original color combination in order to reduce ink consumption with minimal change in visual appearance”

chamber. This guarantees 100 percent cure and zero odor generation by eliminating oxygen from the curing area.

Automation ecosystem

Automation is a key feature of efficient digital workflows, and Durst demonstrated its own Durst Workflow Label software ecosystem, along with a new tool, Durst Analytics. The latter allows multiple presses to be monitored remotely via a web-based dashboard, providing a wide range of production data including ink consumption and uptime, and including preventative maintenance functions.

Another part of this wider ecosystem is the Durst Smart Shop, which allows converters to integrate the press into B2C/B2B business workflows, all managed through a web-based user interface.

‘We have 40 people developing software

across all the print segments we work in,’ says Martin Leitner. ‘So we can connect the press, workflow and color management and how data flows, all using automated hot folders.’

Available with the latest Durst Workflow Label + (v1.10) is a new feature called Save Ink, which uses intelligent color replacement algorithms to save an average of 9.5-12 percent of ink cost per job.

The Save Ink algorithm utilizes AI-assisted image analysis to change the original color combination in order to reduce ink consumption with minimal change (below delta 2) in visual appearance.

The amount of ink that can be saved depends on factors specific to each file. ‘We have analyzed more than 100 different real customer files,’ says Martin Leitner. ‘On average, cost savings of 12 percent have been achieved in a CMYK

color configuration and 9.5 percent in CMYK+OGV configuration. There is no saving in white color.’

Visually, files with Ink Save applied do not have any visible breaks in gradients. The only indication Ink Save has been used is a slight reduction in color saturation.

The real importance of Save Ink mode is when taken alongside the increasing productivity of Durst’s new press line, and particularly the RSCi. An RSCi press with integrated flexo units and Save Ink capability would allow converters to challenge flexography much further into medium-to-long run lengths.



The Durst RSCi press will be demonstrated at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago in September. For more details visit www.labelexpo-americas.com

Panel sessions

This writer chaired a series of panel sessions at the Durst Expo Label 2022 event. The panelists included Klemens Ehrlitzer, managing director of the German label association VskE; Robert McJury, president of US label converter TLF Graphics; Honore Greff, product manager and functionality leader for digital and security products at Avery Dennison; Matt Burton, sales director at A B Graphic; and Kirit Naik, global director, Digital Printing Technologies at UPM Raflatac.

The panelists zeroed in on how to attract younger workers to the label industry and what sustainability will mean to the label industry in the future.

An interesting perspective emerged on the challenges of recruitment. Ehrlitzer insisted that the label industry does not need to make itself ‘sexy’ to attract younger workers. Rather, the industry needs to explain the importance of labels to the wider community, including

parents and teachers as well as young people themselves. VskE has made an entertaining video explaining just what a world without labels would look like.

From the converter perspective, Robert McJury said young people are far more attracted by the culture of the company itself rather than whether or not the labels industry is ‘sexy’. TLF Graphics is split between flexo and digital operations and McJury pointed out that younger workers are definitely more attracted to the digital side of the business. ‘I hate to say this, but I think we may well be aging ourselves out of flexo.’

Honore Greff is himself a younger member of the labels workforce and emphasized the fact that younger people will move between companies multiple times looking for an environment which is challenging and fulfilling and aligns with their values.

Moving to sustainability, Kirit

Naik emphasized the importance of labels as enablers of recyclability, as well as being recyclable themselves. He emphasized the importance of designing for the circular economy and questioned where biodegradability and compostability fit. Ehrlitzer further emphasized the challenges faced by compostable labels without local industrial composting facilities.

Linerless labels provoked another interesting discussion. Robert McJury said that TLF had tried but failed to make a successful linerless business, while Honore Greff stressed the fact that the coater/laminator still has to manufacture linerless labels on a liner, which still has to be disposed of. ‘But you could say it’s easier for us to manage the liner in this case, so this could be an interesting solution.’ Matt Burton said that A B Graphic is actively looking to develop linerless technology.



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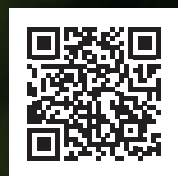
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Check
it out



atma.io gets sustainability upgrade

A year after its launch, atma.io manages 22 billion items. From Spring 2022, it will enable customers to calculate their carbon footprint and pinpoint opportunities to eliminate waste. Piotr Wnuk reports

When Avery Dennison Smartrac launched atma.io one year ago, the vision was to connect the physical and digital worlds by giving each item managed by the platform a unique digital ID, providing end-to-end transparency across the supply chain.

More than 22 billion items are currently managed by atma.io across the apparel, retail, food and healthcare segments. Six of the top 20 apparel brands globally by revenue and four of the top 10 quick-service restaurants use it daily, drawing multiple and potentially unlimited benefits.

'Every second, 300 new items are added to atma.io and join the billions it already manages. This is helping to drive savings and sustainability through traceability,' says Max Winograd, vice president of connected products at Avery Dennison Smartrac and co-founder of the platform.

Having clear visibility through the supply chain has become even more critical during the pandemic, which has disrupted many organizations' operations. Covid-19 disrupted the manufacture of vital components, shipping routes and port capacity and added inflationary pressure and supply shortages. The problem was further compounded in the UK by Brexit, which led to severe labor shortages in sectors including manufacturing and logistics. Identifying where items are at any point in time, and when they are likely to arrive, can help organizations respond to challenges and implement strategies to help avert any crises.

Extending transparency to sustainability

Traceability offers an unmatched ability to demonstrate to consumers, shareholders and investors where products, and their individual components, have come from, enabling them to comply with tight regulations and an increasingly ethically and environmentally conscious public.

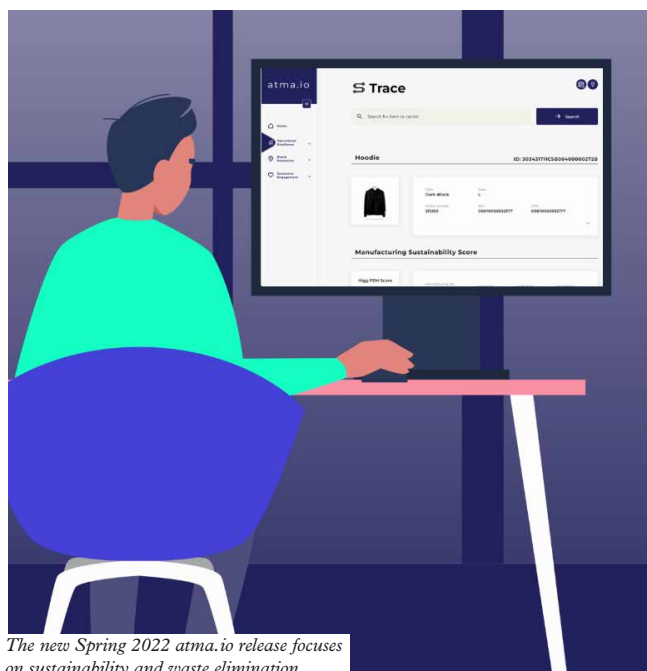
The UN Global Compact Leaders' Summit showed that half of companies globally say that supply chain sustainability and transparency have grown in importance since the pandemic. This, in turn, means that many organizations are increasingly looking to ensure that items are produced and sourced responsibly, drawing on a supply chain that is committed to operating in an environmentally sustainable and morally responsible fashion.

According to Winograd, to take targeted action, we must be able to measure and monitor it. 'We're seeing a tremendous amount of activity around trying to measure what's actually happening today, and then monitor it and take action to reduce carbon emissions in the future,' he says.

The Higg traceability program was another great opportunity to further Winograd's ambitions. The program includes a suite of tools for the standardized measurement of value chain sustainability coordinated by Higg with Avery Dennison, FibreTrace and TrusTrace.

'We're thrilled to partner with these organizations, all of whom are committed to advancing transparency and sustainability, and each of whom brings unique capabilities needed by the industry,' comments Jason Kibbey, CEO of technology platform Higg, which enables consumer goods companies to measure, manage and share the social and environmental impacts of their value chain.

FibreTrace is a transparency technology business combining



The new Spring 2022 atma.io release focuses on sustainability and waste elimination

“Every second, 300 new items are added to atma.io and join the billions it already manages”

Avery Dennison partners with Wiliot

Avery Dennison and Wiliot have partnered to scale the IoT to the next level. Avery Dennison will leverage its R&D capabilities and scale to design and manufacture second-generation Wiliot tags, stamp-sized computers powered by Bluetooth that attach to any product or packaging to embed it with intelligence and connectivity to create more agile, profitable and sustainable supply chains. In addition, Avery Dennison will integrate Wiliot sensing services (SaaS) with its atma.io connected product cloud, enabling tag sensing information to be added to the end-to-end item-level data of a connected product. Both companies share a vision for the future of the IoT, where almost everything is connected to the internet, with an ambition to help eliminate waste and provide unparalleled transparency and consumer connection.

'Wiliot's passive Bluetooth technology offers the ability to work with existing infrastructure and provides another accelerator to the growth of IoT. Combined with sensing capabilities and security features as standard, this expands our portfolio and opens up many new use cases for our customers and partners,' said Francisco Melo, VP and GM, Avery Dennison Smartrac.

physical and digital traceability with the power of authentication, aiming to empower the global textile industry to reduce its impact on the environment.

TrusTrace offers a platform for supply chain transparency and traceability within fashion and retail and has quickly become the foundation for some of the most ambitious sustainability programs globally, including a global sportswear brand.

The Higg program aims to put into motion global brands' efforts to track the hidden impact within their manufacturing processes, ensure fiber integrity and understand, communicate and accelerate product sustainability. It is designed to give consumer brands the ability to identify and share the supply chain provenance of billions of items with their upstream value-chain partners and highlight and disclose sustainability information on their own and other e-commerce platforms to the public and other stakeholders.

'Higg is laser-focused on aggregating quality environmental, social and governance data to provide a single source of truth for consumer goods industries. Partnering with best-in-class traceability innovators is critical in helping our customers make better-informed



The platform ships with modules which help achieve business objectives like consumer engagement, operational excellence, brand protection and circularity

sustainability decisions,' adds Kibbey.

'In collaboration with the Higg platform, we are helping reimagine supply chains for the greater good by combining item-level traceability data from atma.io and environmental and social impact data from Higg,' says Winograd. 'This gives brands and retailers a complete view of their supply chain and an opportunity to provide accurate sustainability insights to

consumers and other key stakeholders.'

FibreTrace brings a significant advantage to the program because the technology is implemented at raw fiber source, tracing and verifying it throughout the global supply chain in retail, in addition to collecting primary farm data that is third party verified, adding a new layer of data and depth.

'Without transparency, we can't improve


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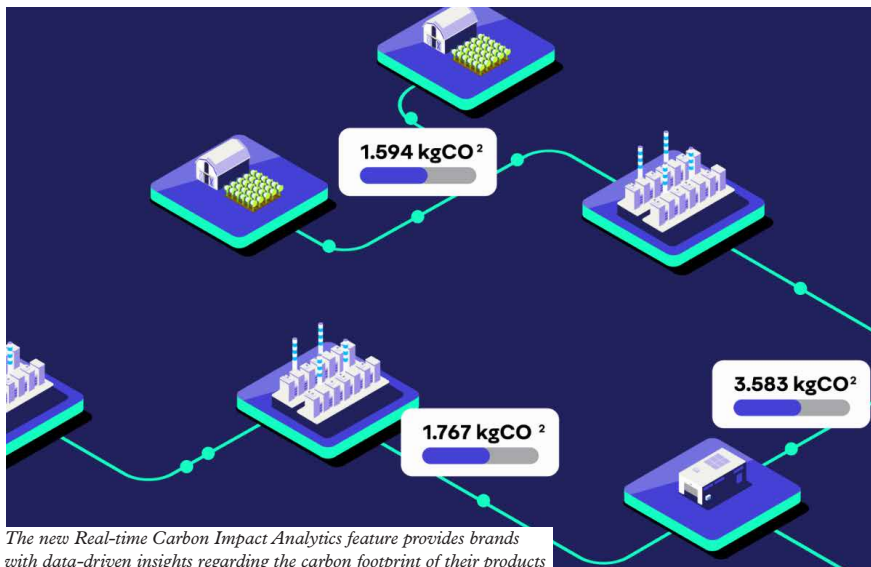
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The new Real-time Carbon Impact Analytics feature provides brands with data-driven insights regarding the carbon footprint of their products

the impact of the global textile industry for future generations,' comments Shannon Mercer, CEO of FibreTrace. 'FibreTrace combines physical and digital traceability for verification of a fibers' sustainability credentials with Higg's ability to incorporate data across every facility in a supply chain. It empowers brands to make the best practice sustainable decisions right from the start.'

Higg's traceability partners will enable blockchain technology to support the tracking and tracing of a product's chain of custody, streamline certification claims, and address material movement, supplier data, consumer engagement and brand protection. The collaborative approach seeks to provide immediate, verified insights to Higg users. It allows brands to better fulfill better the public's expectations, the

satisfaction of corporate sustainability goals, and the oversight of regulatory agencies.

As part of this program, critical social and sustainability data from Higg will also be made available for direct integration into partner platforms, creating more robust technologies for their partners and customers.

'Sustainability cannot exist without traceability, which is why TrusTrace is on a mission to bring true transparency to brands who really want to know what they sell,' says Shameek Ghosh, CEO and co-founder of TrusTrace. 'In collaborating with Higg, our technology can be leveraged to drive more sustainably conscious and socially responsible decisions across the global supply chain while simultaneously equipping the TrusTrace platform with key data from Higg to help our customers make better, more informed sourcing decisions. It's a win-win for all involved.'

Calculating and advising

Following atma.io's recent win in the FDA food traceability challenge and the announcement of its partnership with Higg, the new atma.io Spring 2022 release focuses on sustainability and waste

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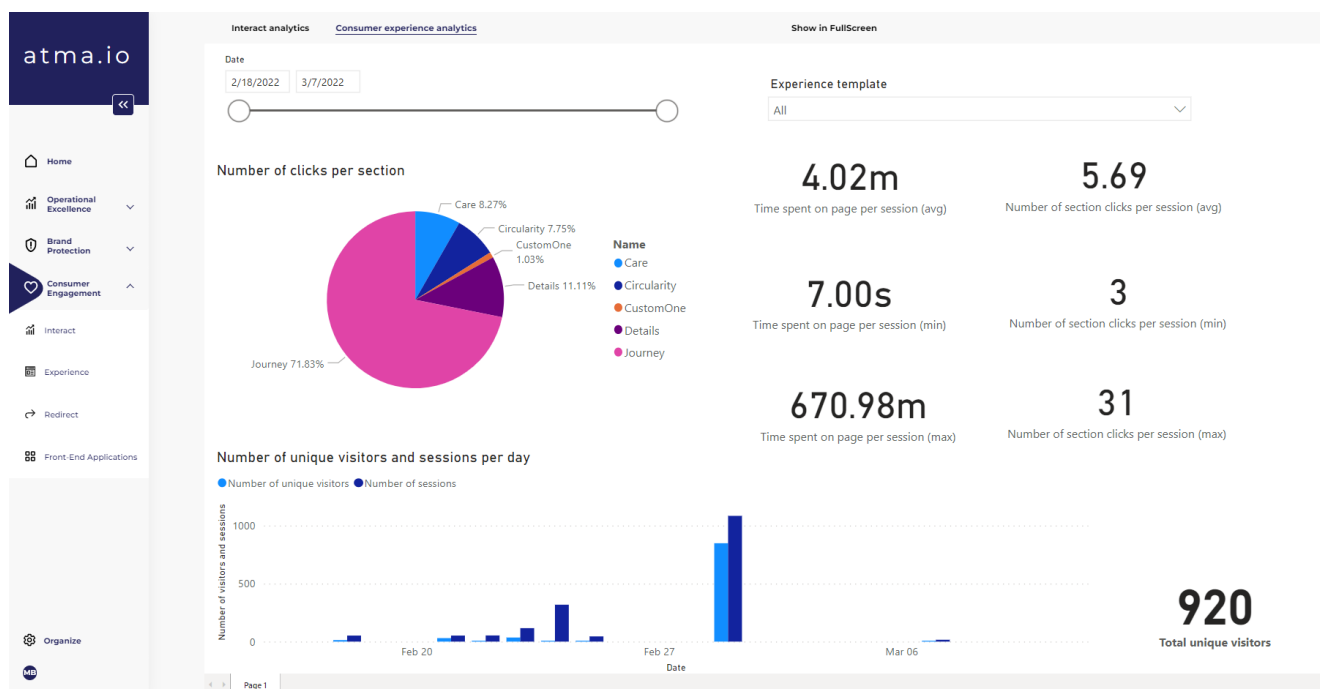
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The platform unlocks several marketing uses including measuring customer engagement

New features

New features within the atma.io Spring 2022 release also include:

Sustainability Facility Assessments and Expiration Callouts – in partnership with third-party sustainability organizations such as Higg, atma.io assigns a manufacturing sustainability score for supported facilities within the supply chain. This bolsters the data already available via the Carbon Impact Analytics feature to provide even greater sustainability insight. Callouts can also be created to help keep track of partner's sustainability assessments' expiration dates.

Global Inventory Trace – tracks inventory on SKU and purchase order level along the supply chain, revealing how inventory items are distributed over the entire supply chain per site type (e.g., factories, warehouses, stores), and creates alerts for items that are on-site longer than the expected dwell-time, adding to the waste elimination features outlined above.

Anomaly detection – generates alerts regarding suspicious activities happening within the inventory. This can include possible counterfeit items in the supply chain or items that have traversed along the supply chain in unexpected ways.

Purchase Order Tracking – helps organizations automate purchase order management and ensure proof of provenance for associated inventory.

“Our technology can drive more sustainably conscious and socially responsible decisions across the global supply chain”

elimination.

atma.io's new Real-time Carbon Impact Analytics feature provides brands with data-driven insights regarding the carbon footprint of their products, including Scope 3 emissions and beyond. This powerful tool captures data from every stage of a product's journey, from raw material to consumer, and can help firms as they work to comply with forthcoming EU 'Digital Product Passport' regulations and the existing US Food Safety Modernization Act.

Third-party manufacturing environmental impact data, including those provided for the apparel industry by the Higg Index, also factors into these insights. This data is then used to deliver verifiable end-to-end visibility of the brand's emissions at an item level across the supply chain.

The new atma.io Real-time Waste Elimination Tool analyzes and alerts on anomalies and inefficiencies across the supply chain. This includes information about the overdue movement of products at a pallet level or even isolated individual items within a warehouse that are close to perishing or otherwise lost.

The precise item-level data will provide customers with valuable new insights vital to their environmental, social and governance commitments.

For example, by identifying items such as food or pharmaceutical products that have been held longer in a distribution center, are nearing expiry, or have a temperature

variance, the platform can make alerts to help mitigate those risks.

'The atma.io Spring 2022 release will empower businesses to get meaningful insights from data that has often been in silos, allowing them to make informed decisions in real-time that can dramatically transform their business agility and accelerate their performance across the bottom line, people, planet and profit,' states Avery Dennison Smartac's Max Winograd.

The platform ships with many modules which help achieve business objectives like consumer engagement, operational excellence, brand protection and circularity. Crucially, however, Avery Dennison does not have all the answers to every unique circumstance, which is why it is built an ecosystem around the platform which includes customers, third-party developers and partners so they build their own modules within atma.io via a new 'app store'.

This openness unlocks every connected product use case imaginable, and developers and partners now can build on top of atma.io's end-to-end platform and unlock new channels for growth.

atma.io will also continue to add new features and unlock even more value by connecting products to the platform.



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Be smart to cut food waste

Smart packaging can help reduce food waste on the farm-to-fork journey, writes Alastair Hanlon, chief commercial officer at PragmatIC Semiconductor

Food waste is a huge problem. Every year 1.3bn tonnes of food – one-third of all food produced for human consumption in the world – is lost or wasted. More than 40 percent of food losses occur at retail and consumer levels in industrialized countries. If food waste were a country, it would have the third-largest carbon footprint after the USA and China.

This often-referenced statistic from a 2011 Food and Agricultural Organization report rang alarm bells when it was published, but the situation has become even worse over the last decade. A recent World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) report estimates that 1.2 billion tonnes of food produced globally is lost before it even leaves the farm. This means that as much as 2.5 billion tonnes is being wasted during the farm stage, contributing to a whopping 10 percent of global carbon emissions.

The WWF report shows that a major portion of global harvest stage losses come from high- and middle-income countries in North America, Europe, and the industrialized regions of Asia, despite these countries having higher on-farm mechanization and a third of the global population.

Considering the scale of the issue, a lot of effort is being put in to understand how technology and data can help reduce wastage along the farm-to-fork journey by giving stakeholders the data to make better decisions, using the often-overlooked 'use by' labels.

A significant portion of food wasted is safe to eat. In the UK, it is estimated that out of 9.5 million tonnes of food waste in 2018, over 6.4 million tonnes could have been eaten – roughly equal to over 15 billion meals. Unfortunately for both retailers and consumers, the only way of knowing whether an item is safe to use is by looking at the expiry dates on the package. These expiry dates are set by retailers based on hours of testing to determine the 'safest' best before date, and these estimates can be extremely conservative. According to WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Program), 8–11 percent of people mostly or entirely use the date label to choose whether to eat a food item. Supermarket staff also go by this information to decide when an item needs to be marked down or removed from the shelves. This continues to be a time-consuming process that has seen very little innovation since sell-by dates were introduced in the 1950s.

Smarter

What if we could make this process smarter, so that businesses can use real-time data to correctly assess when a product is safe to sell or consume? A simple way to do this would be by attaching scannable digital IDs on food products which can provide real-time information and item-level traceability along the distribution chain. By scanning these smart tags on food packaging, they will also be able to know in seconds when a whole shelf of products is nearing the 'use by' date without having to manually check each item, thereby saving thousands of employee hours and reducing wastage.

Going one step further, the packaging can also be embedded with smart sensors so that when supermarket staff or consumers scan the product, they will be able to gain real-time information on the quality of the product based on parameters such as moisture, humidity and smell.

Today distributors and retailers conduct destructive and non-destructive testing of food products to check for quality, which ends up providing a very conservative estimate based on existing statistics. This means that too often, food items go into the bin



By dynamically changing the pricing of products, retailers can provide more options to consumers, with items priced differently according to their use-by dates

“What if we could make this process smarter, so that businesses can use real-time data to correctly assess when a product is safe to sell or consume”

even when they are in good condition. This is a major issue within the meat industry, where wastage along the distribution line is a large contributor to carbon emissions. If we could eliminate the need for destructive testing and other forms of wastage using sensors, we can reduce the amount of meat produced, and thereby reduce the total amount of carbon emissions.

Alternatively, the price of an item can be locked to a digital scannable tag. By dynamically changing the pricing of products, retailers can provide more options to consumers, with items priced differently according to their use-by dates. This can help consumers use their grocery budget more efficiently. For example, if you know you are going to cook something tonight, you can pick a food item closer to the use-by date and save a little money in the process.

Implementing such solutions at scale will need close collaboration between packaging companies, food producers and technology companies to build traceability from farm to fork. At PragmatIC Semiconductor we are working to make this a reality using our ultra-low-cost flexible electronics technology, which allows for smart tags to be embedded on every item on the supermarket shelf. PragmatIC is part of SecQuAL, an innovative project running trials that aim to improve efficiency in supply chains and reduce food waste. The consortium is currently seeking leading UK retailers to participate in these trials to help improve food traceability.

The food industry is responsible for nearly 10 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, but by optimizing manufacturing and supply chain processes using novel technology that is scalable and affordable, it is possible to deliver the significant reduction in carbon footprint needed. Considering the scale of the problem, we do not have a minute to lose.



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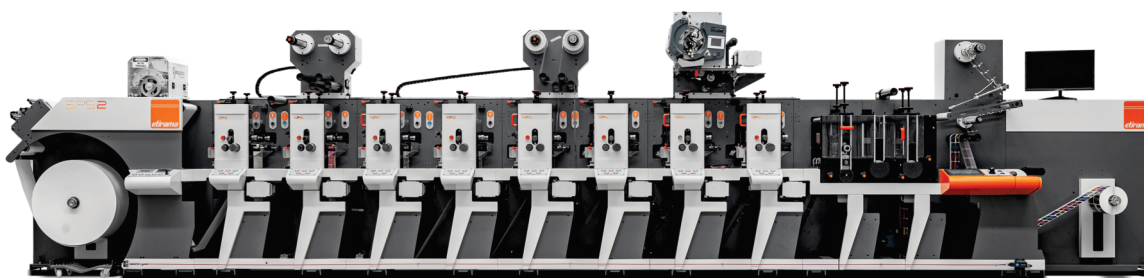
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Label Academy hosts Industry 4.0 virtual master class

Industry experts discussed how automation and data are transforming the label sector, writes Labelexpo conference manager Helen Stoddart

Label Academy, the global training provider for the label and package printing industry, recently hosted its first virtual master class tackling Industry 4.0. This latest in-depth learning opportunity is its fourth virtual master class to date.

Joining the master class chair, L&L editor James Quirk, was a high-profile panel of eleven guest speakers from Baldwin Technology, Traent.com, Hybrid Software Group, Esko, X-Rite Pantone, MPS, Cerm, Label Traxx, HP Indigo, Grafotronic and Tilia Labs. As with the previous virtual master classes, which have covered brand protection, digital printing technology and flexible packaging, Industry 4.0 was divided into two parts.

Part one provided an overview of Industry 4.0, blockchain, data transparency, automating pre-press and quality control. Steve Metcalf, chief marketing and IoT officer, Baldwin Technology, began by introducing the topic and how it impacts the label and package printing industry. This paved the way for the next session, given by Federico d'Annunzio, founder of Traent.com, who delved into blockchain and why brands are pushing for full data transparency. Mike Rottenborn, CEO of Hybrid Software Group, then provided insight into automating pre-press, from pre-flight to imposition and color management, and integrating it into press and factory management systems. Closing part one was a joint presentation given by Martin Cusack, product manager Color, DFE and iCenter at Esko and Jérôme Brangé, solution architect, Packaging at X-Rite Pantone, who set out ways of automating quality control including inspection and measuring color in-line.

The connected press

The focus for part two was a more in-depth look at automating both flexo and digital printing and the finishing process. Kelvin van den Bunt, product manager at MPS, and Lowie-Pascal Geerinck, product manager at Cerm, began with a joint presentation covering the flexo press and how automation can tackle industry issues, such as the manual skills shortage, increased SKUs and sustainability.

Chris Spooner, business development



Federico d'Annunzio, founder of Traent.com

manager at Label Traxx, and Christian Menegon, global business development manager, Labels & Packaging at HP Indigo, examined the opportunities created by the connected digital press. Morten Toksvaerd, business development director at Grafotronic, then set out ways of automating the finishing process and integrating it into existing networks. The master class closed with a converter case study from George Follickman, global sales director and business development at Tilia Labs. He described how the software company had worked with US converter Pacer Print to automate production, and the significant cost, time and resource benefits to the business that this had made.

“Data will drive the next great advantage in labels and packaging and is the centerpiece of Industry 4.0”

Andy Thomas-Emans, Labelexpo strategic director, said: 'The Covid pandemic has accelerated digital technology trends that were already starting to transform the label and package printing supply chain, most notably the use of real-time data and the move towards the smart factory of the future. This has huge potential for our fast-moving industry, so it's essential that converters in particular learn how to



Christian Menegon, global business development manager, Labels & Packaging at HP Indigo

take advantage of this and stay ahead. Our Industry 4.0 virtual master class offered the right step in that direction, with a fascinating insight into all of this and more.'

Baldwin's Steve Metcalf said: 'Data will drive the next great advantage in labels and packaging and is the centerpiece of Industry 4.0. Innovations are happening right now that make getting access to data and putting it to work easier than ever. The line-up assembled for the master class presents a how to guide on what to consider and where to begin the journey.'

Mike Rottenborn of Hybrid Software Group said: 'These master classes are one of the best platforms from which to share this knowledge with industry peers.'

Thomas-Emans added: 'I'd like to extend my thanks to our fantastic line-up of speakers who took part, and attendees for joining. We look forward to hosting further sessions covering more of the industry's most pressing topics in the coming months – online and live at Labelexpo shows.'

The recordings for both parts of the Industry 4.0 virtual master class are available through the Label Academy subscription service, which can be accessed through labelsandlabeling.com.

The Label Academy's accompanying guide, Management Information Systems and Workflow Automation, by Michael Fairley, and is available to purchase on Amazon.



Go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/label-academy for more information



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AWA event puts spotlight on supply chain disruption

AWA gathered speakers from across the industry to talk about the supply chain disruptions, paper mill strikes, and their impact on the global market. Luis Rodriguez reports

Alexander Watson Associates (AWA) held a Global Release Liner Pre-Conference Forum virtually in March, covering the state of the global pressure-sensitive and release liner market and the supply chain challenges, subsequent shortages, and long-term effects of the ongoing disruption.

With perspectives from speakers across the industry, from supplier to converter to the associations, the ongoing materials shortages and the Finnish Paperworkers' Union strike were talking points throughout the Forum.

'Since Europe is, at the moment, in the spotlight, I would characterize it as a sentiment of growing frustration. And not only in the timing, but also the duration of the strike,' said Jules Lejeune, managing director of Finat, while in a panel discussion with Linnea Keen, president of TLMI, and Corey Reardon, president and CEO of AWA. This sentiment was echoed by others during the Forum.

Jeroen Diderich, vice president and general manager of Avery Dennison, said, 'Particularly after the last two challenging years, we were aiming for a little more of a stable environment. And we were expecting that, by the middle of this year, we would get back to normal lead times and more normalized status, we were clearly very disappointed.'

Keen, during the panel discussion, spoke about how lead times have recently been extended across the market to a point unseen before. 'The lead times from the suppliers almost now in every single category – from small, mid-size, medium, and large – is three weeks or more. We have not seen that yet ever before,' said Keen. 'So, it is showing that the four-, eight-, or twelve-week lead times are certainly out of sync with their customers.'

According to Lejeune, these lead times are much longer in Europe, with some figures reaching three-to-four months. And these lead times have extended across the industry, to all substrates and formats.

Multiple factors

These shortages and increased lead-times, however, didn't happen in a bubble. According to Diderich, several years' worth of increased consumer demand, lack of investment on the supplier side, and unpredictability over the past few years, especially during the peak of the pandemic, have added to the shortages the industry has recently been facing.

'When this demand acceleration happened, the demand-supply balance was already very tight, particularly in paper and in North America,' said Diderich. 'Although the industry is very healthy, we have seen a lack of investment in our supplier base for a number of years. In Europe, we saw that several papermills were able to allocate their capacity to either face paper or liner, but in North America, that did not happen.'

'In 2018, we saw the first plants moving capacity over to other packaging materials and we saw some plant closure. But the industry was just not prepared for this 20 percent growth.'

Mike Apperson, CEO of Resource Label Group, during a discussion with Reardon, also spoke of the rapidly increasing demand seen over the past few years, saying, 'Covid threw all the traditional demand patterns into a frenzy.'

Apperson added that inflationary pressure, difficulties of finding

"When this demand acceleration happened, the demand-supply balance was already very tight, particularly in paper"

and maintaining talent, and, ultimately, the paper shortages have put mounting pressure on both suppliers and converters across the supply chain, making the challenges difficult to keep up with.

As the shortages have recently made paper much more difficult to acquire, the possibility of some converters searching for alternatives has been looking much more likely, according to Keen. 'This industry, while it's resilient, is also innovative,' said Keen. 'They're going to come up with other solutions. Some of it will divert away from label and some of it will divert away from paper. And there's a chance they won't come back.'

Apperson had a similar point of view in a later session, saying, 'Right now, if we're going to have anything to sell so we can get products on the shelves, we're going to have to move things to PET. I think, long term, that's going to be a loss for paper. When people convert to PET, it's oftentimes a one-way street.'

At Avery Dennison, Diderich says it has already begun leveraging the products that are more readily available for its customers, securing a steady supply of PET liner and assisting customers in switching over and managing the orders to ensure that the over-purchasing of product is limited to keep the supply steady for its base.

Avery Dennison also recently acquired the linerless label technology developed by UK-based company, Catchpoint. Diderich said the company hopes to provide a linerless product to its customers in the future, but does not believe that the technology will be a replacement for the traditional pressure-sensitive label.

Reardon added that though the linerless label market is an area that AWA has seen growth and says is an area companies should watch, it won't disrupt the whole pressure-sensitive label market.

As for when the industry can expect the disruption to end, the answer is unclear.

'Month by month, you saw a light at the end of the tunnel, with more and more suppliers getting out of force majeure status. So, the outlook was hopeful,' said Diderich. 'Now with the paper situation, we are unfortunately not at that stage anymore, it's hard to see the light at the end of that tunnel.'

Regarding the ongoing strikes and the effects on not just the label industry but across other global markets as well, Lejeune said. 'Our members are working hard to make sure that they can provide the necessary supplies and they are innovative and creative in finding solutions, but this cannot last much longer. And even if this would end now, it would take months for things to get back to normal.'



As L&L went to press, it was announced that the Finnish forestry strike had ended in a negotiated settlement

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Haney Packaging looks to accelerate change

Cincinnati, Ohio-based Haney Packaging is looking to accelerate label and packaging innovation with a unique operation. Luis Rodriguez reports

Haney Packaging, based in Cincinnati, Ohio, has gone through many iterations since its founding in 1990. Initially started as a graphic design agency assisting local businesses with marketing and print collateral needs, the Haney Packaging of today looks a little different.

In 2017, after being renamed Haney Graphics in 1997 and Haney Packaging Resource Center in 2004, the company was rebranded as Haney Packaging, The Packaging Microfactory.

'Historically, Haney was always innovation for others,' says Dan Haney, co-founder and president of Haney Packaging. 'We would innovate, figure out the issues, prototype the product, put it through testing, vet it, and hand off what we call the recipe card. That was it. But all that changed about four years ago.'

The company has now been re-purposed to assist and guide its customers – typically small-batch, consumer packaged goods companies (CPGs) – in developing labels and packaging that not only stand out in a congested market but also utilize technology that is innovative and sustainable.

The company's 105,000 sqft facility contains a large fleet of equipment, including a 12in HP Indigo WS4500 press and 30in HP Indigo 20000 press, multiple Roland large format digital presses, a 43in Nordmeccanica Super Simplex SL1100 solventless adhesive laminator, a 16in



HP Indigo 20000 press at Haney Packaging

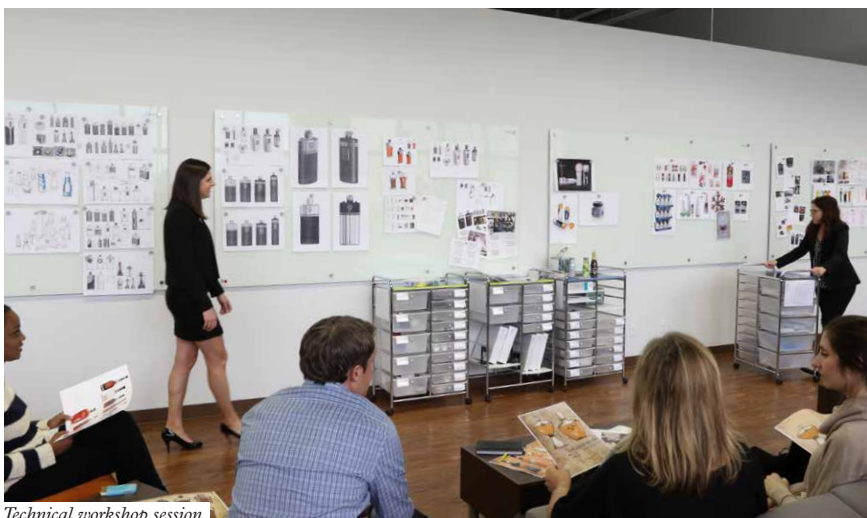
Comco multi-substrate ProGlide 8-color flexo press, and more pre-press and post-press capabilities. The equipment is used to create what Haney calls a 'mini supply chain,' where it quickly turns around prototypes and designs to show its customers what's possible.

'In the simplest terms, if I had one word for it, it would be an incubator,' explains Haney. 'Haney Packaging is focused on connecting early innovation to activation. We do that through a suite of what we like to call a microfactory, a mini supply chain all under one roof. Enabling us to really show and help our customers understand what's possible.'

From innovation to activation

'It starts with someone else's idea, right?' says Haney. 'A brand owner has a new product or a variation of an existing product of some sort and, for example, they're looking for something that's in plastic they don't want to be in plastic. And to that extent, we can help influence and shape the overall consumer experience around the packaging itself.'

At Haney Packaging, the process always starts with the design and technical criteria of the packaging. As a graduate of graphic design, Haney believes that the performance and look of the packaging go hand-in-hand.



Technical workshop session

“If you really want to affect changes in the industry, you have to go to the small-to-mid tier players. If you give them the same tools the larger companies already have access to, the whole process is accelerated”

'As a designer, I'm very empathetic to the consumer experience,' says Haney. 'If the package isn't beautiful, if it doesn't evoke something and tug on the heartstrings of the consumer while also meeting those performance criteria laid out, then it's just going to fail before it even goes to market.'

To understand what the final customer is looking for, Haney goes through what it calls a 'vision session.'

During the session, which can last anywhere from half a day to two days, the company puts its customers through an immersive experience where both companies discuss the 'three legs that hold up the stool called innovation at the brand level: design, consumer insight, and technical packaging,' says Haney.

Haney then figures out which materials can be used not only to make the labels and packaging look nice but be scalable and cost effective for its customer.

Prototyping phase

Next comes the prototyping phase. Here, Haney Packaging utilizes its equipment fleet and full pre-press capabilities to showcase the design concepts developed during the vision session, a process Haney calls 'informed prototyping'.

'For us, informed prototyping is a term we use to mean a prototype that understands manufacturing feasibility and what we can and can't do at a full manufacturing scale. It's important to note that, when we talk about Haney being a microfactory, it's across all formats,' says Dan Muenzer, director of marketing and business development at Haney Packaging. 'Labels is obviously something that we do, but we also engage with flexible packaging, folding carton, corrugated, tubes, clamshell, almost anything you can think of.'

At the end of the process, Haney Packaging assists its customer with a 'path to commercialization'.

'All while we're converting and prototyping, the customer is taking notes, asking questions and we're figuring out what worked and what didn't, developing a path to commercialization or what we call the recipe card,' says Haney. 'The recipe card then enables our customers to scale up more accurately.'

For some customers, however, the work doesn't end here. Haney Packaging also houses a 55,000 sq ft co-packing facility with everything from horizontal and vertical filling machines to steam tunnels to crimpers and sealers. The company mostly focuses on primary and secondary food packaging but is also FDA-certified for level one and two over-the-counter drugs. The co-packing operations are typically focused on test markets, sampling programs, or limited-time promotional packaging.



In 2017, the company was rebranded as Haney Packaging, The Packaging Microfactory to showcase how it has shifted

“Haney Packaging is focused on connecting early innovation to activation. We do that through what we like to call a microfactory, a mini supply chain all under one roof”

The range of offerings and capabilities is part of what makes Haney Packaging unique. Haney doesn't consider the company a converter, but they do some converting. They don't consider themselves co-packers, but they do some co-packing.

'If you're able to look down at our building, we have design capabilities attached to a world-class materials science library, printing and converting capabilities, and co-packing and filling operations right behind us,' says Haney. 'At the end of the day, what we're able to deliver to brands is a total package. From mind to market.'

Invitation VIA Haney

Haney Packaging's Value in Action (VIA) program is an invitation-only, open innovation program with partners across the supply chain, with the aim of building a vast library of cutting-edge materials and products that can be used to demonstrate to brand owners just what's possible when developing new packaging concepts – and also to have an easier way to bring this innovation into its facility.

'We have a market team that spends a lot of time doing research, but I think the secret sauce is our VIA program,' says Muenzer. 'We literally have 33 materials partners who are on the bleeding edge, cutting edge, of packaging development.'

Muenzer believes this has been possible because Haney Packaging does not

compete with any of the program partners.

'Here at Haney, we're not really a threat to anybody,' says Muenzer. 'We have our own lane and because of that, we have created an environment where the entire supply chain feels comfortable coming here, collaborating, and developing together.'

The current partners on the program include a wide array of material and raw material suppliers, including resin manufacturers, film extruders, paper manufacturers, coating manufacturers, adhesive manufacturers, ink manufacturers, and more.

Although offering a vast array of possible technology solutions, the program has recently been dedicated to sustainability. This means helping not only the large CPGs reach the fast-approaching sustainability goals, but also the small and mid-size companies that don't have access to the R&D capabilities of the multinational corporations. That, according to Haney, is where the change starts.

'If you really want to affect changes in the industry, you have to go to the small-to-mid tier players,' says Haney. 'If you give them all the same tools the larger companies already have access to, the whole process is accelerated.'



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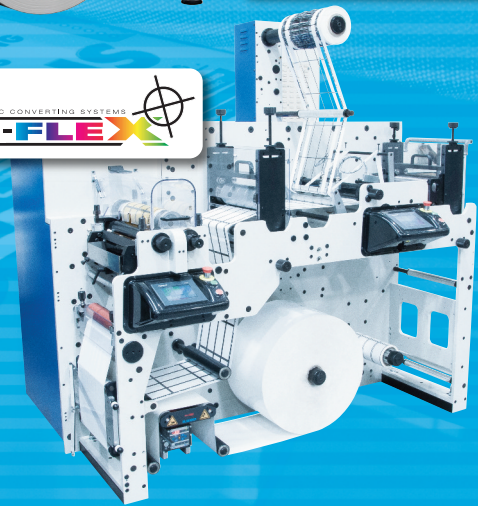
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Label King enters the digital world

After 20 years in the label industry, California-based converter Label King, has entered the digital arena with a Domino N1610i digital press. Luis Rodriguez reports

Founded in 2002, Label King, a label converter based in San Diego, California, has recently installed a Domino N610i digital press, the company's first foray into the digital space.

The installation of the digital press comes after a roughly two-year process in which the company built a climate-controlled, 1,000 sq ft space, in addition to its 8,300 sq ft facility, to house the new machine.

'Right now, it's really an ideal spot to have our digital press,' says Robert Parker, founder and CEO of Label King. 'We see it as showcase for our capabilities as a converter. A custom-built, climate-controlled, newly constructed area with beautiful flooring. Everything dialed in and bumped up to first class. It was very important to us to jump into the digital world correctly.'

Within the company's facility is an extensive fleet of equipment that includes a 10in Mark Andy 2200, a 13in Mark Andy P5, three Rotoflex rewinders, an array of tabletop equipment, and a Rotoflex DF3 that was installed in early 2022.

'The Rotoflex runs parallel to the Mark Andy P5,' says Parker. 'One of the reasons we got Rotoflex is that we know how to run the P5, and the tooling and print cylinders it uses are very similar, so the operators who are trained on one can easily be moved over to the other. And we can run two-color jobs on it with a little downtime as well, which is very important to us.'

Right now, Label King has both the N610i and the Rotoflex DF3 running, but behind the successful installation was two-year process in which the company had to work through the limitations of Californian real estate and conduct extensive research into which press would work best for the company.

Finding the right press

'We looked at the major digital press manufacturers in the industry and came to the conclusion that this was the size, the footprint, that we needed,' says Parker.

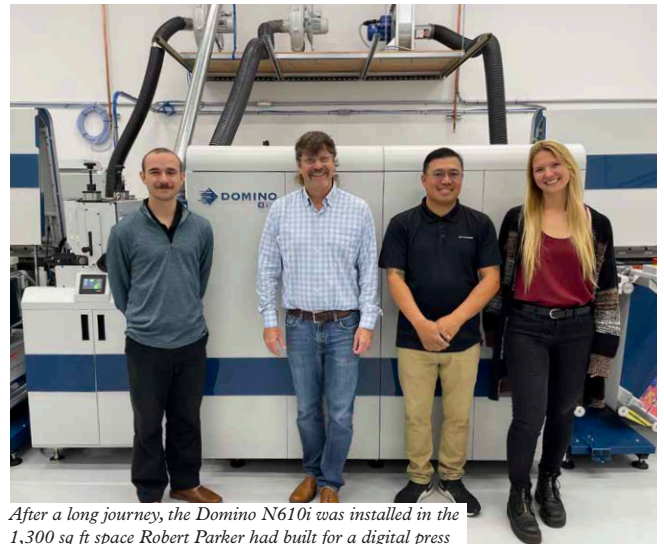
Constructing the additional space required to house the digital press of the company's choosing, however, took longer than anticipated as real estate in San Diego is limited.

'With the 8,300 sq ft, there was no feasible way we could install a digital press in a climate-controlled area unless we were to portion off inside some of the space we already had, but that just didn't work for us,' says Parker. 'So, we had to build a bump out to our building and get the proper permits to build, which all-in-all took about year.'

As the construction was being figured out, the team at Label King was also deciding which digital press was going to be its first. With the help of Turi Fiske, digital lead at Label King, and production manager, David Sommay, Parker began to run some tests with a handful of digital press manufacturers across the country.

'We started off really wide, looking at many of the major manufacturers. Sending them files, a few samples of the work we've been doing, and asking them to recreate them,' says Parker. 'Once we got the samples back, Turi wrote the names of the manufacturers on the back so we could run a blind test to really figure out which press could reproduce the work we were already producing.'

The reasoning behind the test was not only to work out which



After a long journey, the Domino N610i was installed in the 1,300 sq ft space Robert Parker had built for a digital press

"We see it as showcase for our capabilities as a converter. A custom-built, climate-controlled, newly constructed area with beautiful flooring. Everything dialed in and bumped up to first class."

presses could color match and closely reproduce the work of Label King's clients; it was also to eliminate any biases.

'I'm glad we did it that way, because I think everyone has some biases about what they think is going to work best for them or you sometimes hear about other people's good or bad experiences, which is something we didn't want,' says Fiske. 'We wanted what was best for us, what worked best with our job mix, independent of what others have said because everyone's business is different.'

After the list of manufacturers began to narrow, the team continued looking into what best worked for Label King, that being support post-installation.

'We need to make sure that we do the best thing for us, and the most important thing you have to understand when buying a digital press is what happens after you get the digital press,' says Parker.

For Label King, whether it's for its customers or for the company itself, support is crucial. The company wanted a manufacturer that produces many of its own parts and has support staff that would be attentive when or if a problem arose.

Another aspect that was necessary in the company's purchase, especially with the press being the company's first digital system, was ease of use.

'In a three-to-four-month period, we visited the three companies

“We wanted what was best for us, what worked best with our job mix, independent of what others have said because everyone’s business is different”

that had, so far, ticked all the boxes,’ says Parker. ‘We brought them files of our own and asked them to recreate them, on the spot, to see how easy it was to plug it and spit things out.’

According to Parker, Domino was the last stop on the trip, but the decision of which press was going to be Label King’s first was made just a bit easier after the demonstration.

‘They just made it seem really easy,’ recalls Parker. ‘They didn’t ask about materials or anything, they just seemed very confident in the work they were doing. The colors were vibrant, the speed was what we were looking for, and the support and relationships that were crucial to us were there.’

Now, sitting at Label King’s San Diego facility, is the Domino N610i that impressed Parker and the rest of the team, which the company is now using to drive towards one of its 2022 goals: efficiency.

Focus on efficiency

One of the long-standing trends across the label industry is short runs. And when comparing digital and flexo printing, this is where digital shines.

For Label King, as some of its current clients begin shifting to shorter runs and as the company itself begins to start breaking into new markets, installing a digital press finally made sense.

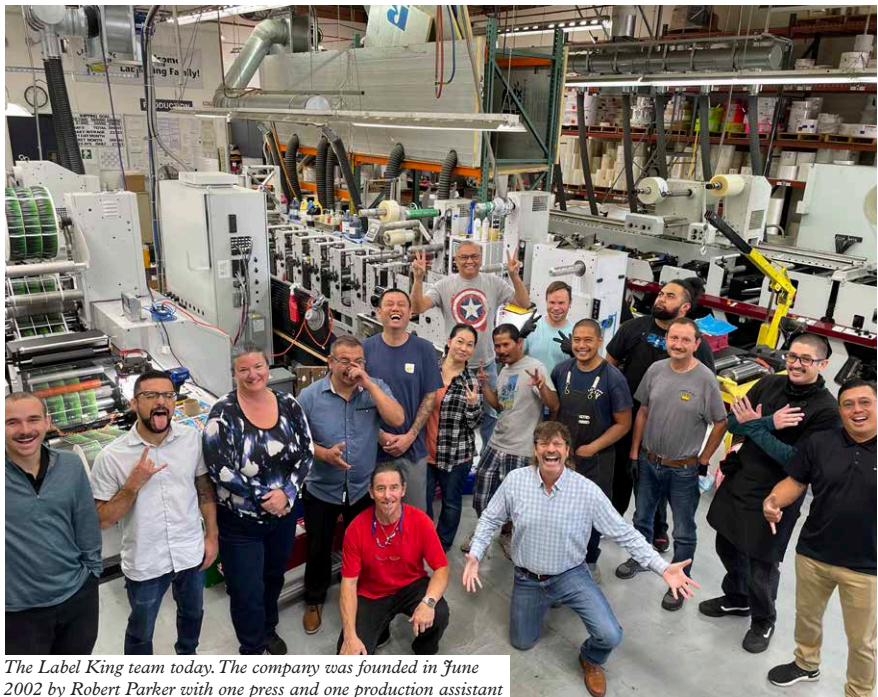
‘Our goal as a company, for the year 2022, is to be more efficient in all aspects of our business and the digital press is one of the main drivers of that goal,’ says Parker. ‘Throughput is already starting to increase as we’re shifting multiple copy jobs that we ran on flexo and putting them on digital.’

Parker comments that this efficiency is already allowing Label King to produce its customers products much quicker and has also helped to eliminate waste.

Along with Parker, Fiske has been driving the company’s push into the digital space, revamping the Label King website, and beginning to assist with the integration of Sitrine from Label Traxx and Cloudflow from Hybrid Software to enhance its front-end systems and proofing process.



Label King operates three shifts, producing labels for large and small brands



The Label King team today. The company was founded in June 2002 by Robert Parker with one press and one production assistant

‘I understand that we’re in the business of manufacturing and are making physical products, but automation and online ordering is such a commodity that everyone is so used to that it was honestly crazy that it hasn’t existed in the space for so long,’ says Fiske.

Fiske comments that along with the integration of the digital press, with smaller runs and copy changes, having a system that shrinks much of the upfront administrative work made sense.

‘One of my own personal goals is to reduce the amount of 8.5x11 pieces of paper we have lying around,’ says Fiske. ‘We have a few small processes that can be smoothed out to make people’s lives a bit easier, because we’re a small team, so we

want to be able to maximize the manpower that we do have and eliminate as much of that clerical work so people can do the parts of their job they actually do like.’

Though the ultimate goal to become a fully digital company has not come into fruition just yet, it is closer than ever, according to Parker.

‘Turi has made us feel like more of a modern company,’ says Parker. ‘We’re on the precipice of something big, and once we’re fully integrated, we’ll be the modern company we’re aiming to be.’



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In-mold advantage

With in-mold labels, there's no trade-off between recyclability and shelf appeal, says Nico van de Walle, product and circular economy manager at MCC Verstraete

Setting business goals that have sustainability at their core is increasingly becoming the norm across most industry sectors, and MCC Verstraete is no exception. As we strive to enhance our position as a responsible leader and pioneer in the rigid packaging market, we are continually facing new challenges that we see as opportunities to sustainably evolve our business.

Focusing on developing innovative technologies that deliver recyclable, reusable or compostable IML packaging for our clients is therefore top of our agenda.

Yet navigating the complex and fragmented regulation, tax and infrastructure landscape requires continually broadening our range of products. There is no one-solution-solves-all and we are regularly diversifying our product innovation accordingly.

As they stand, the current Design for Recyclability guidelines appear to be a trade-off between marketing departments and those in charge of recycling. Ask any recycler and they will opt for minimal packaging design, while the marketing teams will be focusing on creating on-shelf standout.

The reality is there doesn't need to be a trade-off between these important stakeholders. Well thought-through packaging and IML label design can in fact resolve both issues. But first we need to cut through the disruptive noise around reducing plastic that often does little to advance the circular economy and, in many cases, clouds the real issues.

The numerous pledges to reduce the use of plastic packaging materials, fueled by consumers' belief that paper or cardboard packaging is 'greener', often results in what I coin 'regrettable substitutions'.

These alternatives often include blends of plastic and cardboard that make the pack difficult if not impossible to recycle, resulting in it generally ending up in landfill or incineration.

Worse still, in some countries organizations are being rewarded either via reduced EPR fees or exclusion of plastic taxes for using these types of hybrid packaging. There is absolutely no rationale for using less plastic if the alternative materials don't get recycled.

Certainly, we all need to work towards lightening plastic packaging and we are continually researching improved IML solutions that can facilitate this objective, but our current key focus is on mono-material IML packaging that is fully recyclable. In fact, it is now possible to have a decorated mono-material IML pack that is also best in class when it comes to recycling.

To achieve this, we are fine-tuning cutting-edge technology to design intelligent in-mold labels that are poised to play a crucial role in sorting. Combining this latest innovative IML solution with the state-of-the-art recycling and decontamination process developed by Nextek, we will soon be able to demonstrate how a



The photo shows Nextek's marker technologies that NextLoopp uses to separate FGrPP. Pol-yPrism applies luminescent materials to labels on plastic packaging, creating what is best described as an invisible barcode for plastics recycling



MCC Verstraete's current key focus is on mono-material IML packaging that is fully recyclable

“Pledges to reduce the use of plastic packaging materials often result in regrettable substitutions”

fully decorated PP IML pack can be recycled into food-grade rPP that can be turned back into new food IML packaging.

This is a major milestone in our quest to increase the availability of affordable high-quality food-grade mechanically recycled PP.

Breakthrough

We play an active role in a number of cross-value chain organizations and initiatives to continue boosting the circular economy. One such project, spearheaded by Nextek, is Next-Loopp, which provides us with the opportunity to find a real breakthrough into a sustainable circular economy for food-grade PP packaging. NextLoopp's combination of efficient sorting and the cleaning and decontamination of polypropylene packaging to food safety standards is precisely what we are looking for.

Meshing our disruptive innovations in packaging and IML label design with NextLoopp's groundbreaking technology will enable us to play a crucial role in driving the circular economy for PP packaging.

And NextLoopp is certainly accelerating through the barriers of sorting and decontamination. It recently dispatched PPristine recycled PP prototype resins from post-consumer food packaging to 43 participants for further trials. These trials will endorse the suitability of recycled plastics to be a drop-in replacement for virgin PP plastics.

This is particularly timely as forthcoming legislation will impose the use of rPP in every single food or non-food packaging.

On a final note, I believe the European Recycling Industry needs to step up its support for all packaging stakeholders, from the producers, designers, decoration providers to the brand owners that are developing new innovative solutions in order to optimize packaging recyclability.

To turn plastic packaging back into the valuable material it has the potential to be, we need to combine all the most efficient disruptive technologies available across the entire packaging ecosystem, from recycling processes and packaging to label design.



For more information about MCC Verstraete, go to: verstraete.mcclabel.com

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ProPrint's linerless success

Following a string of cross-group purchases, UK-based ProPrint has invested over 1 million GBP to continue its linerless and digital success. *Piotr Wnuk reports*

ProPrint Group was established in 2015 by combining two successful print companies: CopyPoll, an established board print and packaging business, and Promo Labels, a newer, rapidly growing label company.

The goal was to widen the printed packaging range and optimize service levels. The group's production facilities now include nine UV presses covering litho, flexo and digital printing.

Over the last year, the ProPrint Group team has grown significantly and expanded the services offered to customers across the UK. The new 33,000 sq ft office and warehouse has become a customer service hub and provided additional stock materials storage. ProPrint Group now occupies a total of 78,000 sq ft across three sites.

The most recent arrival on ProPrint's production floor is a bespoke Digicon Series 3 automated finishing line from A B Graphic, which will provide an additional range of label finishing options. It complements the company's Screen digital press installed in December 2021, increasing the overall capacity for high-quality embellished labels.

'The Digicon 3 is modular, giving us the flexibility to tailor the machine to complement our existing infrastructure. Therefore, we can optimize efficiency and open more capacity for the choice of finishes customers want in the short lead times we offer,' says James Denny, co-founder and director of ProPrint Group.

The group has also recently installed a new Ravenwood Com500 Coater, followed by an advanced 10-color Edale FL3 flexo press, bringing total investment to over 1 million GBP (1.2m USD), significantly boosting the company's linerless labeling capacity.

'The linerless market is on the rise,' adds Denny. 'Appetite is increasing from companies that are becoming more aware of the sustainability and automation linerless provides. With the known shortage of board within the industry, linerless presents companies with a more cost-effective and time-efficient option with less wastage.'

'Since starting printing linerless labels in May 2019, we have taken on customers over a variety of sectors such as meat, fish and poultry (MFP) as well as fresh produce and confectionery.'

Circle of linerless

Denny says linerless labels are already a big hit within the MFP sectors. Many companies have transitioned from standard sleeves to linerless alternatives. Just during the Covid pandemic, ProPrint Group's Linerless Labels division saw growth of 43 percent.

The Ravenwood Com500 Coater installed at ProPrint's Wellingborough factory alongside the Edale press has a projected print run of 500,000 linerless labels per day. Designed and manufactured in the UK, the Com500 is the only machine dedicated to running Ravenwood linerless labels.

'The addition of Ravenwood linerless technology offers a cost-effective and sustainable option for a fresh approach in driving business operations forward,' adds Denny.

'We are excited to be working with Ravenwood and looking forward to following Ravenwood's strict code of ethics for producing faultless linerless labels as we become official members of the "Circle of Linerless",' comments Graham Bonus, ProPrint's sales director.

'We have worked hard over recent years to forge a successful business, built on exceptional service and trust by our customers in the fresh food sector. To now be able to supply Ravenwood

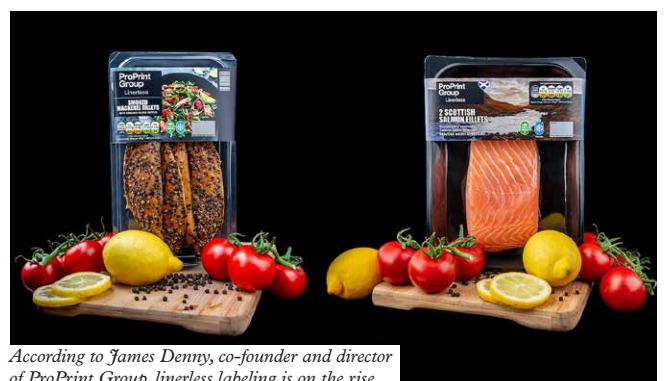


ProPrint Group was established in 2015 by combining two successful print companies: CopyPoll and Promo Labels

"The linerless market is on the rise. Appetite is increasing from companies that are becoming more aware of the sustainability and automation linerless provides"



Andy Clark, ProPrint's linerless sales manager, and Graham Bonus, sales director at ProPrint, in front of the Ravenwood Com500 coater



According to James Denny, co-founder and director of ProPrint Group, linerless labeling is on the rise



Supermarket chain Waitrose & Partners is trialing the Pro-Produce pack linerless packaging for Fresh Gold Kiwis

“With the shortage of board within the industry, linerless presents companies with a more cost-effective and time-efficient option with less wastage”

approved linerless labels is something we believe will open up new opportunities for delivering high speed, sustainable and cost-effective solutions to new and existing customers,’ adds Bonus.

ProPrint is the latest printer to join Ravenwood’s growing network, offering an exclusive service to both the UK and Ireland.

‘We’re delighted to have ProPrint on board with our linerless technology. The ProPrint team is very standards-driven, constantly striving to be the best in the market with their range of non-plastic, environmentally friendly packaging solutions,’ says Ravenwood’s managing director Paul Beamish.

It all started with a pack

ProPrint’s Linerless sales manager, Andy Clark, who has worked in print for almost 20 years, successfully introduced many new linerless users to the market. He now works closely with the team at Ravenwood Packaging, seamlessly linking print and application processes. This ensures customers can apply linerless products with the utmost efficiency.

Iceland, a UK frozen food retailer, is one of the first customers to adopt an entirely new linerless technology, Fruit Lid, developed by Ravenwood for trialing plastic-free packaging across its range of conference pears.

The retailer aims to eliminate plastic from its own-branded foods by 2023 and become carbon neutral by 2042, and continues to invest in technology and initiatives to reduce its carbon footprint. Its Plastic Free by 2023 pledge has already saved 850 tons of plastic by replacing black plastic trays with cardboard across street food ranges.

For the pears trial, Iceland has opted for a food-grade cardboard tray combined with a Fruit Lid linerless concept designed by Ravenwood to achieve entirely plastic-free and recyclable packaging. Previously, Iceland’s pears were hand filled into plastic poly bags and plastic punnets.

‘This is an exciting and innovative new pack format that delivers more plastic-free packaging for our customers,’ comments Stuart Lendrum, head of packaging at Iceland. ‘The hard work and commitment of everyone involved has delivered this step forward in moving away from plastic with solutions that work for shoppers and the supply chain.’

Ravenwood supplied a Nobac 5000L linerless applicator for applying the Fruit Lid labels to the packs while ProPrint Group produces the labels. If the pear trial succeeds, further machines will be purchased.

‘We have worked very hard, alongside ProPrint Group on getting the design and specification spot on for Iceland’s pear fruit application,’ adds Ravenwood’s Beamish. ‘Not only has Iceland adopted our linerless technology, but in meeting its needs and requirements, we have launched a completely new type of label. We look forward to working with Iceland again in the future.’

Pro-produce from ProPrint

ProPrint Group also collaborated with Primafruit and high-end supermarket chain Waitrose & Partners to trial the Pro-Produce pack linerless packaging for Fresh Gold Kiwis.

The Pro-Produce Pack uses Ravenwood’s linerless labeling technology to apply a paper lid to a cartonboard nested tray. Packing speeds are higher than other potential carton-board technologies, with the Waitrose Gold Kiwis packed at speeds of 45ppm. The packing process also offers in-line date coding, making the pack an efficient and practical option for pack houses.

The linerless packaging format is available using a range of tray sizes. Customers can tailor lids using shapes and apertures to suit the product. The Ravenwood applicator can connect to weigh price labeler for catch weight, fixed weight or average weight labeling.

Waitrose & Partners launched an

eight-week trial and if successful, the Pro-Produce pack could roll out further within the Waitrose fruit range. For Gold Kiwis alone, the linerless packaging format can save up to 1.2 tons of plastic.

‘We are delighted to be testing this new technology on our Gold Kiwi product range. The trial is designed to help us understand the packaging function within our supply chain as well as the customer appetite for 100 percent curbside recyclable card packaging where the fruit is not fully visible at the time of purchase,’ says Lisa Ellen Ireland, branch manager at Waitrose & Partners.

‘The data will give us a clear understanding of the supply chain adaptations required if rolling out more widely, as well as insight on how receptive our customers are to this type of packaging solution.’

The reality is that tons of plastic film and punnets go into landfill due to a lack of consumer knowledge or inadequate flexible film recycling infrastructure. The Pro-Produce pack linerless solution could help close the packaging loop. It is composed entirely of renewably sourced board and paper. The lid and tray are both fully recyclable in line with OPRL.

There are significant changes for plastic use within fresh produce, including the new UK Plastic tax, effective April 2022.

The law applies to plastic packaging manufactured in or imported into the UK that does not contain at least 30 percent recycled plastic. France has already banned plastic packaging on a range of fruit and vegetables. Spain is due to implement its plastic ban in 2023.

Paper labeling and carton-board options can potentially offer alternative recyclable options. Most importantly, consumers can quickly identify the pack as recyclable straightaway and conveniently recycle right at the curbside.



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Standardizing color

Ink mixing and matching are one of the most time-consuming processes on the production floor. If not done correctly, it leads to waste of materials, makeready time and, most importantly, press time. But what if the ink and color matching process could be standardized to hit the right color on the first attempt? Akanksha Meena reports

It is always a useful exercise to see how a new technology works in practice some years after it was launched – whether it matched the marketing claims made at the time. In this article we look at Pulse Roll Label Products' PureTone flexo system, launched on the first day of Labelexpo Europe 2015 with the claim it would revolutionize color matching on flexo presses. How has this worked out in practice?

PureTone is a high strength, mono-pigmented flexo ink mixing system, which comprises nine base colors with the addition of a special Royal blue plus extender. The single pigment formulation of the nine mixing bases makes it easier to color match due to the reduced total number of pigments used in the mixed ink. This enables optimized color strength and cleaner colors to be achieved and also reduces the potential for metamerism, says the manufacturer.

The high strength formulation allows for lower film weights of ink resulting in reduced inventory and lower ink volume consumption for narrow web printers and provides greater flexibility for printing half-tones and full-tones using one printing plate.

Gary Seward, founder of Pulse Roll Label Products, first came across ink standardization issues when working as a plant technician mixing inks early in his career. 'It was not with flexo ink then, it was with silk screening but it's the same principle. The same problem occurs when you choose a silkscreen mesh or an anilox. Variability is what causes the problem. Printers would come back to me and say that the colors are wrong when in fact I made the correct shade. And it was very clear that the printers were making their own decisions on what screens to use to print with – the same with the anilox.'

Seward developed a procedure with the converter's pre-press division to ensure that the right screen volumes were used with the right inks. The press operators then knew which screen to use with what ink. 'My problems went from up to 20 a day to probably two a week. All because I made the inks for the same screen every time.'

Seward concluded that leaving the choice of what anilox or screen to use for spot colors with the printer was the main problem. The press remains idle while the



Label produced by Berkshire Labels using PureTone inks

converter chooses the anilox, assesses its availability, mixes and matches the ink and runs print tests to get the right color and consistency.

PureTone was developed to take human judgment out of ink color matching. Pulse developed a database of 11 base colors that the system would use to create the right color automatically. Seward claims that on average 30 percent less ink is used with PureTone than with a standard 18-base Pantone mixing system.

'The database is so accurate, anybody could use it. I could teach you to color match – even if you have not touched ink in your life – in about 15 minutes,' he says.

The second key element was to take the choice of anilox away from the printer. The only way was to provide them with one standard anilox to use with the PureTone inks for spot colors.

Pulse Roll demonstrated that every Pantone color can be achieved using a 5-6 volume anilox, providing the PureTone database is calibrated to that anilox. A converter would simply have to ensure an inventory of the same volume anilox across all presses.

'Now the printer doesn't need to make the fundamental choice. It is made for him by us because we are the ink manufacturers, we know how strong the inks are.'

Seward says the advantages of using a standard volume anilox for all spot colors include greater consistency, a high color strength for lower film weight, better adhesion, improved halftone reproduction, less wastage and better cure.

That was the thinking behind the PureTone ink mixing system. How did it work in practice? L&L spoke with three label

“The database is so accurate, anybody could use it. I could teach you to color match – even if you have not touched ink in your life – in about 15 minutes”

converters in the UK who have switched to PureTone inks.

Reflex Labels

The Reflex Group claims to be the UK's largest label converter. The company has several production sites across the UK and is in the process of setting up new sites overseas. In December 2021 the converter added Macfarlane Labels of Kilmarnock, and its subsidiary companies, Macfarlane Group Ireland and Macfarlane Group Sweden, to the group.

Ian Kendall, CEO, says Reflex Labels was already using Pulse products when PureTone was being developed.

'I'll be quite honest with you, when people say: "We've got this really good product and you will use less ink volume", I'm always a bit skeptical,' Kendall says. But when Reflex Labels implemented the PureTone system, it found that the inks performed as expected and this was backed up by the data.

The production process all the way from pre-press was adjusted around PureTone, says Kendall. 'Once you have optimized each element of the process, you can get a job on press much quicker, with less makeready time, and less set-up is required to match the color you need – that's another thing that we're really hot on.'

Apart from the ink volume and cost savings, PureTone is a food compliant low migration product as well, which ticks all the boxes for Reflex in terms of UV inks.

Kendall says that PureTone has made the operator's job easier since there is no more manual selection of anilox or mixing inks. 'It's printing by numbers, so as long as you do it right, it is a lot easier to get the right



Gary Seward, founder of Pulse Roll Label Products



Paul Roscoe, managing director of Berkshire Labels



Paul Larkin, technical director at Hamilton Adhesive Labels

result. So actually it makes the printer's life easier. But you do need other skills in reprographics before it gets to the press.'

Reflex Labels is currently running PureTone on 50 presses and will gradually roll it out to the McFarlane operations.

'When we acquire a company like we did with McFarlane, we are moving over in a steady and sensible manner to using PureTone. And because of the way it works, you have got your analysis and can already determine pretty accurately how much less ink by volume we're going to use as a business, which is good. So PureTone is a win from all perspectives such as cost saving, environmental benefit and reduction in the amount of product being transported around the country.'

Hamilton Adhesive Labels

Hamilton Adhesive Labels has been operating in the UK label industry for more than 25 years covering multi-color to plain labels. The PureTone ink system was integral to the company's strategy to achieve predictable print results.

Paul Larkin, technical director at Hamilton Adhesive Labels, began working in the industry 47 years ago, a time when flexo was 'not even a print process recognized by the union in the UK'. He had worked with rotary letterpress and litho and saw huge potential for flexo when anilox rolls were invented.

Larkin has focused on developing a predictive system for flexo that is accurate the first time. Quality and efficiency are by-products of the system. 'However, the difficulty was that the ink industry never understood the benefit of the "common quality",' he explains.

'What do I mean by a "common quality"? Typically, the pigment strength if ink

"Once you have optimized each element of the process, you can get a job on press much quicker"

changes dramatically depending on what color you print. For example, a Reflex Blue may need a 9.0 volume anilox to achieve color where a Warm Red may only require 6.0 volume. The impact of this on quality and downtime is significant.

The aim was to identify if an ink company could achieve sufficient color using an 800lpi x 6.0 volume anilox against any color in the Pantone book. The benefits would be huge if this could be achieved without compromise including: perfect solids, vignettes and fine type in the same plate; reduction in ink costs; reduction in downtime.

Continues Larkin: 'The issues with traditional ink gets compounded when multiple inks are mixed together. Predictive software does its best, however a wide range of anilox rolls are required to cope. Printers typically have to make multiple changes before achieving a commercially acceptable result. You are essentially engineering waste into the system straight away.'

Larkin initially tested the PureTone system using a datum point anilox roll, this allows for an exacting starting point on all presses. Pulse passed with flying colors in rheology, viscosity, cure, gloss, flow, accuracy and hitting the common quality volume, he says.

It took Larkin about a year to set

PureTone up and by the end of the process had defined plates, inks and anilox rollers best suited to the system. Hamilton invested in a new laboratory and equipment and spent a few months testing and calibrating the laboratory to the presses and specified anilox inventory. Today the converter's facility is equipped with multiple machines set up in exactly the same way.

'Everything marries into this measurement and control philosophy to make a predictive system where quality is the by-product of the system,' explains Larkin. 'You can only have a predictive system if there is a high level of control in every single part. If the ink system is fundamentally flawed where you take ink right out of the tub and it ranges from 5-10 volume, you haven't got a predictive system.'

In the five years the converter has been using PureTone, Hamilton has perfected its ink estimating formula and has achieved around a 25 percent improvement in overall efficiency.

'When it comes to using more ink to achieve sufficient color, it has a negative impact on the print, and no one has put those two together except Pulse. Gary has a strong printing background,' Larkin adds.

Berkshire Labels

Berkshire Label has been in the label business for nearly 40 years. The company expects to make a turnover around 14 million GBP (17.2 million USD) this year and employs 75-80 people.

It prints labels both flexo and digital, with the latter making up 40 percent of its revenue. The company specializes in self-adhesive labels, sticker sheets, shrink sleeves, wraparound reel-fed labels and



Labels produced by Berkshire Labels using PureTone inks

pouches for markets as diverse as food and beverage, nutraceutical, vitamin supplements, toiletries, healthcare, cosmetics, security and horticultural.

Six years ago, Berkshire invested in its first full servo-driven flexo press, a 17in Mark Andy Performance series machine. 'We had spent a lot of time on digital investment. And it was now time to take our digital experience, know-how and mindset and apply it into flexo,' says Paul Roscoe, managing director of Berkshire Labels.

'We have lots of customers that we look after that start off in with sample runs and short runs and then they build into a nice sized business. Some of them remain on digital, but we want to be able switch them to flexo for the longer runs. So we don't mind whether we do 1,000 or a million labels, the customers gets the same good experience from Berkshire and doesn't have to care how it is produced.'

The Mark Andy flexo press was installed along with a GMG color management system to generate certified proofs for customer artwork. Berkshire took Pulse's four-color ink system and made sure it hit the ICC profile to match the proof. Digital Pantone and IQC (Incoming Quality Control) systems were also implemented.

And then it came down to spot colors. Up to that point, the converter would mix Pantone colors then adjust them to reach the target color. Roscoe wanted to save time on the process and standardize it.

Pulse introduced PureTone to Berkshire and demonstrated how the inks hit the Pantone colors first time and achieve

"The days of us mixing and matching were behind us when we put this system in"

Delta E tolerance of 2 or below. Pulse also promised that by scanning a spot color, previous color or customer swatch, the system would provide the color spectrum and matching ink formulation.

'The days of us mixing and matching were behind us when we put this system in,' Roscoe notes.

Berkshire could now promise customers with confidence that jobs produced in either flexo or digital would achieve Delta E tolerance of 2 or below, although in practice most jobs the company produces are below Delta E of 1.

Berkshire invested in a standard medium volume anilox inventory, profiled the presses and set up the PureTone ink system across its three 17-inch wide Mark Andy servo presses.

'We love customers coming down. We love to show them what we do. But at the same time, we question why they're coming. They're coming to make sure we hit the color,' Roscoe says.

Along with PureTone, Berkshire added GMG proofing and the X-Rite IFS software which works with the PureTone library.

'It has worked very well and we have saved lots of time. We have taken questions and opinions out – it either hits the color or it doesn't. And then it's just a question of maintaining the system, putting the controls in place and ensuring repeatability,' Roscoe explains.

Berkshire Label's flexo investment has not only been in a new press, but a fully 'digitized' flexo ecosystem.

'We couldn't spend all this money on a flexo press for it to be stood waiting for components, ancillaries and inks to be ready and available. So for us it was a question of keeping the press moving. We don't want to be mixing and matching on press. We also don't want to be mixing and matching many times and making lots of variants. Puretone just gave us the Pantone color that we hit the first time,' says Roscoe.

Pulse installed the system and trained Berkshire's pre-press team and supported the converter in the first few weeks to ensure everything was done correctly. 'And it's been successful sailing since. It is quite a simple system to understand. They give you a guaranteed set of ink and formulas, and you make the ink and it matches. As long as you don't change anything, it always matches,' Roscoe says.

With the new system and presses in place, Roscoe estimates the company has saved 2-3 hours a day previously spent mixing inks in the six years since switching to PureTone.



For more information about the companies covered in this article, go to www.pulserl.com, reflexlabels.co.uk, berkshirelabels.co.uk, www.hamilton-labels.co.uk

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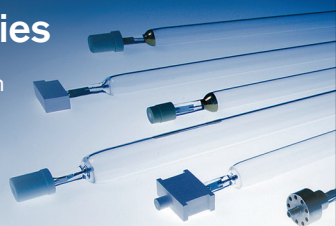
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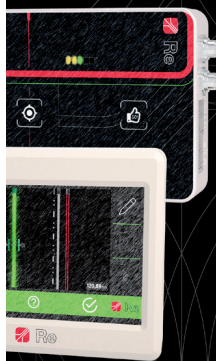
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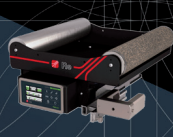
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Yixun ramps up digital investment

The Shandong, China-based label converter is learning how a digital press fits into its conventional operations. Yolanda Wang reports

Founded in 2003, located in Qingdao, Shandong Province, Chinese label converter Yixun has an annual per capita output exceeding 1m RMB (151,320 USD).

In 2021, the company invested in its first digital press – a Haotian HTS330 inkjet machine. In 2022, the company will install the latest Label Source F6 in-line flexo press, with 12 color units and two rotary screen printing units.

Transfer into printing

Lv Zhitao, general manager of Yixun, worked in his early days in the adhesive tape industry before founding the Yixun company, which was originally mainly engaged in the production and sales of a variety of adhesive tape products.

Later in 2013, he began to transform the company into a label converter by chance.

So how did he enter this industry?

'At that time, we considered tape and self-adhesive labels both belong to adhesive products. Many tape users also need self-adhesive label products. On the other hand, more importantly, I think PS label printing has higher added value and greater potential than tapes for future development.'

In the early stages, Yixun experienced rapid business growth. But as he entered more deeply into the label business, Lv Zhitao discovered the significant differences between the two industries, especially with regard to equipment investment. 'For tape production, the equipment is relatively simple and the upgrades do not come as quickly as for label presses. Label production is more complex, and you are required to invest in a range of equipment from pre-press plate making to printing, die-cutting, stamping and inspection.'

He adds: 'And these machines need to be updated according

to customers' needs, especially to support new processes and technologies.'

Lv has invested heavily in new equipment. When L&L visits, Lv explains: 'The machines you see now in our workshop are all newly invested in the last two years. We update our equipment very regularly.'

Today Yixun is equipped with two Qianrun full rotary letterpresses, two Fuji sheetfed digital toner presses, a Haotian intermittent letterpress, Polly rotary die-cutting machines, Daheng online and offline inspection systems, as well as a laser die-cutting machine and CTP plate making unit.

In order to ensure the highest levels of efficiency in the event of equipment failure or maintenance, Yixun's equipment is all duplicated. 'For the Qianrun rotary letterpress, for example, we first purchased a machine equipped with a cold stamping unit. In the same year, we invested in the second Qianrun letterpress. This is mainly to guarantee production in case one machine has broken down or is undergoing maintenance.'

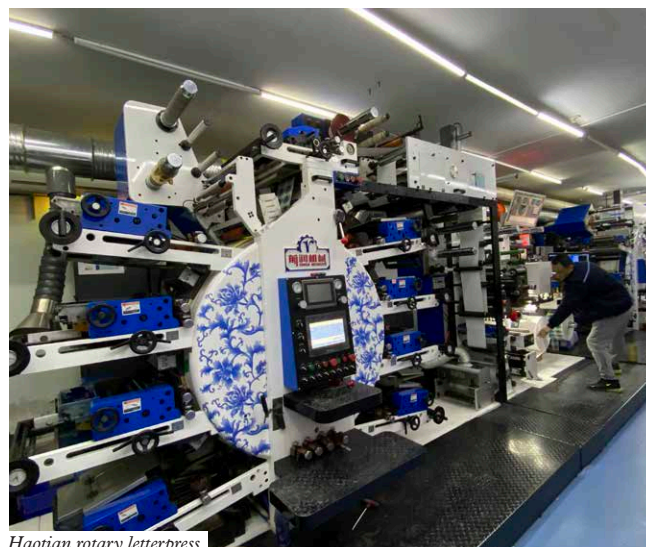
The company also holds a high level of dies and magnetic rolls in stock. 'This is in consideration of the needs of customers for different formats of label products. When the flexo printing machines are installed, we also plan to equip ourselves with multiples of different size cylinders.'

Reviewing the development of Yixun, Lv Zhitao says: 'This is not a simple industry. This is especially true in the face of multiple pressures from Covid-19, rising raw material costs and more rigorous environmental protection policies. We are very lucky because Yixun has accumulated a lot of high-quality customers after many years' efforts. The company's total output in 2021 has grown at a very small pace compared with 2020, which is the common situation of many of our peers.'

“Just as label converters need time to understand and accept digital printing technology, brand owner customers also need time to embrace it”



Haotian digital press



Haotian rotary letterpress

Digital

In 2021, Yixun invested in the company's first inkjet press – a Haotian HTS330.

Lv Zhitao had been paying attention to digital printing since the company began its move into labels. 'With the purchase of this digital press, our main consideration is to understand digital printing technology through actual production, and so prepare for our future development. We also have purchased Fujifilm toner digital presses before this investment, and produced some variable, customized label products.

'We have cooperated with Haotian for a long time. The first equipment we purchased was a Haotian rotary letterpress machine, and then we purchased two Haotian intermittent letterpress presses. Our two companies know each other very well and have established a deep foundation of trust and cooperation. We have noticed the continuous improvement of Haotian's digital machines over the years and also had an insight into the user experience before our investment.'

Before the installation of the equipment, Yixun did not do any proofing or testing. 'Haotian has accumulated years of technical experience and market feedback, so I believe Haotian will support the equipment to the best of their abilities.'

The digital press was installed in the middle of October 2021. At present, the production capacity of this machine has not been fully realized, and it is operating around four hours a day.

'This is all within our expectations,' Lv says. 'At this time there are not many customers who will accept the performance of digital printing of labels. Some customers have been forced to accept the use of a digital press because of short orders or tight delivery times. Just as label converters need time to understand and accept digital printing technology, brand owners and customers also need time to embrace digital.

'What's more, we should know that digital technology is not perfect. It is just another technology alongside letterpress, flexo or offset. We could combine our digital press with any other conventional printing technology. We are also already in communication with Haotian to purchase a second digital machine with more colors.'

Today Yixun mainly produces PS labels for vehicles and boats, electrical appliances, food and beverage industries. 'After the installation of the Haotian digital press, along with the two Fujifilm sheetfed digital machines, our company will gradually transfer proofing or small run orders from our conventional presses. We have also tried producing personalized, variable information and other special orders such as anti-counterfeit labels through a variety of process combinations,' Lv says.

Cooperation

Speaking about the development of the label printing industry in China market, Lv Zhitao says: 'Over these years on the front line, I have operated different printing equipment and finishing machines and new technology, new materials and new systems keep emerging. This is especially important as we face increasing competition, a looming shortage of paper, stricter environment policies and rising prices. Label converters need to focus on the latest developments, to utilize new technologies to upgrade production capacity and reduce costs.'

The company's latest investment in a Label Source in-line flexo press is based on such considerations, with its higher production efficiency and automation level.

While focusing on the company's development, Lv has also learned from the experience of industry peers in other regions of China. 'Compared with the consumer-driven markets of east and south China, the demand for new technology in Shandong is not so high, and competition is fiercer. And label printing peers are more defensive: industry communication and cooperation is much



Factory floor at Yixun

“Competition among peers is inevitable, but for long-term development, we need to cooperate with each other for mutual benefit”



Rhyguan finishing machine

less than other areas of China. All this is actually obstructing the progress and development of the industry. Competition among peers is inevitable, but for long-term development, we need to cooperate with each other for mutual benefit.'

After communicating with some like-minded peers, Lv Zhitao decided to establish the Label Branch of the Shandong Packaging and Printing Industry Association, which was officially inaugurated on January 8, 2022. He was also elected as the leader of the new branch.

Regarding the future development of the association, Lv Zhitao says: 'At present, the influence of our branch is still relatively small, but we are willing to unite with all like-minded forces to strengthen communication and cultivate the awareness of win-win cooperation. I also believe more peers will see our efforts and join us in the near future.'



For more from Yolanda Wang on the Chinese label market, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/yolanda-wang

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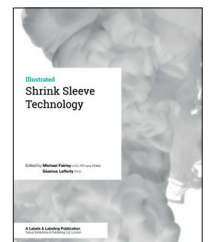
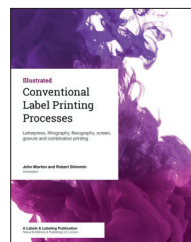
Technology has brought more control, automation and sophistication to every stage of the label and package printing process – from a customer placing an order to receiving it. This is creating vast opportunities for converters, as well as adding complexity to project management.

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ZYprint's new factory in Chongqing

ZYprint opens new factory in Chongqing

In 2019, Yolanda Wang reported on the first Domino-Spande hybrid press installation in China. Three years later she visits ZYprint's new factory in Chongqing

Chongqing ZYprint, located in Qijiang District, Chongqing, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Shanghai ZYprint, registered in August 2017.

The company's investment program totals 270 million RMB (40m USD), divided into two phases. The construction of the first phase began in August 2018 and was completed in September 2019. The completed workshop covers an area of 27,432 sqm and hosts more than 150 employees.

Xu Benkui, the director of Chongqing ZYprint, tells L&L: 'Although the first phase of construction was affected by Covid-19, the whole investment was basically under our control, and all the construction and completion were in accordance with our plans.'

Why did they choose Chongqing as the new company's location? 'At the present time, due to the limitations of the site and local policies, Shanghai ZYprint has been unable to meet the needs of the new company's expanding development. After different field observations, and taking into account the future layout, we decided to make Shanghai our sales and service center and to move the production base to east and southwest China,' Xu Benkui explains.

As an important manufacturing town in China, Chongqing is built beside a major river and has the advantage of water transportation, which is rarely seen in inland cities. Besides, the printing

“Due to the limitations of the site and local policies, ZYprint Shanghai has been unable to meet the needs of the company's development. We decided to make Shanghai our sales and service center and to move the production base to east and southwest China”

industry in Chongqing has been developing since ancient times. Ju Jinyuan, general manager of Shanghai ZYprint, was born in Chongqing, and the investment there also meets his aspiration to give back to his hometown.

Another eastern China production base, Jiangsu ZYprint, located in Yanghe New Area, Suqian, Jiangsu Province, has also been put into production. In the future, these two branches will implement local production and distribution to further improve delivery times to customers.

Southwest China's first Xeikon

Chongqing ZYprint began trial production in March 2020 and was officially put into production in August of the same year. Now, Chongqing ZYprint mainly produces heat transfer labels, PS labels and shrink sleeve labels, of which PS labels have around a 20 percent share. 'This also reflects the label trend of liquor products in southwest China, which is one of the

main production bases of liquor in China,' says Xu Benkui. 'In this field, wine packaging is mostly in the form of transfer printing and shrink sleeve labels, which are fully integrated with the body of the bottle, so as to meet different wine bottle types.'

In March 2021, Chongqing ZYprint invested in the first Xeikon 3500 digital press in southwest China.

'This is the first equipment investment since the new plant came into production,' explains Ju Jinyuan. ZYprint installed its first digital press in 2010, the first HP Indigo press in the Shanghai factory, and the Domino-Spande inkjet printing equipment in 2019.

'As with traditional printing technologies, there are different areas of application for different digital printing technologies,' continues Ju Jinyuan, 'Considering our current order structure and the needs of major customers of the Chongqing factory, we decided to invest in toner digital printing technology this time.'

“Xeikon 3500 uses dry toner which has passed US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations without pre-coating treatment and is suitable for a wide range of materials, especially high-quality heat transfer labels. With an image resolution of 1,200 DPI, the quality of the product is unparalleled”

Xu Benkui, who joined ZYprint Group in 2004, has worked as an operator on the printing line, in ink matching and in workshop management. Now he is in charge of the whole Chongqing factory, including the investment program and production operations. For new equipment investment, he has a rational and clear strategy. 'The Xeikon 3500 uses dry toner which has passed US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations without pre-coating treatment and is suitable for a wide range of materials, especially high-quality heat transfer labels. With an image resolution of 1,200 DPI, the quality of the product is unparalleled. It is no problem at all for us to deliver complex orders with a fast turnaround with this machine.'

Wine industry focus

In addition to the new Xeikon 3500 digital press, Chongqing ZYprint is also equipped with four gravure printing production lines, three screen printing production lines, a Spande flexo press and Domino-Spande hybrid printing line, as well as a series of finishing machines including stamping, laser die-cutting, slitting and automatic inspection.

In contrast to the business model of Shanghai ZYprint, Chongqing ZYprint aims to become a professional printing and packaging supplier to the wine industry. The company has equipped itself with the whole process from design, pre-press, file processing, proofing, printing, post-press processing and inspection.

Chongqing ZYprint has also created a new flexible service model. 'To meet our customers' needs, we set up professional technical and service teams, providing them with high-quality products and solutions, which help customers achieve added values,' Xu Benkui reveals. For example, in November 2020, the company set up a new wine packaging project, which was completed at the end of 2021. With this production line, the company can provide wine brand owners with a full set of integrated packaging solutions including wine bottles, boxes and caps, as well as labels.

Chongqing ZYprint is fully on its way to transforming into a modern smart factory. The company uses a XLYprint ERP system to realize the automation of the whole management workflow, including ordering, material preparation, production planning and scheduling, warehouse storage and delivery. All production equipment in the workshop has been equipped with Siemens sensors to achieve accurate on-site information collection. Then all data is automatically uploaded to the central control room to monitor production status in real time.

L&L is looking forward to seeing ZYprint's new chapter in the southwest China market.



Xeikon 3500 installed in Chongqing



Domino-Spande hybrid press at ZYprint's factory in Shanghai



Spande flexo press in ZYprint's Chongqing facility



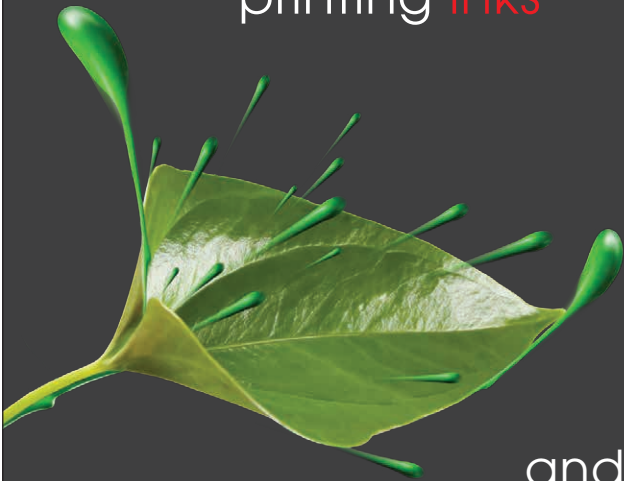
Gravure printing production lines at ZYprint in Chongqing



For more from Yolanda Wang on the Chinese label market, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/yolanda-wang

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Unlocking remote power

Impressed with a significant productivity boost, Malaysian converter Mega Label has invested in a second Martin Automatic machine – installed remotely due to the pandemic. Piotr Wnuk reports



L-R: Product development manager Nicky Tan, group general manager Edmund Chan, and senior commercial manager Moon Gan with Mega Label's new Martin Automatic MBSC unwind splicer



Mega Label has become one of Malaysia's biggest label converters with a team of more than 200 staff

Mega Label began as a small print shop located near the border with Singapore in Johor, Malaysia, in 1987 with just one printing press and six employees. It has grown to become one of the country's major players in the narrow web market with a team of more than 200 staff.

The company currently supplies labels to the food, pharmaceutical, clothing and healthcare sectors from its modern 6,000 sqm plant. In 2011, Mega Label opened an additional production facility in Malaysia, closer to Kuala Lumpur, in Selangor, to cope with increasing demand and shorten delivery times. Just a year later, in 2012, the company set up a third plant, this time in Cambodia, to fulfill the growing demand for textile labels.

Mega Label operates several presses covering various printing techniques, including letterpress, flexo, digital and screen presses, and buys only established manufacturers such as HP Indigo, Durst and Gallus.

The converter prides itself on strong values and focuses on its employees. The management team is continuously working to create a safer and better workplace for its team. It pursues efficiency through Kaizen, a practice of continuous improvement through innovation and evolution. One of the keys to the company's success has been its policy of personnel development, by providing professional training for its team and creating an atmosphere of positive working attitudes and an efficient working environment.

The company also emphasizes the importance of sustainability by using environmentally friendly systems such as renewable energy solar panels and wastewater management, to save energy.

'Our target is to improve efficiency by replacing the unnecessary heavy work of our operators with automation, and in this sector of the market, there is no better manufacturer than Martin Automatic,' says Edmund Chan, group general manager at Mega Label. 'Its non-stop systems de-stress our operators by managing reel changes of material, allowing them to focus on other important tasks. This is a great boost for the overall morale.'

Productivity

The first Martin Automatic technology at Mega Label, installed in 2018, was an MBSC non-stop unwind/splicer and an STR automatic transfer rewriter, fitted to a 10-color Gallus ECS 340 press. The machinery had an immediate impact on productivity and waste levels.

'We save around 5-10 percent of the material and 5-10 minutes per roll change – and these make significant contributions to productivity and therefore profitability,' confirms Chan. 'It also has a

"We save around 5-10 percent of the material and 5-10 minutes per roll change – and these make significant contributions to productivity and therefore profitability"

beneficial effect on the environment.'

After registering such significant improvements in terms of productivity, Mega Label decided to order a second set of MBSC/STR machines in 2020 for its latest Gallus press, another ECS 340.

A new challenge was presented by the worldwide pandemic. Covid-19 spread around the world, posing significant travel disruptions and bringing air traffic to a halt. Engineers scheduled to manage this installation were not able to fly to Malaysia. However, Mega Label and Martin Automatic technicians set about creating a plan to see the new equipment installed and running in commercial production quickly, despite travel bans.

To ensure all practical details were covered, a pre-installation video conference was arranged to review all drawings and instructions so that both parties were comfortable with their respective tasks.

'Mega Label's engineers are very competent, and we had our technicians on stand-by throughout the installation,' recalls Travis Yang, Martin Automatic's regional manager for Asia-Pacific. 'The fact that it all went smoothly and quickly speaks volumes for the functional and pure design of Martin equipment, which combines a robust working capability with easy handling.'

If there is any positive to be drawn from the pandemic, it's the increased use of modern communication technology that allows companies to keep their customers satisfied, undergo complicated equipment installations and fully train converter's staff remotely.

As with most manufacturers of capital equipment, the global pandemic and all that it has involved regarding travel restrictions have forced Martin Automatic to innovate ways of working to keep its customers satisfied. The company continues to explore all forms of communication and instructional videos to support its customers in the most cost effective and efficient ways.



For more information about Mega Label, go to www.megalb.com

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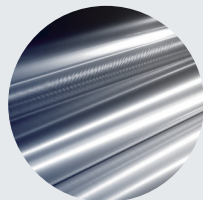
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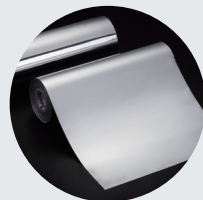
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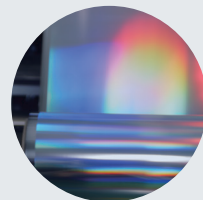
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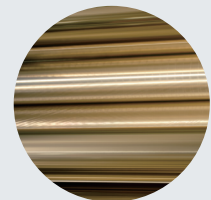
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Ji Sung ventures into hybrid printing

South Korean converter Ji Sung has installed the first Mark Andy Digital Series HD press in the Far East. Piotr Wnuk reports

Founded in 1996 by Kim Jong-Chul, its current CEO, Ji Sung Technology & Industry has specialized in label production from the outset. It currently serves well-known brands in the pharmaceutical and bio-product markets from its modern production facilities in Suwon, the capital of Gyeonggi Province, in north-western South Korea.

For many years the company has relied purely on conventional printing technology. Over time, this has been enhanced with addition of digital presses.

The converter established a relationship with Mark Andy in 2019 by purchasing a 13-inch, 8-color Performance Series P5 equipped with UV drying. Ji Sung's management was so pleased with the machine's benefits and quick return on investment, as well as the local support provided by Mark Andy, that a second flexo machine arrived at Suwon in 2021. This time the company opted for a 7-color Evolution Series E5, also supporting a 330mm web width.

That same year, Ji Sung turned to Seoul-based Phil Tech International, which represents the American manufacturer in the Far East, to purchase a Digital Series HD hybrid model to replace an existing press from another supplier.

All three presses were installed and commissioned by Mark Andy Europe, based in Warsaw, Poland, which is also responsible for the service and after-sales support for Ji Sung and other Far East customers.

'We are using the new hybrid technology for short and medium-run production. The Digital Series HD offers single-pass production, so it is far more efficient for these jobs than a flexo press,' says Kim Jong-Chul. 'Because of this investment, we can process our orders faster and successively offer customers a higher level of service. We are now looking for new customers with the hybrid technology and hope to grow business for the entire company.'

Mark Andy's Digital Series HD is a hybrid press that prints and finishes labels and flexible packaging in one pass. The press is equipped with an inkjet module, as well as flexo units and several additional options such as die-cutting and laminating. Ji Sung's management is especially pleased with the new Digital Series HD's Stitch AI automatic



L-R: Chi Bum Park of Phil Tech International, Kim Jong-Chul of Ji Sung, Park Jong-Se, The Printing Industry News

"The Digital Series HD has taken around 20-30 percent of the jobs we previously printed by flexo"

alignment system and its UV inkjet module that gives 1,200 DPI resolution printing.

'The Digital Series HD has taken around 20-30 percent of the jobs we previously printed by flexo,' comments Kim Jong-Chul. 'We plan to fill the rest of its capacity with work from new customers. The investment in a Digital Series HD is a good fit for Ji Sung's activities, as the company's priorities are sincerity and a commitment to the highest possible customer service. I'm convinced the new hybrid press will prove to be a great asset for staying on this business path.'

Regional pioneer

'It is very special for us as Ji Sung became the first user of Mark Andy's hybrid press not only in South Korea, but in the entire Far East region,' adds Chi Bum Park, owner of Phil Tech International. 'The local market is becoming increasingly conscious of the opportunities offered by this technology, especially for short and medium-length runs and variable data and versioning of the same job. The investment in three Mark Andy presses was a breakthrough for Ji Sung. In the past three years, the company has grown dynamically and become very well-known across the region.'

Ian Pollock, Mark Andy Europe's service director, who was responsible for delivering, installing, and commissioning the press, commented that the global pandemic of

the past two years proved no handicap, despite travel restrictions.

'I should like to take this opportunity to thank Kim Jong-Chul for his trust in Mark Andy. It was a brave decision to invest in two advanced presses at such a difficult time.'

He also acknowledges the part played by Phil Tech International in supporting the project and is grateful to Mark Andy's partner Chi Bum Park for his commitment. 'Last but not least, I would like to mention our service technicians actively involved in this challenging project,' adds Pollock.

'We are delighted with the first sale of our hybrid press in the Korean market and especially pleased that it's the third Mark Andy press delivered to Ji Sung in a very short time,' adds Tom Cavalco, vice president of Mark Andy. 'It confirmed the high standard of equipment and Ji Sung's trust in the Mark Andy brand and its local dealer, Phil Tech International. We hope all three Mark Andy presses will support Ji Sung to continue its dynamic growth and enable the company to attract business from new markets, both local and international.'



For more on hybrid printing, see 'Analyzing hybrid printing' by Mike Fairley, available online in the Label Academy section of L&L's website: www.labelsandlabeling.com/opinion/analyzing-hybrid-printing

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Coating your success

First Durst Tau330 in south India

Mahavir Impex has installed the first Durst Tau330 in south India. Akanksha Meena reports

Bangalore-based Mahavir Impex began business in 2009, manufacturing of thermal paper rolls. In 2017, it expanded into labels, starting its journey with plain labels printed on a 5-color letterpress machine.

Managing director Nilesh Jain explains: 'I was new into label printing. I decided to invest in it because it is intermittent – you don't have to change cylinders. You can print different sizes on it with just a change of plate. And we wanted to use less manpower. If a single person can do the job, that's ideal.'

'We did not want to invest big at the beginning. We gradually built our customer base and learned the advantages and disadvantages of the technology. There were restrictions in terms of size so we decided to add a digital press. Now size is not a problem.'

A few months after venturing into labels, Mahavir Impex observed increasing demand for short runs. 'There was a gap in the market,' says Jain. 'Especially post-pandemic, the demand for short runs has spiked. Brands are focusing on increasing the number of SKUs and they want a local service provider for their labels and packaging. They want their products within a day or two.'

Jain noticed high demand for digital short runs, particularly from start-up companies. He says that there are several players in the digital space but they face limitations such as the capability to print on clear or metallized substrates. They lack the capability to print white.

'White could be printed on flexo and then on digital but it adds a process and wastage which I want to reduce in my factory. We try to be economical. Whatever I reduce I can pass it onto customers or add on to my margins.'

Jain explored several digital platforms while visiting Labelexpo Europe 2019 before opting for Durst's UV inkjet press. 'The team immediately responded to my query during the pandemic. They sent a few samples and I was satisfied. I then sent them my jobs for further confirmation.'

Jain found the quality and the fast turnaround of the press to be its best qualities. 'We can print as per the customer sample and match it in terms of colors. We can immediately print and show samples and get it approved in a jiffy. And it is easy to operate.'

The machine was installed in late January 2022. The investment has allowed the company to acquire new customers as well as bag orders for short run variable data printing from existing clientele.

Mahavir also provides labeling services from scratch. It has an in-house label design team, supporting brands through to the final printed product.

'There's a lot of potential in the market for this service. With our in-house design team, we can provide customers with everything at one point. They can get their labels designed and printed under one roof for quick turnaround. Customers today want one point of service; it becomes very easy for them to manage their jobs,' Jain explains.

This is especially convenient for brands that launch new products frequently or target new markets and regions with multiple SKUs. With the increasing trend of hyper localization in India, brands focus on customizing their products for different regions and go as far as individual personalization for better customer engagement. This is resulting in high demand for variable data print. 'That is how we are helping brands think beyond standard procedures and expand their product reach into the market,' Jain adds.

The company currently operates the 5-color letterpress, two semi-rotary die-cutters, three slitter rewinders, one flatbed



Nilesh Jain, MD of Mahavir Impex, with the Durst Tau330 UV inkjet press

“Post-pandemic, the demand for short runs has spiked”

die-cutting machine and the Durst digital press. Jain is now looking to add fast converting equipment to complement the digital press and enhance its turnaround time.

He emphasizes that customers want their products as fast as possible, preferably by the end of the day. 'They are ready to pay a good price for this service. As the new generation enters the market, they want to innovate and bring a change in terms of packaging design. E-commerce is also picking up. If you want to sell your product online or in modern retail, it needs to stand out.'

South India is becoming a hub for start-ups and Mahavir is seeing prospects for long-term customers. India has over 61,400 startups recognized by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), with at least 14,000 recognized during 2022, according to the Economic Survey 2021-22.

The country has become the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world after the US and China. A record 44 Indian startups achieved unicorn status in 2021, taking the overall tally to 83.

Short run niche

With the new set up, Jain is supporting large label manufacturers with their short run jobs. 'Every label manufacturer sees demand for short run jobs once in a while. They have customers who prefer not to approach a separate label manufacturer for short runs; they want everything under one roof. But these converters have constraints in short run printing due to their conventional print set-up. At the same time, losing a customer for a small job is also not desirable. We are becoming that other option for those manufacturers,' Jain explains.

Jain has never been interested in long runs. He had seen enough well-established players in the market and found that competing with them would be challenging. Instead, he carved a market for himself.



For more about Durst in this issue, see page 77

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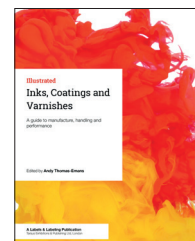
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TCPL expands flexible packaging production

The Indian company has expanded its flexible packaging unit and launched TCPL Innofilms to produce fully recyclable packaging. Akanksha Meena reports

India-based TCPL Packaging has added a new 10-color Bobst rotogravure press, a Nordmecannica solvent-free machine with turret and a co-extrusion lamination system at its plant in Silvassa.

Targeting the pouch market, TCPL installed machinery to convert center seal pouches, three side seal, stand-up, zipper and side gusset pouches. It has also added an additional slitter.

The company has also invested in quality testing equipment. It can now test raw materials and finished goods including OTR/WVTR measurements.

The manufacturer has recently formed a wholly owned subsidiary, TCPL Innofilms. Here, the company has invested in a 5-layer blown film line from Reifenhäuser with an in-line MDO (machine direction orientation) unit to make MDO PE film. The MDO PE technology will help TCPL to replace PET or BOPP as a printing layer and help produce fully recyclable packaging.

Vidur Kanoria, associate director at TCPL Packaging, says: 'We have been in the flexible packaging industry for almost six years now and we feel we have done relatively well overall and are seeing good returns, besides also increased demand from existing and new customers. Our MDO PE line was purely based on sustainability and giving our customers a unique and workable solution to their problems.'

'In the past few years, we have seen a tremendous increase of focus on sustainability and the global plastic waste problem and a solution is definitely required. The quality of our InnoPure film is capable of replacing PET or BOPP and hence we foresee a good potential market. This machine can also fulfill our internal requirement for sealant PE film.'

The MDO PE line can produce roughly 350 MT a month and with its flexible packaging expansion TCPL can add up to 500 MT per month of capacity.

'Our MDO PE is a new and unique product that excites us. Also, our foray into extrusion and pouching opens new avenues for us. Extrusion lamination allows us entry into markets such as snack food, tubes, contraceptives and pharmaceuticals. Pouching allows us to control the quality of everything in-house and provide a finished packaging solution to smaller consumer goods companies,' Kanoria explains.

Other than expanding its offering to domestic customers the company is hopeful for export opportunities, particularly for its MDO PE films.

New markets

Apart from flexible packaging, the company is also targeting carton and rigid box segments. In December 2021, TCPL acquired a controlling stake in Creative Offset Printers (COPPL), thus establishing a presence in NCR. COPPL comprises one carton unit with offset printing and a rigid box unit to supply to the mobile phone industry, to customers such as Samsung and Xiaomi.

'We are very positive about entering this industry which will help propel our growth in the carton industry. We have also added a new KBA offset printing machine in our Goa unit besides also setting up a joint venture, TCPL Halma, to produce paper cups,' Kanoria adds.

'We are confident of continuous growth in the years to come,



TCPL Silvassa plant

"In the past few years, we have seen a tremendous increase of focus on sustainability"



Bobst Rotomec Nova RS5003 10-color machine

having recently entered new segments and having expanded our product base. We wait to see how these play out and are upbeat about our existing mono carton and flexible packaging base. We will definitely not shy away from any potential investments which we see worthwhile.'

According to Kanoria, an interesting area will be the growth of recycled resin, as the government has tasked the packaging and FMCG industries with using an increasing amount of recycled content in the revised EPR guidelines. 'As of now, only PET has a sufficient availability of recycled content resin and it is interesting to see when this picks up for PE and PP as well.'

Sustainability is a critical area in the packaging industry. Most developments are based around plastic elimination or reduction, production of recyclable packaging or the use of recycled content. Kanoria highlights that TCPL is well placed here as it predominantly consumes paperboard and has extensive experience in this segment. And with the introduction of its InnoPure line of products, the company intends to contribute to the production of recyclable packaging.



For more from Akanksha Meena on the Indian market, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/akanksha-meena

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Acme Rolltech doubles production

Ahmedabad, India-based Acme Rolltech has added a second ALE engraving machine to double its production capacity for anilox rolls and sleeves. Akanksha Meena reports

Started in 2019 by three childhood friends, Acme Rolltech claims to be the first Indian company to manufacture ceramic anilox rolls and sleeves in India. The company provides its products to narrow web flexo, offset, corrugated, stack flexo, CI flexo and film coating line segments.

Sandeep Sharma, director of Acme Rolltech, says: 'Our USP is quality and service lead time. Previously, anilox rolls in India were imported from Europe, the US and China, so the lead time was 45-60 days or more. We provide our products within 15-20 days.'

The new engraving machine was supplied by UK-based Applied Laser Engineering. The order was placed in 2021 and the machine is now at the company's plant in Ahmedabad. Acme will also add new equipment for pre- and post-processing.

The new investment will allow Acme Rolltech to double production from 200 to 400 anilox rolls a month. Half of that total goes to narrow web labels and the rest is split between the other segments.

'We ensure that customers get a similar quality to what they get from European and US suppliers. We provide better lead time and pricing in India. We have created market for ourselves and are seeing a lot of growth opportunities. We have identified new segments and look to target them for future growth,' Sharma says.

Acme has introduced two new products – anilox rolls for high opacity white ink to replace screen printing and a raised embossing effect. Additionally, Acme plans for the new machine are to introduce next generation heavy deposition coating rolls for films and paper flexo and offset coating applications.

Sharma believes that the pandemic was a blessing in disguise for the company. Before Covid, anilox rolls were imported into India from China and Europe, which was disrupted by the pandemic-related logistics challenges. This allowed Acme to acquire new customers who could no longer import the aniloxes.

Acme now plans to add further products that are not currently manufactured in India, parallel to its product line in the print and packaging industry. The company might announce another expansion plan by the year end.

'Expansion is the need of the hour and with the new capacity we are covered for the next two years,' he says.

Indian market trends

According to Sharma, the trend of decorative products and added value is on the rise in India.

'Value added products cost more with screen units. But what if you could do it with an anilox? Both of our new products are selling like hotcakes. Customers who have screen units and those who don't are both buying from us.'

As raw material costs increase, end users are pushing converters to maintain the same price but requiring the same special effects. Sharma says Acme's new anilox can provide close to screen-like results (85 percent of the opacity) at a lower cost.

The increase in shorter runs, driven by a surge of e-commerce companies and increasing numbers of SKUs, is a concern for flexo printers because they need to generate more flexo plates.

'Generally, converters are not able to recover costs of new plates from the end user. Anilox as a consumable is more expensive. That's



L-R: Parag Patel, Parag Koradia and Sandeep Sharma, directors of Acme Rolltech

“Expansion is the need of the hour and with the new capacity we are covered for the next two years”

why we help our customers and guide them to achieve the results they want with fewer aniloxes. We have done it for many clients. They are happy with the results achieved.'

There is also a spike in unsupported substrate jobs such as shrink sleeves, pouches and ice cream cones.

'In the past, out of 100 printers, only 20-30 did unsupported jobs along with labelstock such as shrink sleeves and pouches and the rest did purely labelstock products. In the last 3-5 years, this has switched. Seventy percent of converters are now printing unsupported labels along with regular labelstock and now only 30 percent are using purely labelstock. Most of them are now providing shrink sleeves or pouches. I know a few printers who have added dedicated flexo machines to print unsupported labels,' Sharma says.

The reason behind this, he explains, is a growing demand post-pandemic for short runs of unsupported film products. Conventional print businesses are unable to profitably service this market, opening up opportunities for flexo label printers to offer short runs with a faster turnaround.

'This is a reason why label printers are now doing unsupported jobs. Going forward I see most label printers housing flexo presses only for unsupported jobs.'

In three years, the company has established its customer base across India and exports to more than 15 countries including Mexico, Germany, Indonesia, Poland, Turkey, South Africa, Kenya, Dubai and France. The manufacturer supplies its products directly in India and has distributors for exports. It is actively looking to recruit partners in Thailand, Bangladesh and China.

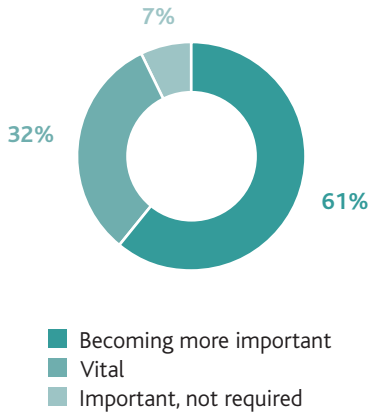


For more from Akanksha Meena on the Indian label market, go to www.labelsandlabeling.com/contributors/akanksha-meena

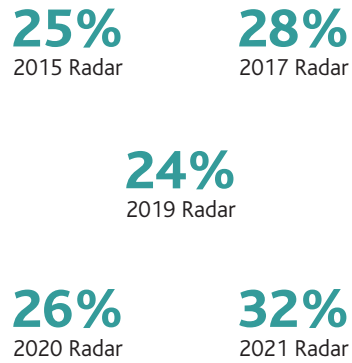
Label trends

Voice of the brand owner: the dynamic between the label buyer and the label converter

How important is it that label vendors have environmental certification?

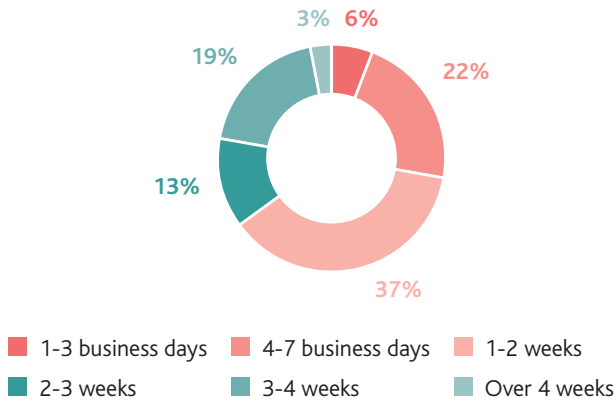


Percentage of respondents claiming environmental certification is a label vendor requirement:

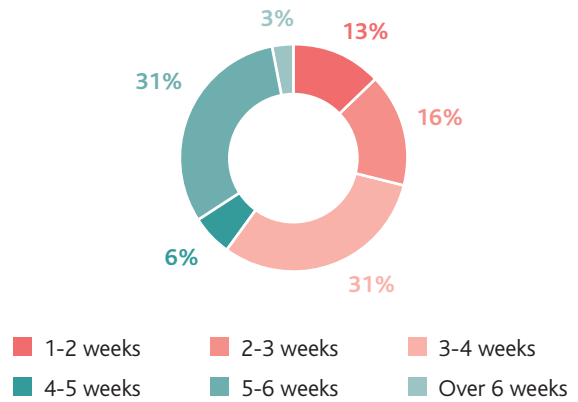


LABEL DELIVERY TIMES

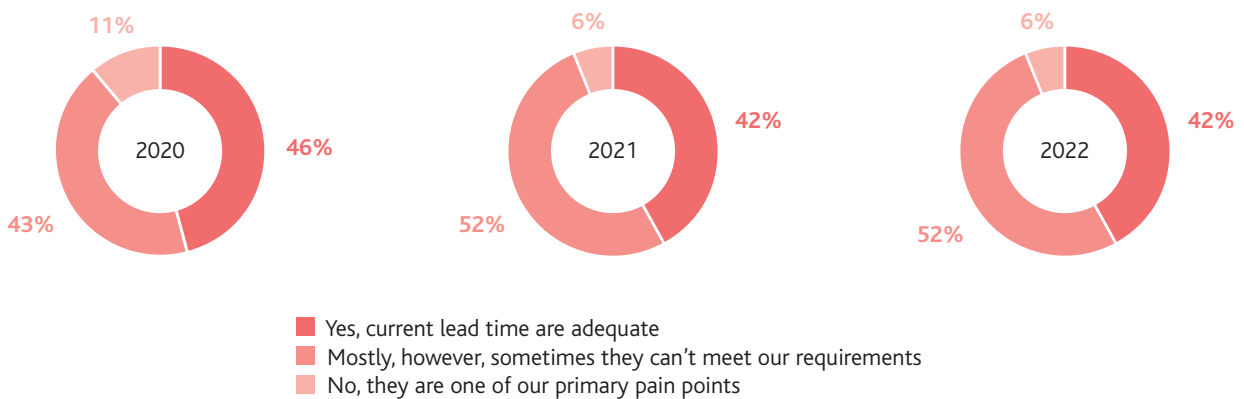
Lead times from companies' label vendors for existing orders



Lead times from companies' label vendors for new orders



Do brands and label buyers think that lead times for labels are adequate:



Source: Finat Radar Report 16 – 2nd semester 2021, report and analysis of the European narrow web market

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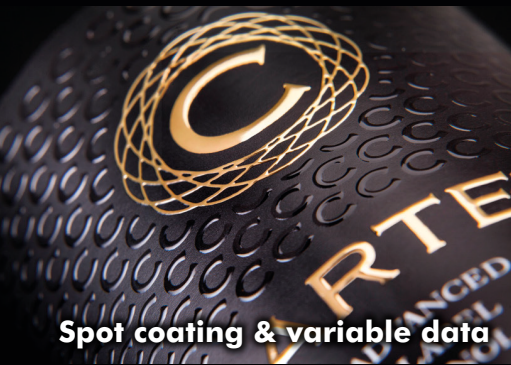
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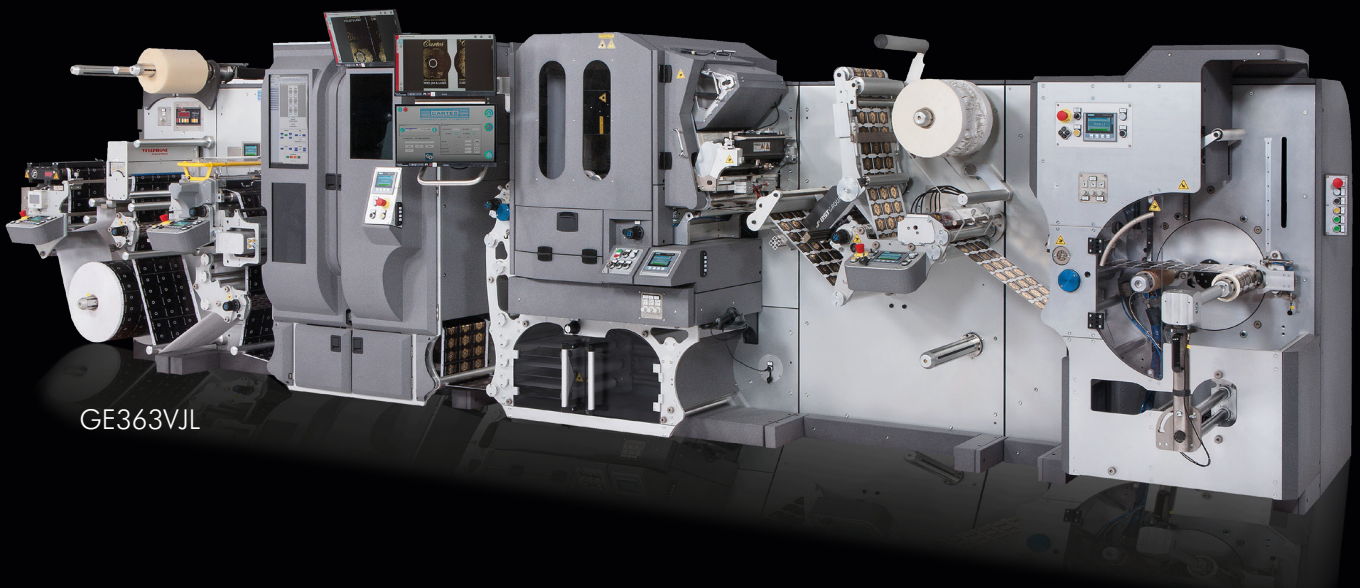


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