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2023 PREDICTIONS

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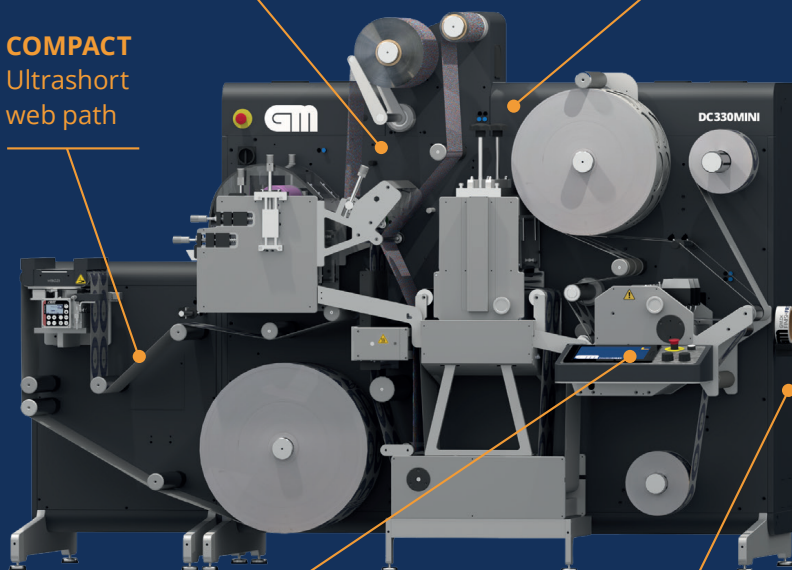
Varnish, lamination, cold foil, die-cut, slit, dual rewind

FUTURE-PROOF

Industry 4.0 ready

COMPACT

Ultrashort web path



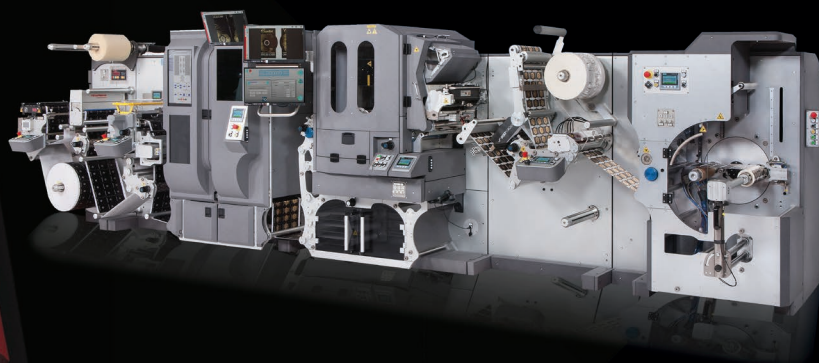
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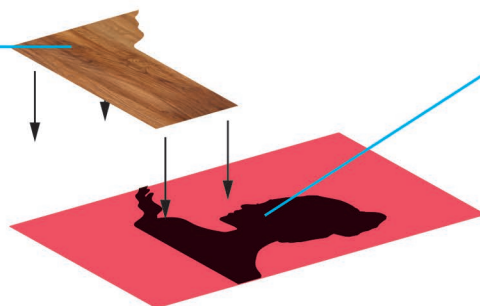
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Label application in register with LOL system (Labels On Labels)

②



①

Highly covering brown screen printing

Highly covering black screen printing

③



④

Metallic doming by JET D-SCREEN for high built thickness effect

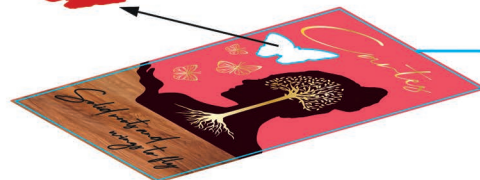
Automatic removal of the die-cut window by DEPASTILLAGE system

⑤



⑥

LASER converting with Invisible Laser Cutting (patented), to avoid white edges on dark labels



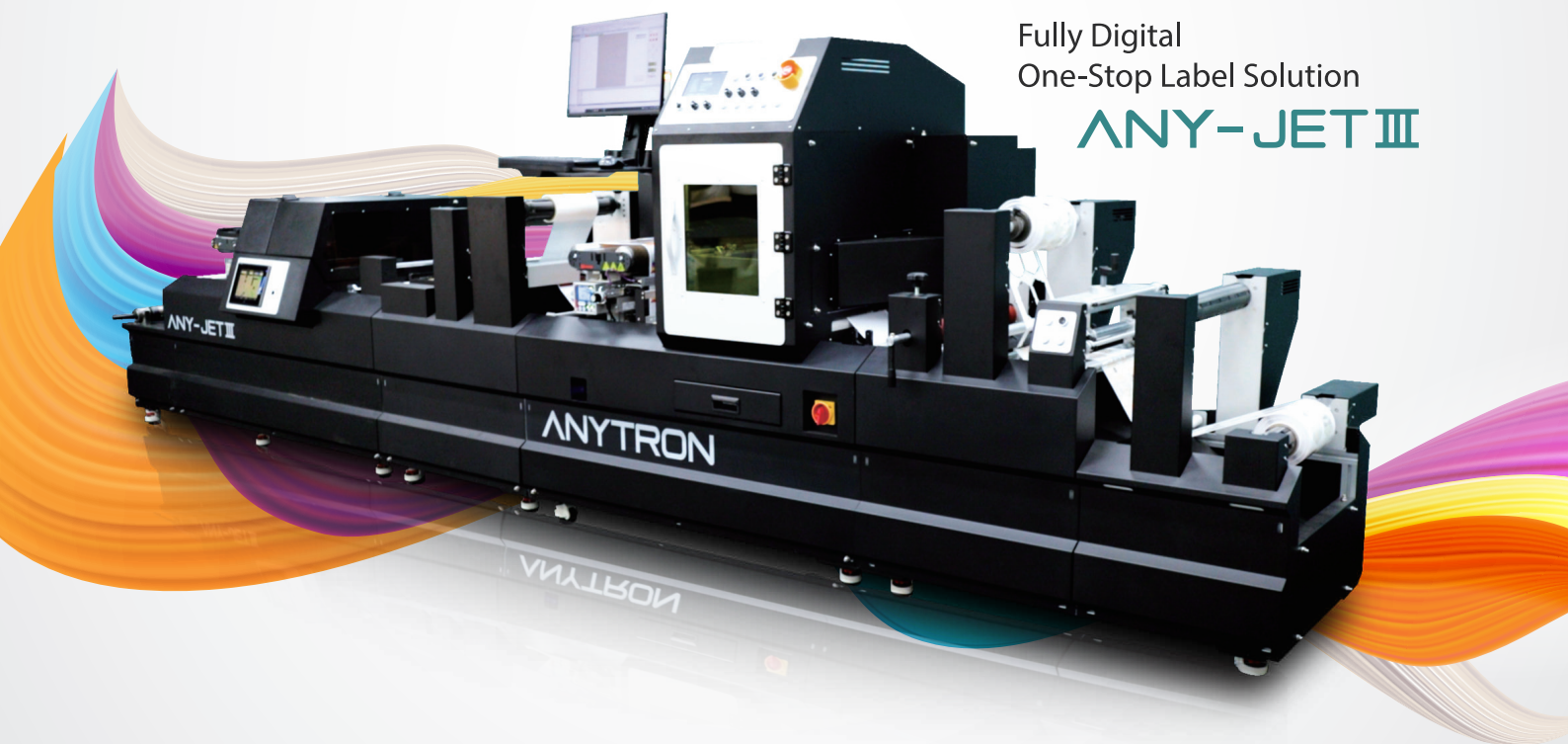
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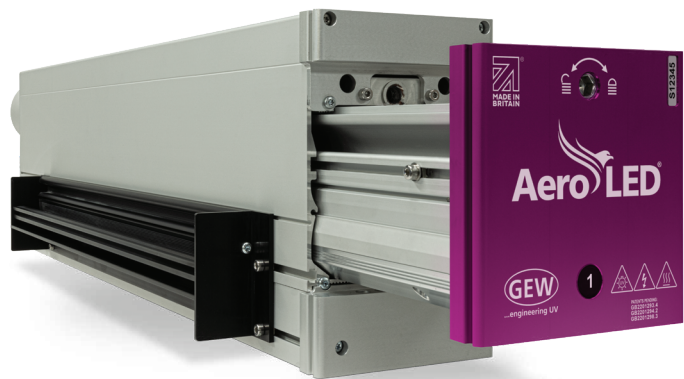
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— Meet the team

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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Group managing editor



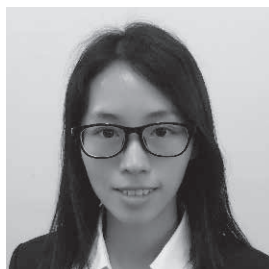
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HP shows possibilities with Indigo technology at Labelexpo India 2022 (video)

Appadurai A talks about the possibilities of applications with HP Indigo 6K press



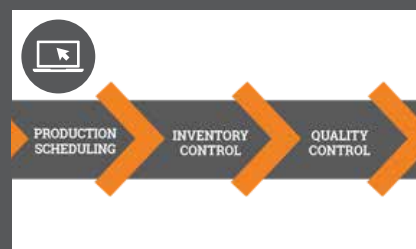
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Konica Minolta India sets high revenue targets (feature)

The company aims to achieve 121.3m USD revenue target in the next three years



Choosing the right MIS System (Label Academy)

What to look for in a supplier to get the most out of your MIS system

g1

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L&L looks back (L&L issue 2, 1989)



P12 L&L investigated a SLC Roll Label Computer Estimating System. It provided the first complete solution to the calculations required in roll-label estimating and operated on industry-standard computer hardware (IBM PC). The estimates were produced in less than a minute in up to five different quantities and then printed in letter form through a word processing program.

P24 Mike Fairley visited Fasson research and production operations in the United States to investigate its advanced laminating line at the Fort Wayne plant and assess how the company was meeting developments in the laminate and label user market and had continued its progress in quality performance, process improvements and reducing overall wastage.

P29 L&L published a comprehensive preview article for Labelexpo USA that was taking place in Chicago in May. The event had over 2,000 visitors pre-registered in March and was set to be an outstanding event in the world of labels, with a wide range of new product launches and services on show.

P50 Mike Fairley visited Raflatrac's headquarters in Finland. The company was celebrating more than 15 years since delivering its first pressure-sensitive materials to a customer and already then held a major share of the European and worldwide laminate market with exciting developments and capacity investments taking place.



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

Same Storm

Editor's note

If you read nothing else in this issue of the magazine, (though I hope you'll read it cover to cover) I suggest spending some time with our global market reviews.

This annual round-up from our team of international editors and correspondents paints a vivid picture of the global state of affairs in today's label market.

Although the label and packaging industry operates on a global scale, it was clear to me from reading these dispatches that the problems are strikingly similar whether you're in Delhi or Detroit, Bangkok or Bogota, Venice or Vancouver. We may be in different boats, but we're all weathering the same storm.

I'll be honest, I wish there was some better news from this special feature, but the clouds

"If I've learned anything about the label industry, it's nothing if not resilient"

that have darkened our skies in recent years, don't seem to be clearing anytime soon.

Managing a manufacturing facility during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic almost looks like child's play compared to the forces label business owners are up against today. I wish I could report that a tight labor market, stretched and fragile supply chain, price hikes, and limited material availability are yesterday's problems, but I fear that business owners must weather this storm a bit longer.

However, if I've learned anything about the label industry, it's nothing if not

resilient. In fact, during most economic downturns, the label market still thrives. This tough-as-nails industry can weather adversity better than most. It's proven time and time again that it's a market that sees opportunities in challenging times, and I expect that to continue.

In fact, there are some exciting technological advancements on the horizon, as conventional press manufacturers tell us on page 90 in an article that explores the future of flexo. Conventional technology will make a return to Labelexpo

Europe this fall, in a show that will highlight the latest in automation, among other trends. As Andy Thomas-Emans details on page 19, an Automation Arena promises to highlight the technology advancements that can help label converters chase what was described to me as a 'tenacious pursuit of efficiency' and ease one of its most intractable problems – labor.

It will be fascinating to watch as the industry responds to the challenges it faces with technological advancements and continued resilience.

Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor

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● **FULL HYBRID MODEL**

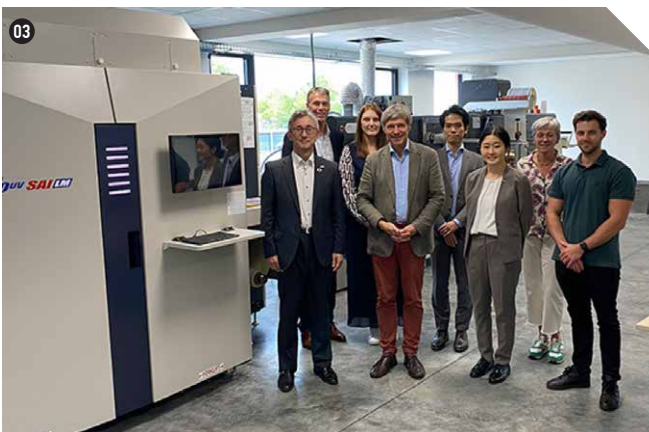


● **REEL TO REEL MODEL**

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
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| ● Razor Slit / Shear Slit | ● LED Curing |
| ● RD Scorer (Edge Trim) | ● Mercury Arc Curing |
| ● Lamination | ● Cold Foil |
| ● Nip & Peel | |



Installations



01 HP Indigo 25K digital press
Nexibles, India
Nexibles, a flexible packaging company from ArtNext installed an HP Indigo 25K digital press at its facility in Mumbai, Maharashtra, to meet market demands by providing digital flexible packaging, shrink sleeves, labels and roll form laminates. The press will enable ArtNext to manage high-volume customers and deliver any size job on time. The press is equipped with HP Indigo LEP and One-Shot Color technology. HP Indigo allows mixing colors off-press, or Pantone-licensed spot colors can also be used and can be matched to any swatch or color sample on specified substrates. It can also reduce production waste with compostable and recycled pouches. Prioritizing environmental concerns, HP offers the HP Indigo Digital Pouch Factory, an ecosystem of printing, lamination and pouch-making.

02 Mark Andy Evolution E5
Wiking Label, Poland
The family-owned and managed business, which primarily serves the pharmaceutical market, is a long-term Mark Andy user with three presses already operating on a triple-shift pattern. With demand for pharma packaging on the rise, the new Mark Andy is part of an investment program that saw the company move to a new purpose-built facility on the outskirts of Łódź in April 2022. When the new 17in (430mm) Mark Andy E5 is installed early in 2023 it will have the high-specification needed for Wiking's work, including a Vetaphone corona treater, 12 flexo print stations with GEW UV curing, chill drums, twin die-cutting stations, two compact parallel web translators, cold foil capability, a screen-printing unit, constant tension laminator and web turn bars. The E5 has automatic and pre-register as and short web path to reduce set-up and job-change waste.

03 Screen TruepressJet L350 SAI LM
Elep, Belgium
To break into a new market, Belgium-based Elep has invested in Screen Truepress Jet L350 SAI LM, a digital-printing label press that meets the latest standards for food packaging. 'To ensure our long-term continuity, we wanted to diversify our activities,' said Yves Peiffer, Elep's CEO. 'We opted for the production of self-adhesive labels on rolls – it's a different segment from envelopes, but one where we can apply our know-how built up over decades.' The company chose the Truepress Jet L350 SAI LM from the Japanese supplier Screen. With its new printing press, Elep targets small to medium print runs, including those for food producers. Given its digital technology, Elep can deliver print runs as small as 100 labels but also rolls with several hundred thousand labels.

04 Nilpeter FB-350 press
CV Labels, United Kingdom
Scottish converter CV Labels has added an FB-350 press to its line-up, expanding the company's Nilpeter presses to a total of three. CV Labels has worked with the pharmaceutical, medical and healthcare labeling sectors for more than 30 years. Based in Irvine, Scotland, the company recently expanded its production area to 2,000 sqm. The FB350 is specialized in printing PS labels for pharmaceutical and medical products. The 7-color flexo press with several customized features for CV Labels, including an inserter, making it possible to create multi-page peel and read labels using different substrates. Other custom features include UV curing, the latest version rail system and rail-based auxiliaries, de/re-lamination, a turnbar, re-register unit for preprinted webs, video inspection, and standard die stations.

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Installations



05 Monotech Systems
Colornovo hybrid press
Shriram Veritech, India
Noida-based Shriram Veritech Solutions acquired Monotech Systems Jetsci Global Colornovo Hybrid press at Labelexpo India 2022. Over the years, through intensive R&D, Shriram Veritech has added a range of products such as holograms, labels and stamping foils. Luv D Shriram had been looking for the right digital label production press for over a year. Colornovo Hybrid is a UV inkjet label production press with 7-color options (CMYK+W+ Orange + Green/ Violet) and offers accurate color reproduction and spot color matching. It runs at 50m/min and offers a resolution of 600x600 and 600x1200 DPI. The press can print on a wide range of labels, flexible and packaging substrates such as in-mold labels and lamitubes with its inbuilt chillers units and inter-color LED pining after each color in the machine.

06 Grafotronic DCL2
converting line
Italgrafica Sistemi, Italy
The DCL2 converting line joins an existing DC2 machine for the production of blank labels and a recently installed H13 inspection slitter rewinder at Italgrafica Sistemi. The company is part of the Konig Print Group. 'Our experience with Grafotronic has been really positive, so we decided to rely on them again for this new line,' said Francesco Nioiretti, CEO of the Konig Print Group. 'We appreciated both the manufacturing quality and the technical service available in Italy, which is very important to us. We hope that this support and collaboration can continue to grow in the years to come.'

07 Bobst Digital Master 340
Berkshire Labels, United Kingdom
UK-based Berkshire Labels has signed an agreement to purchase Bobst Digital Master 340 label

press, a fully digitalized and automated production line that will support the converter's growth plans. The Digital Master 340 is the latest in Bobst's all-in-one, all-in-line portfolio offering printing, embellishment and converting in a single pass, with integration between the UV inkjet digital engine, the flexo and converting modules. Running at up to 100 m/min (328 ft/min) in four or six colors plus optional digital white with 1,200 DPI quality. Berkshire Labels has invested in a machine configured with twin flexo units, lamination and cold foil capabilities and in-line die-cutting.

08 Lombardi Synchroline
430 flexo press
Mudrika Labels, India
Mudrika Labels has installed a second Lombardi Synchroline 430 flexo press at its Mumbai, India, plant. The press was supplied by Vinsak, a distributor of Lombardi presses in the

region. 'This is our second flexo press purchase within a short span of three years, and our repeat business with the Vinsak/Lombardi team proves our satisfaction with the team's authenticity and commitment. Working with Vinsak on previous projects has resulted in good success and we are happy with the technical services and application support provided by the Vinsak/Lombardi team. We look forward to future technical developments with Vinsak for our specialized functional label products,' Mudrika Labels reported.

09 Domino N730i
Grace Label, USA
Grace Label has invested in a Domino N730i digital UV inkjet label press, becoming the first converter to install this machine in North America. Steve Grace, president of Grace Label, said: 'Grace Label saw an increase in business, we saw an increase in demand. The Domino was able

Installations

09



10



12

to turn around orders we had not had before. We were able to develop new customers. And right now, during the supply chain disruption, the Domino is fantastic because we are able to put something on there, move it over from our flexo presses and we are able to adapt and keep our customers rolling. When we saw the N730i at Labelexpo, we knew that it had the features we needed not only to expand our digital production capacity but the added capabilities that come with the more rugged frame, servo drive and most importantly, the 1,200 DPI print engine.'

10 Two Xeikon CX300

label presses

Abbey Labels,
United Kingdom

Suffolk-based Abbey Labels has upgraded its existing Xeikon technology with the investment in two CX300 digital presses. Having taken delivery of the UK's first CX300 late last year, the label printing company

has been so impressed with the productivity and quality consistency that it decided to install a second machine. Now the family-owned company, which operates in Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, has completed a double investment in the latest Xeikon press model to maintain momentum in the digital print department. The duo of Xeikon CX300s, which replace two Xeikon CX3s, are part of an ambitious 1 million GBP investment plan set in motion to expand Abbey Labels' production capacity and accelerate productivity, agility and sustainability.

11 GEW UV and LED upgrades

Pryvatna Drukarnya, Ukraine
GEW has come to the aid of commercial printing works in Ukraine with the contribution of a 40in UV and LED curing system for the company's Komori L640+C sheetfed offset press, free of charge. The bespoke design of the UV system was

carried out over several weeks. GEW's customary site visit to measure and inspect the press was not possible, so great care was taken to capture all of the necessary information through video calls. The UV system was designed with two high-power mercury arc E4C lampheads in the machine delivery and two GEW LeoLED lampheads in interdeck positions along the press. To mark the significance of this installation, the two Rhino cabinets that power the UV system were designed in the bold blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag.

12 Martin Automatic equipment

Cologne Press,
Czech Republic
One of the largest Czech label converters invested in Martin Automatic MBSF unwind splicer and LRD rewriter with slitting capability for its new Gallus Labelmaster 440 press. The first Martin Automatic

equipment was installed at Cologne in 2010 when an MBS non-stop unwind/splicer and twin-spindle LRD rewriter with auto-transfer capability were installed with its Gallus RCS 330 combination flexo/screen press. The Martin machines allowed non-stop production on the Gallus press, which was essential for the pharmaceutical market where point sizes were small, and characters needed to be reproduced accurately. Martin Automatic European sales manager Bernd Schopferer said: 'With their compact dimensions and full features, our MBSC and STR are specially designed for smaller production environments, but they still offer fully automated roll handling for continuous running. This is another example of Martin's tailor-made engineering.'



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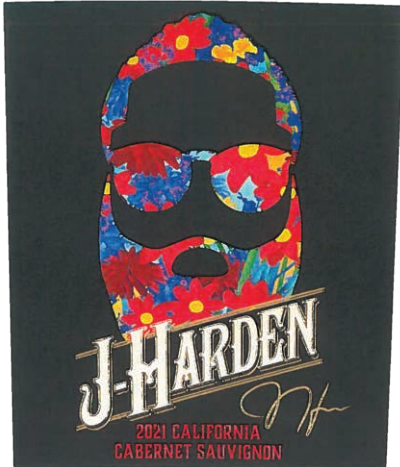
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04 Pepperazzi
Cheese Dip
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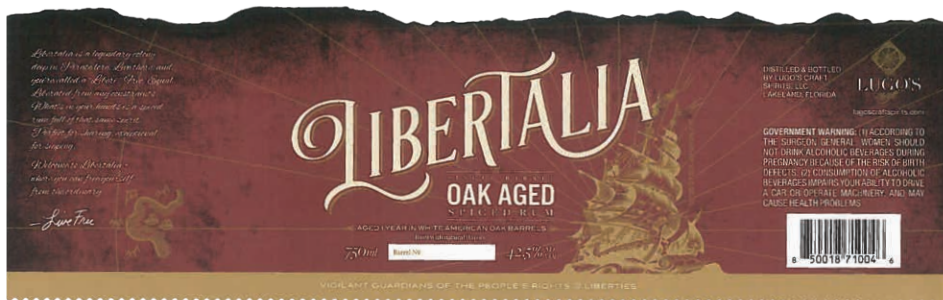
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09



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06 Crooked Water
Minneapple
Viking Label &
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Andy Thomas-Emans column

Labelexpo Arena showcases automated future

Labelexpo Europe 2023 will feature the first Automation Arena in five years, allowing visitors to see a real-time exchange of machine data with an MIS

The Automation Arena is set to return to Labelexpo Europe this year, showcasing the tremendous leap forward in capabilities since the last automation feature at Labelexpo Americas back in 2018.

The 2018 automation arena concentrated on what I would call 'linear' automation – setting up machinery remotely from a centralized workstation.

As was demonstrated at the time, there is a lot of information that can be transferred to presses and converting equipment via JDF/JMF to reduce or eliminate manual intervention during machine setup.

On the flexo side, we demonstrated that we can now automate mechanical processes including printing pressure adjustment, cross- and machine-direction registration and tension control depending on the substrate to be printed. These parameters can be saved for when that same job is run again, representing a kind of machine learning.

At that time there was a roadblock to a more complete integration of flexo presses into factory management/MIS systems. Most flexo press manufacturers used closed, or proprietary press operating systems, meaning a certain amount of double keying had to take place for parameters like run length and job description, with the consequent loss of efficiency and potential to introduce mistakes.

MPS, however, did demonstrate MPS Talk to Me (now MPS Connect), which at the last automation arena was already able to communicate directly with a Cerm MIS and other industry-standard MIS workflows to upload job information.

On the digital press side, automated setup and integration into MIS systems have been available for some time, since Digital Front End (DFE) systems were either directly provided by companies like Esko, or were easily able to integrate with them.

The 2018 automation arena also demonstrated how the set-up of finishing systems could be automated from a central data point, and not only for PS labels but also for shrink sleeve processing.

The Automation Arena at Labelexpo Europe 2023 will focus on closing the data loop. This means not only being able to set up machines remotely but also being able to retrieve real-time production data from the press and converting machine and returning that data via the Cloud to an MIS, where it is processed and made available for distribution.

Machine monitoring technology has been developing quickly. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when it was impossible to send out engineering teams to maintain machinery, there was a lot of progress in remote diagnostics systems able to monitor press or converting machine performance and upload that data via a secure Cloud-based portal to remotely located engineering teams.

This allowed predictive maintenance and fault-finding programs to be run, increasingly making use of AI and machine learning algorithms to monitor machinery 24/7 and alert engineers to

“There is a danger that these portals become ‘closed’, without the ability to share machine data in a standardized format”

developing problems.

These remote diagnostic systems have now morphed into more user-friendly machine data collection systems, targeted at delivering real-time actionable data to the operations manager as much as remote engineering teams.

The information can be filtered and sent to different destinations – for example, the factory/operations manager, press team and managing director can be given different subsets of the data most relevant to their own tasks.

The goal is to improve press utilization and efficiency, to help operation managers make immediate process adjustments, and management to make strategic data-driven decisions, all resulting in waste reduction and higher efficiency.

The Automation Arena at Labelexpo Europe 2023 will showcase real-time machine data collection, analysis and distribution, centered around a Xeikon digital press, a Grafotronics converting line, Esko automated pre-press and Cerm MIS.

The inclusion of the MIS element is an important one.

All printing press and converting machinery manufacturers are working on their own machine data collection systems and setting up their own Cloud-based portals where factory managers and press teams can see their own machine data on a personalized dashboard.

But there is a danger that these portals become 'closed', without the ability to share machine data in a standardized format with MIS/ERP systems – or at least making it very difficult to do so.

As label converters run machines from different manufacturers, would they then have to set up different Cloud portals for each machine, or for each group of machines?

It is useful to start these debates now, while these Cloud portals are still under development.

The Automation Arena will be a great place to see how data can be seamlessly exchanged between manufacturers' machines and an MIS – and what additional functionality can be achieved.

The Automation Arena will also look at implementing as much of a 'lights out' operation as possible – including on the converting machine.



The Automation Arena takes place at Labelexpo Europe 2023 in Brussels on Sept 11-14. For more information, visit www.labelexpo-europe.com



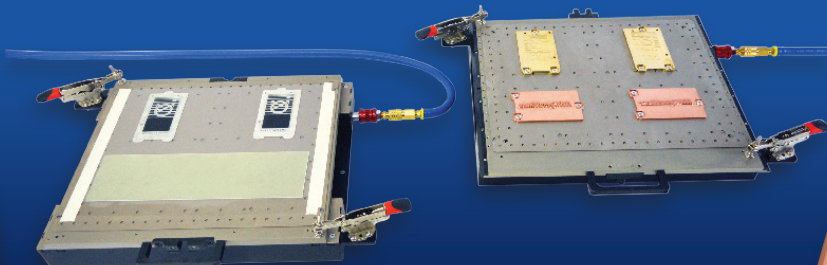
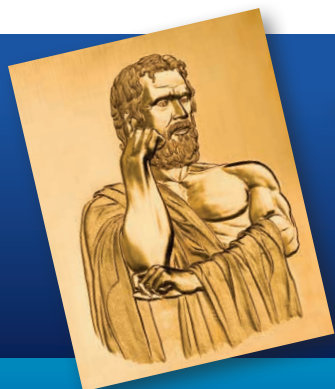
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Labor shortage: building an organization for lifetime employee



Label and packaging converters are facing a dramatic labor shortage, making continuous improvement strategies even more critical, writes columnist Paul Brauss

The concept of a lifetime employee sounds antiquated as we read reports from the Bureau of Labor Statistics that the average worker changes jobs every four years.

The cost of losing an employee runs between \$2,000 and \$10,000 depending on the level of skill. A friend in his mid-50s attended a working symposium and learned he would likely have four more positions before retirement. A recent story in the New York Times underscored a study by Economist Nicholas Eberstadt, who identified nearly 7 million capable working men between the ages of 25 and 54 choosing not to work. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports civilian labor participation rates at 61.6 percent or, better said, the lowest rate since 1976.

“The deck seems stacked against traditional employers who still need to figure out a working environment and culture focus that minimizes employee loss”

It's no wonder converters and suppliers in the label and packaging printing industry are complaining about finding new employees and their current employee retention. The deck seems stacked against traditional employers who still need to figure out a working environment that minimizes employee loss. We know that over the past two years, many companies aggressively implemented wage corrections addressing the number one complaint by employees. Pay alone does not address all the desirable traits an employee is looking for in an employer. We have an employment gap that will take years to resolve, and it is clear that converters are not only going to compete on growing their business levels, but they will also compete with each other on attracting employees.

Learn from the experienced

This workforce is getting older, with fewer individuals interested in this career. There is a significant gap in providing the opportunity for new printers to have proper time to learn from experienced ones. Pressures of throughput have shortened training, and there needs to be more formality to sharing, or the knowledge is soon to be lost. The common link is that in years gone by, crew leaders, supervisors and plant superintendents would work side by side with newer employees, listening to their expertise and then pulling together to solve the customer demand.

The companies with the best training have individuals on the print room floor who may be newer to the industry, but they share the stories of their company origin with their friends and peers as if they were there for years.

Finding magic in consistency

As I hear these stories from converters, I am searching for an elusive magic formula to help companies understand the best actions they can follow to fill their employment gap. It is essential to provide meaningful training experience so that employees will find contentment and fulfillment enough to work proudly at the company for a very long time. One leadership element is consistency. The notion that job satisfaction has little to do with the job but is more about providing an individual with personal fulfillment needs more attention.

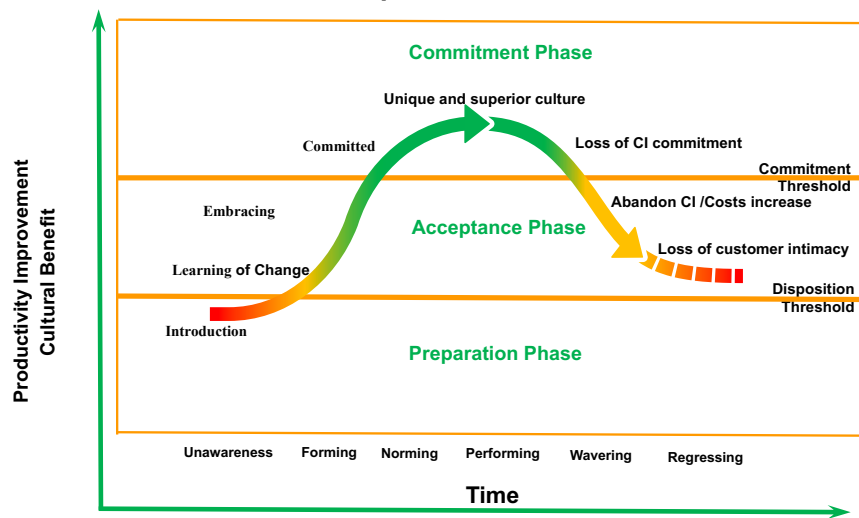
Over the past two years, company employment policies and cultural norms rocked with change because of the pandemic. Many individuals are just now shaking off the impact of work restrictions, including travel and on-site working, with new policies many companies implemented to survive. Companies returning to a more normal state of employment are finding that changes are still occurring in the industry. Companies were bought and sold, and many older leaders began transition activities to next-level leaders. These actions can be unsettling and cause employees to consider what type of work experience, they are looking for. At the foundation, the company's cultural norms need upgrading.

Operational focus is key

A common complaint from tenured employees is their leadership's need for more focus, who often blame issues on outside influencers. Due to supply chain interruptions, leadership's attention to lean manufacturing, ISO procedure and continuous improvement principles waned. These interruptions resulted in increased lead times, constant schedule changes and decreased productivity. Costly performance barriers have gone on too long because price increases passed on to customers hid the actual impact on the organization. Financial decline masked the importance of a company's best practices, and the leaders need to clarify process disciplines. These actions allowed waste and increased time back into the business processes. The result, in some instances, has led to a catastrophic collapse of cultural gains not internalized by leadership. The economic climate has changed, and operational cost increases need resolution. Customers are starting to refute price increases and go out for bids based on the results.

Leaders who joined the executive ranks only in robust economic times, must prepare themselves for the toll on the organization and the action plans needed to reinvigorate their operational

The Impact of lost focus



Productivity and customer intimacy are lost when continuous improvement is abandoned

focus. The lack of experience managing an entire business cycle of highs and lows has challenged their ability to maintain cultural continuity, and they must now begin anew. Experienced leaders, seeing the gaps in execution, realize their succession planning must become more robust for the health of their company and their employees. Fortunately, the continuous demand for products provides the opportunity to set in motion actions that can regain momentum in company cultures stagnated by the events of the past few years.

As I work with the converters on renewing their commitment to continuous improvement, I reminded them that while the pandemic caused significant obstacles, the market segment remained robust. Equipment providers and consumable suppliers in the market fought their battles with supply chain issues. Many of them gave up on the continuous improvement focus, trying to survive the component shortages that plagued productivity. Some companies built inventories only to be stagnated by the missing final component that prevented shipment. This problem plagued just about every capital equipment industry. But the actions of prebuilding inevitably added costs and drained cash flows. The company's reaction to the supply chain issues allowed process shortcuts and un-quality back into their operating systems.

A new normal

We are all dusting ourselves off from the calamity of the uncontrollable economic and pandemic events and find that we are now entering an economic cycle that will no longer accept price increases. Companies have to focus on cost containment. What if the thought process included the actions required to retain and attract employees? Leaders would have to determine the steps to restore commitments that

foster productivity improvement, cultural involvement and accountability to flourish robustly in the market segment. Strategic plans placed on hold would be set in motion for rapid execution so that the employees could quickly see some benefit from their involvement. Two years ago, we talked about pay being the most significant obstacle to employee retention, and the business owners in the industry responded. Today a company's leadership is tested again for their fortitude in sustaining a cultural environment that demonstrates attractiveness for the next generation workforce. What employees are asking now is: 'are the next generation leaders committed to a culture of improvement, and do they have the stamina to stay the course?'

Several leaders have asked me to communicate a path forward that will ignite change. Subject matter experts who were my mentors always emphasized that a company must renew its commitment to improvement every three years and find the catalyst that will force the issue. The best foot forward is ensuring the executive team is the catalyst. Holistically they have to embrace their commitment and rally together as an unwavering force, often revisiting actions they already know but have lacked the discipline to sustain. The group needs to start again learning the behaviors they must outwardly demonstrate each day. As a team, they should begin reading material pertinent to the focus. They should select the reading material and discuss their readings as a group.

Next, I recommend they dissect metrics that highlight fundamental process problems, discuss what needs to change, and then identify and commit to aggressive, quick-hit actions that benefit quickly. I provide a reading list of critical materials, including books like "The Gold Mine"

by Freddie and Michael Balle or "Lean Thinking" by Womack and Jones.

Real-world examples

Some forward-thinking companies have designed and implemented continuous improvement certification plans for their employees to foster engagement. One such program is called the Bronze Certification Plan, which includes a list of books required to be read, complete with a simple write-up indicating the best takeaways from the reading. The certification process consists of a list of four to six more tasks plus participation in at least two kaizen events followed by actually leading an event. The certification is awarded when the criteria are verified. Additionally, the employee participates in a leadership communication and planning session for their career in the future. In this example, employees who completed certification become advocates rewarded with a slight pay bump as recognition of their commitment. Larger organizations have formed Lean Promotion Offices, where they set aside office space for a library dedicated to education about lean manufacturing. They equip the library with several books that the employee can check out. In addition, they have created company stores with promotional items promoting the production system commitment and have assigned an executive leader to organize kaizen teams based on feedback from the metrics and organizational leaders.

The most important takeaway I emphasize is that outside forces will constantly challenge an organization. The most successful organizations continuously learn to shift with the market changes. No one can predict all of the hurdles a company will face, but the best leaders act on securing the best assets for the company in people. Leaders that wavered on process disciplines thinking process shortcuts could help weather the trying times are now seeing that had they held on to their convictions, their employment culture would be much healthier now. These leaders will become invaluable to the company if it truly is a lesson learned. If nothing was learned, they will repeat the mistake and create a less-than-desirable workplace. Find those companies, and you will find employees looking for a better workplace.



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/2NFzXk8



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Chasing Arrows: Can Packaging Be Sustainable?

In this Q&A, branding and design columnist Vicki Strull sits down with host of the podcast *Sustainable Packaging with Cory Connors*. Below is an excerpt of their conversation

Vicki Strull: Cory, thank you for having me on your podcast today and letting me ask you questions, too! Let's jump right in. I've noticed that you ask every guest: **Can packaging be sustainable?** After 170 episodes and everything you've learned, what do you think?

Cory Connors: I actually stopped asking that question because everyone basically said the same thing: 'Yes, it can! We can make this happen!' I only had one guest who said no. She is a brilliant person and a great friend, and she said, 'It's not possible. There are too many variables, too many obstacles, too many naysayers.' I think it's important that we're honest with each other and share our views. Everyone else has been very, very positive.

So let me ask you that same question, Vicki: **Can packaging be sustainable?**

VS: Yes, I think it can. I've learned a lot in the past several years about how to make packaging sustainable and about the differences between a linear system and a circular system. I think it's getting to that circular system that will get us out of this. But that requires participation from a lot of different people in a lot of different industries. So while I think it is a wicked problem, I do think sustainable packaging is achievable.

CC: Very true. It's not just going to be you and me, it's going to be thousands of people – tens of thousands – working really hard for a long time to make this change happen.

VS: I spend a lot of time thinking about whose responsibility it is to create these different changes. When it comes to sustainable packaging, whose responsibility do you think it is?

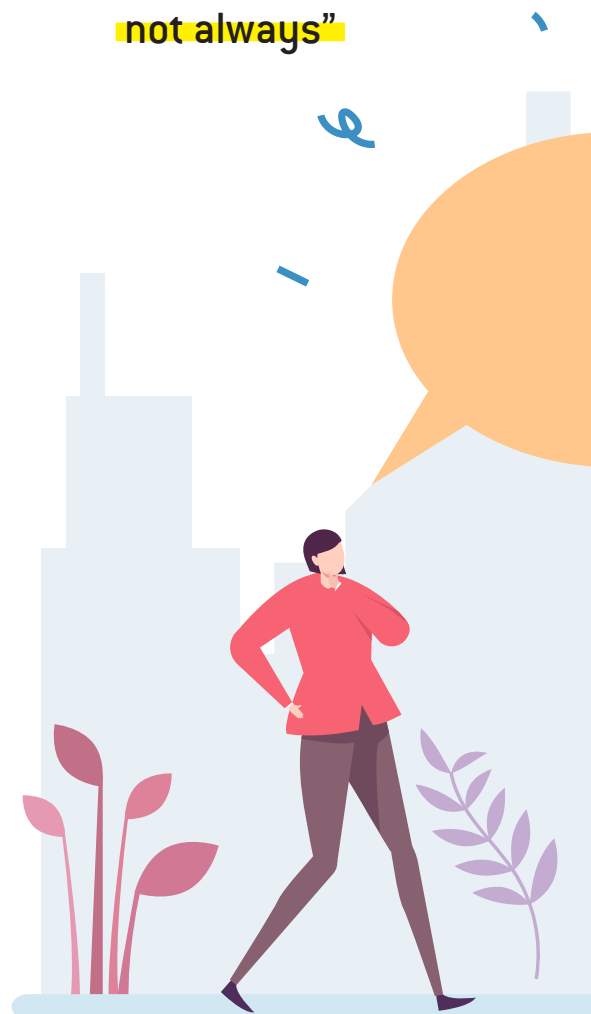
CC: I think we're *all* involved. We all need to work on it and take responsibility for our actions, whether that's the consumer saying, 'Maybe I shouldn't buy this because it's packaged horribly [from a sustainability perspective].' Or the designer, like yourself, saying, 'What if we didn't have three layers of packaging? What if we had two?' Or the brand that's selling the product, maybe they need to say, 'We're not going to have these kinds of coatings or foils that can't

be recycled as easily. We're going to make it look beautiful but do it differently.' So the answer, in my opinion, is that all of us need to work together. And that includes the government; the municipalities need to say, 'We're going to make recycling easier. We're going to give you the opportunity to re-use.' The grocery stores are also going to have a huge impact, frankly. In the future, we're going to bring our recycling back to the grocery stores, until curbside [recycling] can catch up with demand. So lots of people are involved with this. All of us need to work together. What do you think, Vicki? **Who is responsible for sustainable packaging?**

VS: I think there's a community, or I like to use the word ecosystem, that needs to be involved. As a designer, I think about the impact I can make within that ecosystem to accelerate change and the shift to sustainable packaging. It feels like designers can affect a lot of entities within that ecosystem: shoppers because we design with shoppers in mind. The brands, because as our clients, we strategize with them on sustainable materials, embellishments and other design options for their packaging. Designers can affect the converters because we work with them to produce and manufacture the packaging. And we can affect the suppliers and the OEMs – the people that produce the materials or adhesives or embellishments because they are looking for partners to connect their innovative materials to the brands. In particular, I am connected with many of these suppliers, because I do a lot of design with haptics [touch].

So I can impact all of those entities within the ecosystem because the designer is central to all of them. For instance, if I want to do a laminate, a certain finish or a haptic element, I have a direct line to the supplier, and they can advise me. But they may not have a direct line to the brand or the shoppers, so they need designers to collaborate with them. The collaboration goes as far as the material recovery facilities (MRFs) because I need to understand what is curbside recyclable and what is industrial recyclable; what is backyard compostable and what is industrial compostable; what has to go to another facility and what is going to the landfill. Bringing it back to the shopper, part of my job as a designer

"Sometimes virgin materials are more sustainable because they're stronger and you can use less. It's a common misconception that if it's made from recycled material, it must be more sustainable. Well, most of the time, but not always"



is to help brands educate their shoppers so they understand the importance of sustainability, change their behaviors, and learn what they can do to have their own impact.

CC: Oh, important; so true. We talk a lot on the podcast about lifecycle, from the very beginning. How do we harvest the raw materials? Are we using post-consumer recycled material? Are we using virgin materials? Sometimes virgin materials are more sustainable because they're stronger and you can use less. It's a common misconception that if it's made from recycled material, it must be more sustainable. Well, most of the time, but not always. It's really important to say that and talk about making small changes.

VS: I think post-consumer waste is another place where we can educate shoppers because there is another myth that using as much post-consumer waste as possible means the packaging is more sustainable. But you're right, that's not always true. With paperboard, if a brand needs a bright white board, it's actually better to use virgin fiber than a board made from post-consumer waste because it takes

too much energy to get the paperboard white enough. Plus, the fiber in the recycled paperboard may not be strong enough. A lot of recycled board goes into manufacturing other types of materials—chipboard, newsprint or even those cores that go inside toilet paper rolls. That's all recycled material, but that may not be what my luxury perfume carton is made out of.

I try to use as much paperboard in packaging as possible because paperboard is the most recycled material—typically around 68 to 70 percent, whereas plastic may be recycled only 8 percent of the time. Many paper mills have flow loops built into their manufacturing processes to minimize waste. They're using renewable energy and wood, which, as you mentioned, is a renewable resource. They are planting new trees and managing the forests. So it's a complicated issue, but I think that's part of how we need to educate consumers and everyone within the ecosystem.

CC: Well said. I spent the first five years of my career at Weyerhaeuser and we talked about forestry all the time. I worked at a corrugated mill making boxes and learned about sustainably managed

forests, how we were planting 10 trees for every single one we cut, and how those are absorbing carbon. These are great things that are helping the planet. OK, my turn to ask you a question. **Tell me about a project you did that you felt had a positive impact on the sustainability of a company's packaging.**

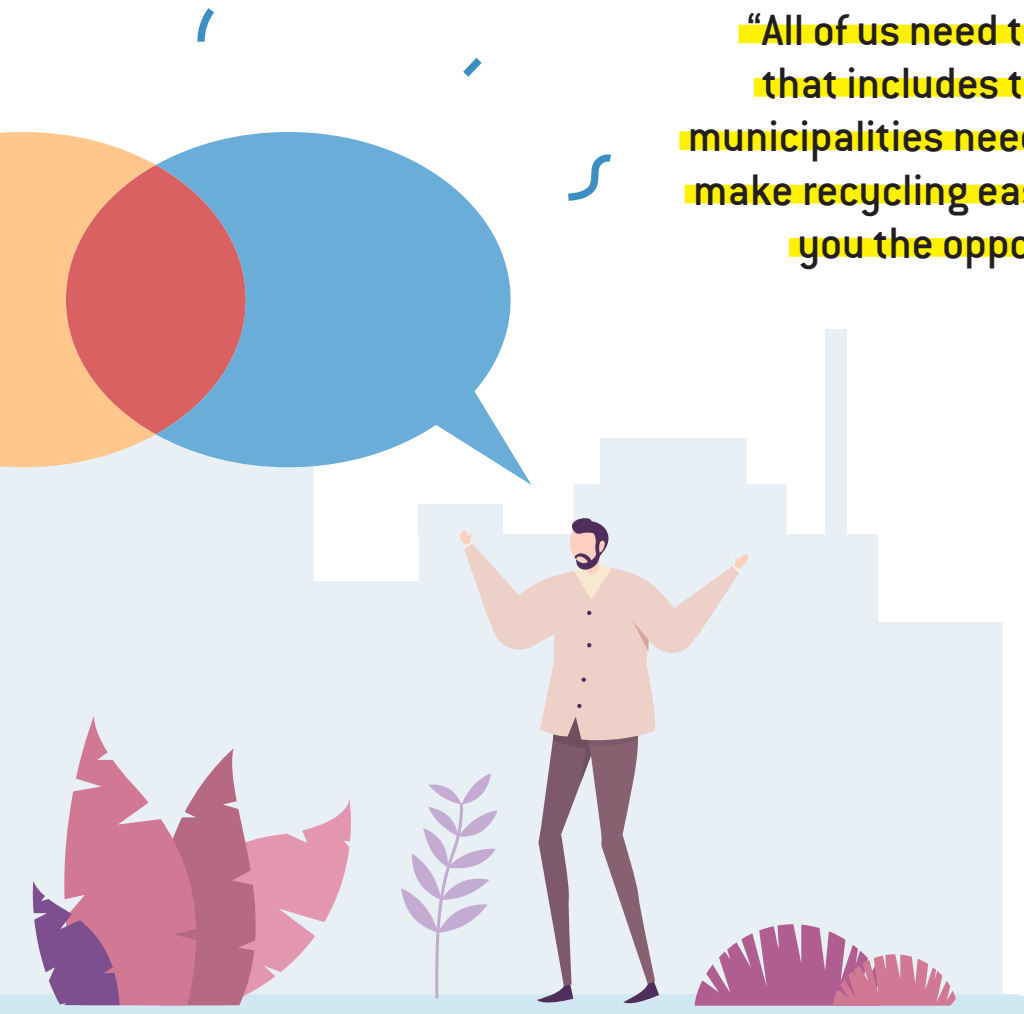
VS: Recently, I did some packaging and labels for a specialty food company. I think every designer and converter can relate to this: the client says, 'We need it now.' But they don't actually need it now, they want it yesterday. Right? They are that anxious for it. However, if you want a very sustainable package, you actually need time to test different materials and different coatings and different embellishments, in order to see if you can get the shelf impact that you need and then balance that with sustainability. So, in this case, I designed the labels, which had to be produced overseas. The client couldn't take the time [to explore sustainability], even though I wanted them to. They wanted metallics on the labels, so we did some metallics. And it worked great on the shelf.

Afterward, I came back to the client and said, 'OK, now that you are on the

“All of us need to work together. And that includes the government; the municipalities need to say, “We’re going to make recycling easier. We’re going to give you the opportunity to re-use”

shelf, in round two, you actually do need to make these labels more sustainable.' Because that was part of their brand story, in terms of being all-organic and good for the environment and healthy for people. So now that we had the time, we prototyped six or eight ideas in order to get a similar design with a similar shelf impact. We prototyped labels that are 100 percent recyclable. These are the practicalities of what can happen in real-time. Not all brands will allow their designer or their converter or others in the ecosystem to take the time and give them the best sustainability solution. They're balancing getting the product on the shelf; they're balancing the economics and the sustainability of their business, not just sustainability for the environment. So I think it goes back to that ecosystem and everyone working together.

CC: That's a valuable point. Brands are taking calculated risks. They have to say, 'Are we going to be more sustainable?



“Brands are taking calculated risks. Small brands and big brands are saying ‘Let’s try this product and see how that works. Do our consumers appreciate the difference?’ Oftentimes they’ll even get more sales”

Are we going to try these changes?’ And what I’m seeing, with small brands and big brands, is, ‘Let’s try this product and see how that works. Do our consumers appreciate the difference?’ Oftentimes they’ll even get more sales. Millennials are 67 percent more likely to buy something if it’s packaged sustainably. This is important to consider.

CC: Are you finding the same thing when you’re working with brands?

VS: I am. A client will try one product and they’ll pilot it in a particular country or city to see how it works. And not everything is going to work. Johnny Walker launched a paperboard bottle, and I was talking to a friend of mine who drinks that, and he said, ‘Yeah, I can’t do it. It tastes different.’ It also goes back to our perception of quality as it relates to the packaging itself, which is why you have to be so balanced with your packaging choices. When we’re talking about the environment, it keeps getting elevated on the list of priorities. And that’s really important. It’s part of the impact you’re having in the market as an influencer, Cory. It’s also part of the impact of other designers who are talking about sustainability, because we do have a voice, and we can impact the brands that we’re working with.

CC: Well, thank you. I’m glad you highlighted this process and the occasional failures. Maybe the brand wants to do some studies in advance of trying something new; reach out to some target audience members, the top 5 percent of

their customers and say, ‘Hey, would you drink this out of a paper bottle?’ There’s nothing sustainable about going out of business, and that’s important for brands to remember; that maybe the risk isn’t worth it.

This is Part 1 of a two-part Q&A with Vicki and Cory. In Part 2, the pair cover forward-thinking innovations; who’s responsible for absorbing any additional costs of sustainable materials; the feel-good world of haptics; and the future of single-stream recycling.

Cory’s podcast aims to help make the planet more sustainable by educating, informing and engaging packaging professionals.

To listen to the full episode, visit www.corygated.com/sustainable-packaging-podcast or search for “Sustainable Packaging with Cory Connors” wherever you stream your favorite podcasts.



Vicki Strull is a packaging designer, strategist, and speaker who advises top-tier and emerging brands on how to leverage the power of print and packaging within

their omnichannel marketing strategies. She consults with print service providers and OEMs to create new revenue streams and shares her strategies in a master class for MarketWise Academy and at design, packaging and print events around the world. Join fellow trendsetters at vickistrull.com or follow Vicki on LinkedIn @vickistrull



News in Brief

The Good Snack Company opts for compostable packaging

Parkside has partnered with the ethical brand, The Good Snack Company to supply certified compostable packaging for its 25g ‘shot’ range of nuts and snacks.

The 25g ‘shot’ product, packed in a vertical filled flow wrap manufactured from Parkside’s Park2Nature compostable material, is fully accredited by TÜV Austria for composability.

This independent verification confirms that the packaging completely breaks down in specified conditions and time frames suitable for both industrial and home composting environments.

The packaging provides oxygen and moisture barriers to extend the shelf life of the product.

The 25g Park2Nature packs replace a delisted compostable solution from a previous supplier. The Good Snack Company plans to roll out the new compostable technology further to incorporate its larger snack packs, currently packed in nonrecyclable conventional plastics.

Cocoa Canopy adopts NatureFlex compostable packaging

Luxury drinking chocolate manufacturer Cocoa Canopy has transformed its packaging by incorporating sustainability and provenance into branding with the help of compostable packaging specialist, Futamura.

Not only are the films derived from readily renewable cellulose, sourced from responsibly managed plantations, they are also fully certified for home and industrial composting after their use.

As early-adopters of NatureFlex, a cellulose film made by the manufacturer Futamura, Cocoa Canopy’s forward-thinking gets noticed within its competitive market – when the company discussed future listings with Waitrose, one of the leading supermarkets in the UK, was greatly encouraged by Cocoa Canopy’s exploratory approach to alternatives to conventional plastic packaging routes.

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Greatest risks facing label and packaging companies in 2023



Inflation, staffing challenges, material shortages and environmental considerations are a few of the challenges and opportunities facing label and packaging businesses in 2023, writes Bob Cronin of The Open Approach

Running a profitable labels or packaging business takes a lot of savvy. Over the past year, market dynamics did some of the work for us. Inflation, staffing challenges and continued consolidation afforded us the luxury of raising prices, extending manufacturing times and increasing customer tolerance for any encountered issues. Material shortages, while troublesome, created a magic storm that produced volume and demand beyond any other growth year. Indeed, 2022 was quite favorable and we have much to be grateful for.

As we delve into 2023, we need to readjust. While risks are a given, they change based on emerging trends, customer expectations, and other internal and external influences. Every leadership team needs to stop and evaluate current circumstances and how they may impact your business, strategic plan and trajectory.

The greatest risks are those that we aren't prepared for.

Let's look at the top six risks of 2023 and how we can address them:

Skilled labor and staffing — Finding new, skilled (and hard-working) employees remain a challenge. In our post-Covid world, many employees still want — and expect — to work remotely. In manufacturing, this simply isn't possible. We need people at our plants running equipment and making products. The physical presence of customer service, product design and estimating is also integral.

Manufacturing has never been considered a glamorous industry, and perhaps the last time we saw a television character in a manufacturing job was 'Laverne & Shirley'. But there is no reason to perpetuate the stereotype. Our industry is thriving, and our technologies have delivered some of the most intriguing and high-profile innovations in food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, automotive and other venues. We have enormous growth opportunities and investment influx. Namely, great excitement and energy surround our business, and we must showcase these on our websites, social media, and other platforms to attract talented labor and new industry entrants.

Hiring pressures will continue to strain all label and packaging companies, so competition for talent will be fierce. Your biggest risk will be losing existing staff. Beyond the financial costs, the impact on morale, productivity and customers can be significant — and spur ongoing exits. Make 2023 the year to implement strong retention measures that resonate with your unique employees.

Inflation — Inflation has been a friend for many of us. It has given us dollar-sales-per-press-hour increases along with margin expansion. But it's slowing in the US and is expected to decline globally over 2023 and 2024.

Thus, we'll need to upsell, cross-sell, increase volumes and customers, expand capabilities, etc., to increase revenues. Namely, we'll have to go back to getting growth the hard way — earning it. This makes skilled labor and staffing that much more important.

Additionally, label and packaging companies need to brace themselves for the risk of a recession, which is predicted to set in by mid-year. This means evaluating your customer concentrations

"The greatest risks are those that we aren't prepared for"

and balancing the industries you're doing business with. If you're heavy in retail or hospitality (which are typically hit hard by recession), focus prospecting efforts in industries more resilient to rising costs and interest rates (such as healthcare and pharma).

Customer demands — Widespread supply chain issues and material shortages made customers more accommodating, and to some extent, more loyal. As capacity and material return, so will price, service and competitive pressures. Additionally, customers' own budgetary challenges will enter into demands.

Expect to have some pushback on estimates as companies tighten their belts. And don't be surprised to see recession-unprepared competitors throwing in unrealistically low bids.

We'll need to get back to positioning ourselves as value-added solutions partners and keep the emphasis off price. Get a jump start on this, show your customers why they need you specifically, and pursue contracts that shield you from these changing demands.

Sales — Expect also to see customers wanting more face time. Zoom meetings were great when there was no other possibility. But our business is highly technical, requiring planning, design and testing that delivers customer confidence. These activities are optimized by close communication. Find out customers' current health protocols and bolster your relationships through more in-person visits and interactions. Be prepared with ideas and opportunities that help them avert current risks and build their businesses.

ESG considerations — ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) is a framework for organizational consciousness that businesses are increasingly looking for in their vendors. ESG measures are also being called for by new government regulations (both state and federal).

Label and packaging businesses will need to start adapting for ESG demands if they have not yet done so. As such investments can be costly, you'll need time to evaluate which measures are most valuable to your business and customer territories and give you the greatest ROI.

With market dynamics changing, 2023 may also be a time to consider an acquisition, a company sale, or a strategic partnership. Regardless of your trajectory, preparing your business for these 6 risks is critical. What you do now can avert these risks and best position your company for the future.



Bob Cronin is Managing Partner of The Open Approach, an M&A consultancy focused exclusively on the world of print. To learn more, visit www.theopenapproach.net, email bobcronin@aol.com, or call (+1) 630-542-1758



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Young managers — Wang Yuehao, Kinde

Assistant general manager of Kinde, Wang Yuehao, explores new ways to add value to the Chinese label converting business.
Yolanda Wang reports

In March 2022, Wang Yuehao joined Kinde and began to learn and take over the enterprise founded by his father Wang Jiancheng. Kinde, located in Shantou City, Guangdong Province, was founded in 2002. The company celebrated its 20th anniversary last December.

“The more you learn, the more you find what you don’t know”

Before joining Kinde, Wang Yuehao worked in the financial industry for three years. He was born in 1996 and graduated in 2019 with a degree in business administration.

At Kinde, Wang Yuehao is responsible for internal control management. He spends his days optimizing and standardizing the internal training and managing systems that then help reduce production costs, improve production efficiency, and improve the overall profit rate of the company.

Learn and improve

By joining the label printing industry, Wang Yuehao had a sense of destiny, and because the enterprise was founded by his father, Wang Yuehao, witnessed every stage of the company's growth and development.

During the past 20 years, Kinde has experienced all phases of business

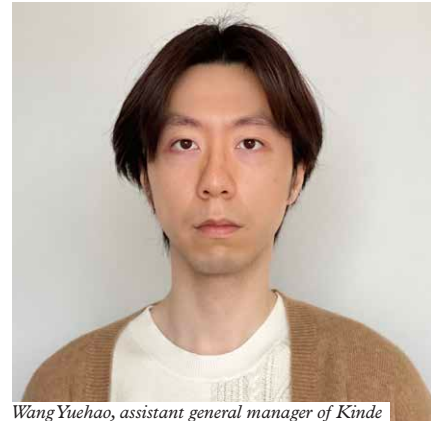
development. Its immaturity phase coincided with the early development of China's label printing industry. Then came Kinde's rapid development phase that followed the boom in e-commerce. Today, the company is witnessing steady growth and is now updating to meet the current trends and demands of the Chinese label market.

'Label printing has been a term I have known for as long as I can remember,' Wang Yuehao says. 'From a slight understanding at the beginning to an imperceptible understanding of this industry, to officially taking over the company now. I understand that this is a long-term career that needs patience and persistence. I think I'm starting a new round of systematic learning and research for improvement.'

After entering Kinde, Wang Yuehao spent time learning about the technology and how the business operates from colleagues in different departments. To Wang Yuehao, the label printing industry is one in which theory needs to be combined with practice. It's why he uses all his spare time to stay in the workshop, learning from the front-line workers, including the paper, ink, press operation, die-cutting, inspection and other different processes.

'The more you learn, the more you find what you don't know,' comments Wang Yuehao.

He has tapped into his earlier



Wang Yuehao, assistant general manager of Kinde

professional experience for fresh ideas that he could bring to his current role.

'With my previous experience in the financial industry, I have carefully analyzed the input-output ratio of each process and think about every detail and whether the overall efficiency could be improved,' he says. 'I asked: 'Does it help to reduce costs? What needs to be managed more systematically?' As a new manager, I'm asking myself: 'how can I introduce some new ideas into the company?''

More than simple

'Now that I have been in the company for almost a year, I feel I have gained a lot during this period. Now I understand that the label printing industry is both simple and complicated,' Wang Yuehao says.

Cymmetrik Group opens new production facility in China

Cymmetrik Group has opened a new factory in Jiaxing, Zhejiang Province. The inauguration ceremony was attended by nearly 100 representatives from the local government, industry suppliers and media.

Founded in March 2021, Cymmetrik Zhejiang in Baibu Development Zone, Baibu Town, Haiyan County, Jiaxing City, produces mainly high-end shrink sleeve labels. It is equipped with three flexo presses, seen by the company as more environmentally friendly.

Cymmetrik points to advances in flexo technology which have made platemaking more flexible, and press operation more automated. Flexo can be combined with gravure and other

printing technologies, making it suitable for the increasing demand for the personalized, short-run shrink sleeve label market.

'Now the equipment in this production facility has been put into operation, our high capacity and technical expertise will provide better products and services for our customers,' said Zhao Keyu, general manager of Cymmetrik Shanghai.

'Cymmetric Group has been here for more than 50 years, and the building of this new factory is an encouragement for the entire group as it faces challenges such as Covid-19, rising material prices and inflation,' added Liao Junhong, deputy general manager of Cymmetrik.



Cymmetrik Group opens a new factory

'I want the Zhejiang facility to become a 100 million RMB (14.4 million USD) factory, be an eco-friendly, high-tech enterprise that cultivates talent.'

The chairman, CEO and vice president of the household chemical division of Cymmetrik Group sent their video message of congratulations.

Wang Yuehao explains that at its core, the main label production process is simple: the use of printing and finishing equipment to produce labels. The complexity is added in this process when converters need to consider different materials, ink, different printing methods, finishing technology, as well as different add-on digital functions, to create labels that stand out, promote product marketing and ultimately better serve the brands and end users.

Wang is proud of Kinde's reforms in this aspect.

Kinde abandons the price competition rat race, and instead explores ways for adding value, such as anti-counterfeit traceability technology.

Kinde opted for this strategy and has already seen some results. They created a technology for random image recognition in anti-counterfeiting applications. Kinde has since received the relevant patents, and the technology has been endorsed by the China Anti-counterfeiting Industry Association.

As a member of this association, Kinde is the only company to win five national patent awards in anti-counterfeiting technology. Kinde has become a major player in China's high-tech anti-counterfeiting industry.

Kinde has set up three business modules: pressure-sensitive label production, IOT development, and data service center. Now, high-tech personalized labels have become the core business of the company.

This advanced model enabled the business to withstand the test of Covid-19. In 2021 and 2022, the annual output value of the company exceeded 50M RMB (7M USD).

'Security labeling makes me more deeply appreciate the importance of labels for customers. Labels are not only the facade of products but also an important tool for consumers to identify authenticity. I began to understand the meaning of this job,' Wang Yuehao adds.

Optimistic about the future

'Labels are used in all aspects of people's daily life and production, so I am very optimistic about its future development,' Wang Yuehao says.

Kinde has an industrial plant covering an area of 43,333 sqm, with a 100,000 class clean room equipped with an advanced flexo press, letterpress, digital press, automatic quality inspection technology and other label finishing equipment, as well as data-handling equipment worth more than 100 million RMB (14M USD).

Kinde's products and services cover dozens of industries including household chemical, clothing, food, pharmaceutical and wine. They have served nearly a thousand customers, including Mobil, Philips, Castrol, BP, Kunlun, Jordan, Liby, LAF, C-BONS, Houdy, Yashili, 999 and other well-known brands.

'As the industry enters a new era, we need to rationally think and plan for the future development of our label printing enterprises,' Wang Yuehao says. 'Three years of Covid-19 reduced our opportunities to meet and communicate with customers. With the loosening of China's (Covid) policies, in 2023 we will again travel and communicate directly with our customers. On the other hand, we will continue to update technology and produce new high-tech products and solutions to meet market demands.'

Wang Yuehao admires and respects the achievements of his father and the company's elders over the years.

'As a new leader of the company, I am very grateful for the efforts of the previous generation, and I also thank them for their tolerance, so that I can give full play to my skills and apply new ideas to managing Kinde. I will adhere to the company's market strategy of easy to identify, difficult to counterfeit and low cost.'

'I plan to lead Kinde to continue providing quality services to brand owners and take advantage of our 20 years of experience in this industry,' he concludes.

In his spare time, Wang Yuehao likes to do aerobics, travel and read books. These hobbies allow him to take himself away from work for a short recharge, then he can throw himself back into work again with full energy.



For more news on the Chinese label market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/asia-pacific

Amcor opens China's largest flexible packaging plant and sells factories in Russia

Amcor, one of the global leaders in sustainable packaging, has opened its new state-of-the-art manufacturing plant in Huizhou, China. With an investment of almost 100 million USD, the 590,000 sqft plant is the largest flexible packaging plant by production capacity in China, further strengthening Amcor's ability to meet growing customer demand throughout Asia Pacific.

The new facility is expected to employ more than 550 people, who will produce flexible packaging for food and personal care products. The plant comes equipped with the first automated packaging production line in China. This, along with high-speed printing presses, laminators and bag-making machines, can deliver double-digit reductions in manufacturing cycle times.

The plant's smart production system includes smart laser scanners, light curtains, machine guarding and multiple quality control points. All key process equipment is CE-certified to stringent European Union health, safety and environmental requirements. Other benefits of the new state-of-the-art facility are traceability throughout the production cycle, a climate-controlled production environment and low-carbon emission production.

'This investment is a testament to our commitment to grow with our customers in China and throughout the Asia Pacific by bringing the best of Amcor's global expertise closer to them,'



Amcor opens manufacturing facility

said Xin She, vice president and general manager of Amcor Greater China. 'The world-class capabilities of our new plant are designed to enable us to exceed our customers' expectations of quality, responsiveness and innovation.'

The plant features three labs with testing and analytical capabilities to fully leverage the expertise from the recently opened Amcor Asia Pacific Innovation Center in Jiangyin, China, helping to accelerate the development of sustainable packaging solutions.

The new Huizhou site includes several sustainability features, including the latest regenerative thermal oxidizer (RTO) system to reduce harmful emissions, as well as a number of energy-reduction, heat-recovery, low-power consumption and rainwater harvesting systems to help reduce its carbon footprint and environmental impact.

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Blockchain breakthrough

A new blockchain technology is set to revolutionize the secure exchange of data through the label supply chain.
Andy Thomas-Emans reports

A user-friendly blockchain technology developed by industry veteran Federico d'Annunzio, through his new company Traent, aims to transform the label into a secure information super-highway, changing forever the way supply chains operate and goods are sold.

Blockchains are basically ledgers that record transactions between two parties or between two systems (or nodes). The ledgers are authenticated by multiple computers on a distributed network, and all these computers must agree that the ledger is authentic and has not been altered. This makes it a highly secure way of storing and exchanging information, pretty much invulnerable to attack.

How might this be applied to labels?

'Digital embodiment'

D'Annunzio's visionary concept is that digitally printed QR codes act as gateways to almost limitless amounts of real-time information encrypted in blockchains and made available to view on secure browsers.

The label becomes, in d'Annunzio's words, the 'digital embodiment' of the product.

The label converter stores different streams of data about the label in multiple blockchains, and exports a subset of that data into a database which can then be viewed by outside parties.

This is critically important: the label converter chooses what data remains confidential in the blockchain and what data is made available for viewing. Also, the converter gets to choose who views which parts of the data.

The type of data the converter chooses to encrypt and make available could cover a wide range of information critical to the efficient functioning of the wider supply chain.

For example, the brand owner might

"People will think about changing from 'only' a printer to a provider of the digital embodiment of the product?' This is a new transformation, starting to add a new layer to what they can offer"

be allowed to access information on the materials used in the manufacture and printing of the label, the date the finished roll is available for dispatch, any certifications required and the total energy footprint of the label.

'You can add data from different blockchains to that QR code,' explains d'Annunzio. 'By scanning the QR code and/or an RFID tag the quality control inspector can now see when the label was printed, the quality certificates, when the customer was billed, what materials have been used, and so on.'

A more extensive range of information could be made available to a brand's audit team, such that physical auditing of label plants becomes unnecessary.

'All this information will be available in real-time and the delivery will be completely automated,' points out d'Annunzio. 'And there is no need to check the data, which is authenticated by the blockchain.'

The QR code gateway to the blockchain has further value upstream of the label



Federico d'Annunzio

converter. For example, it could provide time-stamped confirmation when the label is applied and provide a unique identifier for product authentication and track and trace applications.

If the packing plants and warehouses are on their own blockchains, these can intersect with the converter's own blockchains to create a fully transparent supply chain. The result is a massive reduction in cost, waste and time to market.

'The label printer with a digital press brings the brand owner into the new world of interoperability. This is a completely new offering to brand owners. This is no longer "only" a label, but the digital embodiment of the label,' says d'Annunzio. 'The label becomes a gateway to a wider world of real-time data. A label carries a unique Digital Product Passport, featuring the past, present and future of every single product. Creating additional product value and being compliant with the future mandatory EU norms on traceability, effective starting in 2024.'

Hybrid blockchain

Traent says it has developed a new hybrid public/private blockchain technology. What does this mean? Public Blockchains, starting with Bitcoin, are primarily used for cryptocurrency exchange. Permissionless and decentralized, they offer the highest degree of transparency. Data is publicly available.

In 2015, private blockchains were

developed. Derived directly from public blockchain technology, they are used to establish a private network for the exchange of secure data between organizations with opposed interests. Stored data does not provide any guarantees to external agents that the data has not been tampered with.

The hybrid technology developed by Traent is claimed to provide the best of

both worlds, enabling data-intensive and transparent applications on blockchain.

'According to a report of the European Commission, scalability, performance, interoperability, high energy consumption, confidentiality, and the protection of personal data are the main challenges preventing the adoption of blockchain technology. We fixed it all,' says the company.

How does it work?

D'Annunzio's team at Traent has made the blockchain workflow as easy as possible for label converters to use.

'You can develop your own blockchain workflows in-house without any blockchain skills,' says d'Annunzio. 'We have created editable workflows where you create your own blockchain with one click. You can easily create and exchange data – it is just a standard web interface like you would find on Google Drive or Microsoft Office. This is a democratization of blockchain. You do not need to code anything.'

The blockchain workflow interfaces with a user's standard IT system using APIs [Application Programming Interface].

D'Annunzio says there are no limits to the number of blockchains that can be created.

'I have a node and you have a node and that creates a blockchain. Also, we are platform agnostic and can put data onto any blockchain.'

The workflow acts as a risk management tool because the label converter can decide what information is made available, and to whom. This means there is no danger of disclosing confidential information – which also means the system is GDPR-compliant.



Traent headquarters in Pisa

Security

The use of multiple blockchains makes the Traent system highly secure. 'If someone attacks one node of a blockchain the whole system has problems,' explains d'Annunzio. 'But with multiple blockchains you only ever have a risk to that single blockchain. In the case of a ransomware attack, we have a recovery key. You cannot attack the whole system. You can guarantee your data will never be lost.'

“The workflow acts as a risk management tool because the label converter can decide what information is made available, and to whom”

'You segregate the information you want to keep hidden and aggregate the information you want to make public. You make things private or transparent as you want,' explains d'Annunzio.

Data export from the blockchain can take place in real-time from IoT sensors and blockchain nodes – what d'Annunzio calls a 'living blockchain.'

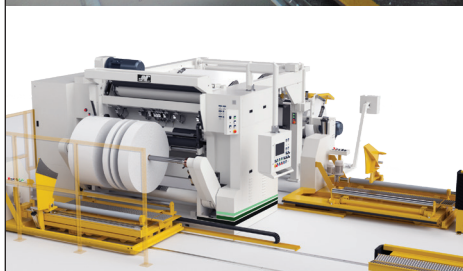
This means processes can be continuously monitored.

'Energy consumption in the factory or on a press can be transformed into a blockchain node. All this data is time-stamped and on the blockchain, so cannot be changed or altered.'

For example, if a converter has GEW lamps on its press, GEW can add a small



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inexpensive box that takes the real-time data from the lamp that then creates a new blockchain where the information is accessible to the converter, and anyone else the converter chooses to allow access to it.

Continues d'Annunzio, 'At the moment we are the only ones who can do this because we have spent two to three years in development. Nobody else has real-time collaboration and nobody else can create blockchains and export files so you can see that data on a website. All these things we developed because I know the business. I put these assumptions on the table at the beginning.'

For the brand owner, there is a deep seam of data to be mined. They can be informed when each label is applied to a pack, and match that to a material with its full specifications, while an inspection system could match the label and the roll to the original file.

The label can continue to deliver critical data after the product has been used.

'The waste product can be tracked, and you have visibility of the recyclability of the package itself. The label can tell you how many times a bottle has been reused. It's a never-ending process,' says d'Annunzio.

'The label is the sum of all these

interactions. And you can enter the metaverse much more easily since the label is already a means to reach every kind of information.'

Currently, d'Annunzio is involved in a pilot project to place a complete supply chain onto the blockchain.

'We are demonstrating risk management along with visibility of the whole supply chain. There are a total of 10 blockchains. We are also working with utility companies, medical device suppliers plus several enterprises in the automotive, luxury goods and foods and beverage industries.'

The project is now ready to be rolled out to the label industry.

D'Annunzio is confident that the entrepreneurial nature of the label industry means it will quickly grasp these new opportunities. 'I'm sure that people will start to think "how can I change my role from 'only' a printer to a provider of the digital embodiment of the product?" This is a new transformation, starting to add a new layer to what the label converter can offer.'



For more information on Traent and the blockchain principles explored in this article, visit www.traent.com

Notarization

Notarization is the process of making data verifiable by anyone, even if outside your network.

Traent carries out this process automatically through the Notary service.

At regular intervals, the company builds the ledger's 'tree', a patent-pending verifiable data structure able to prove the immutability of the data shared on private blockchains.

Digests of each ledger's tree are published on public blockchains to ensure that the data cannot be tampered with.

Whenever data is shared, a self-contained and independently verifiable proof of integrity and authenticity is attached.

Using a browser-based viewer, users can see published data even if they are not part of the private blockchain.

Proofs of integrity and authenticity are automatically checked against the public ledger without relying on Traent or the original data provider.

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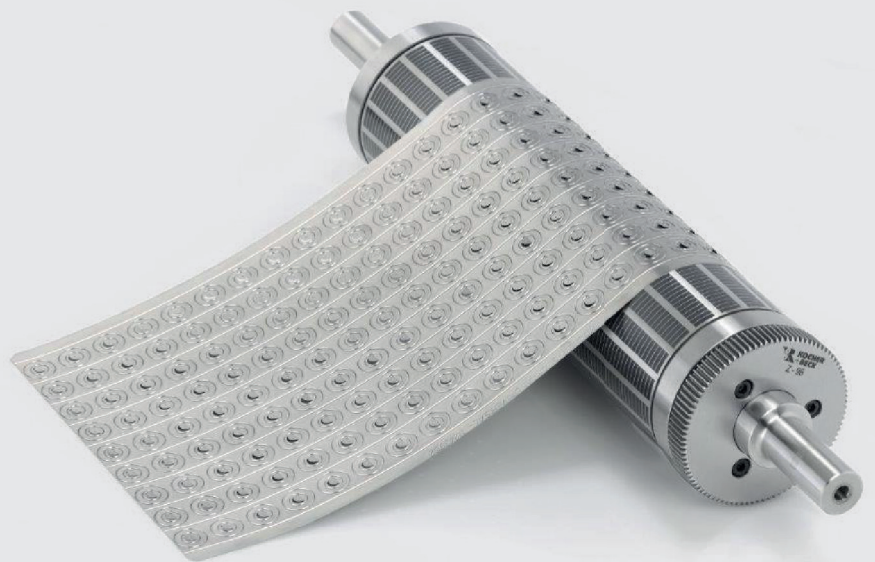
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First V12 heads to All4Labels

The global All4Labels packaging group continues to lead the labels industry in its digital transformation with the first installation of an HP Indigo V12 digital press. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Global labels and packaging group All4Labels has been announced as the first beta site for HP Indigo's ground-breaking V12 digital press.

The V12 uses HP Indigo's new LEPx imaging platform, where a continuously rotating blanket rather than an intermittent blanket cylinder builds up the color image before 'one shot' transfer onto the substrate. This allows the V12 press to reach speeds of 120 m/min in six colors selected from 12 in-line color stations.

All4Labels is an established pioneer of digital label printing technology with a digital center of excellence located in Hamburg. This site has already implemented an advanced digital workflow, as Massimiliano Martino, All4Labels chief technology officer, explains:

'While we are contributing to the development of new HP Indigo presses, including the V12, we have already implemented an advanced digitalization program that includes a robust online portal where customers can directly order to press. We are connecting our HP Indigo printing lines to automated vehicles and robots to drastically enhance safety and efficiency. All our HP Indigo presses are connected to monitor their production performance live, and we are establishing a central control room in our Hamburg headquarters to monitor, navigate and manage our digital production worldwide.'

Step change

All4Labels companies have been pioneering digital printing for over 25 years, having successfully industrialized several beta press series including the HP Indigo 4000, 6000, 20000 and 8000. 'We are determined to continue leading digital printing across the industry,' states Martino.

The HP Indigo V12 represents a real step change in All4Labels' mission to digitize its production processes. 'Our digital portfolio continues growing, becoming more and more complex, especially on medium-run lengths, thus requiring the technical capabilities of a fully industrialized and automated V12 to produce at the most sustainable level possible,' enthuses Martino. 'The powerful software front-end will drive unprecedented production speed, agility, efficiency, versatility and quality to sustainably increase our production throughput, so we are able to deliver complex jobs in short lead times while

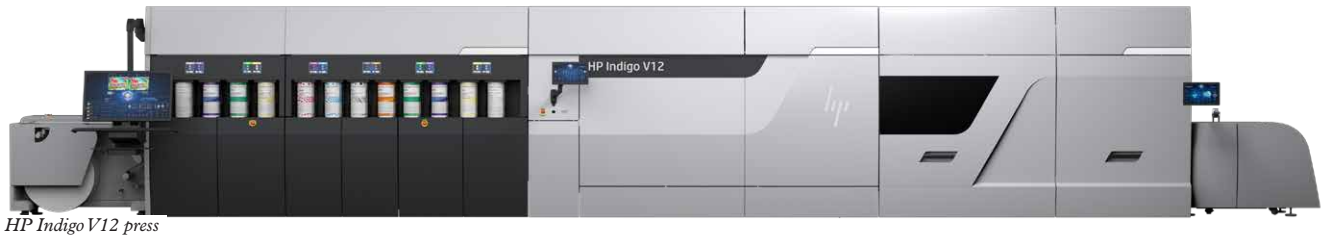


All4Labels marks 25 years of using HP digital technology

"We have already implemented an advanced digitalization program that includes a robust online portal where customers can directly order to press. We are connecting our HP Indigo printing lines to automated vehicles and robots to drastically enhance safety and efficiency"



HP launches the V12 at Labelexpo Americas 2022



HP Indigo V12 press

“The installation of the V12 represents an additional milestone in our path towards continuous innovation and technological development”

meeting our ambitious sustainability targets.’

Martino believes that the HP Indigo V12 will directly challenge conventional printing.

‘I expect flexography and the other production technologies to be heavily challenged to become more and more automated to be able to produce at the new sustainable benchmark that we will be setting at All4Labels, together with HP Indigo. The challenge has already started, and we are experiencing several flexo and analog production technologies investing into innovation and automation to compete with the new sustainable levels needed for the industry.’

All4Labels will be installing a near-line finishing unit for the V12.

‘The V12 is designed with an ergonomic open architecture which allows us to efficiently serve our pre- and post-printing needs through a variety of converting modules,’ explains Martino. ‘Therefore, thinking about the whole production eco-system we have decided to use near-line finishing, which was specifically engineered for the V12.’

Steered toward sustainability

Sustainability is a core concept for All4Labels, and Martino believes the V12 fits perfectly into that strategy: ‘Firstly, and foremost, I see digital transformation as the continuous accelerator for health and safety at the workplace – turning visible certain invisible risks, eliminating repetitive and hazardous tasks, and, for environmental protection, eliminating physical sources of CO2 emissions like printing plates. It promotes the active engagement of our employees who can now proactively and rationally steer production performance towards a much more sustainable direction.’

Martino reports that initial results show an increase in energy efficiency of between 25-40 percent compared to existing printing technologies, with comparable reductions in CO2 emissions.

‘The V12 press is manufactured to be CO2 neutral and will be powered by 100 percent renewable energy at All4Labels,’ says Martino. ‘And it will also produce our innovative and sustainable Star Portfolio. This will significantly contribute to our activities to continue decarbonizing the entire value chain.’

Martino sees the HP Indigo V12 press as a revolutionary technology for the narrow web label printing industry because of the way it changes the interaction between machine and operator.

‘I know the engineers, the scientists and operators working and operating the V12 in the (HP Indigo) lab, and I know well our engineers and operators that will operate the V12 at All4Labels. I believe that our people with their digital competencies and passion for the industry will be the real game-changers to set the new benchmark for the labeling and packaging industry.’

Dr Guenther Weymans, chief operations officer at All4Labels, agrees that the V12 will promote both digitization and sustainability, which are key strategic goals for the converter.

‘At All4Labels we are pioneers when it comes to digitalization and sustainability,’ Weymans says. ‘With these two main pillars in mind, we want to transform the packaging industry through

innovation and lead the change toward a more sustainable future, while setting industry benchmarks for safety, health, and environment.

‘To achieve these goals, we constantly work side-by-side with our partners, investigating the latest cross-market trends with the aim of designing customized solutions to respond to every need.’

Guido Iannone, chief sales officer at All4Labels, says the installation of the HP Indigo V12 will greatly expand the value the converter can offer to brand managers.

‘The installation of the V12 represents an additional milestone in our path towards continuous innovation and technological development. With more than 25 years of experience in digital printing, we accompany brand owners all the way from projects’ conception to completion, combining our largest digital press capacity in the world with our long-term experience in design and artwork preparation.’

Continues Iannone, ‘Thanks to our packaging design unit, All4Graphics, we can integrate digital thinking, creativity, innovation, design and prepress processes with the most modern workflows, to develop versatile and customized projects with variable data management. A brilliant example is our campaign “The Human Blend”, which combines graphic elements in unique ways to create always different digitally printed sleeves. What we offer to our customers is a brand innovation model that leads to the evolution of products in terms of an unlimited combination of design, uniqueness, the possibility of interactions and sustainability. We act as business partners to our customers, and we develop together tailor-made solutions to offer to end consumers memorable experiences.’

Dr Weymans concludes by pointing out the importance of All4Labels’ global footprint when working with brand owners on these kinds of new initiatives. ‘Thanks to our worldwide presence we are a reliable partner for both international companies and regional champions, who choose us as their business ally to connect their brands with the end-users. In the future, we will continue establishing new partnerships to expand our network of family businesses all around the world, keeping on investing in this successful combination of entrepreneurial heritage and global spirit.’

Global debut

HP brought its V12 press to Labelexpo Americas 2022 to much fanfare. The company left the show with multiple letters of intent from converters in North America and around the globe. To read more on the debut of the HP Indigo V12 at Labelexpo Americas 2022, read Issue 4, 2022 of Labels & Labeling.



To learn more about All4Labels, visit all4labels.com

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Gallus appoints new CEO

Already an experienced industry figure, Dario Urbinati brings a clear vision of radical transformation to his new role as CEO of Gallus. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Gallus has appointed Dario Urbinati as its new CEO. Urbinati comes to the role with significant experience in the label industry including over ten years spent in various roles with Gallus itself.

Urbinati started his label career at Gallus in 2007 as global product manager for Gallus' Screeny screen printing business unit before making the move to MD of Gallus' Asia-Pacific operations in 2011. In 2016 he moved to a similar role at Omet, then to Actega with responsibility for what would become Ecoleaf digital metallization technology. He returned to Gallus in 2021 to take up the position of chief sales & service officer.

Since returning to Gallus, Urbinati has been developing a radical roadmap for this traditional engineering company which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2023.

Gallus is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Heidelberg Group, though maintaining a high degree of autonomy. One of Urbinati's early goals was to strengthen that relationship, particularly as regards the development of Gallus' digital printing technology.

'We use Heidelberg for support and joint R+D in all relevant aspects of our digital ecosystem, including inkjet technology, software and ink,' Urbinati tells L&L.

The result was the Gallus One standalone digital press - a true joint development between both companies. 'Heidelberg has a strong expertise in ink and inkjet development, all in-house. We can also use Heidelberg's Prinect connection and networking system, so we have all the necessary technologies in-house to drive forward this digital transformation, and more is to come.'

Gallus is also able to utilize Heidelberg's global technical support, sales and service network. Heidelberg currently has three global support centers out of which Gallus provides spare parts.

Commenting on Urbinati's appointment, Dr. Ludwin Monz, Heidelberg CEO, said, 'Dario has been responsible for refocusing the business against a very clear vision for the future of labels. This has meant resetting the business in important areas by increasing customer service and support, boosting sales and marketing activities and much more. He has also introduced an ambitious sustainability program. Gallus is an important pillar in the Heidelberg Group's packaging business, which offers long term growth potential and, importantly, shares our commitment to quality.'

Urbinati is keen to stress that despite the recent focus on digital, conventional technology remains central to his future vision for Gallus. 'Conventional press technology is still the foundation of a digital press - the Gallus One is built on a Labelmaster platform. We will remain a conventional player, but we feel that combining the benefits of conventional technology and digital technology leads to the best possible outcome, the best TCO for our customer. We will merge the benefits all relevant technical aspects in our future products.'

The proof of Urbinati's commitment to conventional technology is the recent launch of the 570mm-wide versions of both the RCS and Labelmaster press platforms.

Urbinati believes new developments in digital-conventional technologies will help tackle the skilled labor shortage confronting the label industry.

'We are able to solve those challenges with automation. We have those technologies inhouse and we are developing them right now. The future will be highly automated conventional and digital with an integrated and secure cloud-based workflow. This will enable us



Gallus CEO Dario Urbinati

"Conventional press technology is still the foundation of a digital press. We will remain a conventional player, but we feel that combining the benefits of conventional and digital technology leads to the best possible outcome for our customers"

to focus on TCO in radical new ways.'

Looking to the future, Urbinati believes this 'visionary approach to industrial transformation' will allow Gallus to continue to attract a new generation of workers as well as bringing older, experienced workers back into the workforce.

'Our strategy is to develop integrated and automated products which overcome the pain points of our customers. And this will excite younger people to enter our industry.'

A key component of this approach is the Experience Center which is expected to open at St Gallen in June, which Urbinati has championed.

'This will become a touch point for the global industry. We will showcase the latest developments in all aspects of digital technology with a laboratory and incubator to test new ideas and host start-ups around areas like sustainability. This will not be a Gallus showroom, it will be a resource for younger - and older - people who want to learn or create something new. We want to give them a platform to come to St Gallen and to drive the industry forward.'



Turn to page 88 to read more on conventional press technology, with comments from Urbinati



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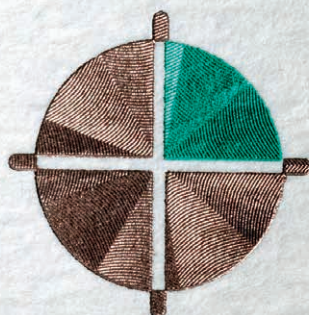

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Xaar printhead set to 'revolutionize' aqueous inkjet

Xaar's newly developed Aquinox printhead technology is claimed to be able to jet inks and fluids with far higher viscosity and pigment loading, opening up exciting new application possibilities. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Xaar has launched a new printhead capable of jetting aqueous inks and functional fluids whilst also allowing the use of high viscosity and high pigment loaded fluids. This is expected to lead to the development of aqueous inks with more vibrant colors, superior adhesion properties and print process simplification.

Xaar's Aquinox technology, aQ Power, is built on the company's ImagineX platform, claimed to provide a radically new approach to how water-based fluids are jetted reliably in an industrial environment.

Xaar's aQ Power is a combination of technologies designed to optimize the Aquinox's lifespan and robustness when handling aqueous fluids. These include a redesigned internal architecture, new water-compatible materials capable of coping with an extended working range of pH levels, and a new drive system enabling optimum drop ejection. Xaar's TF technology ink recirculation allows Aquinox to deliver significantly increased nozzle open time.

Aquinox printheads are compatible with multiple aqueous fluid types and Xaar says operational speeds of over 100m/min can be achieved. Native resolution is 720dpi and a firing frequency up to 48kHz maintains a high level of fluid deposition.

Aquinox printheads are capable of jetting fluids with viscosities up to 100cP at jetting temperature, meaning larger particles and more pigment for higher opacity. Colors are claimed more vibrant and Whites and blacks stronger.

Xaar's chevron printhead architecture provides for energy efficient operation, reducing the power required for the printheads. Improved nozzle open time and latency reduces maintenance and ink waste, helping to minimize the total cost of ownership for users.

Aquinox is supported by Xaar's proven Hydra ink supply system, with a 'plug and print' capability and intuitive user interface, which allows easy integration into new digital presses or modules.

Aquinox is delivered with a development kit that gives OEMs everything they need to get up and running. This includes the ink supply system and printhead drive electronics.

Xaar has tested the Aquinox printhead with both dye-based and pigmented fluids and inks, across a wide range of applications.

Deep dive

L&L interviewed Karl Forbes, Xaar Group R&D Director, to better understand why Xaar believes Aquinox is such a breakthrough technology.

'The key to the industrial reliability of the Aquinox printhead is our TF technology recirculation, which allows us to print highly pigmented, high opacity whites and other colors significantly improved jetting reliability and uptime. We are talking about an open time of potentially days not minutes, which means a huge reduction in maintenance requirements.'

Open time is a measure of how long it takes printheads to dry out when not printing. A typical open time for aqueous printheads is 30-60 minutes, after which the printhead has to be serviced. 'Our TF technology recirculation means ink is recirculated past the back of the nozzle and importantly, within the nozzle itself, which



Xaar Aquinox printhead

"The key to the industrial reliability of the Aquinox printhead is our TF recirculation technology, which allows us to print highly pigmented, high opacity whites and other colors without any danger of the nozzle clogging up"

keeps the fluid moving at all times. This is all about increasing printer uptime.'

Karl Forbes notes that a typical printhead cannot handle fluids thicker than 10 – 15cP, which constrains the design window for the fluid chemist. 'This restricts the amount of ink pigment the fluid can carry to typically 15-20 percent. With Xaar ImagineX Technology we can comfortably double that. So, the ink can be much more vibrant with a wider color gamut and will still dry quickly on the substrate and be tough and flexible. For the ink designers this gives a much bigger operating window.'

Forbes notes that this new design freedom should also see advances in changing the current process required for water-based printing. Opportunities such as reducing the need for special primers and lowering energy levels in dryers are examples Forbes believes are possible.

The wider process window for the Aquinox printheads could also make it possible to use existing water-based flexo ink raw chemistry, including metallic options.

Concludes John Mills, CEO of Xaar, 'Xaar Aquinox, powered by our ImagineX platform, is our most significant product launch in recent years. From textiles to ceramics and packaging, we see the Xaar Aquinox breaking new ground, enabling new water-based print applications, many of which were previously not possible with inkjet. The Xaar Aquinox will revolutionize aqueous printing.'



Labelexpo Europe 2023 will include a special show feature on flexible packaging, including new water-based inkjet systems

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Mighty Titon

At its latest Print Café event, Xeikon unveiled a new press and Titon toner system optimized for printing on paper-based flexible packaging. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Xeikon has revealed details of its Titon toner technology program, complete with a new press, the CX500t, and the first beta installation at flexible packaging specialist ACM in Italy.

First previewed at Labelexpo Americas 2022, Titon is a new class of dry toner technology. It is resistant to heat, chemicals and mechanical (scratch/scuff) resistance without the need for additional varnishes or lamination, while remaining food compliant and odorless.

'This all leads to higher [overall equipment efficiency] and less waste compared to a standard print and varnish/laminate workflow,' says Frank Jacobs, senior product manager at Xeikon.

The key to Xeikon's Titon technology is a high molecular weight resin and a very low concentration of a solid initiator system used to make the dry toner, and an extra inline LED-UV curing stage after the toner has been fused to the substrate. The LED-UV radiation cross-links the polyester-based toner particles to form the final, extremely tough Titon toner layer. Because of the additional heat generated by the curing process there is a cooling roller on the LED-UV curing station.

'This is the best of both worlds, combining our toner and LED-UV inkjet technologies,' says Jacobs.

In order for the cross-linking process between polymer chains to work, the fused toners must remain at a high enough temperature to make the crosslinking happen. This is why the LED-UV curing stage has to be in-line on the new CX500t press – and why the curing station cannot be supplied as a retrofittable bolt-on unit.

Xeikon sees paper-based flexible packaging – typically stand-up pouches and sachets – as the key opportunity for the Titon toner system.

'We see brands are looking to shift from filmic stand-up pouches to paper pouches for reasons of sustainability and to reduce the use of non-recyclable multi-layer plastic materials,' says Jacobs. 'Paper packaging printed with Titon toners is fully recyclable.'

Specialty paper mills are meanwhile busy researching new grades of barrier-coated technical papers optimized for flexible packaging.

The high level of mechanical resistance in the Titon toner prevents damage to the print on the pack processing line. Titon's heat resistance is critical during the heat-sealing process — Xeikon's



Xeikon CX500t Titon press

“We see brands are looking to shift from filmic stand-up pouches to paper pouches for reasons of sustainability and to reduce the use of non-recyclable multi-layer plastic materials”

previous dry toner systems would simply have melted during the heat-sealing process.

These pre-Titon toners were also vulnerable to chemical attack, as was demonstrated at the Café event by removing them with nail polish remover. The new Titon toners were fully resistant.

Jacobs says competitive digital technologies have challenges printing on paper flexible packaging, requiring different combinations of primer, water-based varnish or lamination. The challenges are not just in terms of potential ink component migration, but also in terms of the heat-sealing stage of pouch and sachet production.

Pasta moves to paper

Switzerland-based pasta brand Bschüssig has been fully committed to moving from clear film to paper packaging since January 2021.

The 160-year old company has a strong commitment to sustainability in its products, for example only using free range eggs, so turning to paper packaging appeared a natural next step, according to Linus Jäck, marketing manager of the Bschüssig brand at Pasta Premium AG.

'Our customers really like the paper packaging –they want to go away from plastics. Of course you cannot see the pasta inside, but now most people do

accept that. We are the first pasta brand in Switzerland to change to paper and we avoid 35 tonnes of plastics per year. There is no coating of the paper at all, the kraft paper is strong enough. We cannot place it in a wet place, so that is the only limitation.'

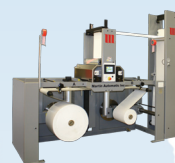
Jäck says it was quite a tough process to switch materials. 'It took us around a year to change over. When we looked at how to realize small quantities of special pasta using digital, we found that the color was partially destroyed by heat sealing until Xeikon came with this groundbreaking technology. So Titon was perfect for us.



Bschuessig paper pasta bags Titon printed

'Our organic pasta is a brand new product and we printed six different packages of 5,000 packs each digitally to introduce to the market. If that succeeds, we will move it to flexo.'

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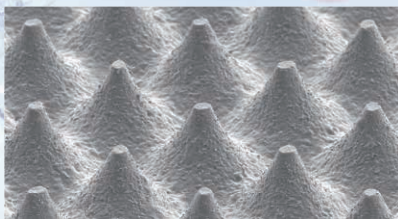
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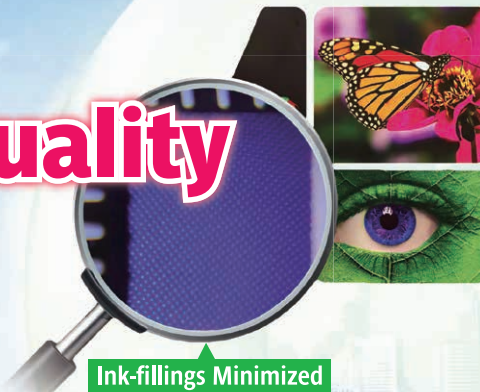
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LED-UV curing station with chill roll on CX500t press

Sustainability goals

At the Café event, Xeikon outlined some ambitious sustainability goals and called for a unified industry approach to Life Cycle Analysis.

Xeikon is aiming to use 60 percent recycled bottle-polymer PET as raw material for its toner resin production, and as a phase 2 to use bio-sourced materials to reduce the carbon footprint of the toner engines. The company is researching paper toner bottles with removable caps to further reduce the footprint of digital printing.

Xeikon is also looking to switch manufacturing of its OPC and fuser drums to recycled Aluminum, with a campaign to make sure customers know how to recycle these high value

cylinders after use.

Xeikon plans to cut its global carbon footprint (CF) by half over the next two years. CF is calculated from energy consumption during printing and the amount of ink which is used. Since Xeikon has been using green electricity since 2009, the energy used during ink or toner manufacture is not included. The final step is to calculate how much waste is generated, for example from toner packaging, drums or printing heads.

This Life Cycle Analysis is still very much a work in progress, and Xeikon hopes it can help form the basis of a measurable industry-wide CF reduction initiative.

“The key to Xeikon’s Titon technology is a high molecular weight resin and a very low concentration of a solid initiator system used to make the dry toner, and an extra inline LED-UV curing stage”

Inkjet developments

At the Xeikon Café event, the company's VP marketing Filip Weymans announced that the Panther PX3300 inkjet press will only be supplied from now on with LED-UV curing. This will involve a retrofit program for all PX3300s and PX3000s in the field, which Xeikon will organize and finance. PX3300s and PX3000s will no longer need mercury lamps once that program is completed. LED-UV lamps have reduced energy consumption on the presses by 30 percent compared with mercury.

The flagship PX30000 press will remain with mercury UV lamps.

Weymans also confirmed the launch of a new entry-level inkjet press, the Label Panther Discovery, which will ship with four fixed color stations and sell for around Euro 250k.

‘The press is targeted at web-to-print companies or signage printers in the commercial space who can add labels to their capabilities,’ said Weymans.

Another interesting aspect of the Café demos was haptic printing. This is achieved by using the double White heads on the PX30000 or by slowing the PX3300 to 25m/min to double the ink volume of the White inkjet head. The haptic pattern – up to 20 microns deep – printed with the White then gives a haptic feel to any colors printed on top.

Migration resistance

Titon toners are compliant with all key regulations including Nestlé Standard on Printing Inks for Food Packaging, EuPIA Exclusion Policy, Swiss Ordinance and German Ink Ordinance. The toners have been successfully migration tested by specialized external labs and a Statement of Composition (SoC) is available.

It is important to note that the heat sealable layer in a pouch or sachet – the thermal coating or PE layer – does not act as a migration barrier to normal UV inkjet inks. A functional barrier is only provided by a laminated foil layer. As a result, a foil layer is needed for inks with a high migration risk.

At first glance, the addition of UV technology to the Titon toner would appear to increase the danger of migration. But Jacobs points out that the situation is completely different from curing UV inkjet inks.

‘The amount of photo-initiator needed for Titon toner is substantially less than for UV inkjet, and furthermore it is of a different kind. The toner particle itself consists of large molecules (polymers), even when it is uncured. Our toners are encapsulated in polyester, ensuring the migration potential is already extremely low. For UV inkjet ink it is completely the opposite: the uncured molecules have to be small to be jettable at high frequency resulting in a high risk of migration.’

Other applications for Titon toner could include labels that currently require varnish or lamination, lids, paper cups, blister

and baking cups, offering the converter interesting opportunities for diversification.

Beta installation

The first beta installation for the new CX500t press with Titon toner is at ACM in Italy. ACM specializes in the production of very small batches of bags, stand-up pouches and film trays, all with a high degree of personalization – what the converter calls ‘personalized micro batches’. Delivery is guaranteed within two weeks of receiving an order and the minimum order size is 50Kg.

The company runs both a flexo operation, with two Omet 8-color presses running low migration LED-UV inks, and a digital plant equipped with HP Indigo 25k and the new Xeikon CX500t press. There is also a solventless lamination facility.

‘We can satisfy all our customers using Titon toner that it is compliant with food safety standards and paper recycling processes,’ said Massimo Raffaele, general manager of ACM.

‘We use the Xeikon Titon toner for our paper-based pouches, which is a fast-growing market for us. Especially when people order through our e-commerce site, they want recyclable paper.’

Raffaele said the typical breakeven point between flexo and digital is between 1,500-2,000m.



The CX500t and Titon toner system will be demonstrated live at Labelexpo Europe 2023 on September 11-14

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Frontaal Beer labels produced at Eshuis

Eshuis sets standard for digital label performance

HP hosted an open house at the Dutch label converter Eshuis to highlight their 20-year partnership and provide inspiration for digital labels. Adrian Tippetts reports

HP hosted a two-day open house in Dalfsen, the Netherlands, inviting label converters from across Europe to understand the post-pandemic industry challenges, how to seize opportunities, and how to convince brand owners of the value digital print brings to retail goods supply chains.

In addition to seminars with senior HP staff, the open house included a visit to Eshuis, a converter with 20 years of HP Indigo digital printing experience.

“The campaign also changed perceptions: digital was no longer just for small runs and niches – it was now a mature technology, suited for large-scale multinational accounts”

Based in Dalfsen, Netherlands, the label, sleeve and flexible packaging converter Eshuis has become a standard-setter for digital printing performance, innovation and campaign planning worldwide. Founded in 1891, the company sells into the food and beverage, cosmetics, chemicals and sustainable products markets.

Innovation has led them to some groundbreaking digital projects, like ‘My Heineken’ where consumers could personalize a bottle of beer and order it, and the groundbreaking ‘Share-A-Coke’ campaign, where in many countries they made Coca-Cola labels with the most common names on them.

The ‘Share-A-Coke’ label campaign printed on Eshuis’s three HP Indigo WS6800 presses, was arguably a milestone, proving digital as a technology suited for large-scale multinational campaigns.

The ‘Share-A-Coke’ campaign, which Eshuis has executed for Coca-Cola for five years now on its HP Indigo 6800 presses, has been a turning point for the company’s digital printing strategy.

Overbeek says: ‘Share-A-Coke changed the way the market

looked at consumer engagement. You see copycat campaigns, as brands recognize that when you use the names of people, the product comes very personal. The campaign also changed perceptions: digital was no longer just for small runs and niches – it was now a mature technology, suited for large-scale multinational accounts.’

Growing demand for digitally produced labels led Eshuis to install two HP Indigo 8K presses, in 2021 and at the start of 2022.

‘Eighty percent of all jobs at Eshuis are digital, which makes up around one-third of total output, and the remainder is printed by flexo and offset,’ says Peter Overbeek, CEO, Eshuis. ‘All printed material is finished in a dedicated hall with sophisticated converting equipment from AB Graphic, among others. The collective set-up allows us to offer the widest range of products, fast and flexibly – from very short to very long runs.’

Scaling up digital output

The HP Indigo 8K digital press, introduced in 2020, provides a higher-output alternative to HP Indigo’s 6000 series label presses, by incorporating two printing engines HP Indigo WS6800 digital presses inline, with control advances.

The printing engines are based on a master-slave concept, where the second engine repeats everything the first engine prints. The first engine prints one frame, leaving a gap that the second engine fills in exactly at the right point. The buffer control unit synchronizes web guidance and engine speeds, while synchronization marks at the side of the substrate ensure repeat precision. Maximum speeds are 80m/min in EPM or 60m/min in CMYK – twice the speed of the 6000 series presses.

The 330mm-wide press features the same ‘one-shot’ technology as in HP Series 3 presses: separations are transferred simultaneously to the blanket in one pass, achieving gravure-matching quality, and color-to-color registration of +/-38 micron.

Jobs on Eshuis’s HP Indigo 8K presses are anywhere between 100m and 25000m.

The presses account for 80 percent of all digital output, which has now reached 420,000m a week.

“We have three big new customers that decided to buy locally. For them, the price is less important than the assurance of continual supply”

Combining runs by substrate for best uptime

'To maintain optimum productivity we schedule jobs with all the same materials together, and make those combined run lengths as long as we can,' Overbeek says. 'Individual job length isn't important, so long as you can create batches efficiently without changing reel size or width. So, with the right planning, great efficiencies are possible.'

Overbeek estimates production uptime on the HP Indigo 8K presses to be about 65 percent. Weekly maintenance accounts for seven hours, while make ready is no more than 10 minutes per reel, including substrate change and color calibration. Material waste is little more than the 30m web path. Otherwise, apart from reel-change, the machines run continuously.

Longer runs on the 8K

One of the longest jobs on Eshuis's HP Indigo 8K is a 25,000m run for 'mask printing' of the square frames on Polaroid instant films, a campaign for the iconic camera brand that was revived in 2017. A high-speed digital press was the only choice, as the high-volume print run comprises a series of different colors and special edition designs. The press' enhanced web guidance also makes it the preferred choice, because of the PET film's sensitivity.

Digital printing means a big data flow increase – and as digital machines become faster and the volume grows, this creates a challenge in planning and fulfillment in finishing. Eshuis is working with ERP provider Cerm on an automated Cloud-based solution,

scheduling batches in reverse order, to be introduced soon.

Last-minute order confirmation has been the norm at Eshuis for many years.

Overbeek comments: 'A customer can place a job order a day before printing, and this is already what we do for many years. We have multiple customers, who order 500 SKUs per week, and we have a fixed lead time of five days. We already know we have material and capacity available, and it runs very smoothly.'

'HP plays a big role in our strategy, which is focused on customer intimacy,' Overbeek says. 'That means working very closely with customers to listen to what they need, and then organizing in the best way, so they can rely on us to get their material on time. And with that performance, that we also measure, we know that we can grow with them.'

Supply chain

Visitors to the open house heard from Bram Desmet, CEO of Solventure, a supply chain consultancy to retail and global businesses, based in Ghent, Belgium. He argues that supply chains today are more critical than ever to overall corporate performance, and procurement is more concerned about supplier reliability than ever before.

According to Desmet, the challenge of providing extra services to customers without increasing costs and cash – the supply chain triangle – was a struggle even long before the pandemic.

Sourcing goods from East Asia was cheaper but means longer


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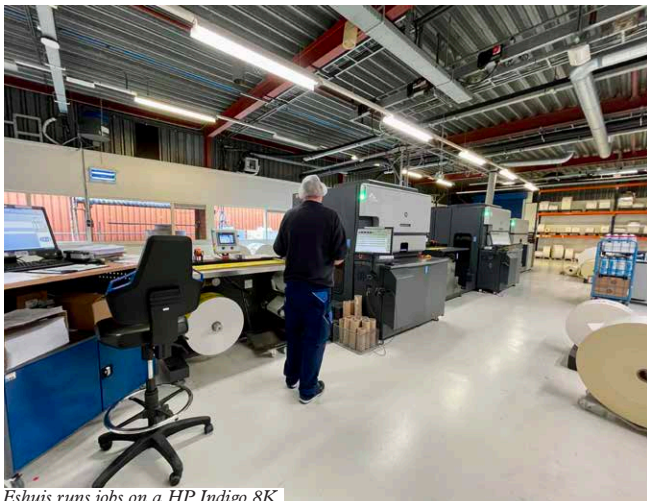
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Eshuis runs jobs on a HP Indigo 8K

lead times, transit risks and higher inventories. Brand variations are great for topline sales and consumer choice, but more, less frequently selling products, raises make ready times, as well as stocks. And while cutting frees up cash, it raises the risk of firefighting to close the service gap.

All these vulnerabilities left suppliers exposed as post-pandemic demand exceeded expectations. Paper shortages in particular meant exposing frailties in the traditional supply chain model – and not many expect a return to pre-Covid normality anytime soon.

In some ways, this has helped companies like Eshuis who see opportunities among the challenges.

'We have three big new customers that purchased abroad but

were without labels. So, they decided to buy locally – and for them, the price is less important than the assurance of continual supply,' he says. 'These brands have contracts with retailers, and it kills them if they don't supply in time. No material is totally unacceptable.'

It's been nearly 20 years since Eshuis started its digital journey with HP. 'It doesn't work anymore to accept orders in the old-fashioned way and tell the customer they'll have to wait two weeks for the work,' Overbeek says. 'You need to make sure you are prepared internally to deliver on demand. And this is why we have created flexibility in the routing of jobs through the company, and trained people to be exchangeable between processes, so we can use them on different machines.'

There is plenty of work for Eshuis's existing 6 Series HP Indigo presses – but again, it is not so simple to define the job profile by run-lengths: 'Normally we exchange many substrates between the 6 Series and 8 Series presses, but the small volumes of rare substrates will stay on the HP Indigo 6800 and the faster jobs will go on the 8K for maximum efficiency. Each time you change substrate you need to do calibrations, so the number of substrate changes is critical – and we schedule to limit these as much as possible.'

Eshuis's ability to maintain continuous 24/7 production for three months on its six-series presses – only stopping for maintenance and hitting 86 percent uptime – helped prove the point.



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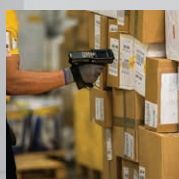
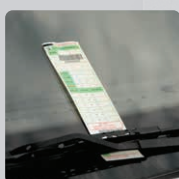
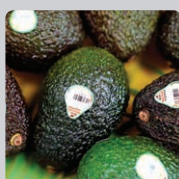
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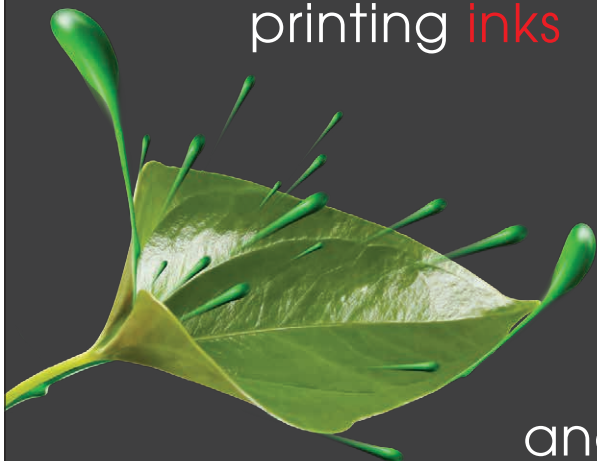


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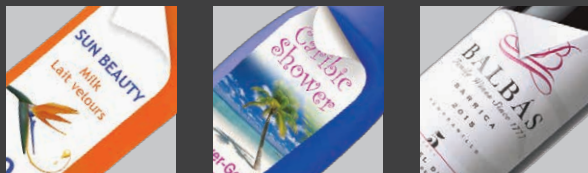
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Generational success backed by solid relationships

JMB Labels' investment in an MPS flexo press and the relationship with Rotocon has widened its scope and increased its profitability. Piotr Wnuk reports

JMB Labels is one of South Africa's leading and fastest-growing label converters. Launched from humble beginnings in 1987, JMB Labels today occupies a 1,500 sqm office and factory site in Amalgam, Johannesburg.

It is currently managed and owned by brothers Ahmed and Aslam Monia, who, just like the two generations before them, attribute the company's success to forming long-standing partnerships with customers who value a label converter that consistently provides a personal touch and high-quality products in quick delivery times.

Principles of success

'Our customers tend to be either family-orientated organizations or run by hands-on owners who want to deal with someone who can update them on what's happening with their job – not within a few hours or the next day, but when they call,' says Aslam Monia. 'I always ensure that I have access to our production schedule wherever I may be so that I can tell them exactly when the job was started, how far along it is in the printing and finishing process or if it has been completed and when they can expect delivery.'

The company runs a just-in-time delivery system to accommodate those who don't want to hold much stock. Although the standard turnaround time is one to two weeks, there have been many occasions when the company has assisted customers with a next-day order.

'We will do whatever it takes to assist our customers, and they know we will deliver on our promise,' adds Aslam Monia.

The company applies the same principles to its relationships with equipment and consumables suppliers to achieve the common goal of producing top-quality labels. Aslam Monia recalls that his relationship with Michael Aengenvoort started long before he established Rotocon in 2008 and that he has appreciated witnessing how Michael's morals, values, hardworking ethic, passion and pride have been passed on to sons Patrick and Pascal Aengenvoort, just like they were for him and Ahmed from their father, Yousuf Monia.

Aslam Monia says: 'There is a 24-hour



In 2020, JMB Labels invested in UV Ray Atom systems to increase savings on lamp cooling costs and improve curing quality



The MPS EC UV, installed in 2013, still operates perfectly and is JMB Labels' flagship machine

“We’re still very much focused on doing business with independent companies instead of multi-corporations. That’s because we’re able to offer them that personal touch”

call line between me and Patrick, Rotocon's Johannesburg-based director. Some of our best conversations take place after hours, and we've developed such a great understanding that I even bought our third MPS press via WhatsApp in 2019 after Patrick shared the deal details and price of the EFS 430 model from Labelexpo Europe. This press is supported by a complementary Ecoline RSI 430 slitting, inspection and rewinding system from Rotocon to ensure top-quality finishing requirements.'

The Monia brothers have admired the MPS press technology for the last two decades. In 2001 they saw the first press in action at Labelexpo Europe and appreciated how the technology made printing much more effortless.

'The fact that the company was built by a core group of friends and that co-founder Eric Hoendervangers came to visit our facility in Johannesburg when he was in South Africa – although we weren't ready to buy a press yet – and started building a relationship left a lasting impression,' Aslam Monia states. 'We are firm believers in dreaming and setting our targets and

goals, and so far, we've reached all of them, including owning three MPS presses.'

In 2013, JMB Labels installed an MPS EC UV flexo multi-substrate press, handling material thicknesses from 12-450 micron A 410-mm web width makes it ideal for producing self-adhesive and shrink sleeves at speeds of up to 200 m/min.

The Monia brothers considered several presses that could meet their needs. However, in the end, it was more than just technology that won the MPS flexo press the deciding vote.

'We were blown away by the press's state-of-the-art features and the people who make it all happen,' says Aslam Monia. 'One year after the initial installation, we entered new markets, attracted new customers, including FMCG companies, and achieved a 30 percent increase in sales. We're still very much focused on doing business with independent companies instead of multi-corporations. That's because we're able to offer them that personal touch. It's a strong component of our operation. We've built strong relationships with our customers over the

years, and as they've grown, so have we.'

The brothers were so impressed with the new press's capabilities and how it streamlined the core business that they made a second investment in 2015 in the first MPS EB 370 flexo press in the African market and a Rotocontrol RSC 560 slitter rewinder with a film package kit. 'The RSC 560 has performed so well that the production team hasn't needed to use the slip differential function when running filmic material,' Aslam Monia reveals. 'Additionally, the small servicing issues have been dealt with very efficiently by Rotocon's technicians and remotely by the German-based team when required.'

In 2020, the MPS EC 410 was upgraded with an Atom 430 mercury lamp 160W ink curing system from UV Ray. The cassette design simplifies lamp maintenance and replacement and enables technicians to work on power packs rather than having to return them as trade-in units. Additionally, each reflector model is designed with a quick shutter, infrared filter and smaller diameter lamps to increase UV output power and reduce working temperatures. Just a few months ago, Rotocon's technicians and Domino specialist installed a Domino K600i digital print bar into the MPS EB 370 press to transform it into a value-added hybrid press that can print variable data, including text, sequential numbers, barcodes and 2D codes at a native resolution of 600 DPI and operating speeds of up to 150m/min.

'Although there hasn't been a need to transition to a digital print shop because our run lengths are typically 10,000 meters and over, we've always referred to the EB as our digital press. This is because our operator can perform job changeovers so quickly that we can average 10 to 12 jobs daily with proper planning,' enthuses Aslam Monia.



Employees form the backbone of the business

JMB Labels production manager Farhad Evans adds that the Wink SmartGap adjustable anvil system installed on the die station also ensures precise, double-sided adaptation of the magnetic cylinder gap (according to the micron settings) for various facestocks and liners. 'The advantages of SmartGap are mainly rooted in its high stability, which allows problem-free cutting through at high production speeds and eliminates waste,' he says.

The SmartGap adjustable anvil system is also installed on the



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“Employees form the backbone of the business. We are nothing without them”

EFS 430 model. Its Wink magnetic cylinders are interchangeable with the EC 410 model without making any adjustments.

‘We also use Kocher & Beck flexible dies because of their excellent quality. Some of these dies are more than 15 years old. One, for example, has already cut over 30 million dishwashing liquid labels,’ adds Evans. ‘This press has improved our production process at all levels. Compared to conventional printing cylinders, make-ready times are shorter with the use of printing sleeves. The short web path facilitates cost saving on material and reduces wastage.’

However, most important for the Monia brothers and their team is the print quality of the MPS, which is constant throughout the run. This has given them the confidence to target more companies seeking high-end labels and packaging for their products. JMB Labels also boasts a Rotocontrol RSC 440 slitter rewinder to handle its diverse finishing requirements. ‘Back then, the machine was marketed for its printing speed of 320 m/min,’ Aslam Monia says. ‘We showed Michael Aengenvoort and his team that we could rewind and inspect at 320 m/min and that it wasn’t merely a marketing ploy.’

Training paramount

To ensure that production staff can consistently get the most out of the available technology, Evans conducts monthly refresher

training courses for mounters, press operators and assistants and rewinders. He also focuses on the importance of consumables, such as how to take care of aniloxes, change doctor blades and maintain ink quality. Furthermore, all the staff treat the equipment with respect and look after it very well because that is how the management team treats them.

‘Employees form the backbone of the business,’ says Aslam Monia. ‘We are nothing without them. Most of our operators have been with the company for over 20 years, and our policy has always been to look after them well and provide them with skills to use their discretion in prepress, converting and finishing processes to ensure that each job meets our quality standards. With each MPS press investment, the operator went to The Netherlands for the acceptance test and training. For some, it was their first flight and international travel experience and an example of how they are valued as team members.’

This approach reflects the brothers’ belief in creating a company where everyone works in a pleasant environment, the staff can talk to one another and have a flexible attitude to ensure that they can deliver excellent customer service.

‘Our investments in people and partnerships with state-of-the-art consumable and machinery suppliers have enabled organic growth alongside our customers. We look forward to seeing where filmic substrate developments globally will open new flexible packaging converting opportunities for us in the future,’ concludes Aslam Monia.



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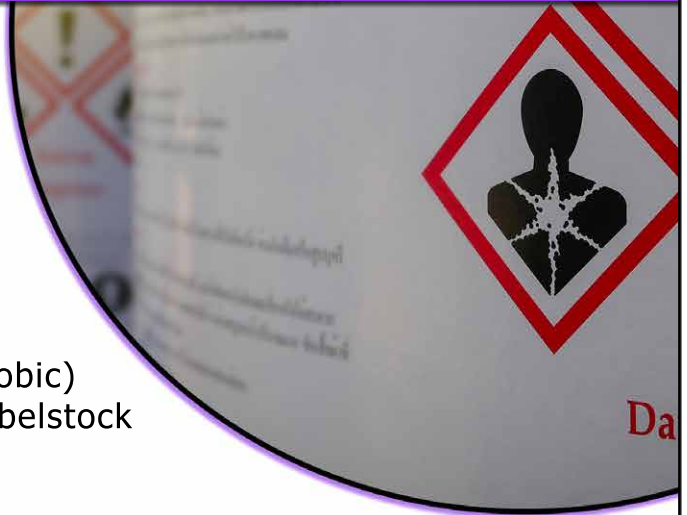
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Practimax has installed three Durst digital presses

Investing in the digital future

Malaysian converter Practimax strongly believes in the efficiency of its three Durst digital presses and predicts a bright future for digital print in the region. Piotr Wnuk reports

Practimax was founded in 1999 in Malaysia with just three employees, one rotary press and a clear vision to become one of the country's leading and most productive label manufacturers. Today, nearly a quarter of a century later, the company's team counts more than 100 people who manufacture millions of self-adhesive labels for multinational corporations and well-known retail brands.

The manufacturing facility operates 24 hours a day to deliver paper, film and foil labels for primary packaging, booklet instruction labels and product identification tags for various markets, including food, cosmetics, household, body care, toiletries, pharmaceutical, chemical and electronics.

Practimax is on its way to achieving its vision by delivering high-quality products, fast delivery and cost-efficiency. One of the pillars of its success so far was reliability and the ability to respond to urgent requests from customers.

Green operations

Adopting a more sustainable approach in businesses has become imperative, especially after the pandemic. While the printing industry, in general, faces its own set of challenges in approaching sustainability, all efforts done by the players in the sector to comply with the environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles will surely make a difference in

“Digital printing can cater not only to short-run jobs but also to medium and long run, thanks to the cost efficiency and fast turn-around”

moving the industry forward.

Practimax, an established label manufacturer in Malaysia, is keen to move towards sustainability - slowly but surely. One of the first steps is the implementation of an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and using alternative materials that are more operationally sustainable. The ERP system, which Practimax develops in-house, helps to reduce paper usage in the production facilities' offices to ensure a more efficient and optimized overall management.

‘We have a good relationship with the major material suppliers, such as UPM Raflatac and Avery Dennison. Whenever new, more environmentally friendly materials are becoming available, the suppliers will introduce them to us, and we always try our best to procure them and use them in our production,’ says Practimax CEO Kate Yap.

Since its incorporation, Practimax has always emphasized quality and speed, making it stand out from the competition. The company has a dedicated sales and service team that is well-equipped with the technical knowledge and problem-solving

skills to serve its customers.

‘We greatly emphasize the printing quality. We always choose the best materials for the labels and stickers,’ adds Yap.

The key to Practimax's success is an excellent team of people, so the company management ensures they are given the best tools for the job.

Investing in Durst products

Yap shares that Practimax mainly caters to the local market. Its clientele ranges from fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies to oil and gas players. ‘Normally, we produce labels for FMCG products - toiletries, personal care, etc. We also produce labels for lubricant packaging,’ she says. ‘As for the export market, we only cater to personal care products.’

Practimax's mission is to provide its customers with reliable and cost-effective products using state-of-the-art technology in printing. The company has consistently invested in various presses to cater to the changing industry demands.

Staying true to its goal, Practimax was the first to introduce Durst Tau

330 digital UV inkjet press in Malaysia. This high-speed, high-quality and high-reliability technology allows the company to produce outstanding quality images with a vivid superior color appearance. This Durst technology delivers consistency in quality from the first to the last label and from the first run to subsequent runs, produced over a more extended period.

'We have been using Durst technology for the last decade. We currently have three Durst machines. The consistent results and the speed of the Durst machines are fantastic,' says Yap. 'The resolution of the printing is also excellent. It is a digital machine, so we do not need to spend significant time setting it up, which conventional printing requires. There are no printing plates, films and some mixture of colors. With a digital machine, it is just a click away. The quality and color consistency that the Durst can produce makes our life better as owners of a label converting business.'

Before purchasing the first Durst Tau 330, Practimax was an entirely conventional printer, operating two of its Gallus EM280 flexo presses. After the Durst Tau installation, digital label printing could take up to 50 percent of the company's production.

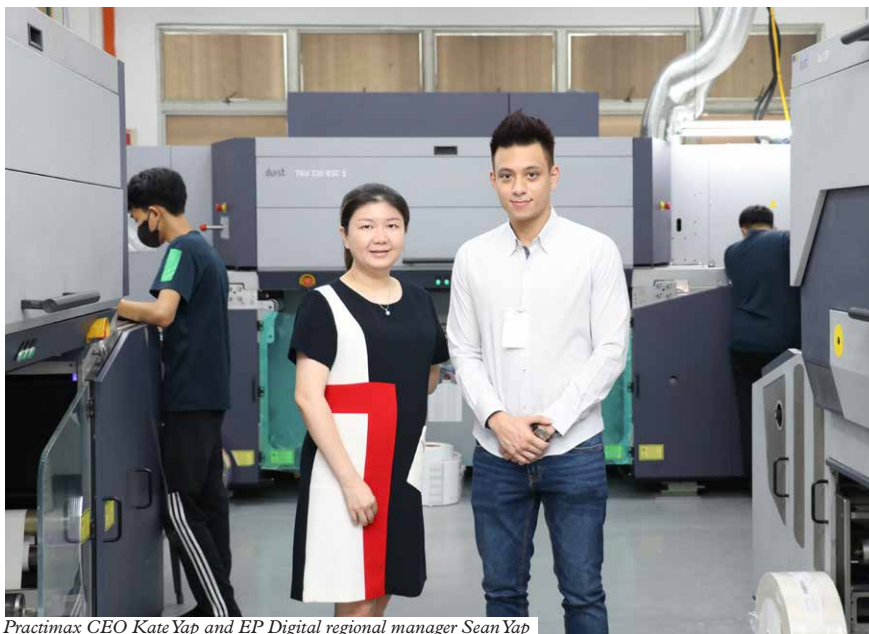
According to Yap, digital printing today has become increasingly popular. She thinks it might have even outpaced flexo printing in Practimax's operations despite digital and flexo having their pros and cons.

Specific jobs, which Practimax previously ran on silkscreen, needed high-density ink and had a particular technical requirement, such as using a rotary block. Durst Tau can handle these jobs with a press of a button, and the company does not have to allow three to four hours of set-up time. According to the company's management, all the silk screen jobs were converted to digital print shortly after the new machine installation.

'We cannot compare an apple to an orange. Both have different types of quality, but digital printing can cater not only to short-run jobs but also to medium and long run, thanks to the cost efficiency and fast turn-around. Many of our customers also require special features such as the silk-screen-like effect and additional security features on the print that the Durst machines can produce,' emphasizes Yap.

Supporting one another

Practimax secured all its Durst machines through the company's Southeast Asia partner - EP Digital (EP means to print in Chinese), which has over three decades of experience in the professional printing industry. It offers sales and services of a



Practimax CEO Kate Yap and EP Digital regional manager Sean Yap

"We have been using Durst technology for the last decade and we currently operate three digital machines. The consistent results and the speed of the Durst machines are fantastic"

wide range of high-quality graphics art equipment but specializes in digital printing presses and related consumables.

Yap notes that both companies are businesses that rely on one another. As a client, Practimax receives round-the-clock technical support from EP Digital.

'The after-sales service and support we receive from EP Digital are excellent. The company has a dedicated team and gives us 24-hour technical support. We just need to call them for assistance, and they will come to our facilities within hours to resolve the issue,' she adds.

EP Digital regional manager Sean Yap describes Practimax as a company that understands the industry's future, especially in digital printing. It is a company determined to differentiate its selling value from other competitors.

'It is the pioneer of digital printing, the first to own a digital inkjet machine in Malaysia, back in 2013. Now, it operates three different Durst machines, which are running 24/7 and offer different resolutions and speeds,' comments Sean Yap, adding that digital printing is definitely a growing market in the region.

Sean Yap continues: 'What makes Practimax particularly special is the utilization of digital printing technology to provide product authentication and offer security printing. Compared to conventional machines, digital machines can produce variable printing in a single pass. You can

print different copies when you go digital - this is especially helpful for product labels that require running or serial numbers. This makes it easy for people to track and trace the products - boxes, bottles, etc.'

Sean Yap highlights that with the outstanding support from Durst service team leader Manuel Gruber and his team, EP Digital was able to build a team of factory-trained engineers in the Southeast Asia region, available 24 hours a day and seven days a week to support Practimax and other customers in the area.

He believes that the availability of technical support from EP Digital and the Durst branding is what attracted Practimax to choose EP Digital as its business partner.

'Being Durst's SEA partner, EP Digital supports printers in the region by having our trained engineers in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam,' he adds.

Kate Yap reveals that the company recently almost doubled the size of its factory by moving from a 13,000 sqft to a 24,000 sqft production facility, reflecting its significant growth.

She also touches on Practimax's near future, where she can see potential investments and is convinced it will be another unit from Durst's portfolio.



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Minimalism meets mixology at Jimmy's Cocktails

Jimmy's Cocktails responds to the growing popularity of cocktails in India with colorful label designs, Akanksha Meena reports

Minimalism meets mixology in the packaging design for Jimmy's Cocktails, a line of premium cocktail mixers. The brand's glass bottles are adorned with bold, bright colors, adding a playful touch to the brand's modern and sophisticated aesthetic. The minimalist approach to design allows the vibrant colors to truly shine, making these bottles stand out on the shelf.

Jimmy's Cocktail is a brand of low-calorie, non-alcoholic spirits mixers founded in 2019 by Ankur Bhatia and Nitin Bhardwaj of Radiohead Brands. The brand was created in response to a shift in consumer preferences towards less sugary drinks and the growing popularity of cocktails in India.

'I was in Bombay with my friends, and I noticed that everyone who frequented bars gravitated towards cocktails,' says Bhatia. 'A larger market that drinks at home was not able to make cocktails. The solution needed to be clutter-breaking since it was a new category. To stand out, you had to look and behave differently. That's what gave rise to Jimmy's.'

The brand has a head office in Gurgaon and another in Delhi with production facilities in Nashik and Indore. The company has more than 150 employees in 20 cities.

Bhatia has worn several hats during his career which started in 2003. He worked at Motorola, joined a publication Maxim, and founded his online magazine MenXP which was acquired by Times Internet. He then worked with the automobile company Mahindra & Mahindra. In between, Bhatia also worked in the alcohol industry for six to eight years where he worked extensively in packaging.

With a background in packaging and design, he recognized the importance of the product's packaging in standing out in a crowded market. He understood the importance of labels and packaging in the spirits industry in India and wanted to create a design that was unique and memorable.

With limited marketing resources during the early stages of the start-up, Bhatia understood that the product label had to play the role of a salesman.

He chose to use glass bottles with shrink-sleeve labels, which was unusual in the alcohol industry but allowed for more space to communicate information to consumers.

Jimmy's in-house design and packaging team created several designs, but in the end, the brand stuck to its original minimalist design, featuring bright-colored shrink sleeves with text in contrasting colors. The label has a QR code at its back with information on cocktail recipes.

'When you think of a cocktail such as a margarita, it reminds one of a beach bar with salt-rimmed slim glasses and lemon on the side. But if I remove the label and look at the liquid of the cocktail mixer, you will just see a green liquid which is not as inspiring as the cocktail in my head. It was one of the reasons I chose to put a shrink sleeve on the bottle. Your memory of the cocktail is a stronger marketing weapon than the actual color of the liquid. The liquid will eventually look like a cocktail,' he explains.

The brand's packaging was recognized for its impact and won an award from Kyoorius.

Bhatia uses the 'MECE' principle for his designs. MECE stands for mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. Mutually exclusive means no overlap between each piece, while collectively exhaustive means all the pieces combined form the original item



(L-R) Founders of Jimmy's Cocktails Ankur Bhatia and Nitin Bhardwaj

"The key to our success was how we stood out on the shelf. Minimalism and simplicity in design are new to India. More and more start ups are embracing it in the last five or so years"



Jimmy's Cocktails use shrink sleeve labels for its bottles of cocktail mixers



Jimmy's Cocktails original minimalist design, feature bright-colored shrink sleeves with text in contrasting colors



Jimmy's Cocktails has launched three new product variants in cans

“We are probably the only brand in India that has no logo at the front of the can. It was unique. We wanted to stay true to design philosophy and to let the product inside do the talking”

without any gap.

‘The key to our success was how we stood out on the shelf. Minimalism and simplicity in design are new to India. More and more startups are embracing it in the last five or so years.’

Jimmy's recently launched three new variants in cans - tonic water, ginger ale and lemon ale - which posed a unique design and packaging challenge. Designing cans required a different approach than bottles. What worked with bottles did not translate well on a can and still had to adhere to brand guidelines.

After months of R&D, the cans featured Jimmy's logo vertically with a white strip as background. The cans, following the same design philosophy as bottles, come in bright colors with a minimalistic design.

‘We are probably the only brand in India that has no logo at the front of the can. It was unique. We wanted to stay true to the design philosophy and let the product inside do the talking. The design needs to pop enough for you to be attracted. The cans look better when kept together,’ he adds.

The minimalist design of the bottles and cans allows for future collaborations.

‘As a founder, I think ahead of time and have a vision. I constantly think of new ideas and already have a few ideas about the next product. My art team has a vision for collaborations and if your packaging is too design heavy, where will you place the collaboration in your brand? We have a lot of space in our design,’ Bhatia says.

Bhatia believes that the success of the brand is due to its product, not just its packaging and that consumers are savvy enough to know what the brand is without needing to oversell it.

‘Someone once told me that the minimalism on your packaging design tells me that you are so confident about your product that you don't need to say anything and that's what Jimmy's stands for.’

The company hires experts from the beverage industry and its recipes are created by the leading bartender in India.

Jimmy's labels are supplied by some of the leading converters in India. It has in-house label applicators at its plant in Nashik. The long-run labels are printed on rotogravure printing technology and short-runs are produced on flexo.

For Jimmy's can variants, the aluminum sheets are printed directly and converted in long runs. The company sources its cans from two leading suppliers in the space.

The company's packaging design department is also actively involved in R&D with its label supplier and can launch new flavors frequently, including limited editions.

MOQs were an issue at the beginning with conventional technology. However, the brand scaled rapidly in the last 1.5 years and its consumption of labels grew.

Opportunity in adversity

The company scaled rapidly during Covid despite its challenges.

Jimmy's Cocktails had just launched and was ready for lift-off in March 2020 when a country-wide lockdown was announced in India.

The brand faced several issues in those days such as supply chain limitations, rising costs and unavailability of raw materials. Shipping the product and sourcing packaging was also a hurdle.

In addition, having started in a retail format, which was shut during Covid, the company had to pivot to D2C model. At the time, the company was run by just three including Bhatia.

‘Since everything was shut, so were the bars. In those days, there was only one way to have a cocktail and that was Jimmy's. So we started marketing Jimmys' online with a tagline – “bring the bar home.”

‘Since warehouses were shut, we stored the bottles at my residence and arranged shipping of the bottles that we packed ourselves,’ he says.

As soon as the pandemic subsided, the company scaled rapidly. In FY22, the brand witnessed a growth of over 200 percent in its revenues and is now available at over 12,000 FMCG retail outlets, wine shops in over 50 cities, and at leading e-commerce/quick delivery platforms such as Swiggy Instamart, Zeptos and Blinkit. The brand delivers from its website to over 400 cities in India. Recently the brand has also started exporting to Australia, South Africa and ISC countries.

‘The moment I realized that drinking cocktail at home becomes easier, people will do it. We just needed to ensure that the product was right. Packaging and branding can make you pick up the product once but if you don't like it, no matter how good the packaging is, you will not buy it anymore. The role of packaging is to attract the consumer once on the shelf. The reason for our success is the product inside. We have a lot of repeat customers.’

The company is planning to expand its presence in the international market. Radiohead will also launch new brands with new product lines.



For more information on Jimmy's Cocktails, visit www.drinkjimmys.com



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Suxin Smart Label diversifies with equipment, innovation

Chinese label converter Suxin Smart Label has been adding digital equipment that has allowed it to create new high-value labels, Yolanda Wang reports

Suxin Smart Label, a company registered and established in 2001, is on a path of diversification - both with its technology and product offerings, as the Chinese converter lays out a roadmap for the future.

The company is equipped with a flexo press, letterpress and digital press, and primarily produces pressure-sensitive labels for the medicine, alcohol, tobacco and high-end health care sectors. Suxin Smart Label has more than 40 employees and the annual output value is close to 60 million RMB (8.9M USD).

Diving into digital

Dong Yiqun, the current chairman and general manager of Suxin Smart Label, officially took over the company in 2011, after which he carried out a comprehensive upgrade of the company's existing equipment. They eliminated the original intermittent letterpress machines, and invested in Label Source satellite letterpress and Weigang United flexo presses.

Since then Suxin has begun to invest in digital printing and finishing equipment. In July 2021, the company installed its first Pulisi digital press.

In October that same year, the company invested in Reborn digital die-cutting equipment.

A year later, in October 2022, Suxin invested in its second Pulisi digital press and Darui laser die-cutting machine.

Dong Yiqun explains the company's decision to mix conventional flexo presses and digital technology.

'We already had demand for short run, personalized, variable data label orders before investing in digital machines. We also find that the number of such orders continues to increase. Therefore, when choosing digital technology, our goal was very clear. We chose this technology to meet the needs of existing customers, but it also aligns with the company's future business expansion plan. The digital press we need must not only have stable performance, but we also require professional and timely after-sale service.'

After assessing Pulisi's digital printing equipment, Suxin quickly made its purchasing decision.

'We have been cooperating with Pulisi



Pulisi digital press installed in Suxin Smart Label

"We already had demand for short run, personalized, variable data label orders before investing in digital machines. We also find that the number of such orders continues to increase. When choosing digital technology, our goal was very clear"

for a long time,' Yiqun says. 'Digital printing equipment is a new product for Pulisi. We had already installed their label inspection equipment and were very satisfied with their team's professionalism, after-sales service and timeliness in handling problems. We believe that their experience in the label industry will enable them to anticipate and solve any problems we may encounter in the label printing process.'

After installing its digital printing equipment, Suxin began exploring ways to innovate. Leveraging the advantages of digital printing technology, the company experimented with materials, design and the print process. The end result was anti-counterfeit, intelligent labels with variable data and two-dimensional codes.

A year and a half later, these labels

account for 20 percent of the company's total business.

Market-oriented

The company says it is difficult to evaluate which printing technology is best for the current label market, because each has its own strengths and weaknesses. For example, letterpress technology has stable color and print quality; flexographic printing is more environmentally friendly and productive, especially with the ongoing progress of plate and plate-making technology. Digital technology removes the need for plates, allows for higher flexibility, and can produce variable data and personalized labels, which helps increase the added value of label products.

'This is the real reason why we invest

in different label printing technologies,' Yiqun explains. 'Label products are used in many fields, such as food, beverage, medical equipment, household chemicals, supermarkets, oil and automotive supplies.

Different label products have different requirements for label material, process, die cutting, temperature and humidity adaptability, oil resistance and other performance characteristics. This requires label converters to use different printing and finishing machines to produce all these different kinds of labels.'

Suxin also needs more flexible and diversified services to keep pace with the needs of brands catering to Gen Z, who want packaging that appeals to their personalities, and their social and product quality demands.

Innovation

After years of development, Suxin has gained its ISO90001 certification, building on its new equipment, standardized ERP system and operating procedures. Today Suxin has become a premium quality supplier to major end users including Hubei China Tobacco, Wahaha, Sinopec, DyStar (China), Phoenix (Asia Pacific), Jinjia Group, Dongfeng Group, Skyworth and other well-known brands.

In 2022, China's overall economic growth slowed, and the label printing industry was also greatly affected. To cope, Suxin implemented what it called the '361 strategy': 30 percent orders from new customers, 60 percent long-run orders and 10 percent of production dedicated to product development and market testing. This finally allowed the company to achieve 10 percent growth through 2022.

While actively seeking new business, Suxin continues to improve and promote its employees' skills. Innovation is used as a driving force to create new products.

To date, the company has secured more than 20 patents for

“We chose this technology to meet the needs of existing customers, but it also aligns with the company’s future business expansion plan. The digital press we need must not only have stable performance, but we also require professional and timely after-sale services”

products such as a self-adhesive labels for woven bags, and a new double-sided adhesive label.

The company has increased its share of export orders, particularly after the outbreak of Covid-19.

In 2022, Suxin moved to a new plant located in Guozhuang Town, Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province. The first phase has been completed and put into operation, with a production area of 4,500 sqm. It is expected that after the completion of the second phase, Suxin's production area will expand to 15,000 sqm.

Including the staff dormitory and canteen, the plant will exceed 20,000 sqm. Suxin expects its annual output will soon reach a value of 100 million RMB (14M USD).



Turn to page 109 to read more on the Chinese label market



The workshop of Suxin Smart Label

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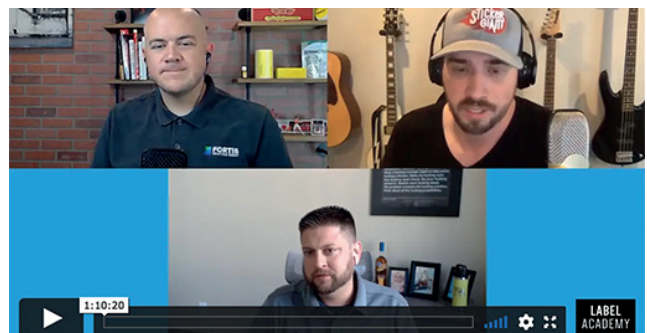
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2023 PREDICTIONS

What's in store for the year ahead? Industry experts have their say

Matt Burton, global sales director, A B Graphic International

Despite a turbulent and challenging 2022, the label market has maintained its resourcefulness and flexibility by continuing to grow and innovate. 2023 will undoubtedly be another challenging year, with macro-economic factors affecting global markets, supply chains and the labor market. From an ABG perspective, we have witnessed a massive rise in automation, which is set to continue into 2023. This means that there will be more ABG machines being sold with connectivity (ABG Connect workflow products) to enhance efficiencies.

Paola Iannone, vice president of marketing and communications, All4Labels

2022 has been a year of renewed turbulence and challenges on the global economic and political landscape. However, a strong boost driven by technology, digitalization and innovation allowed the segment to reach good performance and results. To keep on growing and evolving, some main trends must be under the spotlight in the upcoming year. First, sustainability will certainly continue to be central to business and internal operations. As a key player in the global economic market, we should care about both market's needs as well as about our planet. For this reason, our driving force is to keep on investing in sustainable solutions for the packaging industry, delivering continuous technological innovation, developing new materials and applications aimed at facilitating the recycling process, and at enhancing the circular economy. To meet these ambitious goals, we strongly believe in the power of the network, and we establish continuous collaboration with institutions, associations, universities and other companies.

Another core trend for the upcoming year is the digitalization of packaging, aimed at encouraging consumer interaction and providing more customized buying experiences. We expect an increase in the use of QR Codes and smart solutions to promote and facilitate direct communication and interaction between brands and their consumers. These technologies provide the opportunity to share additional information, create unique experiences through gamification, provide access to dedicated online platforms, and customizable experiences according to all needs.

Jeroen Diderich, senior vice president and general manager for label and graphic materials for North America, Avery Dennison

After two years of pandemic-fueled disruption, a host of new challenges arose in 2022 — paper shortages, rising inflation, the war in Ukraine and more — leading us to rethink once again how we work and plan. As we look to 2023, we expect to see a more challenging macroeconomic environment. We are taking this time to prepare for this economic uncertainty while focusing on three main priorities - improving the customer experience, prioritizing our sustainability journey and advancing the adoption of intelligent labels.

We believe that sustainability will play an increasingly important role both in business practices and in consumers' value equation next year. In the US, we continue to see more regulations being introduced along with retailers and brands looking to measure their carbon footprint. It will be increasingly important for the industry to continue to drive circularity with

products that contain recycled content as well as ones designed to enable recycling.

As more brands continue to seek visibility across their supply chain, RFID technology adoption will offer exciting possibilities at every step of the value chain across industries. Avery Dennison is also embracing digital tools to deliver reliable data, simple tools, personalized information and easy-to-access support to provide an unmatched customer experience.

Patrick Graber, strategic marketing manager for labels, Bobst

The major overall industry trends include workforce shortages, reduction of run length, high demand for just-in-time production, strong focus on waste reduction (electricity, material and time) and, therefore, high demand for automated and digitalized solutions in flexo and digital. 2022 marked a strong recovery in labels, but it is now likely to slow down due to the current political and economic situations around the world. Another trend is the need for converters to have different technologies on the production floor to increase product offerings and optimize production.

We are seeing an increase in companies moving away from offline towards online ordering technologies for labels and packaging. Data-driven and automation are becoming more and more important every day to counter the lack of manpower and skilled workforce and to reduce costs and waste. In this regard, we see many developments around technologies that reduce the impact of the operator on the quality of the final output. We expect to see a significant increase in end-to-end production lines, covering the whole process from the pdf to the final label in one line.

Looking forward, we are very proud of the success of the Bobst Digital Master series, as well as the strong demand for our highly automated inline flexo Master M6, using Bobst V-Flower and oneECG printing technologies. Our customers keep investing in conventional printing equipment and, at the same time, adopting digital inkjet solutions to increase their product offerings and to meet brand owner requirements.

2023 could be a challenging year across all industries, given the social environment. However, we are confident that most of our customers will continue to invest, even if at a slower pace, because of the expected decline in print volumes in certain sectors. The Covid-19 pandemic proved that labels and packaging are more resilient than other sectors.

Mike Barry, key account and OEM manager, Domino North America

The label industry is heading towards digital printing. For many years it was looked upon as a 'nice to have,' but it has truly evolved into a 'need to have' for label converters to be competitive, to maintain and grow their business. Certainly, the proliferation of SKUs that has evolved has highlighted the benefits of digital printing, but in addition, brand owners want what digital printing provides, such as color consistency and repeatability from label to label, personalization and variable data printing, shorter lead times and quicker turn-around times / just-in-time delivery, reduced inventory. Regarding technology, certainly, 1,200 dpi is gaining attention. The best-fit technology depends on a label converter's book of business and the markets they serve. For example, 1,200 dpi provides benefits

for pharmaceutical applications (for micro text) and cosmetics, health and beauty (for smooth gradients). However, for many markets, 600 dpi is still a great choice.

Label material supply chain challenges and material shortages showcase the importance of digital printing. Digital printing minimizes label material waste and maximizes efficiency and productivity. So, in a supply chain crisis with shortages and limited allocations of material, label converters can 'get more from less' using digital printing.

Also, it's important to note that with label materials there may be variations or deviations in quality, so it is important to work with a digital printing provider that can provide a priming station as part of the digital printing solution. This allows for the best quality print regardless of substrate material quality.

Paul Rason, managing director for the Middle East, Turkey and Africa, ePac Flexible Packaging

What happened to 2022? It only feels like yesterday that we were predicting what might happen in 2022! I am sure that many of my peers will talk about sustainability for 2023, and whilst I believe this represents a worthy mention and prediction (again!), we are very much a global organization, and we can see that each region and market have its different opportunities, challenges and trends. Perhaps a common thread that unites all markets is the rapid adoption of automated workflows and manufacturing technologies and e-commerce. Clearly, competition is driving this, but Covid may have played a role as well. We have seen this before when we had SARS in 2002, which acted as a catalyst for e-commerce at that time.

At ePac, we firmly believe in investing and deploying technology to improve our service and offerings to our clients. We recently announced ePac ONE (One Network Everywhere) where our global presses will be connected via cloud technology.

However, we must not forget to talk with our customers. We need to understand their business, their value chain, and their pain points to provide greater levels of convenience and agility. So, in 2023, I see greater levels of investment in technology across our industry, but we will continue to engage actively with our customers.

Jan De Roeck, director of marketing, industry relations and strategy, Esko

Today's brands and their packaging suppliers are facing a catalog of challenges, which technology and innovation will play a key role in overcoming.

As we move into 2023, the macroeconomic and societal trends that we expect to shape the packaging industry include everything from the growth in omni-channel shopping and ever-changing consumer behavior through the pressures of margin compression and, of course, the urge to reduce the impact of production operations on the environment we live in. Through all this, it is important businesses acknowledge and address how digital transformation is key to surviving and thriving in the future.

Simply put, it is now imperative that companies review their current business operations and identify areas where they can make meaningful improvements, drive operational efficiencies and reduce waste so that they not only survive but thrive.

We are already working towards this with workflow innovation designed specifically to make it easier for people and processes to connect, automate operations and drive operational improvements. We are bringing to market new technological developments that will advance the industry, helping businesses mitigate risk and optimize opportunity while preparing for the predicted megatrends of the coming year.

An ongoing digital transformation agenda will prove essential

in 2023 as packaging companies look to technology to make it easier to connect their people and processes, access data, automate operations and drive the operational efficiency they need.

Melissa Harton, marketing manager for North America, Fedrigoni

We are finally emerging from what was a delicate balancing act of supply and demand. In the second half of 2022, customers over-ordered to ensure they had products on the floor. As a result, order entry started to level off in Q4. As we enter 2023, we anticipate order entry will increase. We also expect to see lead times getting closer to pre-Covid.

Raw material delays from film suppliers will continue to soften, and some of the uncertainty surrounding transit will level off. For how long? This can change quickly with additional plant closures, inclement weather, etc.

However, in general, the North American paper market remains unstable, and further demand has us facing allocations, longer lead times, and potential cost increases. In addition, labor shortages remain as we continue to see historically low unemployment rates.

Sustainability will remain a top priority for our industry. Converters will continue to seek sustainable alternatives from raw material suppliers – thinner gauge, recycled content, alternate fibers, APR, FSC, compostable, etc. Corporate ESG goals will be a key driver for many suppliers as our customers and their end users expect greener manufacturing methods and materials that promote recycling and reuse and limit environmental impact.

We also anticipate growth in premium wine and spirits (sustainable labeling will have an increased focus). Premiumization will also continue as a superior shelf presence is required to earn the consumers' attention.

Robert Rae, managing director of sales, GEW

Our industry will see increasing focus from brands and private equity on sustainability targets. On top of this, we expect Europe to see a continuing increase in electricity costs as unsustainable subsidy programs are scaled back, and fixed-rate contracts continue to expire. This will further accelerate the rate of UV LED retrofits of existing mercury vapor lamp technology. We could see nearly 10 percent of the GEW installed base in Europe converted to LED by the end of the year. In the US big end-user groups are increasingly considering group-wide conversion programs, too. GEW is very optimistic about the LED market next year. Arc lamp production will continue to decline after it peaked in 2018.

Supply chain issues, especially on electronics will persist driven by continuing political uncertainty in Asia and Covid issues in China. This will continue to weigh on press lead times and remains the major production challenge amongst equipment manufacturers. Increasing interest rates and slowing economies will soften some capital investment programs, but our biggest concern is on personnel with recruitment persistently difficult and costs increase in line with high inflation rates. Finally, there is an overriding feeling of uncertainty: what will be next year's 'once in a lifetime' crisis?

Eli Mahal, head of L&P marketing, HP Indigo

Overall, the print industry has witnessed continued growth throughout 2022. Many markets have successfully returned to their pre-Covid levels, with some areas, such as commercial, even surpassing these levels. However, as major supply chain constraints begin to settle and the global economy slows down due to the looming recession, the industry growth rate has slowed down, mostly attributed to brands lowering inventories

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built during the preceding months, when they bought whatever stock they could get their hands on.

As we head into 2023, we will begin to see a shift in brands' mindsets. Brands will become more concerned about emptying the shelves rather than filling them, highlighting the need to drive demand generation and fighting fiercely for consumer attention.

This will drive an increase in engaging consumers with personalization, new designs and campaigns, and offering same-day delivery. In turn, this will bring new opportunities for the print industry, which must respond to this shift in demand by being more efficient than ever before whilst battling challenges of labor and material shortages and increased power and supply costs.

We will see label and packaging converters diversify into pouches and shrink sleeves as they utilize narrow web press capabilities with a range of applications. Series 3 presses enable label converters to produce high-quality pressure-sensitive, in-mold, wet glue and wrap-around labels. Pressure-sensitive label converters utilizing a narrow web HP Indigo press can jump-start their digital shrink sleeve journey by using the premium white for shrink sleeves to cater to the needs of small brands, short runs, campaigns and more. This process is a good fit for producing shrink sleeves without investing in coating process equipment to achieve a low-friction surface.

As we move into the new year, sustainability will continue to remain top of the agenda for brands and print businesses alike, which will move away from being just a trend to a requirement.

New technologies and concepts such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) are slowly making their way into the print industry, changing the way labels, packaging, commercial and corrugated printers run their day-to-day businesses.

In 2023, the print industry will continue to implement automation into its entire workflows, starting with investments in smart devices, such as HP Indigo and PageWide digital presses, the integration of software with existing production environments, increased digital efficiency via advanced digital tools, and leveraging the growth of e-commerce to automate production end-to-end.

Mike Rottenborn, chief executive officer, Hybrid Software Group

The printing industry, especially labels and packaging, showed tremendous resilience during the pandemic, and we expect this to continue during 2023, despite recessionary economies, high-interest rates, and rising energy costs. Strong businesses learn to adapt, and many printers and converters continue to execute process improvements initiated during the pandemic, including:

- Data-driven automation: smart factories driven by ERP systems, with fewer human touchpoints and reduced labor costs
- Just-in-time production: digital printing reduces capital costs for raw materials and finished goods inventory
- Software-as-a-service: centralization of job data and production software in the cloud, with lower acquisition costs and minimal IT staffing

All businesses must also operate sustainably. We've been carbon neutral for the past two years, but sustainability is more than that. For a business to operate sustainably, it must be sustainable itself. For technology suppliers, that means steady, profitable growth to allow engineers to deliver printing solutions that meet future needs. Our customers operate in a challenging environment and face price increases for everything from raw materials to energy and employee salaries. Thus, we've decided not to increase our software or maintenance prices in 2023 to

better help everyone navigate the coming recession. We look forward to a fast recovery and a bright future for the industry.

Rahul Kapur, director, J K Labels

In 2022, We have seen a large number of new startup companies in sectors such as food, beverage, personal care, etc. Many of the new products being launched today were unheard of a decade ago.

The biggest dissimilarity between the new startups from the age-old traditional businesses is the curiosity for learning.

The new generation firms are very keen on understanding all the product options, applications and benefits. This makes it even more important for us as label solution providers to be always updated.

Client meetings, which used to revolve mainly around single product price points, have refreshingly progressed towards new product offerings and brainstorming new ideas to enhance the product brand value of the customer.

The winners of 2023 will need to be good at educating clients and keeping them always updated with new product offerings. There is an immense opportunity for sticker label manufacturing companies today to create value by providing premium materials, inks & security solutions.

Jimit Mittal, president, Jetsci Global

The pandemic served as both an accelerator as well as a disruptor for the printing industry, and it was not easy to sail through 2022 due to shrinking profit margins and recurring pressure on logistics and supply chain. 2023 will also have its own set of challenges as increased interest rates, a strong dollar, inflated oil prices, hikes in prices for gas and energy due to the Ukraine-Russia war and economic slowdown in China have adversely impacted the economies across the globe which in turn impacted the industry growth negatively all across, and ours is no exception. We export our solutions globally and have observed the effect of inflation strongly. Despite all this, the scales are weighing heavily in favor of digital technology in the year 2023 and ahead.

Growth in digital printing is inevitable and we, MSL-Jetsci Global, being one of the prominent industry players manufacturing and delivering digital solutions for the labels and packaging industry, are geared up with our latest machines and presses based on innovative technology, 'Made in India' to transform the business and industry digitally in 2023. As it is said, 'When the going gets tough, the tough get going'. MSL- Jetsci Global will turn the tide in its favor.

Matt Smith, operational manager, Kingfisher Labels UK

If anything, the supply chain instability of 2022 only confirms the difficulty of predicting what the future holds. But as companies identify and commit to reducing the environmental impact of their operations, 2023 will see a continued focus on sustainable packaging. It's worth investing in sustainable solutions and alternatives if companies currently use a large amount of plastic, as well as eco-conscious production methods.

With stability expected to return to the supply chain in 2023, customer requirements will demand that innovation and technological advances continue to add value and enhance operational capability. Labeling businesses are constantly looking for ways to be time-efficient and more productive, so service must remain adaptable and flexible. Investment is going to be central to that trend as well; the better technology a company has, the more it'll satisfy its customers.

Visual branding is also going to consistently evolve in 2023. New packaging designs and techniques, including the use of eye-catching colors, typographic scrawl prints and intriguing

brand mascots, are going to become more important. Labeling companies will need to have a thorough understanding of their customers' design requirements to help their products stand out on the shelves.

Tom Cavaleo, executive vice president, Mark Andy

Looking at the market from a wider perspective, the demand for labels is high and still growing. We assume this trend will remain in 2023. High demand for labels affects the long-term strategies of printers and converters, motivating them to start new investment projects and implement changes that increase efficiency and profitability and enable gaining new customers. Print buyers increasingly pay attention to production calculation costs, delivery time, optimizing or lowering runs, and product versioning (including VDP). We also observe increasing print buyers' expectations of improving quality, as well as their growing eco-consciousness, in terms of implementing more sustainable solutions and materials, reducing waste, eco-efficiency, lowering carbon footprint, etc. All these factors influence on choosing efficient and profitable printing technology by converters worldwide. The increasing number of printers, including traditional ones based on flexo technology, are aware of these global trends, and they respond by investing in Mark Andy hybrid presses. Some of our customers have already bought another hybrid press to expand their production capacity.

Printers will more precisely divide their production between digital and flexo technologies, making it more profitable and meeting the growing needs of print buyers, in terms of more creative and sophisticated label designs. We expect increasing demand for multi-unit presses, enabling one-pass inline production, equipped with a translator module for peel-off labels. We also predict a growing interest in RFID technology, driven by brand owners looking for new ways of automating and streamlining sales and logistics processes.

Grant Blewett, chief commercial officer, Miracron

The current economic climate will continue driving trade shops and converters' investment decisions, with a growing need for technology that enables savings across the value chain. With the right technology, higher levels of consistency, on-press efficiency and press uptime, reduced energy usage, plate, ink and substrate waste – all while contributing to sustainability initiatives – can be achieved and businesses need to take advantage of it to ensure continued business growth.

Trade shops and converters are also telling us how a simple plate portfolio that eliminates plate inconsistencies, increases efficiency and productivity, and addresses brands' critical quality demands, allows them to concentrate their efforts on other parts of the production process. I believe this will be of increasing importance as businesses navigate through the next 12 months.

As for flexo printing itself, I believe it will continue making inroads into new markets as brands and converters see it as a viable and cost-effective alternative to packaging previously produced with gravure and offset printing. The reduced time to market and sustainability benefits offered by flexo printing are also proving to be important factors in brands' packaging design and production specifications.

Screen Europe

The packaging and label industry is under increasing pressure from consumer groups to reduce its environmental impact by creating more sustainable packaging. One rapidly growing trend is the reduction of plastic material used in packaging. Many market research studies have shown that consumers perceive paper-based packaging as a more environmentally friendly and easy-to-recycle format for the products they buy. Brand owners,

meanwhile, are demanding shorter turnaround times with a higher degree of product diversification (more SKUs). Packaging and label converters are not able to adapt their analog printing equipment (flexo, gravure or offset) to handle the increase in variability in packaging & label designs and order frequency.

In response to these market trends, Screen GA is moving forward with product planning for its Truepress PAC 520P – a high-speed, water-based inkjet digital press for paper-based packaging and label substrates with a much lower environmental impact than conventional printing processes. This is due to a drastic reduction in energy and material waste. The Truepress PAC 520P utilizes newly developed proprietary water-based pigment inks that comply with appropriate food-safety regulations

Linnea Keen, president, TLMI

Each year brings a new set of opportunities and challenges, and 2023 is no different. In speaking with both converter and supplier members, challenges include economic outlook, inflation, continued supply chain disruptions, transportation, workforce and market demand. The past two years have been a whirlwind and TLMI members have valiantly navigated the turbulence. This year, many anticipate the challenges will settle down as the year goes on and companies will resume a sense of normalcy, or perhaps, what we know as the 'new normal'.

TLMI's events in 2023 will focus on topics that are top of mind for our members. For example, the TLMI Converter Meeting in March will focus on economic outlook, regulatory, supply chain, sustainability, and workforce. The results of TLMI Management Ratio Study will be shared with members, and Eugene Singer Award winners will be announced.

As in every year, TLMI's focus is continued support for our members and the industry. What we see first-hand, daily, is that companies that cultivate a strong work culture driven by deep engagement and purposeful work overcome challenges, find success, beat their competitors, and attract the best talent. TLMI's mission of Community, Insight and Advocacy, enables us to unlock the power of membership to educate, grow business, and bring value.

Harveer Sahni, chairman, Weldon Celloplast

With sustainability, environmental concerns, circular economy and waste management becoming the buzzwords, now the brand owners will be increasingly insisting on measures to reduce the environmental impact and carbon footprint. With large brands planning to do away with primary packaging, the importance of a label as the major marketing tool will become evident. Products coming from certified green factories will be preferred by large label buyers, more so in view of growing regulatory measures coming in. With a large portion of the young literate population opting for startups instead of jobs, digital printing will increasingly become preferred for short runs and personalized or variable printed jobs. Already the need for entry-level digital label presses is becoming evident because the higher-end presses are quite expensive. Competition impacts in two positive ways, which are; increased innovation to create a better shelf appeal and to produce economies of scale in case of larger orders to maintain healthy bottom lines. In both cases efficient machines with higher embellishing capabilities, lower wastages, increased automation, lower energy consumption and lesser dependence on operators will find preference with the enterprising label companies.

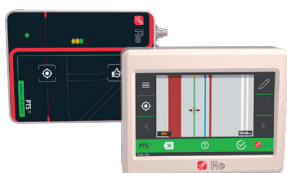


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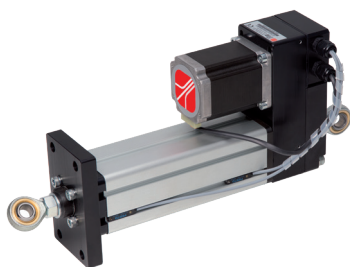


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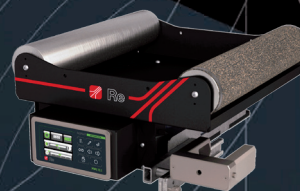
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Packaging design trends to unwrap in 2023

Packaging design is constantly evolving, and the trends for 2023 are no exception. With the focus on sustainability, we can expect to see a rise in eco-friendly packaging designs. Brands will also be looking for new ways to make their products stand out, through earthy colors, tactile effects and interactive elements. Here are the top five packaging design trends to look out for in 2023. Akanksha Meena reports

Touch and feel

Tactile texture in labels and packaging has picked up considerably as it adds an additional dimension to packaging, appealing to other senses besides sight. The use of tactile elements in packaging, such as raised lettering, embossed patterns, or textured surfaces, creates a luxury feel and helps the product stand out on the shelf. Consumers are more likely to remember a product that they have physically engaged with, rather than just seen.

Packaging that is designed to be touched and handled, with high-quality materials and attention to detail, can convey a sense of craftsmanship that instills trust in the consumer.

Leading manufacturers of digital and conventional embellishment technologies are enabling brands to think beyond vision. Brands can benefit from latest developments in embellishment technologies offering in-line options for foiling, varnishing, embossing and debossing techniques to create tactile effects on labels and packaging.



Tactile effects on Sipello spirits



Shrink sleeves on Jimmy's Cocktails

Wrap around design

Wrap-around labels and shrink sleeves offer a 360-degree decoration option that makes a strong visual impact on the shelf. One of the main benefits of wrap-around patterns in packaging design is that they allow for a seamless flow of the design, and offer more real estate to designers. This can be particularly effective when creating a flowy pattern or a series of variants that are kept together. This creates a cohesive and visually pleasing design that can make a strong shelf impact. In addition, wrap-around patterns can also be used to create a sense of movement.

This type of design also allows for more information to be put on the packaging about the product and add additional details through interactive technologies such as QR codes.

Wrap-around patterns are particularly effective with shrink sleeves labels that are popular in the beverage segment. For example, Jimmy's Cocktails brand of cocktail mixers uses shrink sleeves to create a strong impression with its bold-colored sleeves in a minimalist design that allows space for more information without looking cluttered.

Earthy tones

Earth-toned, subdued colors have been gaining popularity, and is often associated with sustainable and eco-friendly products. Earthy colors such as forest green, deep brown and beige are used to create a natural and organic aesthetic that resonates with consumers who are looking for more environmentally-friendly products.

'We'll continue to see a thirst for retro in 2023, but possibly a backlash to the clashing, bold colors of the 90s we've seen making a comeback in recent years. The calmer, cooler, more relaxed 60s and 70s vibe will be making an appearance (as they do, periodically) with warmer, earthy hues, more relaxed typefaces, and familiar illustrative styles. It's all about making people feel less stressed and more comfy in volatile times,' says Weedon.

Newer printing technologies and ink-mixing methods have also made it possible for brands to print new colors on their packaging and labels. This has led to a wider range of color options for brands, allowing them to create truly unique and eye-catching designs.



Scence chooses Earthy tones for its packaging



Lovimals brand is instantly recognizable with variations of brand elements

Mascot variations

Mascot variants have become a popular trend in packaging design as advancements in digital print technology allow for the creation of several variations of designs on a single run. This can include different poses, expressions, or even multiple mascots on a single package. This trend increases engagement with consumers and can open new branding and collaboration opportunities.

A mascot can even be customized to reach a specific demographic or region.

Mascot variants also add a level of brand personality to the product. A unique and memorable mascot can help build an emotional connection with consumers. It can also be used to tell the brand's story.

Kieron Weedon agrees: 'We'll see brands taking real ownership via labels and packaging, as distinctiveness and premiumization become increasingly important.'

'Brand mascots, characters and cartoons will bring an ownable personality to brands across multiple channels. We'll see more brands develop bespoke typefaces that more closely reflect their tone and personality. We'll also see increasingly innovative ways for people to interact with labels and packaging, either physically (think tactile materials or interesting tears) or virtually (QR, VR, AR), to truly bring the brand to life in the most visual sense.'



xxx

Sustainable materials

In recent years, sustainability has become an increasingly important consideration for brands when it comes to packaging design. As material suppliers develop more sustainable materials and as global concern for the environment increases, more and more brands are becoming ethical in their packaging. In 2023, sustainability is expected to continue to be a major trend in packaging design for brands, as companies look for ways to reduce their environmental impact and appeal to consumers who are increasingly conscious of sustainability.

With advances in technology, material suppliers are now able to create eco-friendly alternatives to traditional packaging materials such as plastic. These include materials such as bioplastics, made from plant-based sources, and paper-based packaging made from recycled materials. Brands can now choose to use these materials in their packaging, reducing their environmental impact and appeal to consumers who are looking for more sustainable options.

Additionally, governments and organizations are implementing regulations and guidelines on sustainable packaging, which will also drive brands to adopt more sustainable practices.

'Sustainability credentials will continue to challenge design and production in the industry. Brands will need to explore new ways to create and print labels and packaging that reduce carbon footprints further than before. Offsetting is no longer enough for consumers,' Weedon concludes.



Snackzilla uses sustainable packaging materials



Turn to page 24 for more on branding and design from columnist Vicki Strull

Labelexpo India 2022 review

Labelexpo India 2022 returns with a record-setting event. Akanksha Meena, Andy Thomas-Emans and Chelsea McDougall report

At Labelexpo India 2022, the show floor was buzzing with the noise of running machines on all four days. Indian press manufacturers dominated the show floor, showcasing the latest technology from servo-driven flexo presses to hybrid digital technology with flexo and in-line finishing and converting options. Digital print technology manufacturers also launched new presses with high-speed print capabilities along with in-line finishing options for multiple product applications. Western press manufacturers also had a presence in the region, but not with a press on display. Manufacturers of both flexo and digital presses reported multiple sales during the show.

Press Technology

Academi a. promoted Etirama presses at an exclusive exhibition rate for the first time at Labelexpo India.

Gujarat-based flexo press manufacturer **AKO Flexo** participated for the first time at Labelexpo India 2022. The company displayed its 330mm 8-color flexo printing machine with add-on features.

AKO Flexo is a joint venture based across China and India. The presses are designed and manufactured in Shanghai, China, using European and Japanese ancillary components. A production facility is planned for Ahmedabad, India, which is currently a demo center. Other demo centers are in Hyderabad and in East Africa. The company says it has over 80 Delta press installations globally, including five in India.

The Delta press is available in widths of 330, 420 and 520mm. It is servo-driven and features horizontal die-cutting units, semi-turret rewinder options, auto pre- and re-registration, dual servos in each print station, temperature-controlled ink chamber, quick load anilox and plate system. Large diameter chill drums increase the substrate range from 12 microns up to 300 microns. Options include rotogravure and screen units.

Arrow Digital unveiled ArrowJet Aqua 330r Hybrid Pro at the show. The ArrowJet Aqua 330r Hybrid Pro uses water-based pigment inks in a single-pass inkjet system. It utilizes Memjet Duraflex technology and prints at 1600 x 1600 dpi at speeds of up to 45 m/min on a width of 12.27in with inline priming, digital printing, and varnishing on the same line.

The water-based pigment inks are Nestle compliant, which is critical for the food and

pharma industry. It can print micro text with a sharpness of 2pt size.

Epson relaunched its range of SurePress digital label presses in India after a four-year break. The company promoted its presses at the show.

Konica Minolta demonstrated its AccurioLabel 230 digital press along with the AccurioPro Label Impose workflow tool for digital label production. The company also showcased label samples produced on the newly launched Accuriolabel 400 press. Important new developments on the Accuriolabel 400 include a white toner, improved print speeds of up to 39.9 m/min and enhanced print quality.

Monotech Systems showcased its Colornovo hybrid and KolorSmart+ 6-color and 7-color UV inkjet label production presses equipped with inline finishing and converting options, along with a new version of the 4-color ColorAqua, an entry-level digital label production system equipped with inline flexo finishing options.

The company launched and offered live demonstrations of its dSpark UV inkjet digital varnish and cold foiling press. A Ricoh sheetfed digital label production press was also shown live at the show.

The company sold a Jetsci Global Colornovo Hybrid press to Noida-based Shriram Veritech Solutions, part of Shriram Group of Companies, on the third day of Labelexpo India 2022. It also sold ColorAqua Hybrid press to Wonderpac.

Monotech also launched a blockchain-based product authentication system that uses hidden images built into label artwork as an ID source. The company's Tracesci track-and-trace system is designed to combat counterfeit and product diversion in

Labelexpo India by numbers:

Exhibitors: 250

Visitors: 12,000

An increase of: 22% from 2018

Last Show: 2018

Next Show: 14-17 November 2024

the supply chain.

The base system uses a digitally printed personalized QR code on the label to identify the individual product. Customized apps are made available to consumers and audit inspectors to verify a product's authenticity. Alerts can be automatically sent based on Geo Data analysis and consumer interaction with the app to allow brand owners to respond to possible breaches in the supply chain for their products.

A new development for Tracesci, launched at Labelexpo India 2022, is for labels too small to include a usable QR code - or where the brand owner does not want a QR code intruding on the label design. In this case a hidden graphic is incorporated into the artwork, triggering the app.

The Tracesci system has two models depending on the scale of the user. The Cloud Solution is targeted at small brands and companies without their own technical teams. The Enterprise Solution is targeted at large corporations, big brands, government departments and similar-sized organizations.

Multitec displayed its S1 full servo press in an 8-color 450mm configuration. The press is equipped with a combination of LED and UV dryers, multi-layer coupon label kit



Avery Dennison modeled its booth around four zones, representing the company's commitments to the region and overall global strategy

“Labelexpo India 2022 was the biggest show so far in its history in terms of both participation and visitors. The four-day show was packed with new visitors from commercial print industry eyeing labels market and neighboring countries including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka”

and new operator friendly features.

The company also showcased the new E4 press with twin servo technology and a full LED UV configuration.

A QSR Slitter rewinder with 100 percent defect detection ran live at the show.

Visitors saw live demonstrations of printing on thin substrates including 12-micron PET, 2-layer labels and features such as auto-registration. The company introduced several new features in its presses at the show.

Flexo Image Graphics, Mark Andy's representative in India, promoted its newest flexo and digital/hybrid technology. It signed several contracts, mainly with Indian and Chinese companies.

Omet promoted its range of printing presses, their features, advantages and the new technologies developed by the company. In particular, it promoted the new KFlex flexo press.

The KFlex is a new fully servo-driven model with a web width of 430mm or 530mm and a maximum printing speed of 200m/min. The Switch system allows the press to be quickly adapted to new production needs using interchangeable modules.

HP Indigo in collaboration with Technova Imaging Solutions showcased an HP Indigo 6K digital press, with applications shown across labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging with live demonstrations. The company announced the sale of the 6K press to Wonderpac on the first day of the show.

Pulisi launched its Aobead digital press using Epson PrecisionCore printheads with

LED-UV curing and capable of printing an additional digital varnish in the same pass. The press has a total of eight print stations and incorporates two flexo units. Configured with chill drums the press can handle materials down to 20 microns, opening up applications in flexible packaging and unsupported label materials.

The Aobead press is currently manufactured in China, but an additional production facility will be opened in India in the near future.

The press will be distributed in the US and Mexico by Ajay Mehta. Mehta is a well-known figure in the Indian label industry as the founder of self-adhesive laminate manufacturer SMI, which he recently sold to Jindal.

Representing Taiyo Kikai Japan, **Standard Printers Providers** promoted Taiyo's UV flexo narrow web label press capable of handling a wide range of substrates including paper, films, light-weight carton and laminates.

Vinsak promoted Lombardi range of flexo presses including the newly launched I2 mid-web press, along with the Iwasaki range of semi-rotary presses including the newly launched IF 330 intermittent flexo press.

Printing and converting machine supplier **S Kumar** sold multiple presses at the show. Shri Morya Labels in Mumbai bought a 6-color UV label press and Maurya Labels in Mumbai purchased a fully loaded 6-color flexo press. S Kumar is also the distributor of **Zonten** machines in India. The supplier sold multiple Zonten presses at Labelexpo India 2022 including the three machines on display at its stand.

Press manufacturer **Webtech**

International Machineries launched its latest generation Labeltech X1 Series flexo press in an 8-color, 410mm wide configuration.

Domino was showcasing its K600i monochrome UV inkjet unit for adding variable data at speeds up to 150m/min. Applications include printing serial barcodes and single-color variable data.

UV Graphics booth launched the Ultraflex Dominator hybrid press. The press consists of four flexo print stations, a Domino N600i 7-color engine and a retractable Domino K600i module for variable data or variable varnish. The press is equipped with semi-rotary die-cutting units, but converters can add an optional laser die-cutting unit.

Also on the booth was the Ultraflex UFO 450 8-color flexo press configured with full LED-UV, delam and relam, turn bar, peel and seal and cold foil, with the facility for extended content label production. The manufacturer secured five orders during the first two days of the show.

NBG Printographic Machinery demonstrated a 430mm (17in)-wide 8-color Starflex narrow web press, capable of printing at up to 200m/min. The press was demonstrated with LED-UV curing throughout, printing with Siegwirk inks and including a cold foil station.

The Starflex press at the show was configured with a servo-driven web transport and shaft-driven print units, and achieved speeds up to 200m/min. Optionally the press can be delivered with servo-driven print units.

It comes with a range of options including offset, letterpress, screen, gravure and digital modules. With chill drums it will handle unsupported films down to 12 microns.

Finishing and converting

Exhibitors at Labelexpo India 2022 took finishing and converting technology to the next level with high quality digital die-cutting technologies, in-line inspection and options for finely detailed embellished labels.

Konica Minolta showcased digital die-cutting technology. Post-printing of the label, it showed a live demonstration of a digital die-cutting all-in-one system that unwinds, laminates, digitally die-cuts, removes waste, slit and rewind.



Epson relaunched its range of SurePress digital label presses in India after a four-year break



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Esko demonstrated CDI Crystal XPS flexo platemaking technology and AVT print inspection technologies

“It was wonderful to see Labelexpo India bouncing back after four years away. The show was buzzing with excitement and many deals were done – it was clear many converters were waiting for the show to make their new investment decisions”

The company showed samples of MGI JETvarnish 3D Web digital print enhancement press. The JETvarnish 3D Web is said to be world's first inline label and flexible packaging digital embellishment press for personalized 2D/3D dimensional textures and variable embossed foiling applications.

Multitec was showing live demonstrations of QSR Slitter rewinder with 100 percent defect detection.

Nippon Color was promoting Valloy's all-in-one digital label finishers.

Packline Machines presented a fully automatic die punching machine with continuous/print registered embossing. The machines can handle foil/paper, PET/PE laminated lids, cups, cones, plates, in-mold labels and induction seals of any complex profiles and sizes.

Rotometrics showed its rotary tooling systems, and visitors learned about proper selection of flexible dies according to material, special treatments and coatings, along with information on die-cut station and magnetic cylinders and how to carry out die audits.

UV Graphic Technologies introduced the Ultraflex Pony FB for the first time at Labelexpo India 2022. The flatbed hot stamping/embossing and die-cutting press offers speeds of 22,000 SPM or 165 m/min.

Vinsak promoted the **ABG** range of Digicon series 3 finishing systems, Digilase laser cutting systems and Vectra range of turret rewinders. From the Vinsak range, the company demonstrated live USAR-430 full rotary die-cut with flexo unit and VDP, USAR-330 with inkjet and cold foil, tabletop rewinder and roll lifter VRL-250.

Webtech International Machineries launched its first smart label inspection machine with speeds of 250m/min. It is equipped with **Erhardt+Leimer** inspection camera, three servo drives and two web guide units.

The company also promoted its Blankmaster X Series label die-cutting/slitting machine equipped with one print station, video plate mounter and Lableslitter X Series label slitter rewinder machine.

S Kumar sold an HFQ 350 slitter rewinder to Fortune Label Enterprise in Ahmedabad, and one HMQ 320 dual hot foil and lamination machine to Arihant Laminates in New Delhi. It also sold an intermittent die-cutting machine to SM Packaging during the show.

Weldon Celloplast was representing the **Cartes** product line including the GT 360 series digital embellishment and finishing system. Applications include metal doming, high build varnish and embossing/Braille effects using the Jet D-Screen module, and the line can be configured with flexo printing and varnishing, screen printing, hot stamping and both laser and conventional semi-rotary die cutting.

Weldon also promoted the **Brotech** CDF 330 digital finishing and converting system featuring Vetaphone Corona treater, one flexo printing station, rotary and semi rotary die-cutting unit with

web guide, a web hoist, anti-static bars, vacuum conveyor and vibrating stacker. It is suitable for offline finishing and embellishing of digitally printed labels, in-mold labels and shrink sleeves.

Materials, adhesives and inks

Materials manufacturers at the show addressed some of the critical concerns facing the Indian label industry including brand protection, sustainability, recyclability and growing demand for high-quality label materials. Leading material manufacturers around the globe were showing their commitment to the Indian market by developing products specifically for the that market and setting up new plants.

Avery Dennison modeled its booth around four zones, representing the company's commitments to the region and overall global strategy. The innovation zone focused on security, shelf appeal and labeling for cryogenic and cold chain labels, targeted at the pharmaceutical market. A sustainability zone offered Avery Dennison's CleanFlake wash-off adhesive, which the company announced has been extended across its core film portfolio. Avery Dennison also promoted its ThinkThin portfolio, a range of thinner paper and film label materials. The manufacturer signaled confidence in the region with recent opening of a new plant in Greater Noida.

Hot melt adhesive manufacturer **AICA ADTek** promoted its AICA Melt label adhesive brand formulated for tape and label applications with tailored peel strength, heat resistance and cold resistance. AICA Melt can be provided in block, pillow or drums.

Manufacturers of self-adhesive labelstock in roll and sheets **Dee Dee Label** launched a range of new product including clear-on-clear labels.

DNP launched its V-series of thermal transfer ink ribbons for printing barcodes on a variety of labels and flexible packaging. This V-Series serves diverse applications such as food and beverage, electronics, pharmaceutical, healthcare and automotive.

Dow unveiled SL 184 SYL-OFF SL 184 high speed coating at its stand, along with SYL-OFF EM 7978 food grade release coating, SYL-OFF SL 351 hygiene release coating, DOWSIL 2014 adhesive solventless PSA, DOWSIL 7651 and 7652 adhesives for protective films and tapes.

Fujifilm offered a range of inks, but particularly highlighted its LED-UV inks formulated for indirect food packaging applications in compliance with Nestle and Swiss food safety ordinances.

'In the Indian market, as the multinational FMCG brads move into the market, the trend is labels that have to be [food safety] compliant and with no traces of UV migration,' says the company. 'That will grow in the future as more and more companies move to India and they expect this.'

H.B. Fuller launched at the show a hot melt pressure sensitive adhesive to address tape and label die-cutting challenges. The new Swiftmelt 1401-I performs on various types of label stocks and baggage tags while ensuring that bonds will not fail during

“As the multinational FMCG brands move into the Indian market, the trend is labels that have to be food safety compliant and with no traces of UV migration. That will grow in the future as more and more companies move to India and they expect this”

production, transport, or storage, or in high temperatures.

Gulf Packaging Industries of Saudi Arabia promoted its BOPP films and launched films for IML (in-mold labels) at the show.

Holostik launched several new products. Nano Optical Image OVDs (optically variable devices) offer extremely high resolutions and can include nano text (up to 5 microns), nano images and microstructures. Also new is Optashield, based on custom holographic technology, which displays two different colors at different viewing angles.

The company demonstrated the Half Scratch QR Code, which applies a half scratch layer over the QR code, preventing replication and tampering with the QR code. It can be embedded in both OVDs (holograms) and labels.

Kurz launched its Distorun cold foil transfer module in India alongside an extraordinarily convincing 3D-effect metallic foil. Distorun is a rail-mounted module which allows single foil images to be placed anywhere on a roll regardless of repeat length. The unit operates at 100 m/min.

Self-adhesive labelstock and silicone liner manufacturer **MLJ Industries** launched and showcased a host of release liners and labelstock materials.

The company promoted its full range of release liners including glassine, paper, CCK, SCK, recycled PE liner yellow and white, MG kraft and PE. Among labelstocks, MLJ shows semi-gloss, PP white, PP silver, PP clear, DT, silver MET paper and removable silver PP.

The manufacturer launched clear on clear, battery, tire, pharma, specialty labels for corrugated applications, wash off, PET clear, PET white label, PE clear, PE white and repositionable labels and PET liner.

Orianaa Decorpack showed its full range of shrink sleeve films, noting the growing use of PET against PVC. Recyclability of PET remains an issue in India compared to PVC, says the company.

Polyart is one of a growing number of companies that has invested in the Indian market recently with the opening of a subsidiary in Mumbai.

Polyart showcased HDPE in-mold labeling technology, allowing for easier plastic recycling along with the container. Also on the sustainability front, the company launched its rPolyart in India, after a successful European launch last year. The product is made of 30 percent post-consumer recycled content. Polyart also promoted Fiber Skin, a substitute for plastic that is weather- and water-resistant.

Rakesh Paper Company presented a range of A-grade stocks of self-adhesive materials under the brand name Hippotac.

Stamping foil provider **Shaharaji Associates** showcased the ITW ShineMark range of cold foils under the name of its new firm Sharjun India. Sharjun India is an affiliation between Shaharaji Associates and Arjuna Global Impex.

Shree Lamipack demonstrated its range of security labels incorporating hologram strips, scratch off and QR codes. These labels can also be printed in up to 10 colors. The company introduced a range of paper and filmic labelstocks with a range of adhesives and slit to preferred width.



Erhardt+Leimer promoted its inspection technology at the show

Labelexpo India 2022 set record numbers

Labelexpo India 2022 welcoming over 12,000 visitors to the India Expo Centre in Greater Noida on the outskirts of Delhi – an increase of 22 percent compared to the last show in 2018.

The show featured more than 250 exhibitors from around the world, and particularly showcased the advances made by the Indian supplier industry in the four years since the last India show. The aisles were buzzing and multiple deals were closed through the four days of the show.

Labelexpo India 2022 featured the Indian Label Association (LMAI) awards, showcased in a gala event at the showground.

The show also featured a Digital Embellishment Trail. Monotech demonstrated its dSpark UV inkjet label digital varnish and cold foiling press to coincide with the trail, while Vinsak promoted laser die cutting and Konica Minolta its MGI JetVarnish3Dweb.

Appadurai A, country manager, HP India Sales, commented, 'Labelexpo India is an important show for us as far as label business goes. We definitely got focused people at our stand that we don't see in other shows.'

Amit Sheth of Pulisi, added, 'Labelexpo India 2022 has been very exciting for us. We had been looking for such a platform to network with industry friends. And we look forward to the Labelexpo series.'

Grant Blewett, chief commercial officer, Miraclon, said, 'Labelexpo India is the premier labeling show within the Indian market. Labelexpo is something that is very important for Miraclon and has been for many years, so it was good to be back. We were impressed with how busy it has been and have seen many really good customers and prospects.'

Commented Pradeep Saroha, event director Labelexpo India 2022, 'Labelexpo India 2022 was the biggest show so far in its history in terms of both participation and visitors. The four-day show was packed with new visitors from commercial print industry eyeing labels market and neighboring countries including Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. I would like to extend my gratitude to all of the associations and partners for their constant support in making the show a success. I look forward to welcoming all of you at Labelexpo India 2024!'

Jade Grace, Labelexpo Global Series portfolio director, said, 'It was wonderful to see Labelexpo India bouncing back after four years away. The show was buzzing with excitement and many deals were done – it was clear many converters were waiting for the show to make their new investment decisions. I would also like to thank all our partners who helped make the show the resounding success it was.'

Labelexpo India partners include the Labels Manufacturers Association of India (LMAI), All India Federation of Master Printers, World Print & Communication Forum, World Packaging Organisation, Printing Industry association of Bangladesh and the Sri Lanka Association of Printers.



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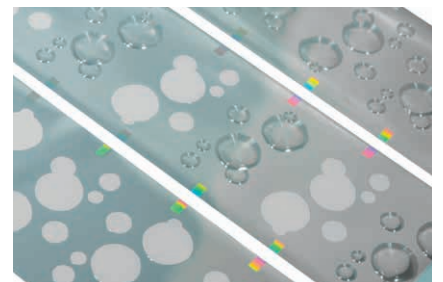
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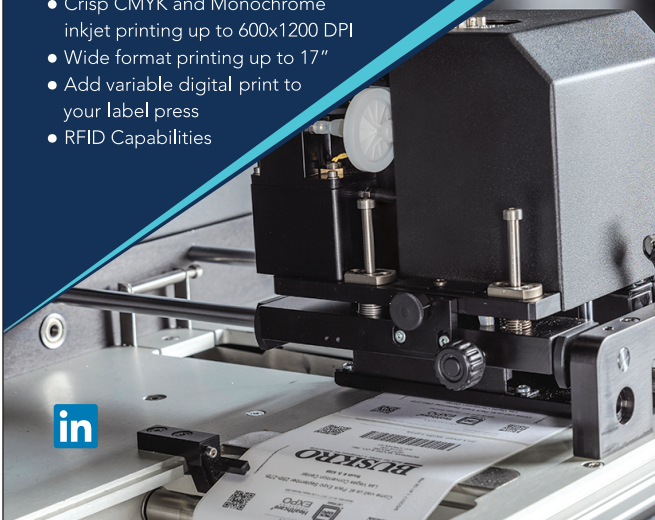


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HP Indigo with Technova Imaging Solutions showcased an HP Indigo 6K digital press, with applications shown across labels, shrink sleeves and flexible packaging

“Labelexpo India is an important show for us as far as label business goes. We definitely got focused people at our stand that we don’t see in other shows”

The **UFlex** Holography business exhibited its product portfolio including registered foil stamping, cold foil, hybrid security labels, holographic sterling lens effects and 3D optics labels.

Plates and platemaking

Plates and platemaking equipment manufacturers showcased technology to achieve carbon neutrality, faster processing and automation at Labelexpo India 2022.

Academi a. promoted CAMIS, Italy (plate mounting machines), Polymount, Netherlands (self-adhesive sleeves, film cleaning system), Keencut, UK (plate cutting solutions), Macdermid (raw photopolymer plates).

Asahi Photoproducts products were presented by its distributor TechNova Imaging Systems. The stand featured Asahi's AWP-DEW water wash plates which have achieved Carbon Neutral certification in Japan, the USA, China and Europe.

Asahi Photoproducts' representatives discussed the company's many years of working toward a more sustainable flexographic industry and the importance of setting a carbon neutral goal.

In addition to AWP-DEW plates, Asahi's AWPTM-Cleanflat plates are also part of the CleanPrint family and were on display at the show.

Bhatia Graphica participated for the first time at Labelexpo India. The company showcased flexo printed samples, letterpress printed samples and dry offset printed samples and plates.

DuPont Cyrel highlighted Cyrel Fast thermal platemaking technology for flexographic printing. The company promoted the new DuPont Cyrel

Lightning UV LED exposure optimized plates at the show. The Lightning series are the plates of choice for LED exposures to achieve high quality printing across a broad range of packaging segments. Cyrel LSH is the photopolymer formulation for the solvent workflow.

DuPont demonstrated live flexo platemaking with the entire Cyrel Fast thermal workflow technology during the show.

Esko demonstrated CDI Crystal XPS flexo platemaking technology and AVT print inspection technologies. At the heart of the Esko booth was the CDI 4835 and XPS Crystal 4260 in combination with the new Flexo Engine module.

The CDI Crystal XPS is said to reduce manual steps by 50 percent and operator time by as much as 73 percent. The company sold Esko CDI Spark 4835 flexo image processor to Unicorn Flexo Graphics.

Lucky Graphics launched and demonstrated Toyobo Cosmolight QZ Series water washable plate. Cosmolight water-washable flexo plate can be washed out in tap water with a small amount of mild detergent. The plate makes the working environment free from hydrocarbon and hazardous washout solvents. Plates are press-ready within an hour. Cosmolight CTP offers built-in flat top dot reproduced with Toyobo's LAMS technology.

Miraclon showcased Kodak Flexcel NX technology. Visitors learned about Flexcel NX Print Suite and its latest feature – PureFlexo Printing – that controls unwanted ink spread and allows for greater latitude on press. Flexcel NX Plates were in action across the show floor, including on the

Alliance Printech, Mark Andy, Multitec, RK Label and UV Graphic Technologies stands.

The **UFlex** Printing Cylinders business division displayed flexo plates, elastomer plates, and photopolymer plates. The UFlex Cylinders business division manufactures Flexo KodakNX printing plates that come with laser square spot imaging technology. The plates are compatible with water-based inks.

Vintex Rubber Industries launched plate mounting and laser engraved sleeves. On display at Labelexpo India were rubber rollers, plate mounting sleeves, laser engraved elastomer plate, polymer plate and ink chamber seals.

Plate making house **Veepee Graphic Solutions** showed a hybrid screening technology which turns a conventional screening of 150 LPI to an equivalent 350 LPI, giving offset-levels of detail and color saturation and vibrancy to flexo work. The company also demonstrated augmented reality applications on packaging, where it supplies both the supporting software and implementation for the brand owner.

Workflow and software

Automation, remote access, better user interface, and reduced manual labor were among the key trends seen among workflow and software providers at Labelexpo India 2022.

Sandilyam, provider of code quality and verification products, launched the latest in the series of 15xxx code verifiers for comprehensive analysis and reporting on all aspects of code design, encodation and print quality.

Newgen Printronics promoted products from Durst Group AG (Italy), Omet (Italy), Packers (Korea), Polly Automatic (PRC), Berhalter (Swiss), Lundberg Tech (Denmark), DCM (France), Allen Pack (Taiwan), Heaford (UK), Alphasonics (UK), Rotary Technologies (PRC) and Alphacure (UK).

It also showed live demonstration of Durst Workflow Software.

Label Traxx showcased Version 9 with a redesigned, modern user interface. It contains new primary navigation tools and increased customization options. Job Costing and Shop Floor Data Collection modules have been improved to support new roll tracking features, reliable remote access and a new operator user experience.

Label Traxx and Batched demonstrated the third general release of their automated planning and scheduling product. Along with other performance and usability improvements, this release contains a new set of features that blend artificial intelligence and machine learning with human engagement.

Siteline, Label Traxx's Customer Engagement Module, offers new features to



Visitors at Arrow Digital stand learned about the latest ArrowJet Aqua 330r Hybrid Pro press

“We were impressed with how busy it has been and have seen many really good customers and prospects”

simplify the product management and reordering processes.

Kiran Consultants showcased Flexibiz ERP – a printing and packaging industry specific ERP for flexibles, labels, cartons and film/paper stock.

The ERP system offers end to end business process mapping for a flexo label converter with multiple presses and plants/locations.

The company also launched Advanced BI Tool, which eliminates the need to write SQL queries. It analyses big data (multiple companies, plants, years data) to find data patterns and plot meaningful charts. It has prebuilt interactive dashboards for sales, production, accounts to compare year to year, quarter to quarter performance.

Esko demonstrated AVT print inspection technologies. Esko emphasized the benefit of automated processes by demonstrating the AVT Helios system that inspects the printed web for defects.

Dies and tooling

Academi a. promoted Flexo Concepts USA's polymer doctor blades.

Acme Rolltech launched its ACE (Advance Channel Engraving) roll/sleeve engraving technology.

The manufacturer showcased special ATAC rolls used for Screen-type raised effects and AHDW for high-density white. The company promoted its cleaning solutions and refurbishment program.

Apex International showed GTT anilox technology and explained its Flexokite knowledge center.

Spilker Germany joined its partner Weldon Celloplast at the show. Spilker covers the entire tooling spectrum from flexible dies, a wide range of rotary tools, magnetic cylinders, print cylinders, sleeves, hot stamping/embossing/punching dies and complex rotary machines with integrated automation technology for labels and packaging.

The **UFlex** Printing Cylinders business division displayed its range of products including flexo plates, elastomer plates, and photopolymer plates.

Vintex Rubber Industries launched plate mounting equipment and laser engraved sleeves. On display were rubber rollers, plate mounting sleeves, laser engraved elastomer plate, polymer plate and ink chamber seals.

Ancillary equipment

Academi a. promoted Polymount, Netherlands (self-adhesive sleeves, film cleaning system), Troika Systems, UK (QC devices



Visitors at DuPont stand learned about the benefits of Cyrel Fast thermal platemaking technology for flexographic printing

- AniCAM HD and FlexoCAM [new]), Alphasonics, UK (advance ultrasonic cleaning systems) and ALE, UK (laser engraving systems).

Eltech showed a new corona treater for flexographic printing machine, along with static eliminators and ionizers.

Atik Chauhan, director, technical and sales at Eltech, says: 'Most label producers now understand the importance of corona treater requirements on their presses. Narrow web corona treater is the most economical technique to increase the surface energy of any substrate for better bonding of ink with the substrate. Ink bonding with the surface is a serious problem during printing the label, and thus, inline corona treatment is an effective and economical solution for increasing the surface energy of the base substrate prior to printing.'

IEEC promoted its corona treatment systems that ensure that ink is anchored to substrates irrespective of the type of face material. The company displayed its double-sided compact corona treatment system to enable front and back-side treatment of the substrates in a single pass.

The company also launched Ozonash, which neutralizes toxic ozone gas using a metal oxide catalyst. Ozone is a by-product of the corona treatment process and this unit can be retrofitted on existing corona treatment systems.

Maxcess promoted its new fully automated RotoMetrics AccuAdjust Dual Adjust anvil control and FIFE-500 Max web guiding system.

New player in the Indian market, **Vetaphone**, had several corona treatment units on display and announced at the show that it will partner with Indian narrow web flexo press manufacturer UV Graphics. At the show, UV Graphics Technologies showcased two Vetaphone VE-A 520 models on its narrow web Ultraflex flexo line, and two VE-A 460 models on its Ultraflex hybrid line, where the digital element is powered by Domino.

On display at the **BST** booth was its Tube Scan Eagle View inspection camera for 100 percent print inspection and detailed viewing. The AI learning camera can reduce false error reports and works on reflective material.

Erhardt+Leimer promoted its Smartscan 200 percent inspection system for narrow web printing and finishing machines. The inspection system detects print defects, damage to the material and missing labels. The company also highlighted Smartscan MIS2 Generation II inspection system.

EyeC ProofRunner in-line inspection system was also promoted at the E+L stand.

GEW emphasized its latest LED-UV curing system, AeroLED for full cure printing, coating and converting applications. It works by the air being extracted by a single centralized fan sited away from the press. There is no need for integrated fans or electronics in the individual lampheads.



To read more on the Label market in India, turn to page 105

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THE FUTURE OF FLEXO

L&L EXPLORES WHAT'S NEXT FOR **CONVENTIONAL**
PRESS TECHNOLOGY. CHELSEA MCDUGALL REPORTS

Conventional press manufacturers have marked record sales in recent years as converters looked to add capacity in the wake of the pandemic surge ordering. But at Labelexpo Americas 2022 – the industry's biggest reunion in four years – flexographic presses were nowhere to be found, while digital press technology stole headlines.

It left many wondering: is flexo dead?

'Flexo is not dead or dying at all,' says newly-named Gallus CEO Dario Urbinati. 'Yes, we are seeing a strong drive toward digital – but we do not see digital as being able to handle 100 percent of jobs or completely replacing conventional print technology. We see them as complementary technologies.'

'Flexo technology is not standing still,' Urbinati says.

Industry experts agree: flexography is certainly not going anywhere soon. It's time-worn and tested technology, and one that in recent years has only gotten faster, more automated and easier to run. In conversations with the leading conventional press manufacturers, L&L learned that, in truth, flexo is far from dead, but rather, conventional print is adjusting to a 'new normal' and a changed label converter.

STATE OF THE MARKET

Throughout the so-called Covid years, flexo press sales soared, driven by a pandemic-related buying surge in key high-run segments, like food, beverage, household chemical and pharmaceutical markets. The rapid demand for quick-turn labels meant that many brands were shelving ideas for creative marketing and versioning, and flexo converters were kicking out labels as fast as they could print them.

In response to this rapid growth, converters of all stripes were looking to add capacity.

According to a Reports and Insights study, the global narrow web flexo press market is forecast to grow at a CAGR of 6.1 percent through 2030.

'Mark Andy had our biggest flexo year ever this year, by a pretty considerable margin,' says Tom Schelmbauer, chief business officer at Mark Andy. 'Converters were tentative in their buying for a while as they were trying to figure out where digital's place was. What they found is that a high productivity, high throughput flexo asset is even more important today. Once converters move their short-run work over to digital, they can really make serious money with their flexo machines by optimizing the distribution of jobs to assets that are perfect for what the converter is trying to do.'

While the past few years have been fruitful for flexo OEMs, some industry experts predict that conventional press sales may cool in the coming years as brands and converters re-evaluate their digital strategies post-pandemic.

'Based on extensive research we have done that included surveying large numbers of converters in the US and Europe over the past several months, we are forecasting that 2023 will be a much more challenging year for conventional/analog press technology and that converters will once again prioritize their digital growth strategies,' says Jennifer Dochstader of the market research firm LPC. 'We are predicting that the number of new digital presses sold will once again outpace the number of conventional/analog presses sold and we could see a precipitous drop in conventional/analog press installations in North America and Europe.'

Against the backdrop of all this, conventional press manufacturers are responding to a changed buyer.

TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Today's converters are not simply looking at capital equipment based solely on speed and output figures anymore. Data-savvy converters are looking at a machinery's total cost of ownership

as they face an onslaught of market challenges. Turnaround times are getting shorter; materials are harder to come by; prices are increasing; brand owners are keen on process regulation and keeping an eagle eye on costs.

In that environment, a technology's total cost of ownership becomes even more important as converters chase what Heidelberg vice president of digital print Dan Maurer calls, the 'tenacious pursuit of cost efficiency.'

Total cost of ownership, or TCO, is a big-picture approach that OEMs and converters are using to calculate the true costs of an asset over its lifetime. It's a model in which the sticker price is only one part of the equation. Today's label converter is weighing and tracking the TCP – total cost to print – and factoring in a slew of variables, including costs for servicing and maintenance, downtime, consumables and energy costs, just to name a few.

Gallus' Urbinati explains: 'I like the total cost of ownership model because it really reflects 360 degrees of your operation. We have invested extensive work into building a proper TCO calculator to provide a true and fair view of costs associated with running a specific piece of equipment.'

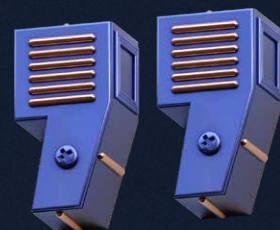
In this view, conventional OEMs see flexo as a clear winner here. Flexo presses, they say, afford converters an ink and substrate flexibility that digital just can't compete with.

'I am seeing more sophistication overall,' says Mark Andy's Schelmbauer. 'Not only are machines getting more sophisticated, but so is our customer base and how they evaluate cost. Converters are getting savvier with how they use the machine and how they extract capacity.'

AUTOMATION

Speed has been a major factor weighing in flexo's favor. However, that line is getting blurry. Digital has historically been seen as a way to offload short-run work, while flexo presses kick out the medium- to long-run jobs. As we saw at Labelexpo Americas 2022, digital presses are only getting faster. This means today's converter must now weigh the options between investing in a highly automated flexo press or new digital presses that can boast operating speeds

**“IS INDUSTRY 4.0
OLD-FASHIONED NOW?
THAT’S THE DISCUSSION
WE’RE HAVING. HOW DO
WE TURN THE PRINTING
MACHINE INTO SOMETHING
THAT NEEDS AS LITTLE
INTERFERENCE BY HUMANS
AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT
LOSING
QUALITY AND
WITHOUT
LOSING
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“NOT ONLY ARE MACHINES GETTING MORE SOPHISTICATED, BUT SO IS OUR CUSTOMER BASE AND HOW THEY EVALUATE COST. CONVERTERS ARE GETTING **SAVVIER WITH HOW THEY USE THE MACHINE AND HOW THEY EXTRACT CAPACITY**



traditionally attained only by flexo.

At the same time conventional press OEMs are automating every press function that can be automated. The innovations in this respect have been nothing short of incredible. Servo-driven automatic print pressure and register adjustment, quick change die cut, short web path, auto pre-setting and high-definition vision systems are a few of the automation bells and whistles offered by conventional OEMs.

And yet, the more automation features added to an asset, the higher the price tag. Sometimes that can make a highly automated press can be out of reach for small or mid-size converting companies.

Nilpeter recently hired a new chief technology officer with a background in automation and digitization. In an interview with L&L, Carsten Clemensen talked about striking a balance between high-performing automation and reigning in costs.

'We always have an eye on all our machines – from the entry-level and up – to find the balance between where we can automate and still remain cost competitive,' Clemensen says. 'Our machines always fit the needs of the converter while maintaining a cost approach of the customer. We're always aiming for that balance: entry-level and high-end still based on the same technology.'

Adds Nilpeter's sales director Jakob Landberg: 'Our whole idea is to make flexo smarter, make it more automated, digitalize it. Is Industry 4.0 old-fashioned now? That's the discussion we're having. How do we turn the printing machine into something that needs as little interference from humans as possible without losing quality and without losing flexibility? There are so many aspects that have not entered into our industry yet.'

Efficiency is not the only goal behind these automation innovations. As a labor shortage squeezes the entire global

industry, label converters are looking at automation as a way to optimize production and do more with fewer skilled employees.

Oftentimes, that means developing machines for the new class of flexo press operators working today.

'We are building the equipment around the talent base that's coming up in the way that they want to work,' says Mark Andy's Schelmbauer. 'We can't keep running machines like a 1970s press because the world today is more efficient, and more data driven.'

Omet recently launched its KFlex range of flexo presses. CEO Antonio Bartesaghi believes label converters will continue to choose flexo provided the technology continues to progress towards 'set and forget,' where machines can be operated by semi-skilled labor assisted by basic automation and machine intelligence.

DATA COLLECTION

Label converters today are sophisticated data collectors as they move to a quantitative production environment for a connected digital workflow.

Bobst's North American business unit director Matt Bennett puts a finer point on it: 'The trend we're all talking about now is a connected workflow. The way label converters run the business today, they evaluate what's going on the press, and what's going out. They're measuring everything: material usage, ink, water, energy, set up, downtime – anything that has to do with running the press. They're collecting that data and evaluating it against every other job.'

With these connected systems, label converters can identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies in their print processes, and then optimize their presses, reduce waste and increase output. Oftentimes this data is accessible in real-time (with historical data) and available from anywhere.

Theoretically, a press shop manager can be at a work conference offsite and be able to monitor what's happening back on the production floor.

'That information is critical to business owners and press operators,' Bennett says. 'Converters, they're not shooting blind. They accurately collect data in real-time and react in real-time. Shop floors today have to be maximally efficient with as few people as possible.'

Conventional OEMs each have their own version of data collection or connected workflows. Bobst with its Connect Essential, Gallus and Heidelberg with Prinect connection and networking system, Mark Andy with its SmartLink technology, launched at Labelexpo Americas 2022, Nilpeter with its Powerlink platform, and Omet with Service 4.0. Perhaps the first to launch this technology was MPS with its MPSCoconnect.

INTEGRATING WITH DIGITAL

Throughout all of these interviews, conventional press manufacturers eschewed an 'us versus them' mentality when it comes to digital print. In fact, the way most see it, these technologies are complementary and almost all of these suppliers have digital technology in their product portfolios. It's a clear strategy of these conventional OEMs who see that a label shopfloor has enough room for both technologies.

Rather than see digital print as a competitor, the relationship between the two technologies can create a powerful synergy with the right book of business and the right strategy.

'The debate goes on when it comes to which technology to invest in,' Bennett says. 'But rather than seeing digital and flexo as competitors, at Bobst, we're asking: how can we create a powerful relationship between the two that will add more value, reduce waste and increase productivity?'

PRESSES GETTING WIDER

Flexo presses are getting wider to cater to the high-growth flexible packaging market.

Label converters have leaned into the flexible packaging market and for good reason. For starters, label converters are already familiar with the key end-use markets that drive much of the growth in that market: the food and beverage, healthcare, household, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals markets namely. Further, label converters are already supplying labels to the customers, so it makes sense for brands to source all their printed packaging needs from a single source.

But perhaps the biggest driver is what makes digital printing attractive: run lengths. Much like the disruption the label

“THAT INFORMATION IS CRITICAL TO BUSINESS OWNERS AND PRESS OPERATORS. THEY’RE NOT **SHOOTING BLIND**. THEY ACCURATELY COLLECT DATA IN REAL TIME AND **REACT IN REAL-TIME**. SHOP FLOORS TODAY HAVE TO BE MAXIMALLY EFFICIENT WITH AS FEW PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE



market has witnessed in recent years, SKUs are getting shorter – far too short to make financial sense on the wide web CI flexo and gravure presses on which flexible packaging is commonly printed. A flexo or digital label converter is well-positioned to cater to shorter lead times and smaller runs and widen their portfolio offering.

Typically, what is considered a short-run job in the flexible packaging world might actually be a medium run for a label converter, which is another factor that makes the mid-range flexo press format work. That, in turn, would suggest it makes sense for label converters to consider both mid-web flexo and digital for flexible packaging to cover the full range of what a flex pack buyer might consider a short run.

Emerging brands and start-ups are ripe for opportunities for flexible packaging, as oftentimes they are experimenting with versioning and new packaging formats.

‘Narrower and mid-web conventional and digital printing has effectively opened up the market to a whole range of new customers who have never previously had a solution for short-run flexible packaging orders,’ writes Mike Fairley in the Label Academy book on flexible packaging. ‘Label converters entering the flexible packaging market are particularly finding new business opportunities with the independent and more regional brands, helping these smaller and medium-sized company buyers to simplify how they buy their flexible packaging, and guiding them in understanding the specifications, tolerances, materials, origination, color technology, inks, and print requirements.’

Conventional OEMs are listening, and as a result, flexo presses are getting wider. Today’s standard press from the likes of Mark Andy and Nilpeter are 17 inches and up. Nilpeter has seen success with its FA-26, and likewise Lombardi with its full-servo Invicta 630; Omet with its X7; Bobst with its M5. MPS’ EF presses go up to 22 inches, with a portfolio that offers wider options.

Labelexpo Europe 2023 will be home to many of these machines, as flexible packaging is expected to take center stage.



Conventional press manufacturers will return to Labelexpo Europe 2023 from Sept 11-14 in Brussels. For more information visit www.labelexpo-europe.com

News in Brief

Berkshire Labels sets records after Mark Andy installation

UK-based narrow web converters, Berkshire Labels, has added another Mark Andy flexo press to its production facility in Hungerford.

The new Performance Series P7E is the latest of five Mark Andy presses onsite, which include an earlier Performance P7E and a P9E that is dedicated to filmic production. Two months after the new press went into production, Berkshire Labels recorded its highest-ever monthly sales figure.

Managing director Paul Roscoe said: ‘We commit at least 10 percent of our annual turnover to investment in the latest technology and this has served us well in both growing and strengthening the business. Our first Performance Series P7E was transformational in terms of production efficiency and the Performance Series P9E moved the game on even further. Having settled on the 430mm web width as the best fit for our product portfolio, we now have three of Mark Andy’s Performance Series that we can dedicate to different work, and this is real plus for production efficiency.’

Mark Andy’s Performance Series is the fastest-selling platform in narrow web history with more than 1,200 presses installed worldwide.

Auroflex installs Nilpeter MO-Line Fusion press

Southern Italian luxury label manufacturer, Auroflex, has acquired Nilpeter MO-Line Fusion press to help its customers to compete in international markets. The new Nilpeter MO-Line Fusion is its fourth press from the Danish manufacturer.

‘It is the most advanced press we have acquired so far in a collaboration that began more than 20 years ago, and which has brought many eloquent and mutual successes to our companies,’ said Fabio Butera, chairman of Auroflex. ‘Auroflex is committed to providing ever-increasing quality to both current and future customers - the market in which we operate stimulates competition and we want to raise the bar and put our customers in a position to compete in international markets. In that sense, it is no coincidence that our new MO-Line Fusion is a mixed media printing system equipped with all the most advanced printing, regulation, and control technologies.’

It is a custom-made combination press with a host of analog and digital embellishment technologies inline for high-volume or short-run markets.

Gallus launches digital press at Labelexpo Americas 2022

Gallus launched Gallus One, a digital label printing system for the growth segment of label printing.

Gallus One is based on the Labelmaster press platform. As a reel-to-reel UV inkjet digital in-line label press, it offers a width of 340mm, a resolution of 1,200 DPI, four colors plus white, and a print speed of up to 70 m/min. Gallus One can be fully integrated into the Prinect workflow from Heidelberg.

‘Digital printing is and will remain a key technology for Heidelberg. The new Gallus One is further proof of this,’ said Dr Ludwin Monz, CEO of Heidelberg.

LABEL ACADEMY

Edited by Andy Thomas-Emans

A Labels & Labeling Publication
Tarsus Exhibitions & Publishing Ltd, London

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- + Pressure-sensitive adhesive technologies
- + Identification and characteristics of PS label materials
- + Test methods for pressure-sensitive labels

Also in the series:



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Managing a self-adhesive materials inventory

This excerpt from the Label Academy book, "Self-Adhesive Labels" examines all the aspects of managing a self-adhesive roll inventory.

Setting up an automated stock management system has become particularly critical as label printers are increasingly asked by brand owners to provide traceability of all self-adhesive materials for every batch. Meanwhile, inefficient stock management is now recognized as one of the leading causes of waste and incorrect estimating.

Specification and ordering

Each of the three individual components of a self-adhesive laminate – face material, release liner and adhesive – have their own characteristics, and suppliers offer the converter many combinations of these three elements in their product catalogs.

The very first dialogue between the printer, the brand owner and the applicator is often about the conditions in which the product will be labeled and the usage of the label. This will define the selection criteria.

"Inefficient stock management is now recognized as one of the leading causes of waste and incorrect estimating"

The substrate identification codes for self-adhesive materials are independent of the ordered length and size. Using a 180mm-wide roll on a very narrow press or a 330mm wide roll on a wider press does not require a change in the substrate's identification code. Of course, the width and length must be provided upon ordering.

By using a price per sqm, self-adhesive material suppliers allow printers to use one purchase price for one substrate, independent of the width. This leads to the first two levels of a self-adhesive material catalog: substrate (a specific combination of the three components, independent of width) and material (a specific width of a substrate). At the substrate level, only sqm is relevant; for the material level, the width and length are added.

But this does not mean that ordering is easy. Price tables are related to the quantity ordered and supplementary restrictions can limit the options for ordering. Sometimes a minimum quantity needs to be ordered and, in some cases, it is necessary to order a predefined length, like 2,000m, or width, say 1,000mm. The purchaser must indicate how this width, far too large for production, will need to be slit by the supplier (for example $1,000\text{mm} = 3 \times 330\text{mm} + 10\text{mm}$) and they will need to pay for the complete sqm ordered, even though the supplier can be asked to destroy the left-over width.

This means that in the order process, the user should be able to combine individual material orders into a cut-instruction for the supplier, all for the one substrate-ID.

Almost every self-adhesive material supplier now offers electronic ordering systems, but the more complex the set of limitations, the larger the number of system rejections.

The benefits of electronic ordering are great for both sides. The

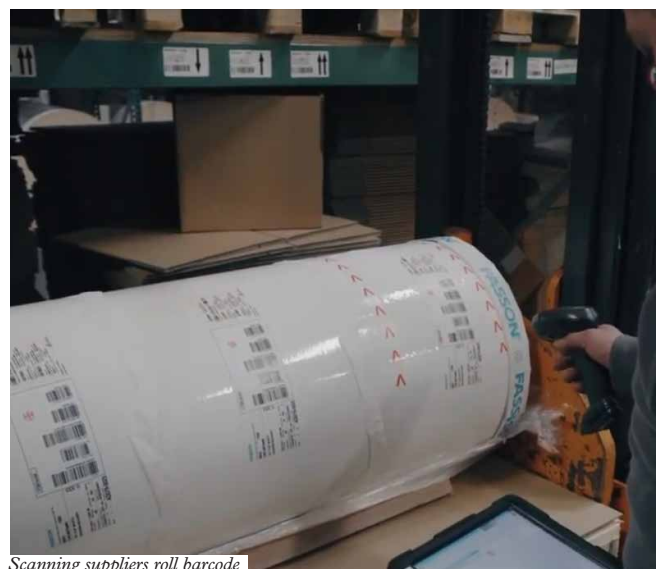
Self-adhesive label



Composition of self-adhesive roll (courtesy UPM Raftatac)



Label applicator machine (courtesy Packsys)



Scanning suppliers roll barcode

FASSON

Customer Prod Code: **ZA123/P03** Customer Order Nr: **AD123456**
COMPANY NAME

LW60
S-451
BG45 WEISS
180 mm * 1000 M

Prod Date: **17/03/00** Weight (Ks): **28** Lamint Splices: **No 0**

Fasson Order/Line nr: **123456701/001** Coatings Order: **546734**

Operator: **MAC A** Lift Position: **01** Construction: **A34114**

EPSMA barcodes

Roll Id	EN Code	Roll Details	Best Before Date	Customer Order Nr
00 3 8712738 052452619 2	8 712 738 002663	8001 0180 01000 078 0 0	15 011105	400 AD123456

FASSON

Construction: **LW60**
A34114 S-451
 Roll Id: **0524526192** Prod Date: **17/03/00** Made From: **546734**
 Cust Prod Code: **ZA123/P03** Cust Order Nr: **AD123456**

Construction: **LW60**
A34114 S-451
 Roll Id: **0524526192** Prod Date: **17/03/00** Made From: **546734**
 Cust Prod Code: **ZA123/P03** Cust Order Nr: **AD123456**

Construction: **LW60**
A34114 S-451
 Roll Id: **0524526192** Prod Date: **17/03/00** Made From: **546734**
 Cust Prod Code: **ZA123/P03** Cust Order Nr: **AD123456**

EVERY DENNISON

“In extreme cases, only half the total material ordered by the converter ends up actually going to the customer as finished labels”

supplier will not have to retype instructions and can have software handle most orders automatically. The customer will receive an almost immediate order confirmation for delivery quantity, date and price and can schedule accordingly.

When the truck leaves the supplier's production site, the customer will receive an electronic ASN (advanced shipping note or manifest) with the details of all rolls that are on the truck.

This will allow for a very easy reception procedure at the printer. The packing slip of the truck driver needs to be checked with the goods unloaded from the truck and with the details of the ASN. No re-identification is necessary, since the supplier's identification labels on every individual roll will match the roll IDs in the computer's stock database after processing the original ASN data. The only thing to do is to move the rolls – or pallets with rolls – to the appropriate stock location. Since the stock locations are identified with a barcode, the operator only needs to scan the supplier's barcode and the barcode of the stock location.

Traceability and inventory

Using the supplier's roll identification for each individual roll is the third level of an adequate self-adhesive material inventory, next to substrate and material (width).

Every complaint about an individual roll, whether it is before or after production, can easily be traced in the supplier's production database by sending them the original roll ID.

At the same time, a system with perfect in-house traceability of all rolls in stock can be set up. Every roll can be at 'any' location in the warehouse or on the shop floor. No need to book the consumption of a roll when leaving the warehouse and booking it back in on return. The warehouse is everywhere, and all rolls are in stock until all the meters of a roll are consumed. The only thing to do is to scan roll ID and stock location ID upon each roll-stock location change.

Rolls can be placed into racks at any height and you do not need to put all rolls from the same substrate together in one area, so less floor space is required. There is no need to use special stock locations for quarantine. A roll can be quarantined by a special scan function and the software will prevent this roll from being used again until it is de-quarantined.

Counting stock is nothing more than scanning all individual rolls. Instead of doing this once a year, this can be organized in groups of stock locations. When stock managers have some spare time,

they can check one or more stock locations by scanning the rolls in it. The result of these scans will be compared with the information in the rolls database and errors can be corrected immediately. The disciplined scanning and regular counting of rolls is the foundation of a fully reliable inventory.

Based on this precise data, only the substrates required for the current and next day's production need to be ordered. The only thing to do is estimate exactly what will be needed. This means a solid comparison between a plant's theoretical and actual consumption must be set up. Fortunately, the organization of a detailed roll consumption system will, at the same time, deliver all data needed for this kind of detailed traceability.

The warehouse team will put all rolls necessary for the next few hours' production close to every press. They will, of course, not forget to scan this new stock location, and they will always take the oldest rolls first. The press operators then scan the barcode of the new roll upon every roll change on the press. An automatic counter registers the meters consumed until the roll is switched again. When a roll is not completely consumed, the remaining meters in stock will be the new stock quantity for this individual roll, and a new identification label with the same roll ID and these remaining meters will be printed. The operator will stick this on the roll for precise re-identification.

As well as booking roll changes, the press operator also books each job change on the press. The combination of these two will give a detailed description of material consumption on every job. This information is then compared with the estimated material consumption. At the same time this system provides a detailed list of all paper roll IDs used for this production job.

The linear meter counter can be a third-party device mounted on the press, but can also be delivered by the computer driving the press.

Roll changes can be booked manually by the press operator, but today's automatic unwinders can deliver this information electronically. The operator will scan every roll loaded onto the unwinder, which sends the new roll ID and the exact timestamp to the MIS system which process the data.

Job changes can of course be booked manually by the press operator, but today more and more presses can deliver this information to the MIS, even if only feeding back job start and end.

All of this gives the converter a precise inventory. The operations team can see which rolls have almost reached their expiration date, based upon the validity date on the original ASN, and can see which alternatives are still in stock.

This does not mean that there is no place for human stock-keeping intelligence. You can limit the widths you buy to avoid roll-width switches when consuming left-overs, for example. Or you can guide customers to order larger quantities where there is a high minimum order quantity to avoid leftovers for less used substrates.

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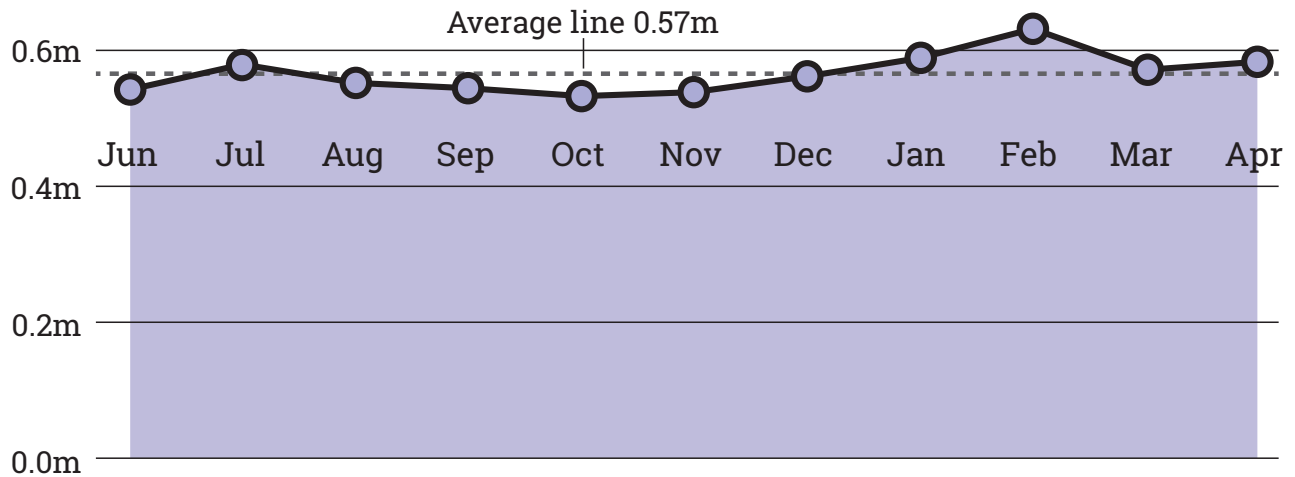
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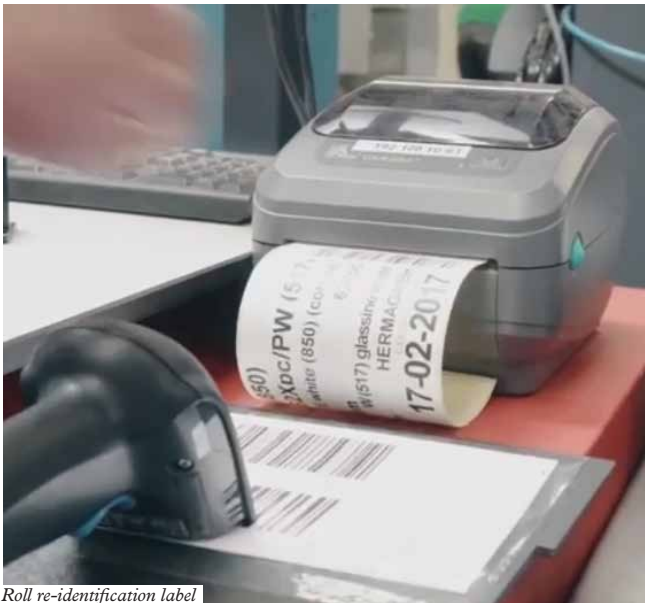
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Historical stock value



Material inventory value over the year



Roll re-identification label



A non-stop unwinding system

“Every complaint about an individual roll, whether before or after production, can be traced in the supplier’s production database by sending them the roll ID”

Estimating and reporting

The ultimate key to reducing inventory is precise estimating of substrate quantities needed for production. This will start by breaking down current waste totals in the finest possible detail. According to figures compiled by MIS specialist Cerm, in the most extreme cases only half the total material ordered by the converter ends up actually going to the customer as finished labels.

Waste estimation techniques include setting up an average waste per roll and multiplying the number of roll changes required for a given production length. This can be determined by checking how many meters are thrown away at the end of every roll; how many meters are not used at the beginning of every roll; and how many meters are lost when switching rolls. You can even use two bins to collect this data, one at both ends of the press.

Detailed waste reduction instructions, based on these estimates, should be followed by the press operators.

A good shop floor reporting system can help determine the biggest components of your waste. If you measure the length entering every individual machine for one job, you will know how many meters are lost during the different production steps like printing or finishing.

The same reporting system can give you much more useful information. You will be able to set up an OTIF (on time in full) delivery rating for your material suppliers. You will know exactly the total sqm purchased per type of substrate for your annual price negotiations.



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L&L GLOBAL MARKET REVIEW

YOUR PASSPORT TO WORLDWIDE LABEL AND PACKAGING
TRENDS WITH ANALYSIS FROM L&L'S GLOBAL TEAM





Europe reels from multiple shocks

After successfully coming through the Covid pandemic, the European label industry has been hit by a series of shocks that are likely to have profound consequences through 2023. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

At the end of 2021 there was a great deal of optimism in the European label sector. The industry had grown by 7 percent, up from 4.5 percent in 2020. The worst impacts of the pandemic looked to be over, and any problems in the supply chain were considered temporary as the labels industry underwent a rapid post-pandemic recovery. No inflationary pressures were on the horizon.

One year later and that situation has changed - and for the worse. Supply chain issues turned out to be structural, a continued shortage of computer chips, and a months-long strike by UPM forestry workers. Then on 24th February Russia invaded Ukraine. Alongside the humanitarian catastrophe, Europe experienced surging inflation in energy and raw materials costs and further blockages in the supply of raw materials critical to the manufacture of label machines, materials and consumables.

Labelstock consumption down

A Finat survey in the middle of last year found that 60 percent of converters had suffered financial losses of up to 6.6 percent as a direct result of label industry supply chain issues. Losses of over 4 percent were caused by problems in the wider packaging supply chain.

At the same time, rapidly increasing inflation reduced European consumers' disposable incomes, impacting what they have available to spend on packaged goods of all kinds.

These multiple crises and uncertainties heavily impacted the last quarter of 2022. Compared to the fourth quarter in 2021, European consumption of paper and filmic roll labelstocks decreased by no less than 24 percent, the sharpest year-on-year decline in a single quarter recorded since Finat commissioned the collection of quarterly statistics in 2003.

Finat managing director Jules Lejeune explains: 'the contraction in demand is a correction of the erratic market behavior in the previous three quarters that started

"Brand owners noted that bigger label converters had more success in sourcing materials than smaller vendors at the height of the supply chain disruptions. In the same way, buyers indicated a growing preference for label vendors with more than one production facility – another way of mitigating risk"

with the long-lasting paper strike in Finland, the resulting paper shortages and increasing lead times, the refilling of label converter warehouses in the third quarter and the mounting general economic uncertainty in the intermediate period caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, rising energy and raw materials costs, rising interest rates and a looming recession due to losses in disposable incomes of European consumers.'

As a consequence, label converters made the decision to wind down inventories toward the end of the year and postponed the procurement of new label stock.

Label buyers remain positive

Despite this downturn, label buyers remained positive about the industry's prospects moving into 2023.

In the latest Finat Radar report, released in December, 85 percent of the 60 brand owners interviewed expected their label procurement to increase or at least remain stable in 2023.

Of course, we will need to see if these intentions hold up given the recent economic forecasts for European growth, but it is an encouraging sign.

Over half the brand owners interviewed indicated that their companies had experienced 'significant' label supply chain issues in 2022, and this has impacted their buying behavior. For example, brand owners noted that bigger label converters had more success in sourcing materials than

smaller vendors at the height of the supply chain disruptions. In the same way, buyers indicated a growing preference for label vendors with more than one production facility – another way of mitigating the risk from shortages and other disruptions in order fulfillment.

The 2022 Radar report also looked at the impact of the post-Covid landscape on end-use label sectors.

Not surprisingly, the report showed food and beverage sectors growing the fastest at more than 8 percent, followed by retail at 7.5 percent, transport and logistics at 6.5 percent, personal care at 5.9 percent, with pharma and household chemicals at just over 4 percent. Industrial chemicals and consumer durables posted respectable growth rates of 3.1 percent and 2.8 percent. The only sector to decline growth was automotive, which shrank by 1.4 percent.

A survey of capital equipment buying intentions showed that 29 percent of converters said they planned to invest in conventional presses in 2022, almost certainly a result of the higher order volumes placed during the pandemic. For 2023 that figure was down to 14 percent, with 33 percent planning to invest in digital – better suited perhaps to the need to remain agile in a period of continued uncertainty.

For more news from the European label market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/europe

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Luis Rodriguez reports



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To see the impact our industry makes this Earth Day and throughout the year!



Industry resilience on show in Latin America

Despite challenging economic conditions, suppliers to the Latin American market see reason for cautious optimism. James Quirk reports

No market operates in a vacuum. The impact of the war in Ukraine – resulting in high energy and food prices – is being felt worldwide, stalling or even decelerating the economic bounce seen as countries exited Covid-induced lockdowns.

In 2021, according to the IMF, the economy in Latin America and the Caribbean grew by 6.9 percent, fueled by a surge in commodity prices driven by strong demand as the global economy reopened. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has slowed that recovery, with growth in 2022 at 3.5 percent, mainly driven by Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica and the Dominican Republic, which have seen better post-pandemic recovery than much of the rest of the world. However, growth in the region's three major economies – Mexico, Brazil and Argentina – has lagged. Economic forecasts for 2023 are more pessimistic: the IMF predicts 1.7 percent growth. Recent years have also seen much political upheaval. Leftist challengers defeated incumbent governments in elections in Brazil, Colombia and Chile. Peru has had five presidents in two years; Venezuela's woes continue.

Resilience

Much of the above chimes with conversations with leading suppliers to Latin America's label and package printing industry: converting equipment manufacturer GM, plate mounting equipment specialist JM Heaford, tooling supplier Kocher+Beck, press manufacturer Nilpeter and synthetic material producer Yupo. Yet despite the economically challenging conditions, the resilience of the label and package printing industry remains on display.

Asked how 2022 sales in Latin America compared to 2021, JM Heaford and Yupo both registered improvement – with the latter even recording a record year in the region.

'In the label market, sales were slightly higher than in 2021 but with customers often buying lower-price machines,' says JM Heaford's Nick Vindel.

Yupo's Alex Cruz reports a 2022 'well beyond expectations' with record sales in Latin America.

'2022 was the year of reactivation,' reports Nilpeter's Juan Pablo Patino. 'If you compare it with 2021, in terms of sales and growth we still did not reach pre-pandemic levels, but 2022 showed that converters are looking to optimize their productivity and are willing to invest in it.'

GM's Jos Kabouw says 2022 was 'slower than expected', but that the company completed 'some nice projects.'

'It is always easier to complain, but we have good customers throughout the region who value the ease of use and reliability of our machines, and who take advantage of this.'

After certain markets boomed in 2020 and 2021, such as food and beverage, medical and personal care, Kocher+Beck's Amin Silva says 2022 was 'a great year as well, but tooling consumption was more similar to pre-pandemic levels'.

The challenge most cited by the suppliers was instability, whether economic or political (or both). 'Unstable exchange rates on the interest for local credit lines are having a big impact,' reveals Nilpeter's Patino. 'In some cases, interest rates increased by more than 10 percent.'

'Historic inflation levels in several countries in the Americas

"2022 showed that converters are looking to optimize their productivity and are willing to invest"

affect people's acquisition power,' says Silva. 'If people do not buy products, it directly hits the production of labels and packaging and indirectly hits the consumption of dies and tooling.'

JM Heaford's Vindel and Yupo's Cruz both saw hesitancy among converters to invest in capital equipment in 2022 because of political uncertainty generated by elections held in many of the region's countries. GM's Kabouw also mentions increasing competition from Chinese manufacturers as a challenge, along with price rises and high inflation. 'The supply chain is also a challenge,' he says. 'We've invested a lot of resources to ensure we always have critical parts in stock. This brings the benefit of machines being available for faster shipment.'

Despite the challenges, there is optimism to be found. JM Heaford's Vindel reports growth in Central America and the Dominican Republic. 'I expect that if 2023 is challenging, 2024 will improve. Labelexpo Mexico and Labelexpo Europe may yield some positive results. We have also started the year with a good order in Brazil.'

For Yupo, Central America, Brazil and the Andean region are all performing strongly. Cruz attributes the company's success in the region last year to brand owners and regulatory bodies driving 'sustainable alternatives to label decoration.'

'Yupo has worked very hard with associations such as the Association of Plastic Recyclers (APR) to ensure that our IML substrates meet APR's Critical Guidance Protocol, and we have been awarded recognition for doing so,' he says. Cruz expects growth to continue and Yupo is adding to its team to serve this growing market.

Kabouw points out that much depends on whether a particular market is geared for export or internal consumption. Chile – hugely reliant on export markets – 'slowed down a lot, but Argentina picked up.' Opportunities can also be found because of specific trends in the sector. 'Multi-layer labels have kicked off in several beverage segments, such as micro-breweries. Smaller shops are diversifying their offering, often with digital printing. And mid-range companies are increasingly seeking to add value to the labels they produce.'

According to Nilpeter's Patino, shrink sleeves are performing well and there is 'important growth' in the mid-web flexible packaging market. Due to the challenging conditions, 'more converters are looking into their internal procedures and renovating technology to reduce waste and increase productivity. They are looking to automate processes as much as possible.'

'The outlook for 2023 is tough and competitive,' concludes Kocher+Beck's Silva. 'But there are opportunities for growth for the companies that work hard and develop a good market strategy.'



Labelexpo Mexico takes place on April 26-28 in Mexico City. Go to www.labelexpo-mexico.com for more information and to register

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India market: growing under pressure

Although not without its challenges, 2022 marked a fresh start and growth for the Indian label industry. Akanksha Meena reports

The Indian label industry faced several challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The supply chain and logistics industry was under heavy pressure due to travel limitations and a shortage of resources. The hit on the logistics industry impacted the supply of raw materials.

The prices of paper, chemicals, adhesives, metal and other products shot up significantly. The Finnish paper mill strike also impacted the availability of labelstock in India.

Subsequently, margins thinned for Indian label converters. Though value chains remain under cost pressure, with mitigating measures taken by governments across geographies, a cooldown of prices is visible and further reduction is expected.

Despite the difficulties, the Indian label industry found steady ground in 2022.

New trends emerging

Harveer Sahni, chairman of Weldon Celloplast, says that once the after-effects of the pandemic tapered off, the Indian label industry exhibited its resilience in full measure.

Printers were back to work. Investments in label presses were being made. A new trend emerged – faith in Indian label presses reached new levels.

'While the top-end printing companies still opted for international brands, the middle or upper middle segment reported a fair amount of installations of Indian-made label presses,' says Sahni.

He continues: 'The Indian press manufacturers have been turning out better quality equipment. The market has shown definite signs of boisterous growth despite margins being under pressure. Flexo printing continues to be the predominant technology but digital is picking up fast and installations are being reported.'

The trend was also observed during Labelexpo India 2022, which made a return to the region.

'The industry gave a definite thumbs up to physical exhibitions as it returned to shows in substantial numbers, specially Labelexpo India 2022. Surprisingly, except for one Chinese flexo press, there were no other international brand presses displayed live in the show. The Indian press

"Customization of packaging or labels has been in demand. Consumers are getting sophisticated in their demands from brands"

manufacturers reported multiple sales. The number of labelstock manufacturers in India has grown and are exhibiting at Labelexpo in bigger numbers – another indication of the positive growth of India's label industry,' Sahni says.

Quality gains momentum

Labels and flexible packaging were one of the few print segments to show growth during the pandemic, particularly with the rise in e-commerce and the need for high-quality packaged food.

Pankaj Poddar, group CEO, Cosmo First, adds: 'Despite disruptions due to the pandemic, the overall demand for flexible packaging and the label industry increased because of the burgeoning need for packaged goods and personal hygiene products for home consumption.'

There was a spurt in the demand for labels used for disinfectants and sanitizers while the labels used for the beverage industry registered a decline. After lockdown restrictions were lifted, the industry bounced back quickly. With businesses having resumed regular operations, most brand owners are recording higher demand for niche labeling products such as touchless transactions, smart labels and social distancing labels.'

New brand owners are demanding high-quality innovative packaging to compete with established brands. The need for quality products has contributed to the recovery and growth of the label industry in the post-pandemic period.

Factors including high economic growth in emerging economies, increasing disposable incomes and rising health consciousness are driving demand for packaged food and beverage items.

In turn, this has increased the need for printed labels and technological improvements to create unique, top-quality labels.

Bhaumik Mehta, director, Flueron Inks, says: 'Flexible printing has seen robust growth in India in the past year. Despite

the challenges in the early part of 2022 including paper shortages, and material unavailability, the industry bounced back well. Customization of packaging or labels has been in demand. Consumers are getting sophisticated in their demands from brands. Embellishments on product packaging, the use of AR/VR and more importantly sustainable package design are highlighted throughout product campaigns and packaging.'

Rahul Kapur, director, J K Labels comments that 2022 saw a large number of new startup companies in sectors such as food, beverage and personal care.

The biggest dissimilarity between the new startups from the age-old businesses is the curiosity for learning. The new generation firms are keen on understanding product options, applications and benefits.

Brand owners' priority has refreshingly shifted from product price points to new product offerings and brainstorming new ideas, he mentions.

Brands are also driving innovation in the Indian label industry.

For instance, as the need for serialization and extended attributes grows, along with demands for item-specific information, the encoding of variable data will continue to grow, Poddar says.

Machine-readable marking incorporating elements such as augmented reality and the Internet of Things (IoT) will also grow.

Sustainability continues to hold center stage.

For the labeling industry, this means building sustainable and biodegradable labels using recyclable materials.

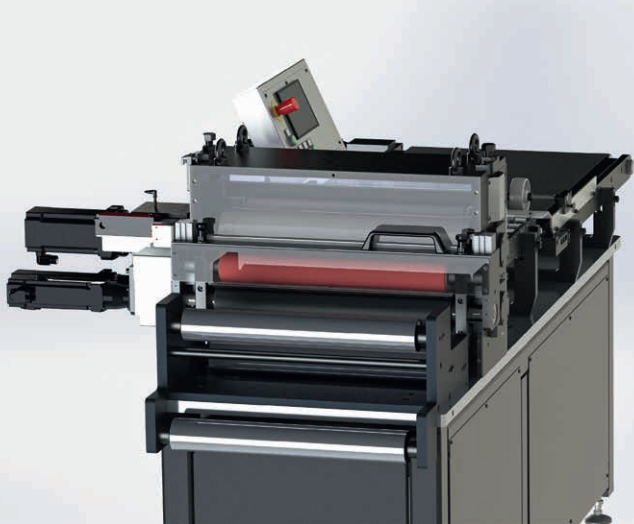
Poddar points out that the Plastic Waste Management (Second Amendment) Rules, 2022, published by the Central Government, include new recommendations for creating a circular economy.



Turn to page 81 to read more from Labelexpo India 2022

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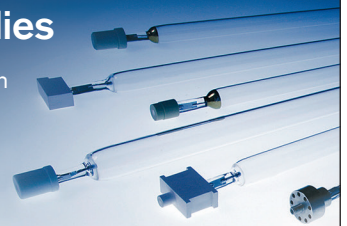
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APAC set for significant growth

The Asia-Pacific print labels market is set to grow nearly twice as fast as other markets in the world, with digital printing quoted as the most prevalent trend in the region. Piotr Wnuk reports

According to the report published by Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence, the Asia Pacific print labels market was valued at 15.778 billion USD in 2020 and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 7.34 percent to reach a market size of 25.092 billion USD by 2027.

Compared with the CAGR of 3.02 percent and 3.47 percent growth prognosis for North America and EMEA, the APAC region is expected to grow twice as fast, with food and beverage projected to hold a notable market share.

Technology advancements are helping to create creative and high-quality labels in the cosmetics, food and medical care sectors. The print label market is expanding due to the requirement for efficient and better-performing technologies to produce high-quality products.

High economic growth in emerging economies, rising disposable income, and growing health awareness are some of the key factors augmenting the demand for packaged food and beverage products, which boosts the demand for print labels in the region.

Despite being heavily affected by the pandemic, the shutdown of various factories disturbing regional supply chains and negatively impacting manufacturing, delivery schedules and raw material sales, the APAC is still anticipated to grow at a high rate.

Innovation drives sustainability

Avery Dennison accelerated the labeling and packaging ecosystem in Asia Pacific, establishing the AD Stretch accelerator program to drive innovation in partnership with industry start-ups across the region and solve critical challenges around sustainability, customer experience and value chains.

'From our first day in business nearly 90 years ago, Avery Dennison has a long and proud heritage as an innovator,' says Anil Sharma, vice president and general manager, labels and graphic materials for Asia-Pacific at Avery Dennison. 'AD Stretch will help us stay on the cutting edge of innovation by reaching out to the brightest talent and startups, working together to realize shared goals and value and solve the key challenges of the next decade.'

The company has also announced the launch of Sustainable Advantage, a rebrand of its sustainability portfolio, in regional markets. The portfolio has been combined and expanded to include their latest sustainable labeling solutions.

'Sustainable Advantage solutions give converters and brands in the Asia Pacific a huge range of go-to options for increasing the recyclability of packaging, using materials with recycled content, and reducing their materials consumption,' notes Pankaj Bhardwaj, vice president of marketing at Avery Dennison Asia Pacific.

Epson is also focused on embracing growth opportunities through its wide range of offerings such as SurePress, ColorWorks, and LabelWorks series, each serving different verticals including healthcare, logistics, food and beverage, from large-scale industry prints to on-demand home and office use.

'We are seeing post-pandemic that the print label market in APAC is set for exponential growth, and we are primed to support this through our SurePress series of industrial label presses,' comments Morikawa Tomohito, regional director for commercial and industrial products at Epson Southeast Asia. 'Incorporating eco-friendly features such as a digital print process and water-based ink, which does not emit harmful volatile organic compounds, our SurePress series ensures a safer and more sustainable working environment for our partners and customers in the region.'

"We are seeing post-pandemic that the print label market in APAC is set for exponential growth"

The Knowledge Sourcing Intelligence report confirms that digital printing is anticipated to grow significantly in the region and outpace any other printing technology.

According to HP, as print continues to grow and evolve, so are customer expectations and demands changing. Successful PSPs are now increasing their focus on growth drivers and progressing in their digital acceleration.

'The global economic outlook during the pandemic saw a decrease in gross domestic product and supply chain challenges,' says Arnon Goldman, general manager for HP in Asia Pacific. 'As a result, the print industry was impacted by lower demand and volume slowdown. We immediately set out focused plans to support our customers and partners aimed at business continuity and the needs of customers. Since then, we have seen many of our print service providers (PSPs) demonstrate business agility and a quick reaction to ever-changing market demands by shifting more volume to digital print and leveraging the versatility of our presses to offer new types of products and services.'

'The digital sector is proving popular for smaller runs and niche applications, offering cost benefits and flexibility over flexo. However, we don't expect digital printing to make big inroads into the core flexo print sector at this time as flexo is still proven to have its cost advantage for mid- to long-run jobs,' says Benjamart Fagg (Jane Tan), managing director of Press Systems Group (PSG), a Thailand-based supplier of UV LED systems.

'In the label industry, inkjet not only complements conventional printing, but it has also grown to a point where it is more competitive in many aspects. We see print buyers demand such quality and fast turnaround time that our customers can do it on the digital,' confirms EP Digital regional manager Sean Yap. 'Business owners are also happier to manage fewer production lines, yet still able to increase productivity. Our customers achieve between 70 and 90 jobs daily with just one machine. This also greatly assists them with the lack of labor that countries in the region face now.'

Domino, which has been in the APAC market for over three decades, opened a Digital Centre of Excellence in Bangkok, Thailand, with its long-standing partner Harn Engineering Solutions.

Roy Schoettle, vice president of the Asia-Pacific region at XSYS, sees these technologies are still complementary to flexography.

'Digital does play a role, however, particularly in the tag and label market where we are seeing many printing companies investing in multiple technologies, but in other markets, such as flexible packaging where high-speed printing and long job runs are required, it is still not economically viable,' he says.

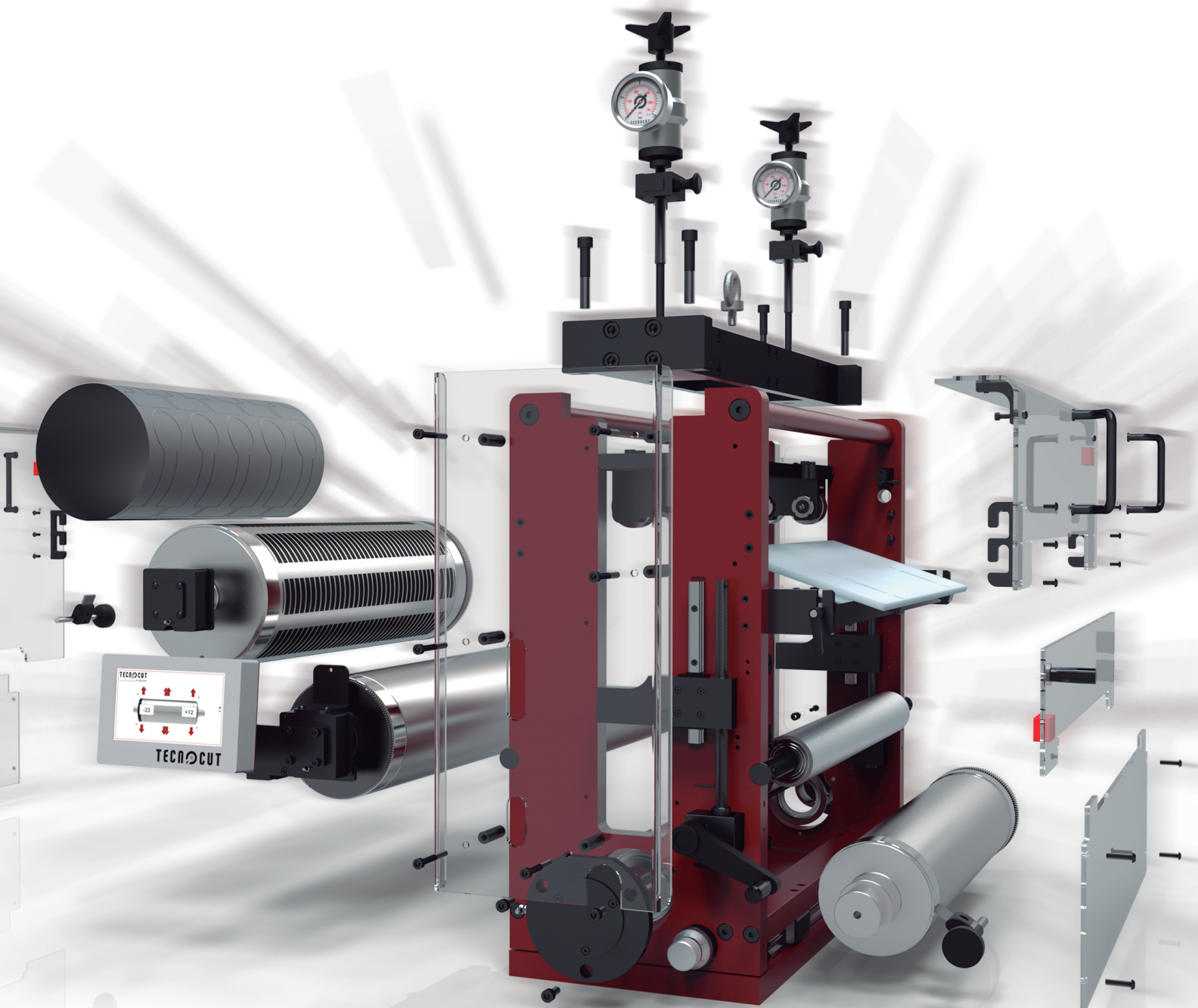
APAC is undoubtedly a rising market with great potential. Although the pandemic has negatively influenced its economy, the region is showing strong economic growth again.



Read the 'Opportunities in Asia Pacific' article in Issue 4, 2022 of Labels & Labeling to learn more about the challenges and outlook of the labeling market in the region



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Chinese label market grows despite lingering pandemic

As the Chinese economy reopens after years of Covid-19 shutdowns, the label industry is poised to rebound with the country's economy. Yolanda Wang reports



According to the latest AWA report, in 2021 the total amount of labels consumed across Asia-Pacific exceeded 30 billion sqm and accounted for 45 percent of the global label market. Of that, Chinese-produced labels accounted for 58 percent of the total Asian label market. This is up 5.3 percent from 2020, and higher than the wider Asian label market, which grew at 4.6 percent.

According to the statistics of the label printing branch of the Printing Equipment and Equipment Industry Association of China (PEIAC), the value of the Chinese pressure-sensitive label market increased from 39.2 billion RMB (USD 5.75 bn) in 2016 to 50 billion RMB (USD 7.37 bn) in 2019.

The Chinese economy has been greatly affected by Covid-19. With reduced consumer consumption, growth of the label printing industry has slowed down, while at the same time labels for medicine, alcohol and anti-epidemic products, have achieved steady growth.

According to China's label printing industry figures, it is estimated that the market size of pressure-sensitive labels in China will reach about 59 billion RMB (USD 8.7bn) in 2022.

Main driving force

China is no stranger to the difficulties plaguing the world, and yet, the Chinese label printing industry continues to innovate and transform.

While traditional consumption was severely restricted by the pandemic, a new tech-minded economy emerged, and e-commerce labels boomed and drove steady growth throughout the region for related industries like logistics.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the total retail sales of online shopping reached 13.1 trillion RMB in 2021, accounting for nearly one-third of China's total retail sales of consumer goods of 44.1 trillion RMB. In 2021, China's online retail sales increased by 14.1 percent over the previous year. Among them, online retail sales of physical goods grew by 12 percent, significantly higher than offline consumption.

According to the National Conference on Postal Administration, the volume of

"Everything from raw materials, inks, printing methods to the recycling of label after the use is under the environmental microscope"

online-sourced deliveries will reach 122.5 billion in 2022, up about 13 percent.

Pharmaceutical and personal health care sectors also saw gains in recent years, driven by demand for anti-epidemic drugs and disinfectants. In particular, the sales of cold and cough medicines have soared since the end of 2022, when the Chinese quarantine policy was lifted. While the demand for labels related to the epidemic is temporary, the epidemic has put renewed focus on health, so the future labeling demand in the field of medicine and personal health care deserves attention.

Smart labels are also making inroads in the Chinese market. Currently, China is the world's largest producer of smart tags, while the US is the largest user (China ranks second). According to an AIoT Research Institute report, China's UHF RFID tags output accounts for about 70 to 80 percent of the global share. In 2021, the production of UHF tags in China reached 16.8 billion.

Industry experts predict that under normal circumstances, global shipments of UHF RFID tags will maintain an annual growth of 10-20 percent. At present, key smart label manufacturers such as Avery Dennison, Arison, Xindeco, Century and Checkpoint, have production plants in China.

Digitization

In China the Internet, big data, AI and the online economy are deeply integrated into everyday life. The China Academy of Information and Communications Technology has released a report on China's Digital Economy Development, showing that the digital economy is playing a more prominent role as a stabilizer and accelerator of the national economy. The scale of the digital economy reached 45.5 trillion RMB in 2021, with a year-on-year nominal growth of 16.2 percent - higher than nominal GDP growth in the same period, accounting for 39.8 percent of GDP.

Industrial digitalization will continue to

be the engine that drives the development of the digital economy.

Label print production in China is becoming more automated. Newly launched machines are equipped with intelligent control systems including servo motors, automatic register and inline stamping, die cutting and other finishing processes. Further, label converters have begun integrating ERP (enterprise resource planning) and other automatic management systems to streamline business.

Meanwhile, the development of digital printing technology continues both at home and with foreign technology. At present, there are more than 10 digital printing equipment suppliers in China. International suppliers, such as HP, Xeikon, Konica Minolta, Epson, Domino, Durst and Screen have been fully entered the Chinese market. Domestic digital printing equipment enterprises such as Haotian, HanGlobal, Flora, Pulisi and Vorey have also released digital presses. In 2022, label converters have continued purchasing digital printing equipment.

The advantages of digital technology with no plate, short delivery time and less human interference became evident during the epidemic, which further accelerated the development of digital printing technology in the region.

There is no doubt that Chinese converters are asking more comprehensive questions when outlining their capital expenditure plans: is this equipment conducive to obtaining future orders? Does it meet the needs of digital transformation? Can it improve efficiency and reduce production costs?

Whether traditional or digital printing equipment, most label converters prefer to invest in diversified, hybrid printing systems to enhance resilience to future risks.



For more on the Chinese label market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/asia-pacific

LABEL ACADEMY



ILLUSTRATED MANGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND WORKFLOW AUTOMATION

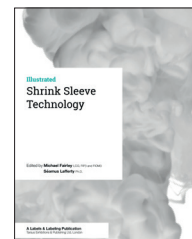
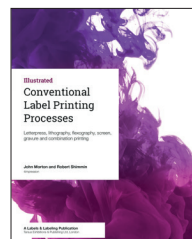
Technology has brought more control, automation and sophistication to every stage of the label and package printing process – from a customer placing an order to receiving it. This is creating vast opportunities for converters, as well as adding complexity to project management.

Management Information Systems and Workflow Automation is an essential read for new, as well as more experienced users, to help navigate the intricacies of choosing the most appropriate system for your business from the many options available.

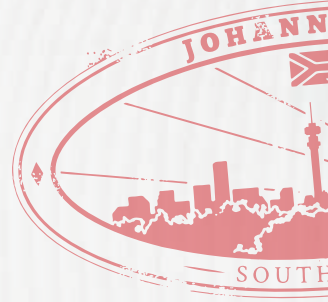
This illustrated guide will not only explore MIS and workflow automation systems, but it will specifically look at:

- + Accounting for profitability
- + Inventory control and quality management
- + Efficient order processing and job management
- + A detailed appendix of industry suppliers

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Global printers eye Africa

Africa correspondent Gill Loubser outlines some key market developments in the continent.

Some 2,000 commercial printing companies are operating throughout Africa, with an additional 1,000 providing prepress or post-press services. Mostly described as SMMEs (small, medium and micro enterprises), their primary focus is on revenue-generating applications, such as packaging, advertising and publishing.

According to the World Bank, six of the world's 10 fastest-growing economies are in Africa. Reflecting these exceptional growth prospects, it's not surprising to learn that global printing businesses increasingly eye African markets as possible investment destinations, something that could have a significant impact on the continent's printing sector.

Adding fuel to this observation, the African Development Bank points out that many African nations have recorded development rates of nearly 6 percent, another factor that encourages printers across the globe to invest in regional economies. Indeed, as the world's printing market approaches saturation, African economies are predicted to provide global players with potential growth opportunities in the coming years.

In addition, Africa is witnessing a fast-growing digital printing environment – rapidly replacing conventional analog printing, particularly among packaging, advertising and publishing operations. This is reported to be creating long-term revenue opportunities – with laser printing particularly poised to provide further impetus to the expansion of digital technology.

However, while it seems safe to report that emerging black entrepreneurs could have the potential to reduce unemployment rates across Africa, there's an urgent need for the continent's governments to support such start-up ventures, which have scant access to the necessary financial resources to invest in the essential (mostly imported) capital equipment to fulfill this promise.

In general terms, however, it appears that latent growth in African economies portends an ever-increasing demand for printing; although it remains a fragmented market, it's expected to burgeon across the continent.

South and East Africa take the lead

Dramatic rises in commercial printing are significantly attracting local and international players to invest in the African market, according to Transparency Market Research in a report on Africa's printing market for the historical period 2017 to 2020, and the forecast period 2021 to 2031.

Unsurprisingly, South Africa is expected to lead this expansion during the forecast period, followed by East Africa. The South African printing industry is expected to perform a particularly valuable role in the local economy and provide employment opportunities to over 50,000 people.

But what else is affecting the South African economy and, therefore, the printing sector?

Since the beginning of 2022, as is true globally, South Africa's headline inflation has been driven by global price increases in food and fuel that have drastically affected the cost of living. Annual growth in household spending, estimated to be under 3 percent in

"It appears that latent growth in African economies portends an ever-increasing demand for printing; although it remains a fragmented market, it's expected to burgeon across the continent"

2022, is forecast at only 1.7 percent over the next three years.

On International Print Day 2022, Jane Molony, executive director of the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa, reflected on the vital role played by paper and print. Since 1436, when Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable mass printing press, the world has seen relentless, exponential growth in literacy, opening up a new world of enlightenment for all, she remarked.

But, although millions of books have been published since then, paper consumption is changing, as consumers increasingly turn to digital and electronic means of communication.

With this change has come the belief that the paper industry contributes to deforestation and increased carbon emissions, along with mounting calls for businesses and society to go paperless.

From the promotion of e-book readers to messages urging recipients not to print emails, the average consumer may be excused for taking these notions on board, but there's no evidence to support this premise.

In fact, not only do forestry and forest products continue to play a crucial role in modern society, but they are also a crucial part of the economy and natural ecosystems, creating millions of jobs while capturing carbon and cleaning the air.

Only 10 percent of farmed trees are harvested annually and these are fully replenished with new trees being planted within the same year.

This leaves 90 percent to continue sequestering carbon from the air, and the increasingly efficient paper recycling system means the carbon is locked up for longer.

The industry also creates direct and indirect jobs for thousands of people in South Africa's rural areas and cities, from forests to factories.

While digital can make sense in a host of applications, paper is just as much a part of the digital journey. Printed paper is still required to display bar codes, QR codes and other media using emerging technologies, such as augmented reality.

As Jane Molony concludes: 'Although some may say that print is dead, it's not – just different. Paper in its myriad formats is here to stay.'



For more from the African label and packaging market, visit www.labelsandlabeling.com/africa

Label trends

Sustainable labels on the rise. The sustainable labels market is expected to surpass \$27.2B USD in the next decade, growth that's driven by environmental concerns and advancements in materials and printing technologies



Global sustainable labels market

\$15.6B USD
2022

\$27.2B USD
2032

5.7%
Overall sales CAGR

Industries trending toward sustainable labels



Food & beverage



Pharmaceutical



Chemical



Cosmetics

Key Takeaways

- Based on material type, the paper segment is estimated to account for market value of **US\$ 9.2B** in 2022.
- Based on end use, the food & beverage segment is projected to expand **1.6 times** during the forecast period.
- With rapid growth of the food service industry, demand for sustainable packaging across South Asia is projected to grow at a healthy pace through 2032.
- North America is likely to hold a substantial share of the global sustainable labels market by the end of the forecast period.
- The sustainable labels market in India is poised to grow at a steady pace over the next 10 years.

“Increased environmental concerns are the major reason for the expansion of the sustainable labels market. Besides this, advancements in printing technologies will also positively impact the global sustainable labels market going forward”

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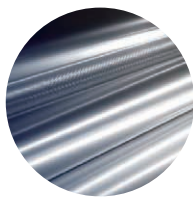
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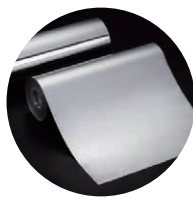
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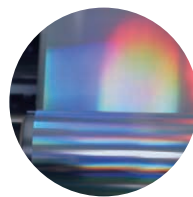
Hot Stamping
Foil



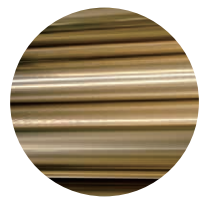
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Narrow-web
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Holographic Foil



Digital Foil

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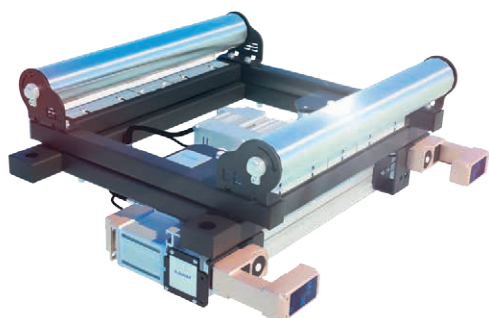
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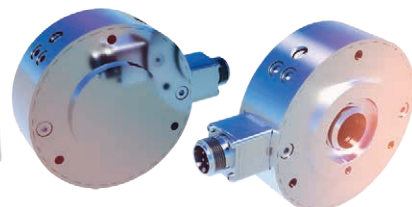
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