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LABELEXPO EUROPE REVIEW

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robotics for efficiency gains

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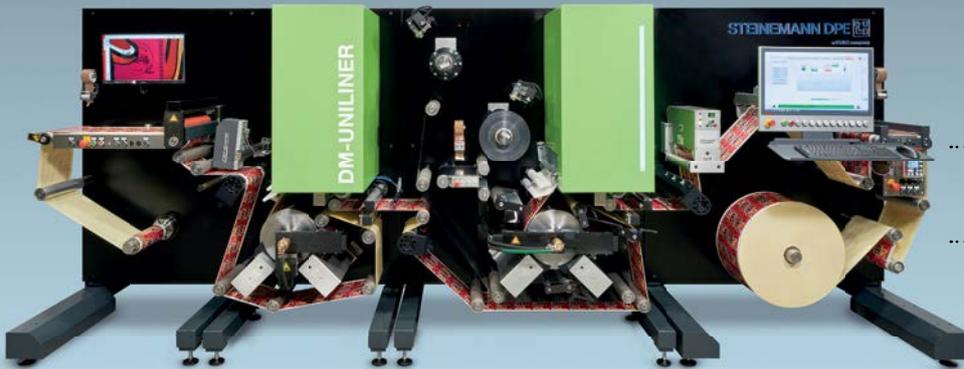
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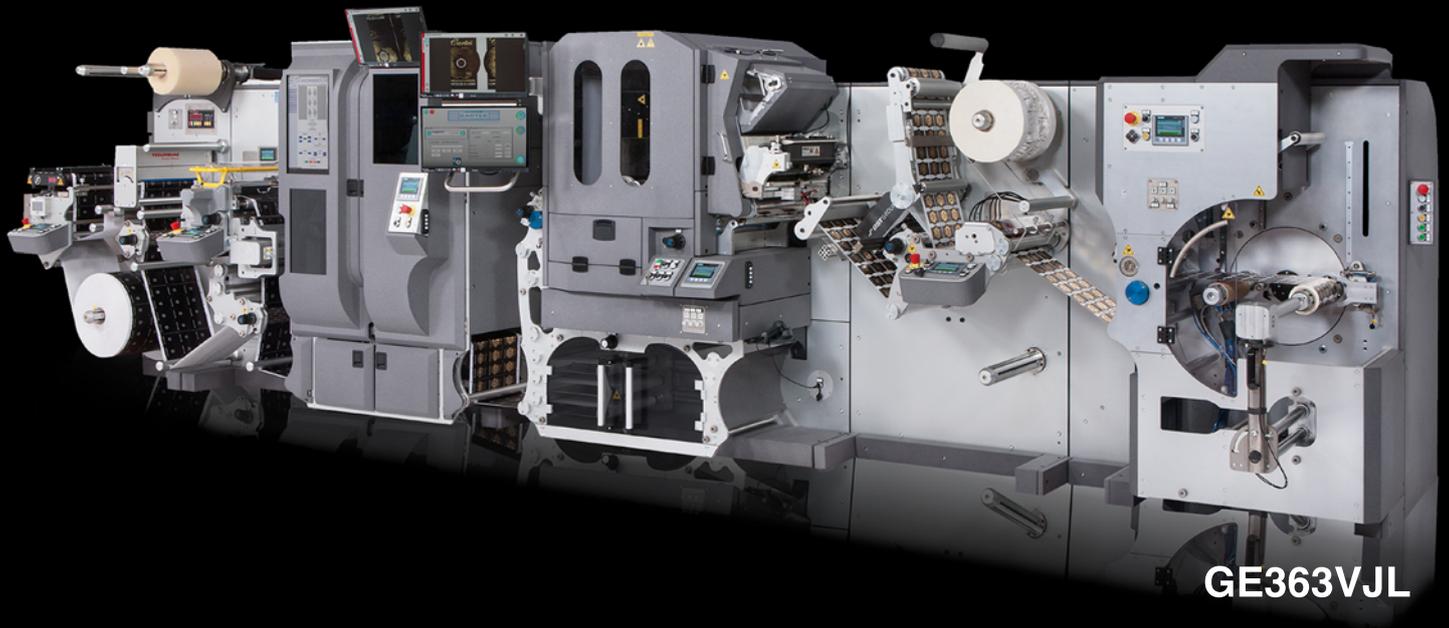
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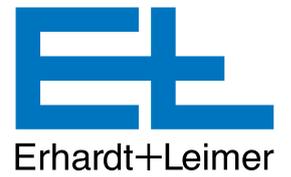
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– Meet the team

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New All4Labels CEO talks trends (video)

All4Labels CEO Paloma Alonso reflects on Labelexpo Europe 2023 and the future of the company



Read L&L Issue 3 online (magazine)

The previous issue of L&L is now available to read online



Rebound with a rebrand (column)

Branding and design columnist, Vicki Strull, recounts a successful packaging redesign she completed for a food brand



Foiling, embossing and 2D, 3D holographic solutions (Label Academy)

Uniqueness, application of skilled technology and high investment in plant and equipment, are all obstacles to counterfeiters



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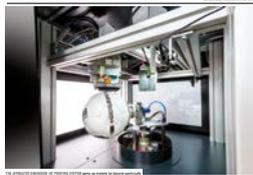
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L&L looks back (L&L issue 3, 2014)



Label press leads Heidelberg digital strategy

EDITORIAL First examines the implications behind Heidelberg's recently announced inkjet label strategy. Heidelberg's investment in inkjet-based digital printing is a clear signal of the company's commitment to sustainable growth. The company's new inkjet-based digital printing technology is a significant step forward in the label printing industry. This technology will allow for more efficient production of labels, reducing waste and energy consumption. Heidelberg's commitment to sustainability is a key driver of its digital strategy. The company's new inkjet-based digital printing technology is a significant step forward in the label printing industry. This technology will allow for more efficient production of labels, reducing waste and energy consumption. Heidelberg's commitment to sustainability is a key driver of its digital strategy.



Unilever plots label future

EDITORIAL Unilever is working with the label industry to design the future as it looks to 'sustainable growth' in the global market. Unilever's commitment to sustainability is a key driver of its label strategy. The company's new inkjet-based digital printing technology is a significant step forward in the label printing industry. This technology will allow for more efficient production of labels, reducing waste and energy consumption. Unilever's commitment to sustainability is a key driver of its label strategy.

Mandela: how the label industry saved the 1994 election

EDITORIAL How the label industry saved the 1994 election. The story of how Nelson Mandela became the president with the help of a South African label converter, Self Adhering Products. The company was given six days to produce 90 million labels and save the country's first multi-racial elections. The story of how Nelson Mandela became the president with the help of a South African label converter, Self Adhering Products. The company was given six days to produce 90 million labels and save the country's first multi-racial elections.



Colombia hosts record-breaking Label Summit

EDITORIAL With 747 attendees, Label Summit Latin America in Medellin, Colombia, hosted more people than any other Label Summit. The event showcased growing trends in the label printing industry and also showcased the growing strength of the Andean region. The event showcased growing trends in the label printing industry and also showcased the growing strength of the Andean region.

P27 L&L examined Heidelberg's inkjet-based digital strategy, which the German offset press maker saw as an essential response to the volatile trading conditions in core markets. Its strategy aimed to improve net profitability and open untapped markets.

P48 L&L shared how labels and packaging played an important, if not dominant, role in Unilever's Sustainable Living Plan. This led Unilever to establish a strategic partnership with UPM Raflatac to make its 'sustainable growth' a reality.

P107 Mike Fairley uncovered the story of how Nelson Mandela became the president with the help of a South African label converter, Self Adhering Products. The company was given six days to produce 90 million labels and save the country's first multi-racial elections.

P132 L&L reported on Label Summit Latin America in Colombia. With 747 attendees, the event spotlighted growing trends in the label printing industry and also showcased the growing strength of the Andean region.

Innovation unleashed at Labelexpo Europe

Editor's note

It was probably about day two or day three of Labelexpo Europe 2023 when something occurred to me. The European edition of Labelexpo – returning for the first time in four years – is not just an event; it's a global community where industry leaders come together to showcase their groundbreaking innovations and engage in thought-provoking discussions with customers and colleagues.

Serving as the backdrop for this community was an array of exhibitions, seminars and product launches that will surely redefine the future of labeling. Labelexpo is not just an event, rather it is a true testament to the creative and innovative spirit of the industry.

This Labelexpo felt different in a lot of ways. Warmer on day one, sure, but this year's European showcase event saw exhibiting companies pushing the boundaries of automation,

“Labelexpo is a global community where industry leaders come together to showcase their groundbreaking innovations and engage in thought-provoking discussions with customers and colleagues”

saw them delve further into flexible packaging, and underscore the importance of sustainable labeling.

Labelexpo Europe truly was a convergence of the leading global minds in the industry.

In this issue, we will bring it home to you. Our editors were on site to delve into the trends, innovations, and technologies unveiled at Labelexpo and offer insights into how they can impact your businesses.

Despite the conjecture about it being 'dead', flexo

came back to Labelexpo stronger than ever, and as Andy Thomas-Emans reports, is evolving in new and interesting directions with a wider footprint, that is faster and more efficient, with an integrated workflow that ties it all together.

Just as converters are, Labelexpo shows are continuing to evolve into package printing exhibitions. Nowhere was this more evident than on the show floor with major press OEMs and material suppliers

showcasing innovations to target the lucrative flexible packaging market.

Material suppliers, meanwhile, are moving the needle on sustainability. As Akanksha Meena reports, linerless labels, materials made with post-consumer recycled content, and the use of alternative fuels for the production of labelstock emerged as clear trends on the minds of material suppliers.

As with every issue, we hope this coverage provides you with a comprehensive understanding of the advancements in labeling technologies, the changing landscape of sustainability, and the opportunities that lie ahead.

Chelsea McDougall
Group managing editor



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Installations



01 *Esko CDI 4260 plate imager and more*
Veepee Graphic Solutions, India
 Veepee has added Esko CDI 4260 plate imager and XPS 4260 and XPS 4835 plate exposure units to its Bangalore facility. The company says the CDI-produced plates are perfect for print applications that require high print output and stability on press, while the XPS – with its front and back LED UV arrays - ensures consistent quality plates while also reducing energy use and waste. The XPS uses UV LEDs. This controlled UV main and back exposure produces consistent digital flexo plates. The new investment replaces Veepee's aging, end-of-life flexo CtP systems with the advanced CDI imager. The new Esko XPS system will be installed at its unit in Sri Lanka, and the CDI and XPS will be installed in its upcoming facility in India.

02 *Durst Tau RSCi digital press*
Accu-Label, United States
 Accu-Label, a family-owned label manufacturer in Indiana, has expanded its fleet of printing equipment with the addition of a second Durst Tau RSCi press. The purchase was based on Accu-Label's experience with its first Durst Tau RSCi press. The company realized five times higher print speeds, lesser consumable costs, and double the digital production capabilities. The Durst Tau RSCi is designed for an industrial level of productivity, offering quality in the most economical way. The machine comes with 1200 dpi quality and has printing speeds up to 328ft/min. The press allows Accu-Label the benefit of repeatability of color and quality. The company is manning eight-hour shifts with 70 to 80,000 feet of product

through with no downtime for cleaning or maintenance.
03 *Nilpeter FA-17 flexo press*
CPC Haferkamp, Germany
 CPC Haferkamp (CPC), a German printing company within primarily self-adhesive labels, acquired its fifth Nilpeter—an FA-17 8-color flexo press. As industries evolve, there is increasing pressure on printing companies to deliver with speed, manage different volumes, ensure rapid job changes, reduce setup times and maintain consistent production. The automation and digitalization features of the FA-17 are designed to address these challenges. The fully operational press has streamlined the converter's processes, enabling it to meet customers' demands promptly. Instead of assembling and testing at Nilpeter's facilities as is customary, the entire process took place at CPC's

site in Germany. This change in protocol and a successful implementation required significant coordination and a symbiotic effort from both CPC and Nilpeter.
04 *SEI Labelmaster finishing machine*
TLF Graphics, United States
 TLF Graphics has invested in an SEI Laser Labelmaster from North American distributor Matik. Searching for new equipment to replace their existing laser system TLF president, Bob McJury, visited the SEI Laser and Matik booth at Labelexpo few years ago, where SEI's Labelmaster was being demonstrated live. The company's old laser system required multiple repairs and component changes which added to the cost. The laser performance and productivity had dropped by 30 to 35 percent, resulting in delayed

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Installations



shipments and lost profits. The new Labelmaster delivers digital finishing, including rapid setup and on-the-fly changeovers and cutting without the need for tooling and die inventory.

05 Vinsak USAR 430 converting machine
JK Fine Prints, Mumbai India
 JK Fine Prints has installed Vinsak USAR 430 label converting machine. The Vinsak label converting machine with a conveyor is used for special full die-cutting jobs. The modular universal slit and re-winder is a fully, servo-driven system featuring pneumatic unwind. This machine is equipped with a re-register rotary die-cutting unit along with a conveyor for a full die cut and kiss-cut jobs on pre-printed rolls. The die-cut unit includes a magnetic cylinder and employs a flexible die plate for precision die

cutting. The machine can cut and stack special materials from pre-printed rolls. Himanshu Kapur of JK Fine Prints said that Vinsak provided the converter with complete installation and training support.

06 Bobst Digital Master 340 press
Anjou Etiquettes, France
 France-based company Anjou Etiquettes has invested in a Bobst Digital Master 340 press. A significant advantage of the Digital Master 340 for Anjou is the built-in calibration and quality control module – Bobst Accucheck. It takes care of everything, from head calibration and alignment to registration and 100 percent inspection of the printed web. The machine handles print runs ranging from 1,000 to 15,000 linear meters or more, with a resolution of 1200x1200 DPI at a speed of 100m/min. Other benefits include its ability to

incorporate new modules, such as a varnishing unit or a semi-rotary die-cutting module, all designed and supplied by Bobst. The modularity and on-site upgradability of the Digital Master 340 are other advantages for converters.

07 Two Mark Andy Performance Series P7 flexo presses
NicEtikett, Sweden
 Swedish start-up label converter, NicEtikett has installed two Mark Andy Performance Series P7 presses at its production facility in Helsingborg, with a view to diversifying the product offering from narrow web flexo technology. The two Mark Andy presses have the 20in web width – one is an eight-color fitted with Vetaphone corona treater, chill drums and GEW UV curing; the other is a four-color with both water-base and UV ink capability. These machines have given NicEtikett the flexibility to grow its product portfolio.

08 Daco TD430 plain-label converting line
Acorn Labels, United Kingdom
 Acorn Labels has installed a custom-built TD430 plain-label converting line from Daco Solutions to keep up with increasing demand. The extra width provided by the TD430 enables Acorn to get more labels across the web. Plain-label production has become an increasing focus of Acorn's business. The machine is equipped with a U350L 1m (40in) unwind module. The SVT 4 spindle servo-driven turret rewinder offers quick changeover times, while the machine can be configured with either one or two servo-driven rotary die stations. The system has a host of optional equipment that enables adaptable plain-label converting. With flexo print units the machine is capable of manufacturing weigh scale labels, color-washed labels and retail labels all in one pass.



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Champagne Capsules



Installations



09 Gallus One digital press
PrintFlex Graphics, United States
 PrintFlex Graphics, a flexographic printer in St Louis, specializing in on-pack and in-pack promotions has purchased its first Gallus One digital label press from Heidelberg. Needing to diversify its customer portfolio and a better way to produce short-run labels, PrintFlex installed Gallus One. The roll-to-roll press utilizes Fujifilm Samba printheads and Heidelberg's Prinect Digital Front End – printing CMYK+W up to 13 3/8in (340mm) wide at 98 t/min (30m/min) or 230ft/min (70m/min) and achieves 85 percent white opacity at top running speed. Another advantage is the head cleaning process, where the inkjet heads remain stationary as the web moves down. This function maximizes print quality and minimizes waste, requires zero operator intervention, and helps contribute to the machine's 95 percent uptime rating.

10 Grafotronic Haptic finishing line
Notarianni, Italy
 Notarianni, based in Alessandria, Italy, has invested in Grafotronic Haptic machine. The company has been producing self-adhesive labels for almost 50 years, including 30 years specializing in the printing labels for the wine sector where it has differentiated itself with continuous investment in both technology and employee training. Alfredo Pollici, owner of Notarianni, said that Grafotronic is young and dynamic company. It designed a machine that perfectly fits the converter's needs – a compact machine that includes all finishing technologies without sacrificing performance. It was crucial for Notarianni that the machine operates with the latest generation digital finishing features. Grafotronic digital finishing machines are sold and serviced in Italy by its local sales and service center located in Brescia.

11 Kongsberg X20 cutting table
Any Graphics, India
 Any Graphics has added Kongsberg X20 cutting table fitted with the FlexiHead tool for accurate cutting for complex and compact materials. The table is especially suitable for short-run and sample making. The new table enables Any Graphics to finish materials from labels, folding cartons and corrugated board through to foam, Kappa boards, varnish blankets and PVC. The X20 is also fully upgradeable. Kuldeep Goel of Any Graphics said that the versatile tools can cut multiple substrates. In terms of production delivery, the machine also produces die-like finish samples, helping to accelerate his sales approval. The new deal also marks the 200th installation of Kongsberg table in India. The first table was installed at Parkson Packaging just over 20 years ago, in 2001.

12 Bobst Master M6 flexo press
Paxxus, Ireland
 Healthcare packaging manufacturer, Paxxus has added a Bobst Master M6 flexo press with inline die-cut lidding to its manufacturing site in Ireland. With the installation, Paxxus has ensured faster turnaround times, increased quality control and continued customer satisfaction. The press has seven-color conventional and UV LED printing capabilities and is equipped with automated visual inspection. In addition, the die-cut lidding machine allows a wider range of customized packaging solutions. Equipped with DigiFlexo automation and oneECG technology, customers benefit from non-stop production, due to a centralized, fully-digitalized press operation.



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

Label & packaging showcase



Dieline Awards 2023

01 Why Not Pancakes & Waffles

Designer: Borondo

Second place in food – breads, cereal pasta

02 Mielt Chips

Designer: Deux Huit Huit

First place in food – savory snacks

03 Acqua Panna

Designer: FutureBrand Paris

Third place in beverages – water

04 Dom Ruinart 2010

Designer: Maison Sagan/ Ruinart

First place in beverages – wine & champagne

05 Eve

Designer: Agence Bemad for Edmond de Rothschild

Third place in beverages – wine & champagne



06



07



08



09



10

06 SAMPÉ Gin
 Designer:
 Design Bureau
 Izvorka Juric
 Second place in
 beverages – clear spirits

**07 AMERICANO And
 AMERICANO Bianca**
 Designer:
 TIREMAN Studio/
 AMERICANO/Shogo Ota
 Third place in beverages
 – dark spirits

**08 MONTANA WHISKEY
 Blackfoot River
 Bourbon**
 Designer:
 Sandstrom Partners
 First place in beverages
 – dark spirits

**09 MOONSHINE
 Marine**
 Designer:
 The Neat Trick
 Third place in concept

**10 Starbucks Coffee
 Packaging Redesign**
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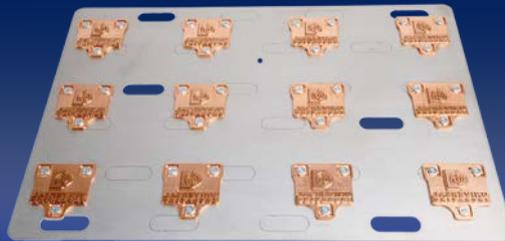
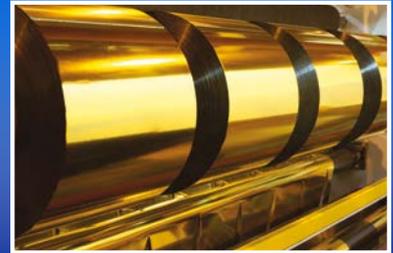
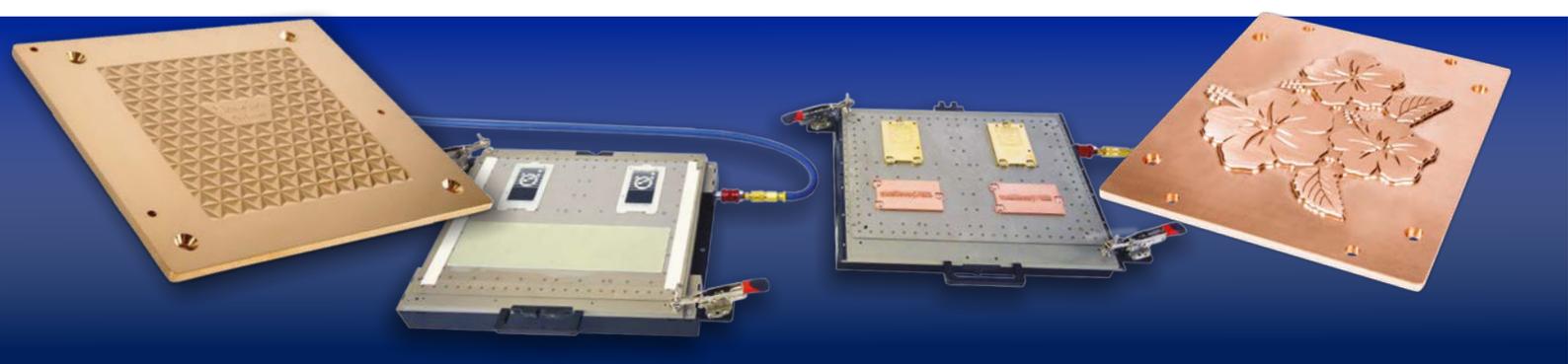
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- Many new lines of Hot, Cold and Digital Foils, as well as Makeready Supplies.



Andy Thomas-Emans column

Flexo emerges stronger from Labelexpo

Labelexpo Europe showed flexo presses evolving with automation, wider press formats and Cloud integration, writes Andy Thomas-Emans

When no flexo presses were shown at Labelexpo Americas in Chicago last year, some commentators asked if flexo was dead, finally superseded by a generation of faster, wider and more productive digital presses.

Labelexpo Europe 2023 gave us the definitive answer. Flexo is not dead – but it is evolving in interesting new directions.

Firstly, wider, mid-web 26in presses are emerging as powerhouses for diversification, giving converters the option to move into new markets, and to be more efficient in markets they already operate in. They give converters access to the more common larger formats of flexible packaging, shrink sleeve labels and in-mold labels. At the same time, the high degree of automation makes converters better able to compete in commodity-based markets, where overall cost-per-label is the critical factor. That may include, for example, non-embellished pressure-sensitive food labels and wraparound labels.

Converters who have purchased these wider, faster machines for PS label work can either use trolley-based fast-change die-cutting modules or can print at high-speed roll-to-roll and either slit on the press and finish off-line, or both slit and finish off-line. This workflow is particularly interesting with expanded color gamut (ECG) ink systems, as it allows flexo converters to print multiple SKUs across the same web and finish them as individual jobs – something offset printers have been able to do for a long time.

One issue facing label converters diversifying into flexible packaging has been brand owners' reluctance to accept UV inks for indirect food contact applications because of the risk of uncured photo-initiators migrating through non-barrier containers.

But there were interesting developments here too at Labelexpo Europe.

After extensive testing, the initial results of the UVFoodSafe project were unveiled. The final product will be a set of guidelines laying out best practices across the whole UV flexo flexible packaging workflow, from designs that minimize migration risk, to standardization and process measurement - in particular accurate measurement of UV dose - maintenance and testing protocols.

Narrow web developments

For the more traditional 'narrow' web-width flexo, Labelexpo Europe also showed an interesting direction of travel. It seems fair to say that we have reached a technology peak in terms of press automation and speed, so attention is now turning to factory integration, flexibility and efficiency.

Factory integration is being achieved by linking flexo presses to Cloud-based workflows capable of sending real-time production information to a remote server, from where it can be accessed for job analysis across a range of data points from downtime to average speed, ink consumption and material waste. All this helps managers to identify points of weakness in work practices and increase the overall efficiency of the converting operation.

Added flexibility is being achieved by the integration of digital

“Factory integration is being achieved by linking flexo presses to Cloud-based workflows capable of sending real-time production information to a remote server, from where it can be accessed for job analysis”

printing and embellishment into the flexo press line, either as a retrofit module or rail-mounted.

Both Mark Andy and Gallus took this trend to a logical conclusion by allowing entire press flexo lines – the Pro Series and ECS respectively – to be field-upgradable to hybrid presses by installing a digital print engine (respectively the DMax Pro and DPU) directly into the existing flexo press. Domino meanwhile premiered its N610i-R digital retrofit module targeted at OEMs and converters looking to add digital printing into existing flexographic presses.

Press-wide digital print bars have been available for some time for flexo presses, replacing, for example, a flexo or screen white or a black plate with a variable imaging digital equivalent.

But at Labelexpo we also saw digital embellishment modules installed on flexo press lines, with high-build digital varnish units on both a Nilpeter FA-17 and Omet KFlex, while Actega announced it is looking for OEM partners including flexo press manufacturers for its Ecoleaf digital metalization technology.

So, we see the flexo press evolving into a 'digital combination' press, in exactly the same way flexo took on board processes like rotary screen and hot stamping in the 1990s. Digital becomes just another combination process technology.

It is also worth noting that the increased automation of flexographic print and converting units is seen in the growing sophistication and efficiency of hybrid presses. Take as an example the latest generation of Nilpeter-Screen hybrid press which uses all the automation advantages of Nilpeter's latest FA flexo platform so that, for example, sleeve changes can be made on the fly, greatly increasing the utility of the entire hybrid line.

So flexo, far from being dead, continues to evolve in ways that take on board the requirement of label converters to diversify into new packaging formats and the added value possibilities held out by digital processing. Add in Cloud workflow integration and you have a technology that continues to reinvent itself.



For a full review of Labelexpo Europe 2023, turn to page 76

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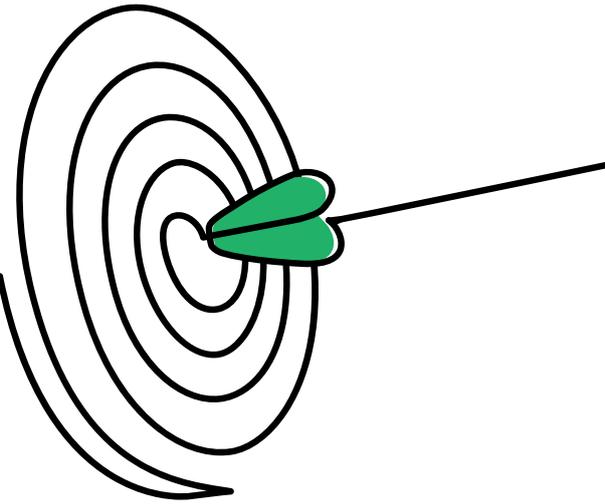
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Why employees like lean

Attracting great employees is all about culture, and using continuous improvement and lean tools demonstrate a commitment to people, and it pays off in the end, writes columnist Paul Brauss



One of the biggest obstacles to growth reported by converters and converter suppliers is finding resources. Finding and retaining employees has become more of a science since Covid, and building an attractive work environment has never been more critical. Coming from the operational side of the business, I often wonder why there is hesitancy in adopting lean manufacturing and a continuous improvement approach to running a business.

The work environment in companies without a lean and continuous improvement focus tends to have more turnover. It is less competitive because the environment perpetuates a less committed mindset to doing things correctly. The work environment at companies that have started a lean initiative and then given up also needs help.

I have interviewed operators of companies that once had firm commitments to continuous improvement but have yet to regain focus due to leadership changes, ownership changes and the consolidation efforts impacting the market today. The common thread is that the operators miss the cultural benefits they felt in a lean organization because they believed their talents and contributions provided a competitive advantage. They had a higher sense of worth to the organization.

New generation workforce

The tangible benefits of a lean organization become more evident as we explore the needs of the next generation of workers.

The stories and statistics from 10 to 15 years ago are overwhelming about lean implementation failure rates in companies. The reason for the low success factor points to a failure to understand the disciplines and the commitment from leaders that is required.

Today, however, the heightened pressure identified as the needs of employees and the needs of the industry may finally

“The dialog about why lean is important must move from just being about an organization becoming more competitive to developing a work environment attractive to employees”

force leaders to make that commitment. Significant alignment is identified as part of a cultural awakening required to harness the capabilities of the new generation workforce.

The dialog about why lean is important must move from just being about an organization becoming more competitive to developing a work environment attractive to employees.

What employees want:

- Purpose finding meaning
- Community and connection
- Growth and long-term focus
- Increased value and self-worth
- Simplification and standardization
- Specific recognition

What companies need:

- Collaboration involving everyone
- Silo elimination and process focus
- Simplification and standard work
- Employees for the long-term
- Innovative problem solvers
- Advancement of skilled work

Our next-generation workforce is telling us they strongly need more fulfillment from their work environment and better work/life balance. Specifically, leaders in organizations are burning out quicker post-Covid because they have more general responsibilities. Like all employees, leaders seek camaraderie as part of a winning team that celebrates personal success and provides nurturing.

What will help move a culture is a roadmap that amplifies how to build on the strengths of our employees, so they know they have an opportunity to grow and

become great.

We've all heard that the best leaders must be exceptional coaches. Executives and business owners are responsible for teaching leaders these skills and paving the way to answer their needs. The next generation of workers will demand this, or they will leave. In a recent survey, over 72 percent of employees say it is essential for them to feel part of a community at work.

The answer to the workforce crisis can be found with a lean, continuous improvement focus for the employees and the leaders.

Committing to lean involves the entire company. This management philosophy promotes the concept that everyone in the company is part of a team. Solving problems and using kaizen projects to advance a solution promotes involvement and eliminates costly silos of activity.

Kaizen teams are engaged, and the participants have a sense of fulfillment, all very important to the next generation workforce. The company gains the elimination of problems by getting to the root of the issue. The investigation and elimination steps ensure the correct attention and focus are achieved quickly.

The lean tools

Lean is all about increasing an overall company's efficiency by providing a balance of the flow of work that provides an increased velocity of throughput. Accomplish throughput advances are mapped with a focus on bedrock foundation elements of lean: standard work, visual management, 5S, and waste identification.

Standard work is a tool that provides continuity as well as a training reference for completing a task the best way every

“People want to know the company will invest in them, help them learn their job, and also help them learn about the industry they work in”

time. Employees are engaged to write the best standard work, and leaders use the input to solve areas that struggle with the process, thus increasing productivity.

Managing the improvement activity requires community involvement in kaizen events focused on advancing the best process methods. Sustaining the standard work involves communication and feedback as part of the daily management approach. Shift start-up meetings and frequent follow-ups at the machine level fill the need for communication. These quick communication huddles are perfect for employees to come together for a common purpose, solving problems and highlighting achievement.

Trying to explain all the tools of lean and all the fundamental approaches to implementing lean in your company cannot be achieved in a brief article. A simplified overview is a communication about the 'Four P's of Lean,' and I can show you how they resonate with our new workforce and with a cultural alignment.

Purpose: High on the list of desired traits in a company for new employees is identifying a purpose that provides meaning. Employees want to understand that the company has a long-term vision with a commitment to that vision that includes a fulfilling work environment. It is essential to see and hear current employees talking about the positive atmosphere and to see leaders demonstrating values being communicated. They want leaders willing to share detailed information about strategy, goals and how people will be held accountable.

The foundational toolset of the House of Lean provides a toolset of standard work, 5S, visual factory, and a focus on waste identification that communicates the commitment to vision daily. During the lean implementation phase, the training ensures the employees and the leadership teams understand how these fundamental stones are placed. The information is repetitively presented, including at the onset of each kaizen event.

The commitment to kaizen is part of a long-term vision and commitment focused on continual improvement. The kaizen philosophy assumes that our way of life – be it our work, social, or home – deserves to be constantly improved.

Process: Workers at every level of an organization want to see consistency and standard work. Having one way of performing a task helps individuals identify with the expectations of the job, and having one way defined and supported with documentation and visual aids can be easily shared from shift to shift in a visual company.

Using a standard approach to process problem-solving helps with consistent communication, breaking down silos of activity. The process map is often the starting point for evaluating a company simply. Having fresh eyes from multiple areas of a company and understanding the process flow is helpful in the identification of

barriers in the process and stimulates collaborative discussions to fix any issues and speed up the process steps. The process approach, usually measured by time and value-added content, eliminates silo thinking that stifles an organization.

Measuring process cycle time and process quality eliminates inconsistencies in management and actions by the workforce at all levels. Problems rise to the top visually, and leaders can help define corrective action by including the process responsible person. Kaizen projects provide the tools to solve process issues and build standard work.

People: One of the most substantial teachings of lean manufacturing is the reliance on people as the most versatile asset a company can help flourish. Coming out of the Covid isolation, we learned the workplace can rebrand itself as a central hub of a community of people pulling together to add value for the customers being served. Community and linkage to others are essential in the new work life.

There is a disconnect in many organizations, assuming their workers, who complain about the amount of work, are looking for less when looking for more versatility and support to advance improvement. When we pull together a kaizen event, we typically find that the workforce is excited about the inclusion to improve things and is bold in doing the work required to advance an improvement idea. The kaizen participants use task diversity to help pull them from the mundane to a level of fulfillment for their involvement. People want to know the company will invest in them, help them learn their job, and also help them learn about the industry they work in.

Communication is essential, and positive specific recognition is a crucial element of this communication. Visual management practices help provide a consistent method to communicate each engaged worker's appreciation and value.

Performance: Every work team in a lean environment is comfortable with the idea that performance is a critical element of organizational success. The workforce is anxious to know their process task is impacting results. As a result, a company needs to understand specific driving metrics that an operator can relate to from their vantage point. Leaders often talk about profits or gross margins, and an operator running a press finds it complex to draw the connection from their tasks.

Lean puts attention to metrics on time, quality and productivity. Using the visual factory tools with simple metrics displayed and maintained by employees drives a focus on performance if they are linked to the efforts and displayed at the machines.

Sustaining a competitive advantage requires an organization that can pull together company assets in a cohesive approach to generating value for the customers they serve. The roadmap to achieving the cohesive movement is chartered with lean manufacturing.

Attracting great employees is all about culture, and using continuous improvement commitment with lean tools demonstrates a commitment to people. The reduced turnover rates reported by lean-focused organizations highlight the benefits compared to non-lean-focused organizations. Is there any wonder why?



The 4Ps of lean



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

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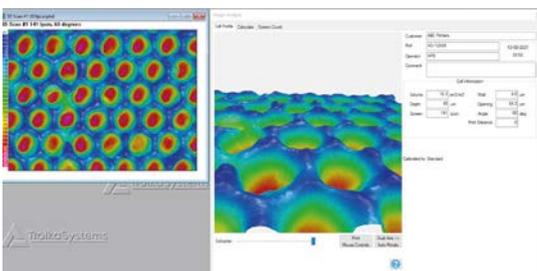


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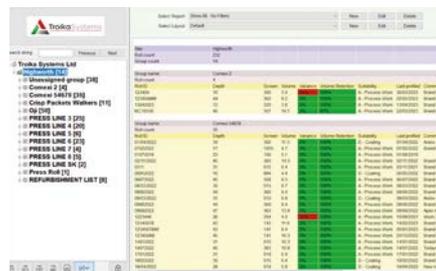
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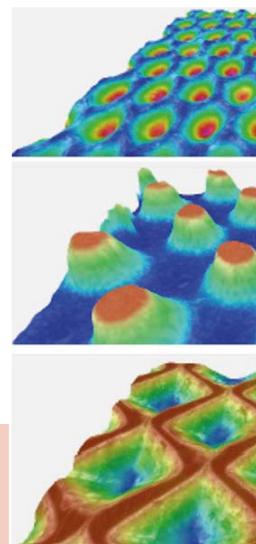
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The art of effective collaboration: Infusing value from concept to cart

A good label supplier, one who collaborates and innovates with customers, is oftentimes the winner in for the long haul, writes branding and design columnist, Vicki Strull

Recently, I read a LinkedIn post by Adam Peek, a self-proclaimed packaging evangelist. In the post, he boldly stated that label printing is becoming a commodity and explained that the differentiator is the value a good label supplier can add to the process, not just what they add to creating the label itself.

After reading comments, I could not help but wonder about the value converters bring to CPG brands and their sales. What parts of the design process are ripe for converters to add value and collaborate with brand managers and creative professionals? What 'entry points' are ideal for converters to step in and offer their experience, advice and inspiration? Why do some converters become valuable partners while others remain stuck in a cycle of commoditization and order-taking?

Collaboration begins with a need

Just like any endeavor, designing a label starts with a need. How many times have you heard any of the following requests from your clients?

We need a line extension.

This is typically requested by a brand that is expanding to more flavors, formulas, categories, etc. In the last issue, I discussed a rebranding project I did for a specialty food company, Wildfare, where I described the design process and the various extensions within Wildfare's product lines. The brand's need was for more shelf appeal – to get shoppers to quickly notice its products on the retail shelf while also differentiating from its competitors. Most converters I know have strong opinions about what gives packaging its shelf appeal, whether it's a finish, a specialty effect, a format or something else. Here is an entry point for converters to add value by sharing their opinion and experience.

We need to create a 'wow' moment during our unboxing experience.

This is typically requested by a brand that sells primarily online. Unboxing experiences are valuable because so many people post videos on social media as they open their purchases, potentially reaching a vast audience. Did you know that one of the most popular ways that people shop today is by researching unboxing videos online?

“If product packaging begins to look alike, the category becomes a sea of sameness. A converter with deep knowledge of a category is a valuable resource for a team”

In fact, 62 percent of people watching unboxing videos intend to make a purchase. For those of you with experience in corrugated packaging, you may have ideas about how to improve a brand's unboxing experience. Another opportunity to bring value.

We need to show our customers we care about the environment.

Many of you may have customers who are trying to reduce their carbon footprint or make their packaging more sustainable and recyclable. This is an area where not only converters but also suppliers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) can educate brand managers, packaging designers, production managers and procurement managers about new innovative materials and processes that meet the brand's sustainability goals and initiatives.

Research leads the way

After the need is defined and the creative brief is approved and the paperwork is signed, the first step for brand managers and designers is research.

Creative professionals need to understand the ins and outs of the category. It's not surprising that it's very different to design packaging for a luxury cosmetic brand that sells direct-to-consumer than it is to create a craft brew label that's sold in grocery stores. If a converter specializes in a particular niche market, their knowledge and experience within that category are valuable to the creative team.

Understanding the category also entails researching the brand's competitors so that the packaging design is differentiated from the other brands adjacent to it on the shelf or even online. Brands have very little time to attract a consumer's attention – research shows it's about eight seconds – so the design, graphics, format, shape and textures need to entice shoppers fast so

they will pick it up, learn more and put it in their cart.

The minimalist packaging trend that began 10 years ago was effective for the first two to three brands in a category, but after that, minimalist packaging grew bland, and customers have had trouble differentiating brands on the shelf. If product packaging begins to look alike, the category becomes a sea of sameness. Again, a converter with deep knowledge of a category is a valuable resource for a team.

Creative professionals also need to understand the brand's audience – their demographic, geographic and ethnographic data. Who are the brand's customers? How old are they? What do they have in common? What do they believe in? Are they pet owners? What shows do they stream? The list goes on and on, but it helps to identify specific existing and potential customers.

Recently, I worked with a client on a new concept for a convenience store. One of the primary audiences we identified were parents who like to walk their children to school, along with kids who are 10 to 16 years old who would walk or ride their bikes to the store after school.

Sharing your deep knowledge and experience within a category or with an audience does not have a direct ROI to your selling situation, but that doesn't mean it isn't valuable. In fact, it definitely adds to your 'ROR' – Return on Relationship. Advice and education build trust with your clients and prospects.

Gathering inspiration

The next step is for the creative team to collect inspiration and assemble a mood or style board. During this phase, creative professionals gather ideas for imagery, typography, color palettes, layouts, call-outs, finishing techniques, textures and formats. The inspiration on a board may not solely be related to that brand or category, and that's a good thing. Instead, creative

teams should assemble a board with pieces that spark creative exploration.

Suppliers and OEMs have historically created pieces that inspire and reveal possibilities. For example, Sappi, a global supplier of renewable and recyclable packaging, specialty and graphic papers, has developed a series of educational books called *The Standard*, which focuses on various printing techniques to achieve optimum print and packaging. The series includes books on color, varnishes, folds and specialty effects. Sappi's latest book in the series —*Standard 7*— is about the importance and impact of sensory marketing on packaging for people's perception of a brand. Each book in the series, full of inspiring imagery, bright colors, unusual special effects and various haptic elements, is a treasure trove of inspiration and a tool for converters to use with their clients – the brand managers and creative teams.

The value for the OEM and converter comes once the team prototypes and manufactures packaging, then chooses that converter and specifies the supplier whose imagery and inspiration were on the idea board.

From vision to reality – it's time to prototype

After brainstorming ideas and conceiving the new or updated design, it's time for prototyping. According to Mauro Porcini, chief design officer at PepsiCo, prototyping has 'distinct superpowers.' Prototypes align stakeholders around an approved idea by creating a tangible piece for everyone to see, touch and evaluate. The prototype reduces risk, sets expectations and instills confidence.

While the previous collaboration opportunities I've mentioned are consultative, prototyping directly relates to sales and your capabilities as a converter. If you cannot prototype in-house, partner with an external

“Designers unfamiliar with production will remember connecting with you and the time you took to mentor them. Not only will the designer thank you, but your pre-press team will, too”

vendor to prototype to your capabilities. Prototyping is the place where your capabilities shine, as you have an open invitation to suggest various specialty effects, varnishes, spot UVs, tactile finishes, metallic inks, foil stamps – any of the techniques that you know will advance the goals of that brand for more shelf appeal, a memorable unboxing experience, and/or a more sustainable packaging solution.

As prototypes are approved, the next steps are those that converters are very familiar with – the RFPs, quotes, prepping files and production. In Peek's post, he suggested that one way to add value to a commoditized process is through optimization, which is another opportunity for collaboration. For example, converters impose labels on a roll to reduce or eliminate the most waste. If my label can be shortened by a half inch and I can get more across the roll, that's valuable information that ripples across departments – design, procurement and finance, for example.

Recently, when I was designing pouches for a specialty food company, we had designed the pouch to be 7.25in tall. When talking to the converter, they told us that reducing the pouch to 5in would allow them to impose more pouches on the roll and cut our costs by more than 25 percent. However, in this brand's case, they needed more shelf appeal; they decided that making the pouch smaller would sacrifice some of

the shelf presence, so we kept the pouch the same size. However, the suggestion to optimize the size made the converter a more valuable partner in our packaging solutions.

Launching production and bringing the product to market

Most large brands have production managers who prep files, work with the pre-press teams and supervise production. However, the advent of many new brands over the past two decades has created a production environment where a production manager may not be part of the team. Instead, a new brand frequently launches quickly – a product, an e-commerce website, social media pages and videos. Often, the designer overseeing digital media is also designing packaging. Files may arrive in RGB with flattened layers without bleed. The final opportunity to collaborate in the process is to coach these designers. Ensure they know what is expected of their files and share best practices. When on-press, teach them the difference between high-quality and bad-quality printing, the acceptable delta variations, and the benefits of metallic ink or foil stamping. Designers unfamiliar with production will remember connecting with you and the time you took to mentor them. Not only will the designer thank you, but your pre-press team will, too.

Experience, knowledge and trust combats commoditization

It is said that people do business with people they know, like and trust. Being a resource for education and inspiration builds trust. Collaborating with brand managers and creative teams throughout their process builds rapport. Sharing your experience and advice primes your prospects so that when they are ready with a need, you are the first resource they contact. That strategy is not a commodity; it cannot be replicated with AI. It is a value-add that fosters trust, partnership and long-term client relationships.



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

polilux



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Youngest
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Leading
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Polilux is the youngest player of BOPP production industry. The company was established in 2018 and its main purpose has been to focus special products such as IML, PSL so far. Polilux has been performing production with specially designed Brückner Technology in order to produce the highest quality of label materials.

Polilux today exports material to 26 countries and this number reached in only 3 years after establishment. The company has only one purpose as to be a leading producer of special products. As a consequence Polilux launched its first BML (Blow-Moulding Label) product in 2022 and the company is producing high quality of PSL Facestock material which can serve high end market since January 2023. Polilux invested the first of its kind investment which will be the only one in the World. The main purpose of this investment is to match with company's objectives as to be leading special product supplier.

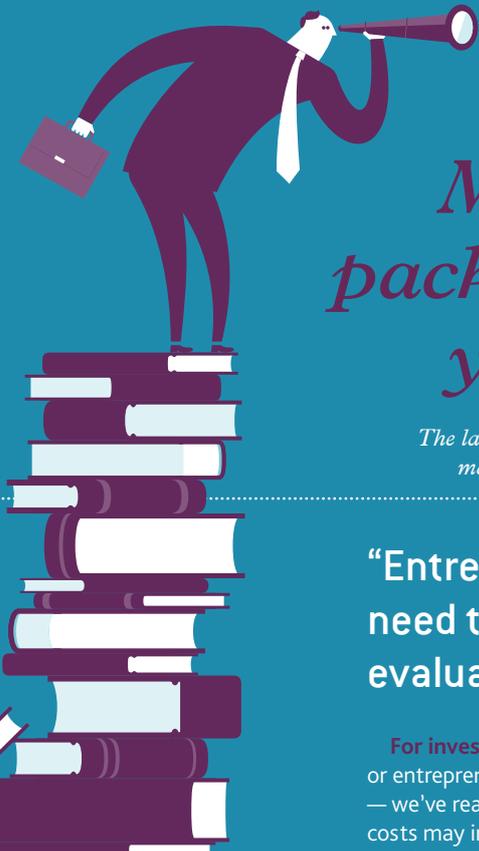


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M&A in the labels and packaging industry: What you need to know now

The labels and packaging market is still a great space for M&A, but economic factors make it more difficult to get deals done, writes Bob Cronin of The Open Approach

“Entrepreneurs interested in selling or buying need to be aware of these arising issues and evaluate their own situations against them”

Over the last couple of decades, labels and packaging have been a boon for M&A. Indeed, our industry has been part of some of the world's most significant strategic and private equity transactions.

We've had all the elements for M&A success, most notably:

- High-profit operation
- Near- and long-term industry growth
- Double-digit market segment growth
- Fragmented industry with potential to consolidate
- Opportunities in various categories / segments to gain advantage or dominate
- Low capital commitment
- Ability to find numerous financing sources for deals

While the majority of these elements remain, the last — and most important one in fueling activity — is falling short. Economic changes and uncertainty have driven rising economic skepticism. Thus, our current market faces hurdles in finding, funding, valuing and completing M&A deals. And this is quickly crushing many would-be opportunities for our industry's entrepreneurs.

Let's look at today's most notable issues:

Higher cost of capital — Over the last 10 years, global business has enjoyed some of the lowest lending rates for everything from capital equipment purchases through acquisitions. With interest rates escalating, deals are a lot more expensive than they were in previous years. While we are perhaps nearing an end to a lengthy cycle of rate increases, the cost of capital is now higher than it's been at any other time in the last five years.

For investors looking to make a deal — or entrepreneurs considering an addition — we've reached a point where borrowing costs may impede (or even outweigh) the upside of a potential investment. It's thus critical that every organization thoroughly evaluate all possible funding sources and leverage points before considering any target.

Reduced debt position for lending — Risk is becoming a lot less desirable than it used to be. Rising costs and lower profits have hurt numerous industries and put many previously successful entities out of business. Those who have financially supported these businesses have taken the brunt of the pain. Thus, the amount of the overall debt that banks are taking on in an acquisition has declined. Even in labels and packaging, where lenders had typically been eager, they are now backing down. If financing is actually approved, it's at greatly reduced positions, a trend that is likely to continue — and perhaps even worsen — in the near term. This significantly reduces the return opportunity for investors.

Higher risk and less upside for investors are bringing lower valuations, a lower debt position, and more scrutiny to any transaction. This is making investors a lot more analytical in their due diligence.

Future potential does not match recent results — Typically, deals are crafted based on historical performance (which helps substantiate projections). Yet near-term expectations and financial models are hampering expectations. Our industry is coming off record results, but growth and profit forecasts do not show the same trajectory.

Our industry is under new pressures. Inflation and customer cost-cutting have weakened demand. At the same time, there is a supply glut due to overstocking during the previous peak market, which is causing material prices to slide. The combination

of this increased available capacity and customer pricing pressure will intensify competition, further lowering margins and opportunity.

Issues in refinancing existing deals — Many previously completed deals are coming to the end of their original terms. However, with significant interest rate rises and qualification changes, refinancing will be more challenging. Our industry issues and financial market pressures will necessitate new terms — including the possibility for banks to require notable increases in investor funds to achieve the next round of financing. Such requirements will impact investor groups' ability to make additional investments.

I have always said that labels and packaging is a great space for M&A, and it still is. The above factors just make it more difficult to get deals done. Transactions will not stop; however, we can expect to see the valuations and transaction structure change around these circumstances.

Entrepreneurs interested in selling or buying need to be aware of these arising issues and evaluate their own situations against them. I am always happy to discuss your opportunities and expectations.

Investment timing is always important, but you also need to be aware of the current environment and obstacles you might face. Deals can and will be done but at a price that takes all things into consideration.



Bob Cronin is managing partner of The Open Approach, an M&A consultancy focused exclusively on the world of print. To learn more about The Open Approach,

visit www.theopenapproach.net, email Bob Cronin at bobrcronin@aol.com, or call or text +1 630-542-1758.

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Extended producer responsibility explored in Colorado

TLMI invited Colorado's EPR leader to speak to its members about landmark legislation being implemented in the state that could impact the wider US label industry, writes Rosalyn Bandy

This year, TLMI's annual meeting took place in Colorado Springs at the Broadmoor Resort. Nearly 500 people gathered to network, learn, socialize and get updates on important issues impacting the label and packaging industry.

Being in Colorado was special for so many reasons, but one that was particularly interesting to me is that Colorado is the first state in the US to adopt extended producer responsibility (EPR). It seemed only fitting to invite the state's EPR leader, Darla Arians, to address TLMI members and help us understand EPR and prepare for what brands and retailers may start asking for.

“The policy helps to build a more resilient domestic supply chain. This is a precedent not only for Colorado but for the entire country”

We learned a lot from Arians' excellent presentation. EPR shifts the responsibility of recycling upstream to the producer and away from municipalities. It often includes incentives for producers to take into consideration the weight and recyclability of their packaging when designing their products.

Colorado's landmark EPR program is designed to increase recycling and make recycling programs consistent and more convenient across the state. (With over 9,000 different recycling programs in the US, it's no wonder we're all confused). With cost being the biggest hurdle for current recycling systems, the state's recycling programs will now be funded by the producers' annual dues, rather than municipalities and taxpayers. Eco-modulation is also included in Colorado's EPR program. This is the concept that the cost to producers will be modulated downward if they design their packaging to be recyclable.

With these financial incentives for companies to reduce unnecessary packaging and move toward using more reusable and recyclable packaging, the policy helps to build a more resilient domestic supply chain. This is a precedent not only for Colorado but for the entire country.

With greenhouse gases (GHGs) such an important issue, increasing recycling and using recycled content in products can cut 75 to 80 percent of the energy required to manufacture new materials like plastic, aluminum and glass. This is equivalent to taking 1.8 million cars off the road each year. Our daily use packaging materials are created from materials that have to be mined, go through numerous upstream industrial processes, then have to be transported long distances; often across the globe. Using recycled content eliminates all this upstream energy and the resulting GHGs.

Companies that are now focused on circularity rather



than a linear take-make-waste system need this increase in recycled-content supply. While there is no silver bullet fix, EPR has the potential to increase the availability of this transition.

A few of the key milestones that Colorado's EPR program has underway are the following:

1. In September 2023, an independent third party was hired to conduct a needs assessment of all the state's recycling services and recycling needs. The report is due to the advisory board by 2024.
2. In 2025:
 - a. Convenience standards, state-wide recycling, collection and post-consumer recycled content rates will be decided
 - b. The funding mechanism through collecting producer responsibility dues will be established, including covering the organization's costs in implementing the program and the costs of overseeing the program.
 - c. A formula to reimburse 100 percent of the net recycling service costs of public and private recycling service providers will be established.
 - d. A list of covered materials will be established that providers must collect to be eligible for reimbursement under the program.

While EPR legislation is considered an environmental policy, it's also a business policy.

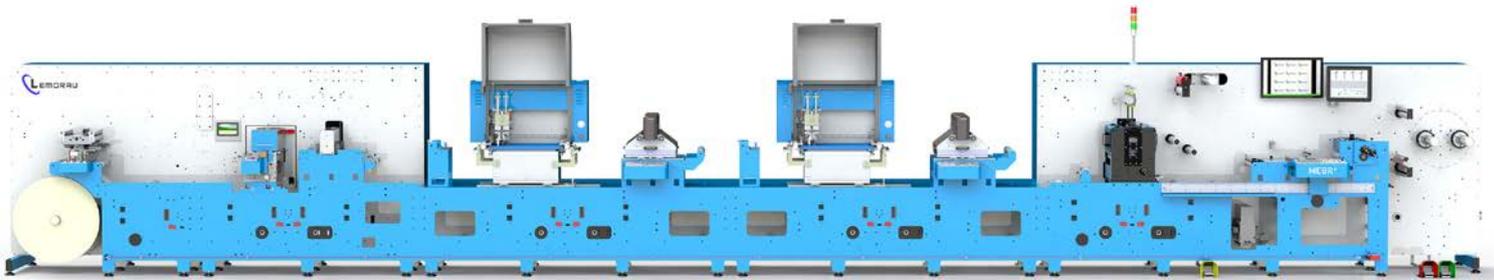
Producers will become responsible for their packaging when it becomes waste. The eco-modulation incentive will no doubt lead to lightweighting packaging to reduce fees and, in doing so, reduce material costs, and increase the success of many sustainability programs.

I hope that not only will EPR data be tracked on the increase in recycling rates, but also on how much GHGs been reduced through the program.



Rosalyn Bandy is VP of sustainability for TLMI. For more information about TLMI sustainability, contact Rosalyn.bandy@tlmi.com. For information about TLMI membership, contact Engagement Director, dale.coates@tlmi.com

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Geostick leads the way in automation

Dutch label and packaging converter Geostick is a cutting-edge company at the forefront of automation technology, sustainability and technical innovation that enhances its overall efficiency. Chelsea McDougall reports

The Netherlands' leading label producer and supplier is pushing boundaries by streamlining its processes and carrying a strong dedication to enhancing its overall efficiency.

The kind of blue-sky thinking at Geostick that has grabbed the attention of the world label industry.

Geostick has been on a rapid growth trajectory since 2014, though the private, family-owned label converter can trace its roots back to 1924. The company has grown both by acquisitions – with Clever Etiketten, Labelform and Etiket BV – and more recently with the build of a new digital printing operation in Uithoorn, Netherlands, near Amsterdam, where its first production facility sits across the street. Geostick has a third operation site in Heumen, Netherlands.

Rising star

It's not often a label converter gets a blank slate on its production floor. But it's particularly interesting when a personality like Tom Schouten is the company's operations manager. Schouten, with a degree in international business, joined Geostick in 2019, firstly at the behest of his father, Cees Schouten, operational director at Geostick, to assist with a few one-off projects. Tom quickly saw the possibilities of working in the labels and packaging space and joined Geostick full-time to help oversee the successful integration of the new digital printing facility that's buoyed by HP Indigo, Bobst and AB Graphic technologies.

At Geostick, Tom has been given the freedom to explore new opportunities for finding process efficiencies, a passion that earned him a nomination for, and eventual win, as the 2023 Global Label Awards Rising Star. The award recognizes emerging talent in the label and packaging industry representing the next generation of leaders. Schouten was honored at Labelexpo Europe 2023.

Tom Schouten truly is a rising star in the European label industry. The 30-year-old only has four years in the industry, and already his impact is being felt, as the Global Label Award judging panel noted.

'He's managed to bring optimization to Geostick operations and supported the company's growth by creating a workflow change management and successful integration of digital technologies,' the Global Label Award judges said.

Tom is also actively engaged in Finat, and passionate about cultivating other young leaders in the label and packaging space, mostly by touting the industry's boundless opportunities for



Cees and Tom Schouten in Geostick's new digital production facility

“Our industry is the perfect playground for automation and innovation – we already have high-tech machinery and software”

technical innovation.

'Our industry is the perfect playground for automation and innovation,' Tom says. 'We already have high-tech machinery and software.'

'In the upcoming years, I think we will see an even larger challenge to attract young talent,' he continues. 'Especially young talent behind our printing presses, so we need automation and digitalization of manual processes to attract them and get more out of that same operator. The supplier that realizes that will be the winner and I think they are all already heavily investing in this.'

Automation

An early project for Tom in his career at Geostick was to shape the design for the new digital printing facility. Ahead of opening the facility in 2020, Geostick purchased four HP Indigo 6K presses, the first units to be installed worldwide. Geostick paired its printing assets with finishing equipment from AB Graphic.

'We were able to buy a lot of equipment in the middle of the

Sustainability

Geostick is leading the drive toward sustainable labels and packaging. It has installed LED lights in the new facility, and reused the metal and concrete from the demolished building. Its roof is equipped with 3,214 solar panels, and the company even maintains bee 'hotels' to cultivate native insects. All of that was awarded with a BREAMM Outstanding certificate.

Furthermore, Geostick has a program with its customers to collect label liner waste. Customers can return pallets of spent release paper liner back to Geostick for recycling at

Cycle4Green. The collected paper is de-siliconized and the paper fiber is used for the production of paper. It's an option for customers instead of incinerating or landfilling, and Geostick provides customers who participate with a certificate that proves recycled volume and CO2 savings.

The company doesn't stop there. Geostick places a high priority on social responsibility as well. Geostick is in the pre-auditing phase for the ISO 26000 certification and hope to receive the certificate in 2024.

pandemic, which made our suppliers very happy,' Cees says, laughing.

In total, Geostick has 10 HP Indigo presses, including an HP 20000 for labels, shrink and flexible packaging applications, and a new HP Indigo 200K installed in October. The HP technology is complemented by a Bobst Digital Master 340 inkjet machine. The digital facility processes 100 to 200 jobs per day, and the company does about 21M USD of business each year on its digital assets. Geostick relies on AI tools from Cerm to plan the most efficient production route for the high volume of job tickets, and Hybrid Software to automate its prepress processes.

Automation is equally as important on the conventional and digital sides of the business. For flexographic production, Geostick relies on technology from Nilpeter and MPS for turning over 39M USD annually at its two conventional production facilities.

In total, the company has 14 printing lines, all running on a 'single pass' philosophy, meaning there is one operator per line that 'operates everything into a box,' Cees says. 'There are no second passes.'

This is implemented with the help of workflow and automation technology from Cerm and Hybrid Software and automated color matching from GMC.

Robots

As the company prepared to install its new digital technology, Tom started thinking about the way the building and its assets were laid out. He was looking for ways to get jobs off the finishing equipment and to the warehouse while minimizing the time operators spent away from their production equipment. The company ended up choosing an automated guided vehicle

“We planned this facility to make it the most efficient for an operator to do their job”



Tom Schouten with the company's self-driving robot

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(AGV) from Jungheinrich to move finished product around the production floor.

Tom says: 'We were looking for something flexible and scalable, and the AGV was the perfect solution. It picks up the pallet of finished product from the machine and brings it to the warehouse. There it puts down the pallet, picks up an empty pallet, and brings it back to the machines. This way the production process continues.'

The self-driving robot uses cameras to look for floor markings to avoid hitting people, presses and anything else that might be in the way. The robot has smart charging, meaning it charges as soon as there is a break in the workday, on the weekends, or at slow points when the production team is less likely to need it.

Next on Geostick's robotics wish list, is a machine that can bring raw materials to the press. Tom says this is challenging given the number of raw material SKUs on a single pallet.

'We need to make the operational structure to allow that first,' he says.

Robots are still a novelty in many label manufacturing plants, but leaders at Geostick noticed the benefits immediately. There are the tangible benefits of fewer touchpoints and fewer actions taken by the production team.

'If an operator walks from a finishing line to the warehouse with the finished rolls, he may make a stop to go to the toilet, to talk with friends, to take a phone call. That's all time that he's not behind the press,' Tom explains. 'The amount of time the operator is walking, that's the amount of time the press isn't running. There's a huge cost associated with that.'

'We planned this facility to make it the most efficient for an operator to do their job,' he adds.

There's also the intangible effect the robot – affectionately called Rob Ot around Geostick – has had on employees.

'When our employees first saw the AGV, they looked around a lot and wondered what it was doing and if it was doing it well,' Tom says. 'Now it's just another colleague working with them to get the finished product off the floor as quickly as possible.'

Cees adds: 'The printing industry is still a little conventional. Although we use modern technology, the way we operate is still somewhat conventional. Implementing the robot into the production area was something our staff was very proud of. Proud to work at this kind of company.'

Future

As the company looks to celebrate its centenary next year, Geostick has ambitions for more growth, with automation leading the way.

Contrary to many schools of thought, Geostick's approach to automation is not driven by a labor shortage.

'For me, automation is a way to make the process more efficient and for our staff to enjoy working here, and for them to be the most productive when they are working. So anything we can automate with that in mind, we will,' Cees says.

The company is on the path to what Cees hopes is one day, 'a boring life.'

He says, with a smile and a laugh 'The best situation is to have a boring life. When life is boring, then you don't face challenges, which also means the process is fully under control.'



To read more about other winners from the Global Label Awards, turn to page 86

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Positive ID Labels adds Daco TD350P flexo press

UK converter installs flexo press with in-line finishing and GEW LED curing. James Quirk reports

Positive ID Labels has installed a TD350P 2-color flexo label press with in-line finishing from Daco Solutions. The new system is the first supplied by Daco with two integrated GEW AeroLED curing units, as requested by the UK-based converter.

The Daco TD350P allows automatic label production with little operator input. It has a high capacity U350L 1m (40in) unwind module to keep master roll changes to a minimum, while the SVT 4 spindle servo-driven turret rewinder offers quick changeover time. The press can be equipped with one or two servo-driven flexo print stations and the option to add a UV inkjet system for variable data. The machine is configured with a servo-driven rotary die station.

The Daco SVT turret rewind module uses a patented double-sided tape system for attaching the web to the cores. The finished rolls are closed using a label printed by an onboard thermal transfer printer, eliminating the need for hotmelt gluing systems.

The operator can select from either length or a given number of labels per roll, and the machine will then automatically cut and transfer the web to the cores without stopping.

'It allows us to move simple label jobs that were previously printed on our 8-color MPS EB370 flexo press and finished on a separate Daco slitter – a two-step process involving two operators – to the new Daco TD350P system, where a single operator can print, rewind and box labels in one pass,' says Danny Carr, production director at the Melbourne, Derbyshire-based converter.

The installation has brought the added advantage of freeing up capacity on the MPS EB370 for advanced jobs requiring additional colors, according to Carr, while the integrated LED curing units from GEW require far less energy than the curing systems on the MPS press, helping the converter reduce costs and improve sustainability.

Jamie Neill, GEW's sales manager – UK & Ireland, says: 'The installation of an AeroLED system for Positive ID Labels means a reduction of up to 70 percent in energy use compared to a conventional arc UV system. This not only reduces their energy costs but also allows them to offer a more sustainable product to their customers. Positive ID Labels also gain from having improved process reliability, with predictable output for the duration of the LEDs' life as well as no lamps or mechanical parts within the lamphead requiring change or maintenance.'

Around 20-30 percent of the work handled by the MPS press can be moved across to the Daco TD350P, according to Danny Carr. 'We can also move around half of our plain label work, which was previously being done on a Daco semi-automatic turret, to the new system with its fully automatic turret. For the jobs we do on it currently, it halves the production time – if not more in some cases.'

Positive ID Labels serves the food, beverage and logistics sectors in the UK, among a wide spread of markets which includes chemical and automotive. It also produces price-marking labels on a fleet of four Mark Andy 830 presses. Two are equipped with Arsoma turrets for in-line finishing.

Further flexo capacity is provided by the MPS EB370 and the new Daco TD350P. The converter also runs a Xeikon 3030 toner-based digital press, a Jetrion 4900 UV inkjet system with laser die-cutting, and a Screen Truepress L350UV inkjet press.



Positive ID Labels' Daco TD350P flexo press with in-line finishing

“The installation frees capacity on an MPS press, while LED curing units from GEW require far less energy than the curing systems on the MPS press”

Alongside two Daco rewinders, and the in-line finishing capabilities of the Jetrion and Mark Andy machines, is a GM DC330 Mini to convert labels printed on the Xeikon and Screen presses. These are often craft beer or wine labels for the fast-growing local wine industry.

The converter began operations in 1997 with a single Mark Andy 830 press and has expanded significantly over the years, aided by multiple acquisitions of fellow UK label converters, including Limbus Labels, Banbury Labels and Dabbon Labels. In 2014, it acquired Danro Labelling Systems and continues to sell its label guns, tooling and other equipment under the Danro name.

Long-standing relationship

Positive ID Labels has a long-standing relationship with Daco Solutions. A table-top turret rewinder bought in 2007 is still in operation, while the converter runs two PLD rotary die-cutters with semi-automatic turret rewinders, with web widths of 250mm and 350mm respectively. 'The relationship we have built with Daco over the years means it was a natural progression to go back to them for the new machine,' says Carr, who has worked at Positive ID Labels for nearly 17 years.

'The beauty of Daco is the usability of their machines,' he continues. 'They all work in the same way, so an operator with minimal training can move from one machine to another with ease – the interface is the same, the operation is the same.'

'It's a landmark installation for Daco, as the first of our machines to incorporate GEW's LED curing systems,' says Daco Solutions' sales manager Mark Laurence.



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HP looks ahead to 'Indigo First' digital future

Labelexpo Europe 2023 saw HP Indigo demonstrate a suite of products designed to allow converters to operate inside a fully digital ecosystem. HP's Haim Levit explains the concept to Andy Thomas-Emans

Haim Levit, senior vice president and general manager at HP Industrial Print, believes a very successful Labelexpo Europe 2023 represents a watershed moment for the company – the first step towards building a global community with a digital mindset transforming the industry.

'We have sold 8,000 presses to 5,000 companies across both the commercial and packaging spaces, including 2,000 6K-series presses. What I'm trying to achieve is to build that into a global HP Indigo community that helps our customers to be part of something much bigger,' explains Levit.

“Today’s market trends are characterized by converter consolidation alongside consumers and brand owners demanding agility and sustainability”

This is not simply a matter of label and packaging converters buying more digital printing equipment. It's also about the eco-system of some 200 OEM partners HP has built up across prepress, coating, finishing and packaging systems, which allow converters to adapt their business to rapidly changing requirements.

Levit says the press technology HP Indigo introduced at Labelexpo Europe 2023 will allow converters to fully operate within a fully digital eco-system and create new business models that dovetail with emerging trends across the supply chain. 'Providing proven digital printing for all types of print runs is, in short, our main intent,' he says.

'Today's market trends, reflected in the state of the industry, are characterized in part by converter consolidation alongside consumers and brand owners demanding agility and sustainability. These trends are creating market conditions in which digital delivers tangible benefits to navigate a complex production landscape where converters need to adjust production plans and types of substrates very quickly. This is precisely where the HP Indigo mindset unlocks higher efficiency, and shorter delivery times, resulting in increased productivity and higher ROI.'



Haim Levit at Labelexpo Europe 2023

Game changer

In this context, Levit describes the HP Indigo V12 as a 'game changer'.

'The V12 is a 24/7 printing line that allows label converters to replace more than one flexo press. Indeed, one of our beta testers, Brook & Whittle, says two V12s would replace eight legacy flexo presses. The V12 needs only one operator compared to various specialized manpower required around a flexo press, and we are constantly working with our partners to provide more automation solutions to make the production flow more seamless.'

As an example, Levit points to the launch at Labelexpo Europe 2023 of ABG's high-capacity automated unwind and rewind modules for the V12.

With the V12, capable of flexo-matching speeds up to 120m/min in six colors, finishing can be the bottleneck. But Levit says HP's partner network is already working to tackle the issue. 'JetFX is now working with ABG on end-to-end automation of the embellishment process.'

Given the high productivity of the V12, will it now replace the HP Indigo 8000? 'Absolutely not,' confirms Levit. 'The HP Indigo 8000 is still in the range as not all label converters will have that

Commercial trends

Haim Levit sees an increasing migration of HP Indigo's commercial print customers into the labels and flexible packaging space.

'They are already working with brands in their commercial business who are asking: can you also supply labels and flexible packaging? These printers will generally start with a 6k then move to the 25k and now possibly to the V12. They typically understand digital very well.'

This process is working both ways, with some label converters looking to add 'commercial' equipment to widen their offering to brand customers. All4Labels, for example, recently purchased an HP PageWide press to bring the production of booklet labels fully in-house.

Some 20 percent of HP Indigo's commercial print customers are producing folding cartons, mostly on 15k presses as part of a wider product mix.



HP Indigo at Labelexpo Europe 2023

“We are seeing impressive volume growth in flexible packaging, breaking new records every quarter”

volume requirement to feed a V12’.

The other major launch at Labelexpo Europe 2023 was the mid-web HP Indigo 200k press, a successor to the hugely successful HP Indigo 20000 which first allowed converters to digitally print flexible packaging on an industrial scale. Now undergoing final beta testing, the 200k offers a 30 percent speed increase over its predecessor and a claimed 40 percent increase in overall productivity.

‘We are seeing impressive volume growth in flexible packaging, breaking new records every quarter,’ confirms Levit.

A major reason for the success of the 20000 was HP Indigo’s market-shaping ability to encourage OEM partners to build an entire eco-system around the press, which was demonstrated at Labelexpo Europe 2023 in the Digital Pouch Factory. The output of the 200k press was sent to a thermal laminator then a pouch-making machine supplied by Karville, with digital embellishment provided by a JetFX digital print bar mounted on an ABG Digicon line.

The final part of the interlinking print system demonstrated at Labelexpo Europe 2023 was a 6k press shown in the context of a fully integrated and automated web-to-print operation. HP’s OEM partners here included the Web2Pack e-commerce solution for small brands, an ABG Digicon Series 3 finisher with digital embellishment and laser die-cutting, and the Storefront solution from Infigo.

Beyond the machinery, a central part

of HP Indigo’s automation strategy lies in the roll-out of its new PrintOS Suite, a cloud-based operating system that integrates software and data tools into print production. This Cloud-based workflow will enable converters to get more out of their existing presses. HP Indigo PrintOS Suite adds intelligence to machines reaching new quality and production levels. As an example, the latest version of HP’s Spot Master color matching system, launched at Labelexpo 2023, allows color information to be shared by converters with their brand owner customers via a secure Cloud link. This version of Spot Master also allows calibration of HP Indigo presses across multiple sites.

Industry trends

What did Labelexpo Europe 2023 tell HP about wider industry trends?

Says Levit: ‘Over the last five years, we have seen our customers overcome several challenges. From paper mill strikes, destocking, rising costs and inflation, and a host of other obstacles, but the print industry has remained solid throughout. The recent summer period has not only restored the demand levels observed in 2022 but has also unveiled promising indicators of new growth trajectories. Notably, there’s a discernible trend of converter consolidation and destocking, which has primed the industry for a new phase of expansion. Overall, the label industry is experiencing a year-over-year

Sustainability

Sustainability is a key focus for HP Indigo, and Haim Levit states: ‘It is an all-encompassing goal as we progress towards mandatory 2030 sustainability targets.’

Sustainability starts with the design and manufacturing process for the press, says Levit. ‘Our manufacturing process is now certified carbon neutral. When the press is operating, changeovers are faster with far less waste than a flexo press. This reduces our customers’ energy consumption, waste and the overall CO2 footprint. Then, we are able to print on a full range of sustainable label materials, such as compostable, recycled and FSC-certified paper, including a recyclable paper pouch. On our Labelexpo stand, in collaboration with Etivoet of Belgium, we showcased wash-off labels, which allow easy and complete label removal for smooth recycling. Where necessary Indigo-printed labels can be de-inked to enhance the recycling process.’

growth rate at nine percent.’

Levit reports that one of the encouraging observations people were talking about at the show is the consistency in demand levels and the transformation of the way companies work.

‘Converters want to invest money to upgrade their fleet and be able to convert solutions that enable end-to-end automation from order to labels. In fact, automation is indeed one of the key trends for 2023, and its importance is increasing across industry segments. As I have said, for the HP Industrial business, this is a key component of our strategy. We are taking our learnings from advances made in other markets such as commercial and photo and bringing them to the labels industry.’

In conclusion, Levit states that labels and flexible packaging are ‘substantial markets with a significant potential to further lead the analog to digital transformation with more automated process management and greater sustainability. As we look ahead, our customer priorities and requirements will remain central in shaping our ongoing innovation. You can expect new products with LEPx technology, workflow automation, and sustainability at the core. We are excited for the future and looking forward to leading the next chapter of label and flexible packaging production.’



For more from HP Indigo at Labelexpo Europe 2023, turn to page 89

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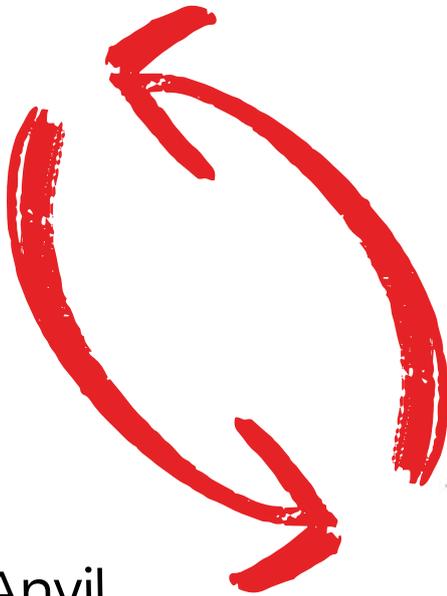
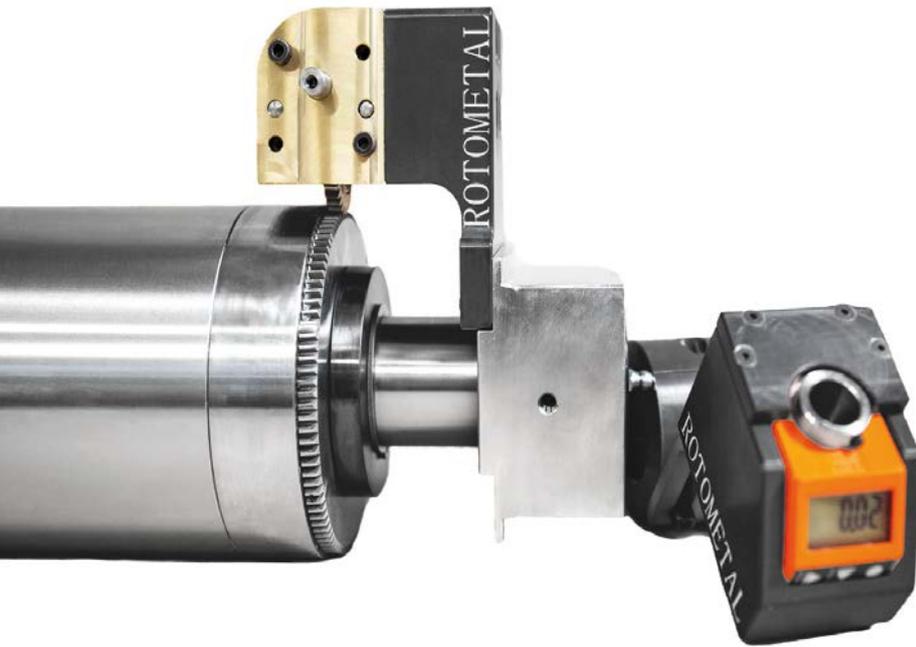


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Avery Dennison launches decorative linerless system

With its AD LinrSave technology, Avery Dennison is looking to transform the market for linerless prime labels. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

Avery Dennison launched at Labelexpo Europe 2023 a new decorative linerless technology, as the first step in a bid to transform the pressure-sensitive prime label market.

In March last year, Avery Dennison acquired the IP of a linerless label technology developed by Catchpoint, a UK company based in Yorkshire, England, and its pioneering champion Mike Cooper. At the same time, Wayne Middleton joined Avery Dennison from Catchpoint, having previously spent many years at Innovia Films, with the express task of commercializing the Catchpoint technology.

'Mike Cooper supported us greatly as a consultant, helping us gain the right knowledge and sharing his experience with Avery Dennison's team,' Middleton says.

While direct thermal linerless has been around for a long time, showing huge growth in simple applications like e-commerce, quick service restaurants and price-weight labels, linerless labels have not made a significant impact in the decorative labeling sector – although Ravenwood has shown some good advancement of linerless technology in the food tray market sector.

'The question for Avery Dennison became, with sustainability being at the core of everything we do, how can we help create a linerless future?,' recalls Middleton. 'We're committed to delivering innovations that advance the circular economy: from lowering carbon footprint to making a positive social impact. Therefore, through the acquisition of Catchpoint's IP, Avery Dennison could move forward with our own internal developments at higher speed. We could really hit the ground running and take the technology forward. After I joined in March 2022, we spent 14 months operating off the radar.'

Continues Middleton: 'We needed to understand how to convert materials to a linerless format and how the labels are applied to containers. We explored different materials, different sizes and shapes of labels and different adhesive and release systems.'

Converter partners

The next step was to select converter partners and get them up to speed. 'We were looking for converters who were sustainability-minded and had the capability and the innovation mindset,' says Middleton. 'We started putting pilot projects together around Europe to understand how to convert and handle open adhesives and the micro-perforations Mike's technology required.'

"We needed to understand how to convert materials to a linerless format and how the labels are applied to containers"

Today those converters are making their first rolls of self-wound decorative linerless labels.'

For label converters, one of the key advantages of the Catchpoint system is that it does not require a major investment in specialist converting equipment.

'We are trying to use converters' existing equipment base, which really helps to get them on board, and we put the rest of the ecosystem in place around them,' explains Middleton. 'So, the release coating can be applied on a standard flexo printing unit and converters can use their existing die stations. We trained the die manufacturers how to get the correct micro-perforation into their mag plates.'

The micro-perforations are in many ways the key to the success of the whole system. 'This is really what the whole Catchpoint technology revolves around,' explains Middleton. 'We are not trying to separate the whole height of the label at once on the applicator. The slits break the perforations into smaller zones. The profile on the applicator tool engages with the slits and helps to "unzip" the perforations, which means you can be more consistent and faster in applying the labels to the container.'

Working with Bobst

Selection of the UV release coating presented a challenge, says Middleton. 'Most UV release coatings require a nitrogen inertion unit and only a few converters have that. So we needed to select a release system that did not require nitrogen inerting. Another issue was the release coating tended to sink into the open surface of paper labels. So now we apply a primer first on paper, then a release coating, so this takes two flexo stations on the press. Film has a closed surface that does not need a primer.'

Avery Dennison worked closely with Bobst to trial the application of the UV release coating. 'We proved that on a Bobst M5 press, it is feasible to convert linerless label materials in-line in

Liner recovery

The Catchpoint technology which forms the basis of AD LinrSave is not entirely linerless. The roll is supplied to the converter as a standard PSL laminate with a release liner.

'We do have true linerless labels on our AD XeroLiner DT direct thermal product line, but our goal of starting on the decorative side was to make it as simple as possible for converters,' explains Middleton.

'So, with AD LinrSave we print as normal and apply release varnish over the print and then die-cut to introduce the

perforation and then wind up the labels and simultaneously strip away the liner so there are no edge trims or matrix.

'Then we offer our AD Circular liner collection service back to the converter. This consolidates all the liner collection at the converter - the end user has no liner waste to deal with, and this should ensure a greater percentage of liner is recycled. Currently, only around 10 percent of spent liner is being recycled. With this system in place, we can guarantee 100 percent liner collection and recycling.'

one process. On the release coating station, you need the correct coat weight to achieve 100 percent coverage and you have to make sure you are fully curing, as migrating release coating can interfere with the adhesive.'

The linerless labels can also be converted off-line. 'There is a debate here - do you finish in-line, on press, or on off-line finishing equipment?' says Middleton. 'We have done both. We can also print digitally and finish off-line. With a digital combination press, all these techniques are feasible.'

Applicator trials

The Catchpoint technology requires a dedicated linerless applicator, either a linear conveyor-belt applicator or a high-speed rotary platform. A previously developed adapter, which turns a standard linear applicator into a linerless applicator without requiring additional electronics, has been further refined by Avery Dennison on its in-house pilot line.

Avery Dennison selected Novexx as its specialist partner to scale up the installation of the adapters onto linear applicators. Novexx and its distributors will be responsible for on-site modifications to users' labeling lines. Novexx was formerly Avery Dennison's in-house applicator division before it was spun off.

For rotary applicators, Avery Dennison partnered with Italian company Ilti, which developed rotary linerless heads for both its own and third-party rotary applicators.

Addressing brand issues

Looking at the potential end uses for AD LinrSave, Middleton points to a wide cross-section of market segments from wine and spirits to beverages and personal and home care. But how will AD LinrSave



Avery Dennison launches decorative linerless range

deal with brands' historic reluctance to adopt decorative linerless technology?

One major obstacle for many brands is the shape limitation: linerless labels must be either square or rectangular. But Middleton says the sustainability benefits will rapidly outweigh reservations on shape.

'We not only eliminate liner waste from the brand's labeling operations, but with square or rectangular labels joined together by perforations and slit side by side during conversion, we also eliminate matrix waste both in the machine and cross directions.'

It is, in fact, possible to die-cut a curved top to the label, but again this introduces matrix waste. 'So what is the brand's real driver? We estimate that 75-80 percent of labels are rectangular



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“Once linerless applicators are more widely installed, brands will be encouraged to test out more linerless formats”

or square anyway, so this could be something brands would be prepared to live with to gain the sustainability benefits. And with a clear film the graphic design can give a convincing illusion of shape without the need to die cut.’

A key brand concern has been visible perforations left after the linerless labels have been separated. ‘Some people thought we were producing postage stamps!’ laughs Middleton. ‘But using the latest technology you cannot see the perforations – you can run your finger down the edge and feel it but visually you can’t see the perforations.’

Another major stumbling block has been brands’ reluctance to disrupt their existing high-volume automated PS labeling lines. Middleton argues that for some brands it would be ‘relatively straightforward’ to introduce linerless if there was a modular system that you can simply roll in and out.

‘The back label is also a good starting point. As these tend to be rectangular, a brand could run only its back labels in linerless format and start to standardize that across their product range.’

Future innovation

Avery Dennison sees the launch of AD LinrSave as the first step on a journey to make linerless a mainstream decorative PS technology.

Middleton firmly believes that the increased take-up of decorative linerless labels will spark a new wave of innovation.

‘It will open peoples’ eyes to how to convert labels in a different format. For example, because the liner no longer has to deliver the label to the container, the performance requirements of the liner can be adapted. You might look at a different liner to glassine, for example, which is more difficult to recycle, or a more optimized release coating formulation.’

Middleton says the next generation of PS label applicators will be designed from the ground up for ease of conversion to linerless. ‘Conventional PS labels will not disappear, so the ability to run in dual mode will be key. We might also see the development of late-stage die cutting for shapes, but again that re-introduces waste.’

Middleton compares the current situation with linerless to the push-pull cycle of the electric vehicle market. ‘You need a network of chargers before people feel they can move to electric vehicles, and then adoption rapidly ramps up. Similarly, once linerless applicators are more widely installed, brands will be encouraged to test out more linerless formats.’

The approach of sustainability targets will also drive linerless adoption. ‘Over the last couple of years, we had the pandemic and then supply chain shortages, and now businesses are returning to normal we are only a few years away from 2030 sustainability targets. So now they are focused on achieving those targets, and linerless has an obvious contribution to make.’



Wayne Middleton participated in the Label Academy Sustainability masterclass at Labelexpo Europe 2023. For more, visit www.label-academy.com



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Screen opens European Inkjet Innovation Center

An impressive demo hall showcases Screen's latest inkjet printing technology for the label, commercial and packaging markets. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

More than 100 customers, sales agents, supplier partners and local community representatives attended the opening of Screen Europe's new Inkjet Innovation Center (IIC) in Aalsmeer, on the outskirts of Amsterdam.

In the impressive 2,000sqm showroom and demonstration center, visitors can explore Screen's latest inkjet digital printing technology across three distinct product lines: Truepress JET for commercial printing and direct mail, Truepress Label for label printing, and the new Truepress PAC range for paper-based flexible packaging. These presses are shown alongside Screen's well-established CtP product range.

As well as a demo and applications center, the IIC will also serve as Screen Europe's HQ and as a spare parts and servicing hub for Screen's European customers, providing engineering support and preventive maintenance services as part of Screen's 24/7 global support network.

'Establishing the IIC reflects our confidence in the status of the printing industry and Screen's position as a leading player in the market for inkjet digital printing equipment,' says Eiji Kakiuchi, chairman Screen Holdings.

'We overgrew our previous building due to our solid and steady growth in existing inkjet and CTP markets and also needed more space for the next wave of industrial inkjet digital innovations for both existing markets, such as label and commercial, as well as new markets such as flexible packaging.'

Osamu Yamagata, president Screen Europe, says the Inkjet Innovation Center will serve as a hub for innovations in digital printing.

'Collaborating closely with our software and finishing partners, our aim is to provide customers with end-to-end printing solutions, offering a glimpse into the future of the printing industry,' Yamagata says.

Among the VIP guests at the opening were AJ Kakiuchi, chairman of Screen Holdings, Yuki Yoshi Tanaka, president Screen Graphic Solutions, and Takanori Kakita, advisor to Screen Graphic Solutions, alongside the Mayor of Aalsmeer, Gido Oude Kotte.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was accompanied by Japanese drummers



Screen-Nilpeter hybrid press on the floor of the Inkjet Innovation Center

“Finally, it seems we have found a solution that will work for the wine market in inkjet”

marking the occasion with a thrilling performance of traditional Taiko drums.

Hybrid technology

The demo floor showcases the latest Truepress Label Screen-Nilpeter hybrid press, the third generation in the partnership between the two companies. This matches the new Truepress L350UV SAI-S inkjet print engine with Nilpeter's latest FA-Line flexo press platform.

Soren Ringbo, general manager digital products at Nilpeter, manages the joint development program for Nilpeter.

'This new press uses the most modern and automated version of the Nilpeter FA-4 flexo press platform,' Ringbo points out. 'New features include individual digital touch panels on all print stations, part of the "Clean Hand" machine strategy to minimize operator's direct intervention on the press. And you can now change a sleeve on the fly while the machine is running. This means the flexo unit can be

more flexible in terms of a hybrid press, with faster setup and less waste. The FA-4 control system has been expanded so it can exchange more messages with the SAI, making it easier to set up and run an embellishment process together with the digital print.'

Screen has also implemented a slow speed makeready mode which allows the FA-4 units to register faster, producing less waste.

The SAI-S print engine runs at 60m/min in CMYK+ blue, orange and white. The speed is expected to increase to 80m/min next year with new SAI model. The high opacity white option reduces print speed to 50m/min.

Primer station and new inks

At Labelexpo Europe 2023 Screen announced an in-line digital primer for the Truepress L350UV SAI for substrates that exhibit poor ink adhesion or are very absorbent.

Ringbo is excited by the possibilities: 'The inline primer is very useful. You only prime where you print, so you need less primer. And the primer will not affect the gloss of material surface as you only prime where it's needed. Finally it seems we have found a solution that will work for the wine market in inkjet. Because on many wine labels you don't want the inks to be absorbed by the material, while you still want the matte surface remaining on the non-printed area of the label.'

Screen also announced at Labelexpo Europe a new ink series that helps customers comply with the latest European safety regulations issued by the European Printing Ink Association (EuPIA). Screen's new TPO/EDB-free Truepress ink LV02 series for the Truepress Label 350UV SAI S print press complies with the EuPIA guidelines that were reclassified in April 2023, while offering improved lightfastness in yellow ink for more functionality.

In recent years, materials used in the packaging and label industries have been submitted to more and more scrutiny from a safety perspective. This has led to the reclassification of various substances as 'substances of concern'.

Several types of printing inks were among these substances. UV inks, and in particular photoinitiators and monomers, are considered potentially harmful, especially compared to water-based inks. EDB, a substance that is widely used as a photoinitiator in UV inks, was reclassified as H360. This means it is classified in the 'reproductive toxicity' category as defined in the European CLP Regulation.

In response to this reclassification, EuPIA has added EDB to its exclusion list. Another substance, TPO, was added to the REACH Substance of Very High Concern (SVHC) List, also due to reproductive toxicity concerns. TPO may soon also be reclassified by ECHA and included in the EuPIA Negative List in the same manner as EDB.

Flexible packaging

The second showroom press of interest to label and package printing converters is the Screen Truepress PAC520P water-based inkjet press for printing on uncoated paper-based packaging.

Juan Cano, business development director at Screen Europe, says: 'Today under one percent of the flexible packaging market is digital, so we see great potential for ultra-short runs, limited edition campaigns, personalization and production mock-ups. Brands are making the move to paper from film pouches for reasons of sustainability.'

Cano sees the market for dry products as a key target for the PAC520P, and Screen showed some examples from Japan of a heat-sealed paper pouch for chocolates. The food-safe water-based inks used in the press are formulated to be resistant to the high temperatures generated by heat sealing.

The press uses a heated cylinder to remove the water from the inks, meaning that, along with the natural absorption of the paper, no extended drying tunnels are required. This allows the press to occupy a very compact footprint. No primer or overprint varnish is required.

The PAC520P prints in four colors on a print width of 520mm at resolutions up to 600 x 900dpi, with a maximum reel diameter of 1350mm.

During its Labelexpo Europe 2023 press conference, Screen announced the launch of its

TruePress PAC 830F, a water-based inkjet press dedicated to printing on filmic flexible packaging. The company is expecting delivery of this sizeable machine to the IIC demo center over the next few months.



Juan Cano in front of the PAC520PWB inkjet press printing on paper pouches

“The IIC will also serve as a spare parts and servicing hub for Screen’s European customers, providing engineering support and preventive maintenance services as part of Screen’s 24/7 global support network”



(L-R) Osamu Yamagata, president Screen Europe; Mayor of Aalsmeer, Gido Oude Kotte; Eiji Kakiuchi, chairman Screen Holdings



Screen's 2,000sqm IIC



For more on Screen's presence at Labelexpo Europe, turn to page 89

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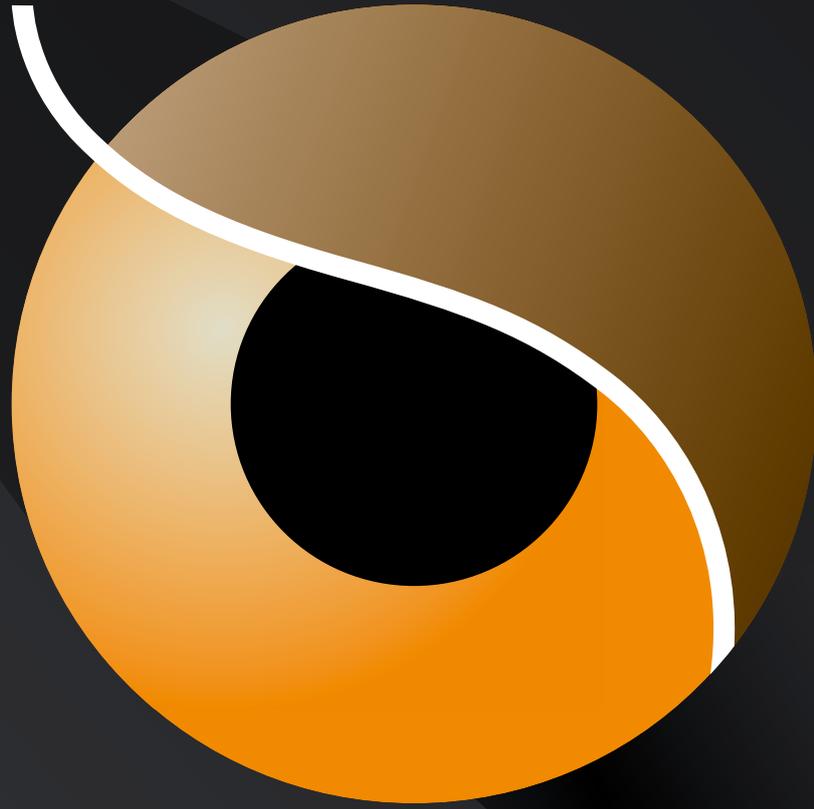
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TLMI unites North American label industry in Colorado

The North American trade association hosted its annual event this fall to a record number of attendees. Chelsea McDougall reports

TLM I welcomed nearly 500 members at its annual meeting hosted at the idyllic Broadmoor hotel in Colorado Springs, Colorado from Oct 15-17.

The topics of discussion during the three-day event were centered on the economy, mergers and acquisitions, extended producer responsibility, workforce and more.

Alan Beaulieu, a favorite of TLMI and principal at ITR economics, predicts a mild recession in 2024 with recovery in 2025, followed by an economic expansion in the later part of the decade. For business owners to manage increased demand, he advised them to start thinking now about solving bottlenecks in their businesses.

'The overarching question is: what are we going to do to handle the demand that's coming your way? You're going to be busier than ever and challenged at the same time,' Beaulieu says. 'That's not something you want to develop on the fly.'

'This is the perfect time to invest in your business,' he continues. 'Spend money on your business wherever you need it. If there's something you want to buy, buy it in 2024. If you don't invest in your business now, you'll be playing catch up the rest of the decade.'

Mergers and acquisitions were a common thread throughout many of the sessions. Representatives from BMO Capital Markets provided the audience with both a history of the recent private equity activity and a glimpse into where the label market is headed.

'Twenty years ago, there was not a lot of private equity appetite in labels,' says BMO managing director Jon Ewing. 'A lot of that was borne out by the perception that labels were a commodity product, with low growth prospects and unsustainable margins. What investors eventually found was this is an industry with



The TLMI Annual Meeting was hosted at The Broadmoor in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Photo by Robert Pizzuco

“If there’s something you want to buy, buy it in 2024. If you don’t invest in your business now, you’ll be playing catch-up the rest of the decade”

embedded customer relations, a low-cost/high-value product, and a market with high organic growth, with sustainably high margins. It's as hot an M&A market that any of us has ever seen.'

The last two years brought turbulence as consumer prices rose and historic supply chain volatility disrupted the label industry and resulted in a small decline in M&A activity across all sectors. However, with an estimated 1,500 independent label companies across the US, there is no doubt this activity will continue, BMO says.

Awards

Capping the Annual Meeting each night were award ceremonies that recognized the converter, supplier and volunteer of the year, honoring the industry's environmental leaders and recognizing the best in print.

Converter of the year was a crown given to the king himself: Robert Parker, owner of Label King in San Diego, California. The supplier of the year award went to Domino and was presented to David Ellen, divisional director at Domino. Tracy Tenpenny was posthumously awarded the volunteer of the year award. Tenpenny, of Tailored Label Products, passed away in December 2022, shortly after TLMI's annual meeting where he spearheaded the new pickleball tournament. Tenpenny's wife, Clare, and daughter, Lorraine, attended the meeting and accepted the award on his behalf.

McDowell Label took home the coveted best of show print award as well as a host of others, alongside peers who were awarded the coveted print award prize (see boxout). TLMI revamped its print awards this year to focus more on end-use categories and to fall in line with fellow L9 association awards.

Award Winners

The following were announced as best in class winners during TLMI's Print Awards hosted during the Annual Meeting.

McDowell Label

Best of show, IsoPept Vanilla Ice Cream
Winner in: wellness, pharmaceutical and nutraceutical; personal care and cosmetics; beverages non-alcoholic categories

Brook + Whittle

Winner: Household UTC category

Inland Packaging

Winner: Beverages – alcoholic and food categories

Hub Labels

Winner in: Promotional and extended content and innovation, single application, linerless and sustainability categories

AWT Labels & Packaging

Winner: Wine & spirits category

Multi Color Australia

Winner: Industrial automotive category



To read more about the TLMI session on extended producer responsibility, read Rosalyn Bandy's column on page 29

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Kuresa makes move to digital technology with Durst

The leading Peruvian converter has installed its first digital press – its first investment outside of letterpress technology in more than 20 years. James Quirk reports

Kuresa, Peru's leading label converter, has installed a Durst Tau 330 RSC inkjet press – not only its first piece of digital printing equipment but the first non-letterpress machine it has added to its arsenal in more than two decades.

The Tau RSC inkjet press – the first of its kind installed by Durst in Peru – has a 330mm web width and can print seven colors (CMYK plus white, orange and violet) at 1,200 DPI. It runs at 80m/min, with that speed reduced to 52m/min when printing white.

Kuresa CEO Jaime Yoshiyama is enthused by the possibilities brought by the company's first foray into digital printing. 'The investment in the Durst Tau RSC inkjet press will add a new dimension to our offering,' he says. 'It can print both short and long runs at high speed and with excellent quality. It will increase the options we can provide to our clients, as well as allow us to target new end-user markets and produce new products such as shrink sleeves, among others.'

For Durst, the installation further vindicates recent efforts to increase its presence in countries outside of Latin America's two largest markets – Brazil and Mexico – and reflects rising interest from the region's label converters in a new generation of inkjet technology which increasingly can compete with flexography in terms of speed and productivity (see boxout).

'There's no question that Kuresa is a hugely important reference point in the industry, and was one of the first companies we contacted when we began this process,' says Alejandro Ortiz, who covers the Latin American region for Durst outside of Brazil and Mexico. 'We are very proud to have them as a client and are sure that we will have a valuable relationship into the future. The Tau RSC inkjet press gives Kuresa great versatility to optimally meet all the needs of its clients in terms of job sizes, variability of information and time to market.'

History

Kuresa was founded in the Peruvian capital of Lima in 1965 as a producer of adhesive tapes, which continues to represent 64 percent of its business. Since the mid-1980s, it has been the exclusive distributor in Peru and Colombia for Pilot, the Japanese brand of writing instruments, which accounts for a further 21 percent.

The remaining 15 percent of revenue comes from self-adhesive labels, which the company began printing in 1998 with the installation of a flexo press from Italian manufacturer Ecoflex. Letterpress quickly became Kuresa's core label printing technology, however, with the installations of presses from Swiss manufacturer Ilma in 2000 and 2002.

Ilma, founded by former employees of Gallus, stopped manufacturing the presses after around 50 installations though parts continue to be available on the market.

Kuresa bought further Ilma machines over the coming years. Each of the presses has flexo, silkscreen, reverse printing and hot and cold stamping capabilities, and can print variable data for promotional applications. They are equipped with inspection systems from BST, web cleaning equipment from Teknek and Kelva, corona treatment and lamination. Proofing and mounting equipment come from Heaford while finishing is handled by



L-R: Fernando Montedoro, sales manager, and Jaime Yoshiyama, CEO, with the new Durst Tau RSC inkjet press – the first in Peru

“The investment in the Durst Tau RSC inkjet press will add a new dimension to our offering”

Rotoflex machines.

The company became synonymous with high-quality letterpress printing, winning Finat's Best Rotary Letterpress Printing Award for four consecutive years between 2007 and 2010, and establishing itself as one of the leading label producers in Latin America.

Kuresa invested 25 million USD in a new 23,000sqm facility inaugurated in 2011, which featured the addition of a new adhesive coating machine from German manufacturer Olbrich – the company's largest ever single investment at 9.5 million USD. This benefitted both the adhesive tape and label printing operations, with the company now able to produce its own labelstock. Among the guests at the ribbon-cutting ceremony were Salomón Lerner Ghitis, Prime Minister of Peru at the time, and various members of his government.

Today, Kuresa is one of the few large-scale producers of adhesive tapes in South America. Its scope includes adhesive design and formulation, coating both waterborne and solvent-based adhesives, converting them into finished rolls, and packing them. Production, which takes place on world-class machinery from Switzerland, Germany and Italy, is at 65 percent of capacity.

'There is plenty of room to grow with our existing infrastructure,' says Yoshiyama. The company produces general-purpose and specialty masking tapes, acetate-based tapes, double-sided tapes, and heavy-duty EPVC packaging tapes, among others.

In the label division, meanwhile, running two shifts six days a week, the company produces four million square meters of self-adhesive labels per year.

Ninety percent of production serves the local market, with the remainder exported to Colombia, Ecuador and Central America. Forty percent of the company's production is for the cosmetics and personal care market; 34 percent goes to food and beverage; 18 percent to household goods; 6 percent is for pharmaceutical applications, with the remainder divided between the agricultural

market and promotional work.

Digital move

While digital was being enthusiastically adopted by converters elsewhere in the region – around the time of Kuresa’s factory move, Latin America was HP Indigo’s fastest-growing market – Kuresa remained loyal to its high-quality hybrid letterpress printing, preferring to keep an eye on the technology as it evolved.

‘We were looking at investing in digital technology for a long time,’ says Kuresa’s CEO, Jaime Yoshiyama. ‘We spent some four years studying the various options on the market and getting to know the manufacturers at industry trade shows. We had felt that the productivity levels were not quite good enough for what we needed. But recently there has been a great evolution in the market in terms of the productivity of digital presses, and the quality of the printing has also improved.’

‘During the pandemic, we found that some of the work we were doing was not very efficient on our machines. There were more SKUs and the runs were getting too short. This also spurred us into adopting digital.’

After evaluating many options, Kuresa



Kuresa has a fleet of letterpress machines from Ilma

“We are looking at ways to ensure Kuresa’s continued growth. We are open to all possibilities for the future”



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Durst broadens Latin American installation base

The installation of a Tau RSC inkjet press at Kuresa, as well as a first in Peru for Durst, is one of a recent spate in Latin America for the digital machine manufacturer. With offices and installations in Brazil and Mexico already, the process of ramping up the company's presence in the rest of the region began three years ago with the appointment of Bogota, Colombia-based sales executive Alejandro Ortiz, who brought 20 years of digital experience at IBM, Xerox and latterly HP Indigo. The pandemic hampered initial progress, but Durst has since installed Tau RSC presses in Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Peru now added to that list through Kuresa. 'Without doubt, the machine is gaining the traction in the region that we were hoping for,' says Alejandro Ortiz, who handles Durst's Latin American sales outside of Brazil and Mexico.

It's a notable shift in a region whose converters – though quick to

install toner-based digital presses – had lagged behind other developing markets in their adoption of inkjet technology.

'Productivity is the key,' says Ortiz. 'When I was with HP Indigo, we were selling huge numbers of machines in Latin America. But they were only used for short runs and in terms of overall market share, digital was always under 10 percent of total volume. Digital has had huge penetration, but not huge volume. Inkjet can change that. Its productivity has improved so much in recent years that it's now at a level where it can compete not only with toner-based digital but even with flexo. It's a press that can run at 80m/min with enormous flexibility in materials and with all the benefits of digital printing.'

'To have installations in so many different countries in the region shows that converters in Latin America can see the benefits of Durst's inkjet technology.'

opted for the Durst Tau RSC. What made the company choose the press over others available on the market? 'Printing at high speeds, without waste, with lower set-up time and great flexibility in materials – these have been the key factors,' explains Yoshiyama. 'The physical structure of the machine, too – its robustness and stability – is another advantage. It produces perfect registration.'

'The print quality is excellent and the colors it produces are very vibrant. We did a lot of internal testing of our clients' jobs and everything passed their quality needs. It's a highly productive machine and very quick to set up a new job.'

'The press has given us an important amount of extra capacity. It allows us to offer existing clients new options and ideas, such as personalization and promotional campaigns. They know we can produce shorter runs for them if needed, and that their work will be turned around more quickly.'

'We have great experience in promotional labels, so the addition of digital will help that area of our business even more. It provides more options.'

Yoshiyama is clear-eyed about the cultural change that the new press will



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bring to Kuresa. 'It is a fundamental change for us,' he admits. 'It is not an easy transition, given our background in conventional printing. A lot of work is required in pre-press to adjust our existing jobs from conventional to digital. But once you have got the parameters right for a particular job, the repeatability means that you can perfectly replicate the same job again just by pressing a few buttons. That speed and ease with which you can recall a job is another key advantage.'

'It has only been two months since the installation. The press is working well. But it will take a while for us to fully adapt. It is a challenge. Our sales team needs to learn how to take full advantage of having this extra option.'

Yoshiyama emphasizes that the support from Durst during the installation process has been first-class. The press manufacturer runs a technical support office in Mexico, and Kuresa received regular visits from technicians from that office as well as Durst's Italian headquarters during the installation. Press operators were given three weeks of training and will continue to be trained in the coming months.

Kuresa has converted one of its six Ilma presses into a finishing line for the Durst Tau RSC press. It is equipped with a flexo unit, lamination and die-cutting. 'We are using the converted Ilma to start with, but we might invest in something more specialized in the future,' says Yoshiyama. 'We have everything we need to serve our existing clients, but of course, as we continue to grow and attract new business, there might be more capabilities that we need to add.'

Future growth

Kuresa's investment in the Durst Tau RSC inkjet press is part of a strategy to continue its impressive growth trajectory over the past 20 years. 'We want to continue to grow in the region, to sell more labels into more countries. We are looking at widening our portfolio to include new options to offer our clients, such as shrink sleeves and flexible packaging,' reveals Yoshiyama. 'While this could have been done with our Ilma presses, the Durst machine brings us the advantage of enabling shorter runs.'

'Domestically, we are prospecting customers in the agriculture sector, mainly labels for exporters of berries in clamshell packaging, and producers of Peruvian liquor Pisco.'

The converter is also setting its sights further afield. This year it began a partnership with a Florida, USA-based distributor for various converters in the flexible packaging sector, which is now selling Kuresa's labels to brands in the US. Kuresa is its only label printing partner.

'We are looking at ways to ensure Kuresa's continued growth,' says Yoshiyama. 'We are open to all possibilities for the future, whether that be partnerships with other companies or setting up a factory in a new market, for example.'

Kuresa's history of international cooperation goes back to the 1980s and remains an important part of the company's culture. By then, its Pegafan brand of adhesive tapes was one of the biggest in Peru, but a shift in government policy towards importation saw the arrival of foreign tape brands in the local market. According to Yoshiyama, this encouraged the company to rethink its strategy. It began to search for a technology supplier, modernized its production facilities and invested in the training of its workforce. This search led it to Swiss adhesive tape manufacturer Cellux, whose president Dr Daniel Blansjaar – a Dutchman who has lived in Switzerland for many years – then became chairman of Kuresa. His son Guido Blansjaar, also based in Switzerland, is Kuresa's president.

'When Dr Blansjaar and his engineers arrived at Kuresa in the 1980s, the performance of our machinery and the quality of our products began to improve enormously. Because of our lack of technical knowledge at the time, the existing machinery had



Personal care is one of Kuresa's key markets

“There is still huge potential for per capital label consumption to rise in Peru. We are more optimistic about the future growth of the local market than we were two years ago”

not been used efficiently. The addition of Swiss precision to the enormous practical talent of the technicians and mechanics from Peru quickly gave Kuresa a strong competitive position.'

When Kuresa moved into label production in the late 1990s, Jaime Yoshiyama and his management team traveled extensively, visiting industry suppliers and attending trade shows. The company developed strong relationships with companies such as Netherlands-based Kolibri Label (now part of Optimum Group) and Spanish converter Gemark. 'We have a management culture of ensuring that the company's leaders are kept up to speed with the latest technology and advances in the industry,' says Yoshiyama.

Kuresa's long-term membership in Finat is a further example of the company's international outlook. The self-adhesive label association's competitions have provided a useful yardstick for Yoshiyama to compare the quality of Kuresa's production to that of leading European converters. Its multiple victories demonstrate that it has not been found wanting – indeed, it added two more Finat Label Competition awards last year, in the combination printing and rotary letterpress printing process categories.

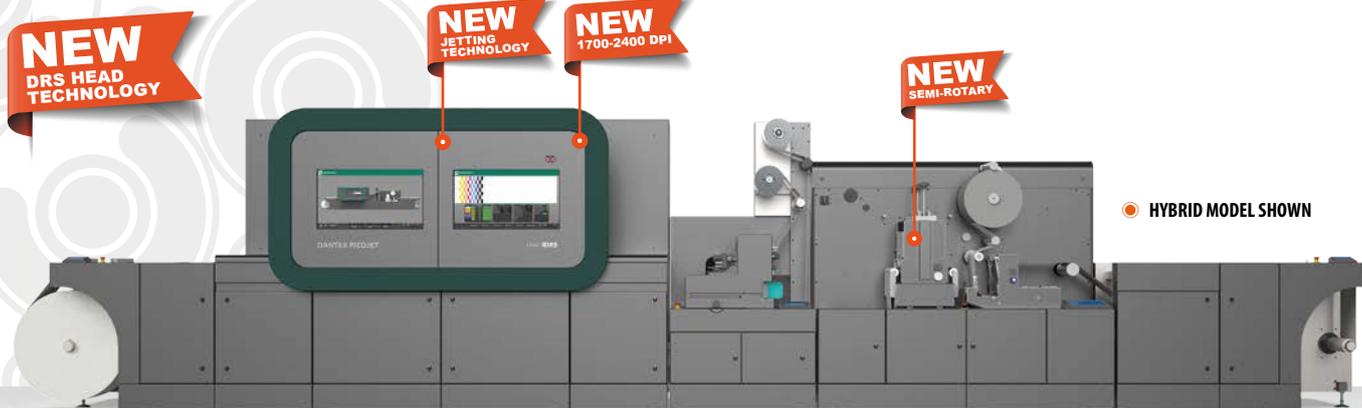
Meanwhile in Peru, despite recent political instability (the country had six different prime ministers last year) the local industry is growing and demand for labels 'continues to rise', says Yoshiyama. In 2022, as the local economy opened up following extensive lockdowns during the pandemic, Kuresa achieved growth of 25 percent across all three of its core business areas. Growth in the first half of 2023 was up 11 percent compared to the same period last year. 'There is still huge potential for per capital label consumption to rise in Peru,' emphasizes Yoshiyama. 'We are more optimistic about the future growth of the local market than we were two years ago.'



For more information on Kuresa, visit kuresa.pe

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LMAI conference 2023 explores key industry trends

Returning for the first time since Covid, the LMAI conference brought the Indian label industry under one roof once again, Akanksha Meena reports

LMAI hosted a two-day conference at the Leela Palace hotel in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The conference was packed with informative presentations, thought-provoking panel discussions and networking opportunities. The conference with the theme 'Creativity, innovation, sustainability' had more than 600 attendees.

While opportunities for growth in the Indian industry are many, it is not without its challenges. Converters face challenges such as a lack of trained staff, increasing supply chain costs, material shortages, plastics tax and the rising cost of raw materials.

The conference brought forward the key trends in the industry including diversification into new market segments, automation and run lengths getting shorter. It also highlighted issues such as supply chain and logistics. Sustainability has become synonymous with packaging as the industry focuses on reducing the environmental impact of packaging and labels.

Flint Group shared that the company has introduced fully compliant food-safe UV flexo inks in recent years. Its next major launch will be FCM (food compliant) dual cure inks, which can be cured on both arc UV and LED-UV systems. This will be followed by an FCM dual cure inert technology platform in 2025.

The company also discussed how its new deinking primer technology enhances the recycling of PET containers because the ink no longer contaminates the recovered PET. The system is now being trialed by converters and brands in Europe. Flint has also developed a caustic-resistant varnish that ensures inks stay with the label in cases where the label material is different from the bottle material and is separated by flotation.

Jindal SMI is developing thinner and lighter labelstocks. The company has introduced a conformable PP that reduces material usage by up to 40 percent compared to standard 85 micron PE film. Another new product is PCR white opaque cavitated BOPP film with similar properties to conventional PP. It contains 30 percent post-consumer recycled content.

Jindal SMI also announced a release



LMAI panel discussion highlighted the many ways the industry is innovating for a sustainable future

“As a newcomer to the industry, attending the LMAI conference was a truly phenomenal experience. This conference offered a unique opportunity to connect with industry peers, learn from experts, and stay updated with the latest developments in our field”

paper recycling program and a new wash-off label adhesive that enables the removal of labels at lower water temperatures.

The continued growth of digital printing in India and globally was widely discussed. Konica Minolta stated that in 2022, 45 percent of worldwide narrow web label press installations were digital. HP India shared changes in consumer buying habits and more startups emerging has paved the way for a dramatic growth of digital printing.

Waste reduction

Reducing waste by making the best use of resources was also a popular topic of discussion during the conference. Bobst spoke about its OneECG extended color gamut Inline flexo process, which uses up to seven colors to achieve 88 percent of the Pantone Digital Library while ensuring consistency and repeatability.

In the pressroom, Miraclon explained how choosing the right plates can simplify the flexo process. The company has

recently launched its UV Choice printing technology with a new plate surface patterning technology specifically tailored to label and other UV flexo printed narrow web applications.

Vinsak highlighted that sustainability should be observed not just during the printing process but throughout the supply chain, including manufacturing equipment from sustainable resources, implementing reusable packaging designs, better inventory management and automation for better utilization of resources.

Kurz India highlighted that its digital metal 3D Uniliner will be available in India soon. The company also spoke about its Recosys carrier recycling program that is already implemented in Europe. Kurz has also reduced carrier thickness from 12 to 10 microns.

Mark Andy pointed out that current market challenges such as lack of staff, supply chain cost and issues, material shortage, plastic tax, rising cost, shorter run length and multiple SKUs can be tackled using data collection and analysis



The conference attendance of more than 600

and automating production processes. Implementing controlled changes after monitoring and analyzing the activities of a press in real-time will lead to better production performance.

Hybrid technology

Hybrid printing is another fast-growing trend, with manufacturers including Gallus and Domino promoting these technologies at the conference. The Gallus One press offers digital print capabilities with finishing options such as a die-cut unit, flexo unit, cold foiling and UV ink printing. Domino's digital retrofit unit can be integrated with a flexo press.

At the same time, semi-rotary technology offers its own unique benefits. Iwasaki highlighted the IF330 semi-rotary flexo press and compared it to letterpress, full rotary flexo and digital press technology. Compared to letterpress, it is easier to operate, no inking adjustment is required and consequently, waste can be eliminated. The press can be used for proof printing for a rotary flexo press and can print multiple sizes of labels with one cylinder. The press also comes with inline finishing and embellishment capabilities.

The conference was attended by young newcomers to the industry. Aryaman Julka joined his father Jatinder Kumar Julka in his Alliance Printech business and attended the conference. He says: 'As a newcomer to the industry, attending the LMAI conference was a truly phenomenal experience. While I've been to trade shows and exhibitions before, this conference offered a unique opportunity to connect with industry peers, learn from experts, and stay updated with the latest developments in our field. The insightful sessions and engaging discussions were a valuable learning experience for me.'

'Furthermore, the conference provided an excellent platform to build meaningful connections with like-minded professionals, fostering a sense of camaraderie within the industry. Overall, the LMAI conference was a remarkable journey of learning, networking and personal growth. I'm grateful for the opportunity and look forward to more such enriching experiences.'

LMAI panel discussion

LMAI conference also hosted a panel discussion with label converters, material and machine suppliers titled 'Challenges in creating sustainable innovations in labels'. The panel was moderated by Harveer Sahni, chairman, Weldon Celloplast and included Ankit Gupta, joint managing director, Holostik; Hemant Paruchuri, director Pragati Pack (India); Devendra Solanki, director sales, Sicon Packs; Rajeev Chatwal, managing director, Kwaliti Offset Printers; Upal Roy, managing director, India / Middle East / Africa, Flint Group; Manish Kapoor, sales manager - Indian Sub Continent, Nilpeter; Umesh Kagade, segment manager, labels and packaging, HP; Sanjeev Sharma, director product management, Avery Dennison South Asia; and Akshay Datta, director of Dutta press.

The discussion started with measures the industry is taking to

“The younger generation is playing a pivotal role in shaping market trends. With 65 percent of India’s population being 35 years and younger, this demographic exerts pressure on brands to adopt sustainable practices”

foster innovation in sustainability. Pragati Pack's Paruchuri says that while aesthetics in labels are crucial, sustainability cannot be ignored. One result is the Indian industry is seeing a reduction in plastics use by brands. The converter is also working on anti-counterfeiting products.

Datta emphasizes that the focus should shift from only considering the end product to examining the materials used in its production. While wash-off labels have been around for a while, they are gaining traction now and are likely to become standard.

Kagade adds that HP is committed to bringing sustainability throughout the production process, from machine manufacturing to the final print. He underlines the sustainability advantages of digital printing, with HP inks certified for recyclability and de-inking processes.

Holostik's Gupta emphasizes that the drive toward sustainability needs to start with brand owners. However, it's important to acknowledge that sustainability often comes with added costs, and pricing is a significant concern. The converters and manufacturers within the ecosystem are collaborating to address these pricing challenges.

In turn, the younger generation is playing a pivotal role in shaping market trends. With 65 percent of India's population being 35 years and younger, this demographic exerts pressure on brands to adopt sustainable practices. Kagade actively educates brand owners about sustainability. Additionally, the Indian government is also working to promote sustainable practices and has introduced CO2 emissions policies that incentivize brands to prioritize eco-consciousness.

Discussing technological innovation, Chatwal from Kwaliti Offset Printers suggests that converters should invest in cutting-edge technologies that include multiple processes including flexo and digital. Kwaliti has reduced its foil usage by using more metalized paper.

Sharma explains that release liner poses a challenge and is considered a 'necessary evil'. The industry needs to collectively find ways to reuse and recycle liners. Avery Dennison has initiated programs such as the AD Circular Program to promote the reuse, recycling, and upcycling of liners. It has also developed paper liners that can later be converted into usable tissues.

Roy of Flint Group mentions that packaging is evolving to become more recyclable, with a focus on monolayer, paper and board, using compostable inks. Bio-based raw materials for ink production are gaining popularity, all the while Flint ensures competitive pricing.

Kapoor and Kagade highlight that machine manufacturers such as Nilpeter and HP are actively developing energy-efficient machines. Replacing UV curing with UV LED technology is a step toward energy savings.



For more information, visit the LMAI website at www.lmai.in

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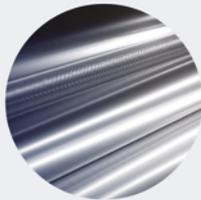
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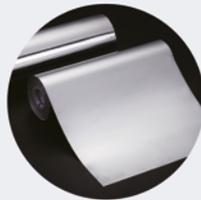
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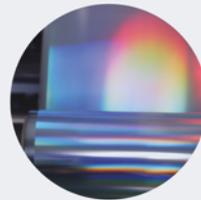
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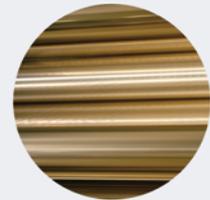
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Digital printing boosts growth at Xuzhou Jindian

Xuzhou Jindian has invested in two Flora digital presses for small-to-medium-sized label orders, increasing the automation level across the whole company and improving overall production efficiency. Yolanda Wang reports

Established in 2011, Xuzhou Jindian is located in the Huashan Printing and Packaging Industry Park in Fengxian County, Xuzhou, Jiangsu Province. The converter mainly produces labels for electric bikes, electric cars, agricultural equipment and engineering machinery. Around 70 to 80 percent of these labels are self-adhesive, and the rest are mainly thermal transfer labels.

'Labels for electric vehicles account for a large part of our business,' states Lv Weili, general manager of Xuzhou Jindian. This type of specialist label has to be highly durable, as they are primarily used outdoors. 'This means, after experiencing significant variations in temperature and humidity, they still need to maintain good appearance and performance - no deinking, bulging, crimping, color fading or other changes are allowed. These all make us very careful when selecting raw materials, printing equipment and postpress finishing equipment.'

Xuzhou Jindian started out with multiple sheet-fed screen presses. These had the advantage of laying down a thick ink layer, and the inks were sun-proof and highly scratch-resistant.

'Screen technology fits these durable labels very well,' Lv Weili tells L&L. 'But honestly speaking, the production efficiency of a sheet-fed screen press is relatively low. Coupled with continuous cost rises in raw materials, labor and workshop rental, and increasingly fierce market competition, our profit margin has suffered a big drop, and we urgently needed to address this dilemma.'

After exhaustive investigations, he finally decided to invest in UV inkjet digital printing technology.

'Firstly, it can use sun-resistant UV inks, the same kind of ink as our screen presses, while maintaining the color consistency of the final printed products. Secondly, the thickness of the UV inkjet ink layer perfectly meets the durability requirements for electric vehicles. The last and most important reason is its high production efficiency. No need for platemaking, which has saved us plenty of time and resources. And the web-fed printing mode is much faster than our previous sheet-fed screen printing technology.'

In 2020, Xuzhou Jindian purchased its first digital press, a Flora J-330S UV inkjet label press. 'I was a bit worried at the beginning because Flora had launched this model not long before, and this was our first experience with digital printing technology,' recalls Lv Weili.

'But my concerns were soon dispelled after a period of full-scale production. We found that it fully met our expectations, and it is highly accepted by brand owners due to its amazing printing quality and shorter lead time, which had been cut by more than half. Some orders can be delivered even on the same day, which significantly reduces our time and labor costs. Moreover, the high performance-price ratio of the machine itself and the reasonable investment required for post-processing equipment, makes it very suitable for enterprises like us, moving into digital for the first time.'

Lv Weili says the advantages of a digital press became very clear during the Covid-19 epidemic when the supply chain was extremely unstable. 'My last scruple completely vanished when our first batch of labels produced by digital printing received zero complaints from customers, indicating that the performance of these labels had met their requirements for UV-resistance, temperature resistance or



Flora J-330s at Jindian Pack

“My last scruple completely vanished when our first batch of labels produced by digital printing received zero complaints from customers”

whatever other properties they required.'

This experience led Xuzhou Jindian to invest in its second Flora digital press in early 2022 to meet growing demand for the company's products.

Currently, digitally printed labels account for 10 percent of the company's total business. In the future, the company is considering investing in a wider web-width UV inkjet press to meet the production needs of large format labels. 'Undoubtedly, digital printing technology has become a key engine for our future growth,' says Lv Weili.

Continuous innovation

Innovation is fundamental to the sustainable development of all enterprises, and Lv Weili, who has been working in this industry for 21 years, has a deep understanding of this. He worked in a Guangdong printing company in his early years and later started a company focusing on sales of printing consumables in Shenzhen.

During this period, Lv Weili discovered the huge growth potential of the label printing industry and decided to enter the business. Looking at the high growth rate of the label market in East China, he decided to return to his hometown of Xuzhou to establish the Xuzhou Jindian label printing enterprise.

Lv Weili acknowledges the label industry in China still faces many challenges. 'We have seen both rapid development, then a slowdown in the growth of the industry. We are also faced with our customers currently de-stocking their inventories. We see great changes in customer requirements at the same time as we must keep up with technological innovation and we face a high

“Attracting new talent not only requires a good working environment but also a satisfying incentive and promotion system”

staff turnover. As the founder and leader of our company, I need to recognize and meet these challenges to lead our company to achieve long-term and stable growth. I believe that it is the ability to innovate across all areas of technology, application and factory management that will achieve this.’

As an example, Lv Weili says the investment in a digital press not only enhances the company’s productivity but also cultivates many other advantages including the customer service skills involved in the development of personalized and small batch orders. The digital press has particularly enhanced the company’s ability to help customers during testing and optimization of labels for new products. This in turn has boosted Xuzhou Jindian’s reputation for innovation and given it new opportunities to showcase its strengths in digital printing capabilities, which in turn has cemented the company’s relationship with brand owners.

Xuzhou Jindian has always used innovative processes, even on its sheet-fed screen presses, such as foil-stamping and spot varnishing. These skills in product embellishment can now be applied to digitally printed labels.

In terms of internal management, Xuzhou Jindian has always adhered to the fundamental principle of ‘people first’, attaching special importance to the cultivation of talent. ‘I know the printing



Lv Weili of Jindian Pack and Yolanda Wang

industry might have limited appeal to young people,’ says Lv Weili. ‘Attracting new talent not only requires a good working environment but also a satisfying incentive and promotion system which will meet their needs and provide corresponding salaries and job rewards for those hard-working employees.’

The company’s talent management system is focused on the different needs of older employees and new employees, who generally seek more flexible working conditions and opportunities for promotion.

Win the future

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Such a special geographical location places Xuzhou Jindian in an ideal situation to attract employees and find new customers. After 12 years of development, Xuzhou Jindian has attracted a group of loyal brand customers, which has helped the company achieve stable business growth even during the pandemic period.

Xuzhou Jindian opened a new factory in January this year with a total workshop area of 9,600sqm. 'The investment in this new factory is a key milestone in Jindian's history, and our blueprints for the next 10 or 20 years will be drawn up and realized here,' Lv Weili tells L&L.

Today Xuzhou Jindian has 140 employees and an annual output of 60 million RMB (8.2M USD). 'For our future development, we will focus on the enhancement and transformation of our internal processes, including improving product quality, production efficiency and reducing waste, introducing an automated management system, and fully realizing and activating the potential of our existing equipment and personnel. Our target is to increasingly add value to our label products and thus reverse the sharp decline in profits caused by rising costs,' says Lv Weili.

As a socially responsible enterprise, Xuzhou Jindian pays close attention to China's increasingly stringent environmental regulations. In addition to strictly adhering to environmental policies in its internal production processes and across waste and exhaust emissions, the company is looking to upgrade the durability of its label products through the complete lifecycle of an electric vehicle.



Flora will be demonstrating its latest UV inkjet technology at Labelexpo Asia in December. For more information, visit www.labelexpo-asia.com

PEIAC founder Prof Tan Junqiao passes away

R Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award winner Professor Tan Junqiao passed away on 8 September in Beijing.

Born on October 22, 1927, in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, Professor Junqiao was highly regarded and respected as the founder and chief representative of China's label and packaging printing industries.

Professor Junqiao founded PEIAC in 1985 and served in a number of positions including deputy secretary general, deputy director of the Printing Technology Committee, director of the Packaging Printing Committee and honorary chairman of the Label Printing Branch. He was instrumental in introducing and promoting the use of flexo and digital printing technology in China.

A recognized print expert, Professor Junqiao wrote many professional articles on printing, packaging and labeling technology which were widely read by the new generation of converting business owners.

As well as winning the R Stanton Avery Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017, Tan Junqiao has been awarded the sixth Bisheng Printing Award, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the China Anti-Counterfeiting Technology Association and the PEIAC China Label Industry Special Contribution Award.

Kevin Liu, project director of Labelexpo Asia says: 'we mourn deeply the passing of Professor Tan Junqiao, who was a true friend and advocate of the Chinese label industry.'



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Shenzhen Kunbei walks path to digital transformation

Through investments in digital printing equipment and an ERP system, Shenzhen Kunbei is walking a steady path toward digitization and improved production efficiency. Yolanda Wang reports

A division of Hong Kong-based United Label-Trade, Shenzhen Kunbei first marched into the label industry in 1979, mainly as a producer of price labels and tags for supermarket goods. At the same time, it also acted as an agent for the accompanying hand-held printers.

With the rapid development of the company, the Hong Kong workshops soon ran out of capacity to meet the growing demand for labels. The company turned its attention to the Chinese mainland when selecting a new production location.

The large population base in mainland China implies a huge demand for labels, and at this time the label printing industry was still in its infancy, with only a small number of label converters. This led United Label-Trade to register and establish a wholly-owned subsidiary in Guangdong Province, to be called Shenzhen Kunbei. All its production equipment was moved to Shenzhen, leaving only the sales teams and warehousing services for finished products in Hong Kong.

'Before barcode technology arrived, all products on supermarket shelves were labeled with price tags,' says Chen Dongji, vice-general manager of Shenzhen Kunbei. 'There was a tremendous demand for price labels and our company grew very fast at that time.'

Chen Dongji joined the company in 1999, originally as a workshop apprentice, and was promoted step by step to his current position. At the peak, there were eight units of Ko-Pack and Taiyo full rotary letterpress machines in the factory, all running at full capacity.

Following the introduction and rapid adoption of bar code technology, the price label market rapidly shrank. Although Kunbei shifted to the production of barcode labels, its profit margins were squeezed due to the emergence of many low-cost competitors. 'Fortunately, we were aware of these seismic market shifts at an early stage, and we started to research a move away from supermarket labels - to in-mold labels,' recalls Chen Dongji.

In-mold labels have totally different technical requirements to self-adhesive labels since they need to take into account how labels are handled throughout the application process. 'No blistering or shrinkage or any abnormal phenomena are allowed during the later blow mold or injection process,' says Chen Dongji. 'We collaborated with Yupo on research and development at that time and experienced together a constant series of tests, failures, improvements and then re-tests before the in-mold labels were finally approved and accepted by customers.'

Thanks to this timely transformation, Kunbei withstood the impact of the introduction of barcode technology. After a short and difficult transition period, in-mold labels became the major source of business growth at Kunbei, and the company became the largest in-mold label converter in South China.

Shenzhen Kunbei learned from this experience that a diversified business model was most likely to succeed. Today, the company produces self-adhesive labels, in-mold labels and shrink-sleeve labels, which are widely used in fields such as edible oils, food and beverages, household chemicals, mineral water, electronic products and lubricants.



Yolanda Wang of L&L, Raymond Kwong and Chen Dongji of Kunbei

“Fortunately, we were aware of these seismic market shifts at an early stage, and we started to research a move away from supermarket labels to in-mold labels”

Automation upgrade

As the label industry enters the 'new normal' of post-pandemic development, a variety of difficulties such as slower growth, cost increases and profit reduction have emerged. Kunbei has been forced to innovate to stand out in a fiercely competitive field.

Jimmy Kwong, the founder of both United Label-Trade and Shenzhen Kunbei, delegated this arduous and important task to his son, Raymond Kwong, who had worked in banks and then packaging and printing companies after graduating in Canada.

'I had no experience in the label printing industry before joining Kunbei, and my only knowledge about the printing industry was obtained at a previous sales role in a packaging and printing company,' Raymond Kwong tells L&L. It took him nearly two years to finally take over the company, starting from his familiar sales role and gradually entering the management team.

He learned a lot during that period. 'At first, I thought label products were very simple. However, after gradually understanding and learning, I realized that there were a wide variety of complicated processes and technologies involved in such a small label product, either in raw materials, printing technologies or finishing processes. It was the first time that I had direct experience of the hard road taken by my father and his company.'

Then how to make the change? There is an old saying, 'A workman must sharpen his tools if he is to do his work well.' Raymond Kwong resolved to start by upgrading and retrofitting the company's equipment.



Pulisi DPIM-330F digital-flexo hybrid press in Kunbei



Weigang flexo press in Kunbei

“We collaborated with Yupo on research and development through a series of tests, failures, improvements and then re-tests before the in-mold labels were finally approved and accepted by customers”

Starting in 2018, Kunbei gradually retired its old Omet inline flexo press and full rotary letterpresses, then successively purchased a Weigang intermittent offset press and inline flexo press, as well as multi-functional finishing equipment from Rhyguan and Hontec.

Kunbei also retrofitted its presses to connect inline with the finishing units, so orders could be finished in one pass. This significantly helped save time, labor and plant costs.

In May 2023, Kunbei invested in its first digital press, a Pulisi DPIM-330F digital-flexo hybrid printing machine. The press is used mainly for small and medium-sized orders and proofing of new products, freeing production capacity from the company's conventional printing machines.

'It's relatively late for Kunbei to enter the digital printing industry compared with our peers,' concedes Chen Dongji. 'However, we had actually looked at digital printing technology some years ago. We are very optimistic about UV inkjet printing with its print quality and speed, which is now very suitable for our current stage of development.'

'Besides this, we attach great importance to the after-sales service provided by the digital press supplier. One of the major advantages of digital printing is just-in-time production, so we require the press supplier to troubleshoot problems that occur during the production process in a timely and effective manner. Pulisi has satisfactorily met our expectations on the performance of the equipment to after-sales service.'

In addition to hardware upgrades on its equipment, Kunbei has also innovated and optimized its software. Based on years of production experience, Kunbei applied for a series of software patents, including a high-precision plate-making system, high-fidelity image processing, text layout software, a color matching system for digital inks and fully automatic control system for in-mold label production. This allowed the company to systematically integrate all its in-house software systems.

At the same time, it has introduced the Xunyu ERP system to monitor in real-time the operation of all equipment, allowing management to identify and address any problems at the earliest possible opportunity to reduce waste and equipment downtime.

At the time of L&L's interview with Raymond Kwong, the recently purchased inline flexo and intermittent offset presses were due to arrive. Kwong estimates they will increase the company's productivity by 20 to 30 percent.

Optimized management

Representing the new generation of managers, Raymond Kwong tells L&L: 'I am very grateful to my father and the company's veterans, who have brought together an excellent group of teams in technical, production and customer service. Their professional knowledge, rich technical experience, teamwork awareness and loyalty to the company have not only facilitated my successful takeover but also laid a solid foundation for reforming the company.'

'But I've also found some drawbacks left by my predecessors running the company, such as management's severe dependence on personal experience and poor implementation of some internal rules and regulations, which have significantly affected the potential development of both equipment and the talents of our employees.'

Raymond Kwong has been able to fully leverage his business background in understanding the concept of Big Data to optimize internal management processes.

According to his plans, modern management software will be used to summarize and analyze the data from each process and workstation, identify weak points in production and provide practical and effective solutions when combined with the professional knowledge of the company's technical team. This process will gradually optimize workflows and achieve the final goal of quality and efficiency improvement as well as reduction of cost and waste.

Inevitably some obstacles emerged during this process of management optimization, especially from what Kwong describes as the 'stubborn habits' of some older company employees. With a manager's strategic patience, Kwong patiently promoted his plan, allowing employees to see and experience personally the benefits brought about by a modern management system, 'so they will gradually accept it, carry it out and finally maintain it themselves.'

Wong says this management system is now becoming firmly established.

'The number of our employees has been reduced from over 170 to currently 160 without affecting our annual output growth at all,' says Kwong. 'Our goal for next year is 140 employees.'



Both Pulisi and Weigang will be demonstrating printing equipment at Labelexpo Asia 2023 in Shanghai this December. For more information, visit labelexpo-asia.com

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

Also in the series:



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Doghouse Distillery spirit labels inspired by music

London-based grain distillery, founded by husband and wife Braden and Katherine Saunders in 2017, is a mix of two of their passions – music and spirits. Akanksha Meena reports

Braden Saunders shares how his love for music inspired the captivating label designs for four of the brand's popular spirits.

Stepping into the Doghouse office in Battersea, London is akin to walking into a music festival or a recording studio. Every inch of the office walls is covered with iconic posters spanning across rock'n'roll to hip hop genres. At first sight, it's clear that Doghouse is deeply inspired by the world of music. The distillery is claimed to be the only one in London that produces a multi-category of spirits from scratch.

Saunders says: 'When we started the business, we knew we were about to do something quite out there. One of the things that we have always loved is music. In fact, you tend to be drinking and listening to music or listening to music and drinking, they tend to go together.'

He continues: 'And we were just thinking, where are we going to get inspiration for our labels? And we asked ourselves, what do we love? Music and booze. It was just a natural fit. Each of our spirit brands is inspired by a particular genre of music.'

Doghouse is a place of creativity and passion where music and cocktails converge into a harmonious blend of joyful moments. The team at Doghouse firmly believes that every sip of its crafted spirits is accompanied by a unique vibe.

Saunders describes the brand's spirits as its own form of music. 'We consider ourselves artists in the world of spirit creation. Spirit brands are our music, and our labels become album covers.'

“We consider ourselves artists in the world of spirit creation. Spirit brands are our music, and our labels become album covers”

Baller vodka

Baller vodka is one of Saunders' favorite labels. The label portrays a suave Jack Russell Terrier, accompanied by a martini and a hand of playing cards. What sets this label apart is its dual-sided print: when the bottle is turned around, the terrier is seen engaging in a poker game with a group of Dobermans, a larger breed of dog, confidently holding a royal flush.

Saunders elaborates: 'He is beating the Dobermans at poker. The idea is that he is the little dog beating a bunch of big dogs. And that is reflective of who we are in the market. We are a little distillery, we are up against massive vodka brands. Hence, he is the underdog and we wanted to depict that.'

The art style chosen is pop comic which was invented in the 1950s and was repopularized with the advent of modern art.

The Doghouse team is particularly fond of rap and hip-hop music. Saunders notes that many early hip-hop artists emerged from challenging backgrounds, in the late 80s driven by their unwavering passion for music. This group of musicians has been a significant source of inspiration.

'Most of it [music] came out of the American culture and the artists went from nothing to famous personalities. Because we started thinking about hip-hop artists

and where they are from, the first thing that popped into our heads, art-wise, was graffiti. Graffiti was synonymous with lower socioeconomic areas, and we wanted to capture that. And so that style of art stuck in our heads. Today graffiti has evolved to be called street art which is now more widely accepted.'

The world changed as graffiti artists garnered respect and recognition and 'Pop Comic' emerged as an art style. The team conceptualized the label design and approached an artist in Sydney to bring it to life.

The Chilli Bacon variant of the vodka differs in flavor and hence has a slightly different design. Beside the Jack Russell, a Bloody Mary cocktail can be seen, and the label's color palette shifts to red hues to mirror the drink's flavor. The brand worked with distinct artists for each of its labels.

For this drink, the Jack Russell holds four aces in place of the royal flush on the back of the label. The brand plans to add to its range of flavored vodkas which will carry a similar label design concept.

Renegade gin

Renegade is Doghouse's brand of gin. The bottle features a wraparound label with a slit at the two ends.

The label shows the old and new world iconic sites of London in an amalgamation



Baller vodka dual-side printed label



Doppelgänger aperitivo label design employs fantasy art style



Debt Collector moonshine is inspired by Blues rock music genre



The complete range of Doghouse Distillery spirits

“We also give consideration for the substrate we use to provide an end appearance reflective of the style of art depicted on the label”

of monochrome sketches and texts that run throughout its length.

‘This gin is inspired by rock and roll. We are old school, we like instruments. When we came up with this label, we looked at the gin market and thought, do you know what? They all looked the same – traditional and pretty-looking labels. But we wanted to do something different and fresh,’ Saunders says.

‘When you go to a rock concert, the first thing you do is get a drink. And then you go into the crowd, and everyone is just having fun. People are dressed however they like and have their hair however they like and nobody cares. It is not about looking pretty.’

He points out the symbiotic relationship between tattoos and rock music. To infuse this spirit into the gin’s identity, Doghouse collaborated with a tattoo artist from North London to create the label’s design. The black and gray visuals mirror tattoo illustrations. ‘I went in and asked him to do the label based on the concept. I still have the piece of paper of the label concept. It is an A4 landscape sheet with various icons of London and the River Thames running through it. And I gave that to the artist and said: “imagine that I wanted something like this on my upper arm all the way around as a sleeve”. And that’s what he came up with,’ he reminisces.

The label shows Battersea power station, London cab, Clapham tube station, Westminster, Waterloo, London Eye, Piccadilly Circus, Big Ben, Trafalgar Square, the cityscape, the Gherkin, the Shard at London Bridge and then to Tower Bridge.

The split where the ends of the label

meet is intentional to show the remaining liquid in the bottle. The edges on both sides are meticulously designed to resemble London lamp posts.

The distillery calls Renegade a new-age version of the gin that’s been around for centuries. The side of the label says ‘Not your typical London dry – the dawn of a new age – we don’t do normal!’ The label also has the definition of a Renegade, a person who behaves in a rebelliously unconventional manner.

Doppelgänger aperitivo

The brand’s aperitivo is composed of an amalgamation of 19 botanicals to create a citrus-forward, fruity yet bittersweet concoction.

Drawing inspiration from house and dance music, the drink is meant to be consumed during leisurely afternoons as the day winds down. This drink is tailor-made for relaxation.

Employing a fantasy art style, the label for Doppelgänger takes a unique approach. It showcases an illustration portraying two halves of a goddess’ face.

‘One side is your good or light side, and the other side is your cheeky or darker side. Your doppelgänger is defined as a person on the planet that looks like you. And we have a saying that when you go out and have a big night, we blame it on the doppelgänger - it certainly wasn’t you!’ Saunders says.

Debt Collector whisky

Debt Collector is Doghouse’s whisky made from a mash of majority corn plus barley and rye. It is fermented using a Kentucky

Bourbon yeast, copper pot distilled twice and then matured in a virgin American oak barrel before diluting to 50 percent ABV for bottling.

While the brand is modeled on a Bourbon, it is made outside of the USA and therefore, cannot be called a Bourbon. Further, as its first releases are aged less than three years – the cut-off before it can be called a spirit whisky – the brand calls the initial two releases ‘moonshine’, taking inspiration from the origins and evolution of the category.

In true Doghouse fashion, the label turns heads. A fictitious skeleton gangster character, ‘Mad Dog Coll’ (created by a German-based airbrush artist), reflects the Prohibition times that inspired the brand, where illicit alcohol - aka ‘moonshine’ - was born and bootlegging was rife.

Blues rock is the musical inspiration behind Debt Collector, and the label captures the essence of the Deep South of the USA where Bourbon originated.

One of the next steps in the brand’s evolution is to adjust its labels to maintain each spirit’s individuality but also align the different brands of spirits under the name Doghouse Distillery with its distinct logo on the bottles.

The brand’s converters use mostly flexo printing in combination with embossing, hot foil, acrylic gloss and layering for special effects. It also considers environmental factors and labels and closures need to meet its sustainability standards before final sign-off. ‘We also give consideration for the substrate we use to provide an end appearance reflective of the style of art depicted on the label. It is a holistic approach working backward from the end art piece,’ Saunders concludes.



To learn more about Doghouse Distillery, visit doghousedistillery.com



THE BLING FACTOR

When it comes to health and beauty product labels, embellishments are non-negotiable. Technology today not only offers the ability to create intricate embellishments but also offers sustainability benefits, Akanksha Meena reports

In the dazzling world of cosmetics and beauty, spotting a product with packaging that does not include embellishments is almost as rare as finding a unicorn.

Brands are not just settling for shelf appeal, they are aiming to catch the elusive eyes of shoppers navigating through a sea of beauty products in a supermarket. Special effects and finishing touches on beauty and cosmetic product labels turn packaging into irresistible works of art.

Adam Frey, director of North American sales for Wausau Coated Products says that the cosmetic and healthcare industries, like many, are always looking to create an emotional response with the buyer to drive purchases of their products. Label embellishment is one of the ways to create that connection.

'If you can connect with your buyer in a few seconds because you personalized or customized the label material with a specific foil emblem or highlight a feature or benefit of the product with varnishes or texture, you have a much better chance of that consumer choosing your product over other packaging that lacks these qualities,' Frey says. 'Quality, special ingredients, awards and safety are just a few of the features of a product that can be accentuated with the use of embellishments.'

For example, hygiene and beauty brand Dove's classic dove logo in gold embellishment shines against the backdrop of a white label on almost all of its products. High-end skincare brand L'Occitane integrates gold and silver metallic foils into its label design, enhancing the packaging's appeal. Popular beauty brand Pixi makes healthy use of metallic accents in delicate details on its labels over soothing pastel hues, soft pinks, mint greens and calming blues.

Ryan Chai, strategic account solutions specialist at Nobelus, says: 'In the realm of cosmetics and health labels, there's a long-standing emphasis on luxury and quality. Presently, there's a discernible shift towards designs that are both minimalist and impactful. The allure of foiling, characterized by its reflective quality, provides a distinguished highlight to streamlined label designs. Furthermore, there's a mounting interest in holographic and multi-faceted foiling techniques, capturing both a sense of premium craftsmanship and a contemporary edge.'

Design agency Kingdom & Sparrow's managing director Kieron Weedon agrees: 'We're seeing a real polarization of approaches to embellishment in the healthcare and cosmetics industries. On the one hand, is the minimalist approach that focuses on clean beauty - often also used



Minimalism is among a growing design trend in beauty product labels



Actega Ecoleaf metalization system uses a donor roll of nano-metallic flakes attracted to a printed trigger image

“IF YOU CAN CONNECT WITH YOUR BUYER IN A FEW SECONDS BECAUSE YOU PERSONALIZED OR CUSTOMIZED THE LABEL MATERIAL, YOU HAVE A MUCH BETTER CHANCE OF THAT CONSUMER CHOOSING YOUR PRODUCT”

to denote a more premium, luxury feel. It reflects the consumer trend for authenticity and simplicity. On the other hand, there is a shift to a much more playful and joyful space – for consumers that embrace the glamor and excitement of beauty routines – these embellishments are often much more tactile, encouraging people to play and touch products.'

FINISHING TECHNIQUES

Finishing machine manufacturers are developing technology to keep up with the ever-evolving demands of brand owners. These machines not only offer aesthetic labels but also come with automated variable finishing options on labels along with material-saving capabilities.

Iosu Álvarez and Eider Lizarbe of Lemugroup explain the two major trends in label embellishments. The first is the specialization of labels that are increasingly challenging to manufacture and visually appealing. This is mainly achieved through eye-catching finishes that include holes in the labels or the use of multiple labels with different materials. The second trend is automation and digitalization of production for speed and accuracy. In this context, the incorporation of digital inkjet varnish for greater homogeneity and productivity stands out.

In response to these market trends, Lemugroup presented at Labelexpo Europe 2023 the LI22ORFID, a machine that enables the insertion of luxury labels and

the integration of RFID technology at high speeds, all with spectacular registration.

In addition, with a focus on automation and consistency, Lemugroup also introduced an inkjet embossing varnish module (MI350) as part of its MA350+ machine. This module demonstrates high-speed productivity, ensuring no labels are lost during machine stops and starts.

Actega EcoLeaf metalization system uses a donor roll of nano-metallic flakes attracted to a printed trigger image. Kurz offers its DM-Uniliner 2D/3D digital embellishment systems and the Distoron module, a material-saving cold transfer unit for processing single images and endless décor. It operates by reading a print mark on the web and positioning the images in relation, at the same time monitoring and syncing with the speed of the press.

Kurz also offers an inline metallization technology developed specifically for the Xeikon toner press, using a part-cured 'tacky' toner to adhere the metallization effect to the substrate.

An interesting decoration technology for shrink sleeves is by Pantec, which offers its Cheetah N rotary embellishment system for applying single 3D images to shrink sleeves. Such effects cannot be achieved on shrink sleeves by embossing. The customized 3D images are applied to the shrink sleeve by heat and pressure from a carrier film at up to 20 images a second.

Wausau's Adam Frey adds: 'Without a doubt, the advancement of digital

“SUSTAINABILITY IS HIGH ON EVERYONE’S AGENDA. BUT THAT’S NOT JUST A SHIFT FROM RECYCLABLE AND ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS, BUT ALSO REFILLABLE ONES”

embellishment capabilities is changing the landscape and making it easier to provide embellishments on labels efficiently but more importantly personalized and customized for the consumer.’

He points out that Wausau is seeing interest in pressure-sensitive label materials that can play well with new digital forms of embellishment. Customized pressure-sensitive materials that provide the right base to allow these emerging technologies to function and provide value on a variety of surfaces are key to maximizing options for high-end cosmetics and healthcare products.

FACTORING IN SUSTAINABILITY

Christophe Dujardin, global business development manager of sustainability/cold transfer at Kurz highlighted at Labelexpo Europe 2023 that Kurz transfer products are 100 percent recyclable. Any metallic or printed transfer finish from Kurz on paper, cartons, labels and traditional plastics can be sorted, recycled and re-purposed within today’s supply chain.

According to Dujardin, it is a common misconception that foil is transferred to the substrate during hot stamping and cold transfer, creating a composite (laminated) that is difficult or even impossible to recycle. But that is not the case. Although foil is used for both processes, it only serves as an intermediate carrier for Kurz finishing products. The actual finishing is a sequence of ultra-thin varnish or metallization layers separated from the intermediate carrier in the machine and transferred to the material to be finished by heat and pressure (during hot stamping), or pressure and adhesive (during cold transfer). The coating itself does not affect the recyclability of the product. Plastic packaging with finishes from Kurz can be mechanically recycled, coated paper and cardboard can be recycled as normal or sometimes even composted.

Another factor to consider is the deinkability of paper and cardboard in the recycling process. This means that printing inks and other surface treatments (finishes, paints and fillers) from paper fiber can be dissolved so that new paper can be produced from the cleaned fibers. The International Research Association for Deinking Technology (INGEDE) has certified Kurz transfer products, both cold transfer and hot stamped, as deinkable. The deinking residue is usually used thermally to generate electricity and process heat (steam) in paper mills.

Kurz also picks up embossed PET carrier material from the finishing plant as a part of its Recosys program to produce PET recycle for the plastics industry.

And of course, sustainability starts with the substrate to which the embellishments are applied.

‘With the availability of recycled or alternative content papers and films paired with specific adhesives to allow for recycling downstream, the sustainable material options are growing quickly,’ Frey explains. ‘We work hard to provide these sustainable options to perform with embellishment technology the same as previous unsustainable materials, but it is not always possible. The impact can be two-fold.

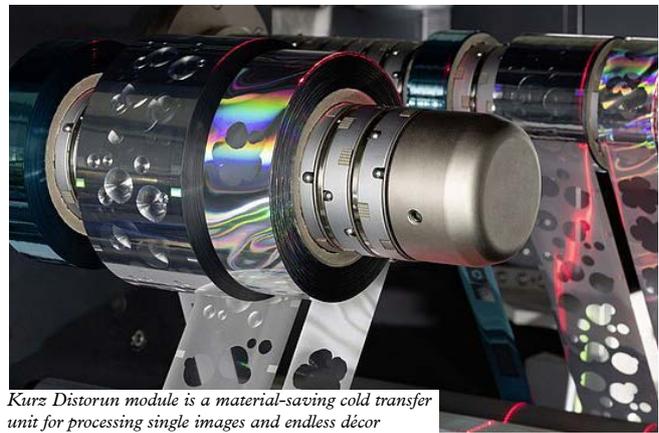
On one hand, products that contain tiny defects because they contain recycled content may be considered unacceptable, but for others seeing those defects confirms they are making a sustainable buying decision and creates that emotional bond to drive a purchase.’

REFILLABLE PACKAGING

Cosmetic brands are considering refillable packaging to reduce their carbon footprint. Several beauty and wellness brands offer



Kingdom & Sparrow designed Schwarzkopf’s SalonLab&Me products with hyper-personalized labels with clean and minimal embellishments



Kurz Distorun module is a material-saving cold transfer unit for processing single images and endless décor

SKINCARE BRAND NECESSARY GOOD USES ECO-REFILL POUCHES

London-based refillable skincare essentials brand, Necessary Good offers refills in compostable pouches. The brand’s products are packaged in glass packaging designed by packaging company Croxsons.

Established in March 2023, Necessary Good makes essential skincare products. Glass packaging was chosen by its founder given its durability, recyclability and aesthetics. The brand has launched an initial range of hero products consisting of face mist, face wash, moisturizer and micellar water. What distinguishes Necessary Good is its refilling service, which utilizes eco-refill pouches that can be conveniently composted at home and disposed of sustainably.

When consumers begin to run low on their Necessary Good products, they can order a 100 percent biodegradable refill pouch and transfer its contents. The company firmly believes that compostable, bio-based and biodegradable packaging presents the ideal solution for addressing waste issues within the beauty industry.

Croxsons launched its lifestyle, beauty, health and wellness division early in 2021 to complement its existing core business of supplying glass bottle containers, closures and decoration to international food and beverage brands. Since then, the new division has provided brands in the sector with an unrivaled, fast-tracked NPD service and an engaging customer journey, ensuring that every project fully meets the brief and exceeds expectations.

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Stella McCartney chooses new skin and eye care refill containers produced with certified renewable polymers

flexible packaging refills that are lighter in weight and easier to produce in contrast to complicated rigid packaging.

Weedon says: 'Sustainability is high on everyone's agenda. But that's not just a shift from recyclable and eco-friendly products, but also refillable ones. That means harder wearing finishes that can last longer on the packaging that will live in bathrooms for much longer periods.'

One such beauty product brand Stella McCartney Beauty joined forces with manufacturing company Sabic and three French plastic converters (Texen, Leygatch and STTP Emballage) to create a set of new skin and eye care refill containers produced with certified renewable polymers from Sabic's Trucircle portfolio. The containers have already been introduced in the market in North America and the United Kingdom.

Flexible packaging refills can also be increasingly observed in everyday-use hygiene product brands as well such as detergents, liquid soaps, shampoos and lotions. Dettol, a Reckitt brand, is among the leading players in hygiene products that offer refills in flexible pouches to reduce packaging waste.

Players such as Nobelus are also working towards the shift: 'Sustainability transcends being a mere industry buzzword for Nobelus; it represents a core commitment,' Chai says. 'In response to the sector's increasing demand for environmentally-conscious alternatives, we have pioneered the development of films, notably our EcoElement range, that are compostable, yet do not sacrifice aesthetic appeal or functionality. Additionally, our dedicated R&D division is ceaselessly exploring strategies to curtail waste and reduce our carbon footprint during production phases. Anticipate further innovations in our

“THE ADVANCEMENT OF DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT CAPABILITIES IS CHANGING THE LANDSCAPE AND MAKING IT EASIER TO PROVIDE EMBELLISHMENTS ON LABELS EFFICIENTLY AND MORE CUSTOMIZED FOR THE CONSUMER”

product offerings in the near future.'

When determining embellishments, it is crucial to ascertain alignment with the brand ethos, Chai highlights.

While the allure of cutting-edge designs is undeniable, the end product must resonate seamlessly with the brand narrative. Furthermore, it's advisable to adopt a long-term perspective, favoring materials and finishes that offer enduring quality and aesthetic relevance.

Additionally, it is important to ensure that the design, beyond its visual appeal, is feasible from a manufacturing standpoint. This ensures that production remains streamlined, is cost-effective and aligns with branding objectives in the long haul.

Weedon suggests simplicity in design: 'As packaging becomes hyper-personalized, for example with Schwarzkopf's SalonLab&Me products, consumers' names and personal products are added to the branding. This means embellishments are kept clean and minimal to allow for bespoke additional features.'

And thanks to new technology, packaging has become a key part of the brand experience - not only offering something visually and tactile but also building on brand stories. QR codes have become the simplest way to allow consumers to access more information about a product, but AR and packaging that change color to indicate if it's running low, is becoming increasingly prevalent.

Kingdom & Sparrow's work with Ethica CBD is a great example of how QR codes can educate consumers on an unknown category such as CBD healthcare.



Visit [labelsandlabeling.com](https://www.labelsandlabeling.com) to read more market-focus features

COSMETIC GIANTS TEAM UP FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Global cosmetic and healthcare giants have come together to form the EcoBeautyScore Consortium to develop an industry-wide system for measuring and communicating the environmental impacts of products to consumers.

The collaboration is now live with 71 industry players in an initiative to enable more sustainable consumer choice.

The EcoBeautyScore Consortium is developing an industry-wide environmental impact assessment and scoring system for cosmetics products. The approach has a global scope and may help provide consumers with clear, transparent and comparable environmental impact information, based on a common science-based methodology. This will contribute to meeting growing consumer demand for greater transparency about the environmental impact of cosmetics products (formula, packaging and usage).

The Consortium is working with the experienced sustainability consultancy Quantis to ensure a robust and scientific approach to co-build an assessment methodology and scoring system that is guided by and articulated around:

A common method for measuring environmental impacts throughout the lifecycle of products, backed by the principles of the 'Product Environmental Footprint' (the European Union's PEF scientific method based on life cycle assessment (LCA) for quantifying the environmental footprint of products).

A common database of the environmental impact of standard ingredients and raw materials used in formulas and packaging, as well as during product usage.

A common tool that enables the assessment of the environmental impact of individual products, usable by non-experts.

A harmonized scoring system that enables companies, to voluntarily, inform consumers about the environmental footprint of their cosmetic products. The methodology, database, tool and scoring system will be verified by independent parties.

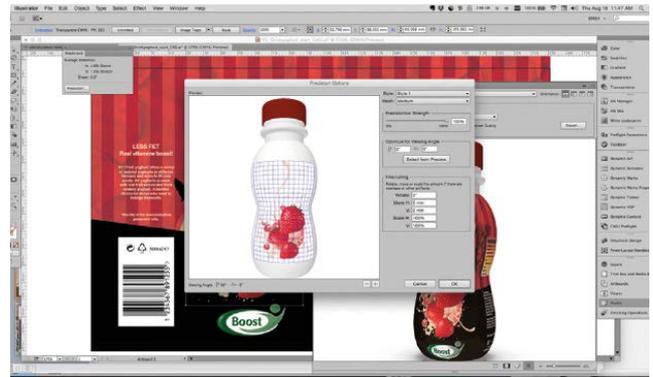
Operationally, the EcoBeautyScore Consortium is also supported by Capgemini Invent (project management) and Mayer Brown (legal counsel).

This Consortium is open to all cosmetics and personal care companies, regardless of their size or resources.

LABEL ACADEMY

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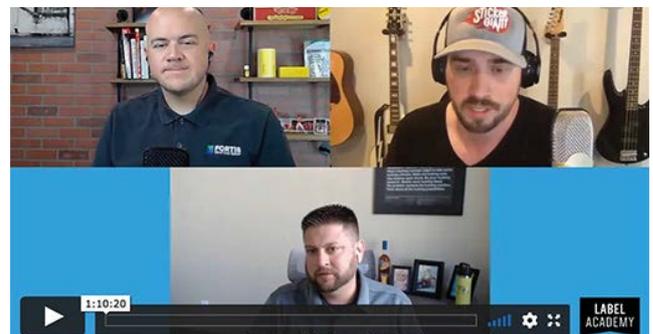
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- Label Design and Origination
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LABELEXPO EUROPE 2023 REVIEW

After four years, Labelexpo returned to its flagship event in Brussels to a global audience and more than 250 product launches from industry suppliers

The first edition of Labelexpo Europe since 2019 was one for the record books. Event organizers reported a total of 637 exhibitors taking part in the show, which welcomed 35,889 visitors from 138 countries as the global industry returned to Brussels Expo from Sept 11-14.

Labels & Labeling covered all nine halls and 36,588 square meters of show floor to report on the latest innovations in the pages that follow. It was clear to us that the return of flexo, diversification into flexible packaging, digitization and automation were key trends at this year's event.

Demonstrating how Labelexpo Europe is evolving into a package printing show, major press OEMs were showcasing technology for flexible packaging. HP

Indigo, Lombardi, Nilpeter, Screen and Xeikon among the press manufacturers leading as the industry moves to further diversification into flexible packaging. Labelexpo also hosted a sold-out Master Class on flexible packaging technology and a Flex Pack Trail where visitors could deep dive into digital and conventional press technologies, flex pack material constructions, coating, laminating, ink and curing requirements, in-line and near-line decoration options, QC and migration testing.

The Automation Arena drew in large crowds to every one of the 10 live demonstrations. Visitors witnessed a fully automated workflow from file creation to turret rewind with automated inspection

and MIS integration, without any manual intervention. The participants included Cerm, Esko, Xeikon, Kurz, Grafotronic and Fedrigoni Self-Adhesive.

Labelexpo Europe will move to Barcelona in 2025, in an event that is already highly anticipated. Organizers said 96 percent of exhibitors already rebooked space for the 2025 event.

Jade Grace, managing director, Labelexpo Global Series says: 'It has been the hardest

ATTENDEES AT A GLANCE

Attendees: **35,889**

Countries represented: **138**



“IN SPITE OF THE HEAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SHOW, THERE WAS A VIBRANT MOOD AND GENERAL STATE OF PLEASURE ESPECIALLY AMONG THE OVERSEAS VISITORS TO RECONNECT WITH THE GLOBAL LABEL COMMUNITY AFTER SUCH A LONG ABSENCE”

show yet for us to deliver, but the most rewarding. We are looking forward to the next chapter in 2025 where we will be bringing Labelexpo Europe to its new home at the Fira in Barcelona, with many plans to stimulate growth and collaboration in the industry.'

Echoing this sentiment, Jules Lejeune, managing director, Finat says: 'Finat was once again proud to be the lead association partner of Labelexpo Europe this year. In spite of the heat at the beginning of the show, there was a vibrant mood and

general state of pleasure especially among the overseas visitors to reconnect with the global label community after such a long absence.'

Labelexpo's flagship North American event returns to the Donald E Stephens Center on September 10-12, 2024. Other events include Labelexpo Asia on Dec 5-8, 2023 in Shanghai; Label Summit Latin America on March 12-13, 2024 in Bogota, Colombia; and Labelexpo India in Delhi on Nov 14-17, 2024. Labelexpo Europe moves to Barcelona from Sept 16-19, 2025.

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Andy Thomas-Emans, Chelsea McDougall, Akanksha Meena, Yolanda Wang, James Quirk and Heather Roth report from Labelexpo Europe 2023. Adyasha Sinha reports remotely.

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SHOW FLOOR SALES

Labelexpo exhibitions have always laid the perfect stage for a significant number of equipment deals. The Europe edition was no exception. Here's a snapshot of the sales action that happened on the show floor. Adyasha Sinha reports

Conventional flexo technology made a return to Labelexpo after an absence from the Americas show in 2022, with much success. Meanwhile, digital technology continues to be a clear addition to many converters' technology toolkits.

Following a four-year gap, **Mark Andy** reported a highly successful Labelexpo Europe. The company showed three presses during live demos, including a global premiere – new flexo Pro Series as well as two hybrids: inkjet-based Digital Series HD (equipped with Kurz Distoron cold foiling unit and Lemu turret rewinder) and toner-based Digital Pro MAX. Mark Andy also noticed a huge interest in the company's software: sMArt link on-press monitoring system and ProWORX Label Suite imposition tool.

Speaking for the company, executive VP in charge of international sales Tom Cavalco stated: 'The high international attendance at Labelexpo Europe confirmed a growing narrow web label market, full of opportunity. Outside of the large attendance expected from Europe, we were thrilled to welcome guests from Latin America, India, Far East and Australasia. The quality of conversations was excellent too, keeping both our staff and our team of global distributors busy throughout the show and resulting in multiple orders from across the globe.'

The company welcomed over 800 visitors in four days from 84 countries around the world, which – as the company states – was an excellent result and a great indication of the value of Labelexpo to the label printing and packaging industry. In total, it signed 10 new press sales during the show, including a new Pro Series model. Two of these sales were signed through the company's India distributor, **Flexo Image Graphic (FIG)**.

FIG secured a deal with Webtech Industries to install two Mark Andy Pro Series narrow-web flexo printing presses.

Not only that, it also sold a Mark Andy performance series P7E narrow web flexo printing press to Bangladesh's Kashpia Printing & Packaging, along with multiple other Mark Andy narrow web flexo printing press deals. Kashpia is FIG's existing customer and has been using Mark Andy P7 and Rotoflex HSI slitter rewinder along with KDS efficiency management system, installed by FIG.

Gourav Roy, managing director, FIG, says: 'Labelexpo Europe this year is really a fantastic edition for us. Mark Andy globally launched the highly advanced Pro Series during the expo, and we have bagged multiple deals of the press.'

Domino made sure that Labelexpo gave it optimum opportunities to showcase its N730i UV inkjet label press and the K600i variable data printer along with the new K300 high-resolution inkjet printer capable of speeds up to 250m/min.

The four-day event also resulted in three direct sales on the show floor. Domino's Italian distributor, NTG Digital, was responsible for securing two of these orders, both for versions of Domino's N610i 600dpi label press, with an additional order from a UK business.

Eclipse Labels, an existing Domino customer with facilities located in Swindon in the UK, purchased an N730i, Domino's 1200dpi digital label press built upon its latest Generation 7 inkjet technology platform.

Commenting on the purchase, Thierry Turel, commercial business manager Benelux, Domino, says: 'We're delighted to continue our long-lasting partnership with Eclipse Labels by announcing the sale of our Domino N730i press at Labelexpo. This collaboration underscores our commitment to providing cutting-edge printing



(Left to right): Olivier Moeyersoms, Hybrid Software, Pascal Pernot, Hybrid Software, Christophe Seguin, ELC Etiquettes, and Guido Van der Schueren, Hybrid Software

“THIS WAS MY SIXTEENTH APPEARANCE AT LABELEXPO IN BRUSSELS, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT EVENTS FOR OUR INDUSTRY”

solutions to Eclipse Labels, a valued partner. Their investment in our advanced technology is a testament to their dedication to growth and excellence. We look forward to further strengthening our partnership and supporting their continued success.'

Durst, too, had a competitive run at the show as it sold its Tau RSCi single-pass label press to UK trade printer, Reel Appeal. A key reason for the investment was RSCi's ability to print at 1200dpi, which would open new markets for Reel Appeal – traditionally a major player in agro-chemical labels – such as hair and beauty.

Reel Appeal's managing director Barry Lewis comments: 'Digital technology has revolutionized the label industry and we have been no exception. Without the costly set-up and origination costs, digital printing allows multiple sorts to be easily printed on the same print run however short. The RSCi investment is another huge step forward for our business.'

Simon Cosh, Durst's UK and Ireland business development manager, says: 'We are delighted to announce this sale at Labelexpo. Reel Appeal will benefit not only from the uplift in quality from the 1200dpi functionality but also lower ink usage as well as a big increase in capacity that will enable the company to complete longer run work.'

Xeikon also sizzled at Labelexpo, with its introduction of a new high-productivity and highly automated dry toner press aimed specifically at volume label printing with the highest quality. The Xeikon LX3000 model, affectionately known as The Lion, was presented to the public for the first time at Labelexpo Europe 2023.

And that was not only reason. Xeikon signed some amazing deals with companies such as Femalabel, Sticker Gizmo, Reslan Etiket, LP2i, and Vistaprint.

Femalabel, which has established itself as a trusted partner in the labeling industry, invested in a Xeikon LX3000. With this investment, it aims for a significant production increase. The brand-new integrated Cruise Control functionality will bring a big win to Femalabel in terms of OEE (Operational

Equipment Efficiency).

Sticker Gizmo purchased its second Xeikon press—a Xeikon CX300. The Xeikon CX300 is a high-end label press that serves more than 90 percent of all end-use applications (substrates, white capability) within the self-adhesive label market.

Jamie Tillen, operations director at Sticker Gizmo commented: 'The new CX300 really impressed us and is a massive step forward in performance and quality and will allow us to continue along our exciting growth journey underpinned by providing our customers with amazing quality labels. Sustainability was a big factor in this decision. The new eco toners Xeikon has developed for the CX300 are the perfect partner for our popular range of sustainable materials. This ensures we have a market-leading proposition for customers who are looking for a more environmentally friendly label, but still at a competitive price.'

Turkish labels and packaging printer, Reslan Etiket, also invested in a Xeikon CX300.

French label converter, LP2i Étiquettes acquired two digital label presses from Xeikon—Xeikon PX3300 UV inkjet press and Xeikon TX500, featuring the Titon technology that is designed for paper-based flexible packaging applications.

LP2i Étiquettes' decision to embrace these advancements underscores its commitment to sustainability and eco-conscious packaging. Adopting paper-based flexible packaging materials over traditional plastic alternatives aligns perfectly with the evolving industry trends and environmental considerations.

And last but not the least for Xeikon was its deal with Netherlands-based Vistaprint. Vistaprint is taking its printing game to the next level with an investment in the Xeikon PX2200 UV inkjet digital printing press.



GEW reported an exceptional Labelexpo, with a record number of visitors to its stand

“WITH MORE THAN 570 LEADS CAPTURED OVER THE FOUR DAYS AND SEVEN SHOW SALES ANNOUNCED ON THE KONICA MINOLTA STAND, WE WERE DELIGHTED TO HAVE MET SO MANY VISITORS”

For Gallus, the center of the show was its latest addition, the Gallus One.

'Labelexpo is a great platform for the industry to connect and collaborate, and for us, it was a hugely successful show. Together

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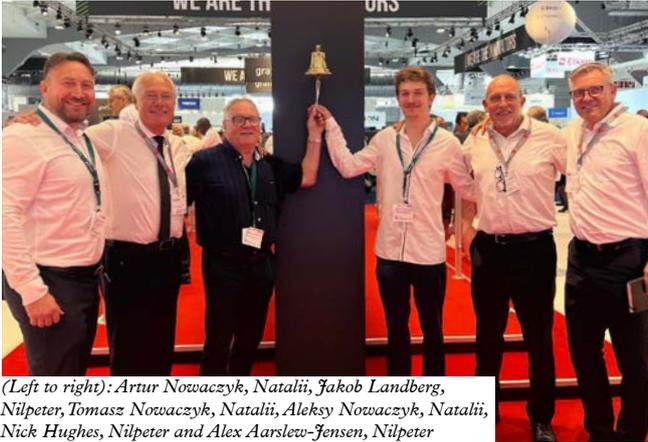
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(Left to right): Artur Nowaczyk, Natalii, Jakob Landberg, Nilpeter, Tomasz Nowaczyk, Natalii, Aleksy Nowaczyk, Natalii, Nick Hughes, Nilpeter and Alex Aarslew-Jensen, Nilpeter

with Heidelberg, we had the opportunity to share some exciting news, showcase our latest innovations across our entire portfolio and debut the Gallus One at its first European tradeshow. The show also allowed us to present our vision behind 'smart, connected printing' and the necessity of a digital transformation – both of which was very well received, and sparked genuine excitement from key industry stakeholders,' commented a company spokesperson.

Labelexpo formed the backdrop for many Gallus deals across its entire portfolio, including the Gallus One, resulting in double digit sales.

Bobst also unveiled significant new product innovations to simplify label production, while disclosing fresh strategic alliances and supplier partnerships. The company disclosed a

strategic partnership with Asteria Group, reinforcing the mutual commitment to innovation. The extended collaboration involves Asteria's investment in multiple Digital Master All-in-One production platforms throughout Europe, enabling groundbreaking label solutions and mutual growth.

An increased interest in **HP Indigo's** digital label production portfolio – some machines making their European debut – made it clear that an increasing number of industry professionals were looking to capitalize on the growing advantages of digital printing. Throughout the show, quite a few letters of intent for the HP Indigo V12 digital press were signed, however, HP could not share sales information at this time.

Basking in the success of Labelexpo Europe 2023, VS Labels, part of the VinilSul Group in Brazil acquired KolorSmart+ and dSpark digital presses from **Jetsci Global**. The KolorSmart+ UV inkjet label production press is renowned for its versatility, catering to both short and long label printing runs with efficiency and speed.

On the other hand, the dSpark digital label varnish and cold foiling press stands out with its label embellishment capabilities, elevating label designs to new heights.

With a focus on complete production workflows in packaging and label sectors, **Konica Minolta** presented innovative end-to-end ecosystems at Labelexpo Europe 2023. The company marked hundreds of leads and recorded seven press sales on the show floor.

Sacha-Vittorio Paolucci, head of industrial print business development at Konica Minolta Europe, shares: 'With more than 570 leads captured over the four days and seven show sales announced on our stand, we were delighted to have met so many visitors to help them see the potential in digital label and packaging production and to receive so much great feedback on our unique



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“THE EXHIBITION WAS EXCEPTIONAL FOR GEW, WITH A RECORD NUMBER OF VISITORS TO OUR STAND, AND A VERY HEALTHY ORDER BOOK TO SHOW FOR IT”



ABG team at Labelexpo

stand in terms of design and construction.’

Together with MGI Digital Technology (MGI) and other partners, Konica presented its end-to-end ecosystems to demonstrate to its customers and other showgoers how they were rethinking possibilities.

Lombardi returned to Labelexpo to showcase the latest versions of its Synchroline and Invicta presses. It clinched deals with Prakash printers and coaters, MGN and Etipress. Together with Vinsak, it sold its Invicta i2 press, of 870mm width at Labelexpo. It’s the first press of this width that’s sold in Asia and will be installed at the customer site by the end of the year. The press goes up to a speed of 300m/min.

Lombardi also sold Invicta i1, 670 mm wide Invicta i1 press to MGN. Its Synchroline 430 press, which includes a rotary screen and could print up to 11 color printing for special labels, was sold to Etipress.

Nilpeter enjoyed a brisk business with India-based Savvinova Pack & Labels. The converter invested in its first Nilpeter press – an FB-350 for its Dubai facility. The FB-350 was an ideal choice for Savvinova, the company says, because it specializes in printing pressure-sensitive labels for the FMCG and food and beverage industry. The Nilpeter FB-350 is a high-performance flexographic press, with a speed of 228m/min that can handle webs up to 350mm wide. The FB-350 has a maximum unwind diameter of 1016 mm and a maximum weight of 226 kg.

Nilpeter’s journey didn’t end there. It also made a deal with Natalii, which invested in a Nilpeter FA-26 flexo press. Although Natalii is a long-standing partner of Nilpeter, this deal marks the first in Poland.

‘This investment is not just about adding another Nilpeter to our lineup. It’s about embracing innovation and ensuring we stay at the forefront of the industry. Being the first in Poland to have the FA-26 is a testament to our commitment to excellence,’ says Artur Nowaczyk, the owner of Natalii.

FINISHING EQUIPMENT

AB Graphic International (ABG) unveiled

its most significant exhibition to date at Labelexpo Europe 2023. Dominating the floor, ABG showcased 17 machines, placing an emphatic focus on the future of automation.

Labelexpo proved to be not just a showcase but also a marketplace, with ABG technology being sold across the globe. Deals were completed with partners in South Africa, France, Dubai, Australia and many other regions, underscoring ABG’s international footprint.

Its flagship DigiLase 4.0 was an instant hit with trade print service provider, CMYKhub. The new ABG technology integrated Digijet 330 digital embellishment with DigiLase 4.0 digital laser cutting, offering a singular solution for diverse embellishments and finishes.

‘Labelexpo was an outstanding success for ABG this year,’ says CEO, Richard Knight. ‘We showcased a variety of brand-new innovations, illustrating to our customers how keen we are to offer cutting-edge solutions and continue to push forward as a market leader.’

Hotpack Global, a player in the food packaging industry since 1995, has acquired an Omega SRI3 430 with monochrome inkjet from ABG. This is its second purchase of ABG equipment, having invested in an SRI in 2022.

The SRI3 430’s advanced features, including a die-cut unit and 4k camera inspection, enhance Hotpack’s efficiency benchmarks. The acquisition was spearheaded by Anvar PB, technical director and Mr. Ramesh, production manager.

Brotech, too, sold its two finishing systems by the company’s India distributor Weldon Celloplast at Labelexpo Europe.

India-based Asean Pack invested in a Brotech CDF 420. The machine is specified with a flexo print unit with both UV and hot air drying and cold foil. It is configured with full rotary and semi-rotary die cutting and vacuum suction conveyor and anti-static bar.

The other Brotech machine, a Brotech DL-420, was sold to Chromaprint in India. The machine is configured to run IML, wet glue labels and unsupported film labels.

Labelexpo Europe 2023 was hugely successful for Daco Solutions as well where it garnered positive reception for its new SRV350 inspection slitter rewinder that was launched during the show. The UK manufacturer also signed a deal on the show floor for the sale of a customized sheeting system to Wisconsin, US-based converter Kenco Label & Tag.

‘There was a very positive response to the new SRV350 inspection slitter rewinder – which is the highest-specification system in our slitter rewinder range. We received many inquiries and a few companies have said that they will order a machine in the coming weeks,’ says managing director David Beynon. ‘The new fully automatic slitting feature drew particular interest from many visitors to our stand. One customer in Poland is upgrading its three Daco PLR350V turret rewinders to include fully automatic slitting.’

Grafotronic demonstrated five machines equipped with AI-based computer vision system Grafotronic IQ. The company capitalized on its technological edge and signed quite a few deals including the ones with St Luc, Femalabel and Notarianni.

St-Luc purchased two of Grafotronic’s DCL 550 machines. Additionally, after visiting the Grafotronic booth at Labelexpo Europe, St. Luc has decided to further invest in one of the machines on display at the event – the CF finishing line, featuring the Grafotronic IQ automation suite. Grafotronic IQ works with a set of cameras that monitor the web and automatically adjust what’s needed.

Belgium-based label converter Femalabel, signed a purchase order for a fully modular Grafotronic digital finishing machine, after its owner Wim Feys, was impressed by the performance of Grafotronic’s multi-layer label technology which was operational on the show floor. The company decided to invest in a DCL2 350 with sophisticated lamination in register capabilities.

On the other hand, Notarianni invested in a Grafotronic haptic finishing line machine. Alfredo Pollici, owner of Notarianni, says: ‘Grafotronic is a young



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“KURZ IS CONFIDENT THAT ITS EFFORTS TO FINALIZE PROJECTS THAT WERE INITIATED AT LABELXPO WILL BE COMPLETED BEFORE YEAR-END FOR BOTH ITS 2D AND 3D TECHNOLOGIES”

and dynamic company, and it really stands out for us thanks to its flexibility and speed in designing a machine that perfectly fits our needs. We want a compact solution that includes all finishing technologies without sacrificing performance. For us, it is crucial that the machine operates with the latest generation digital finishing features, without compromising on performance. All these factors mean that Grafotronic will be the right company to support us in realizing this new, ambitious project.'

St-Luc managing director Niko Dhondt says: 'With more and more digital stand-alone printing machines, we needed to expand our capacity in off-line finishing. Digital labels and flexibles are a fast-growing market. Grafotronic offers new technologies and visions for increasing speed and efficiency in the finishing process of digital printed labels. Together with my team, we decided to invest in new technologies. The IQ reduces start-up time dramatically. So, we hope the new collaborations with Grafotronic will be a big success.'

In the same vein, **Grafisk Maskinfabrik** sold its automated digital embellishment line, DC350Flex+, to Danish advertising agency Buchs. DC350Flex+ wine features the DVM350 digital varnish module, which uses the latest inkjet technology for digital embellishment. This is a faster, more flexible, and cost-effective alternative to screen-printing for adding spot varnish, high-build tactile effects, including warning triangles and braille, as well as metallics and holograms, all in one process.

'The unique combination of both analog and digital finishing technology makes the DC350Flex+ wine truly unique. Digital varnish and digital foil will shape the future of a highly competitive market in short-to-medium run digital label printing,' states Uffe Nielsen, CEO of Grafisk Maskinfabrik. 'The DC350Flex+ gives the option to add these capabilities with the fantastic DVM350 digital varnish module, providing tool-free operation, flexibility in design, faster job changes, and lower costs.'

The interest in **Leonhard Kurz's** 2D and 3D digital embellishment technologies this year at Labelexpo made it very clear that an increasing number of label converters worldwide are looking for such technologies. Modular installations of these technologies were also on display at the booths of Kurz partners Grafotronic and Xeikon.

Kurz didn't disclose specific customer and company names, however, Michael Aumann, director digital embellishment at Kurz confirmed: 'We are confident that our efforts to finalize projects that were initiated at Labelexpo will be completed before year-end for both our 2D and 3D technologies.'

Additionally, MPRINT, a subsidiary of the Kurz Group and leading solution provider for inkjet digital printing, was also very satisfied

with the outcome of this edition of Labelexpo.

Marcus Stickel, CEO of MPRINT and director global digital printing at Kurz, also confirmed: 'The letters of intent that were agreed upon at the show will be finalized within the next few days.'

ANCILLARY TECHNOLOGY

Labelexpo also proved a good platform for **Fujifilm** which sold a C-Touch MK2 2530 plate processor and PRC-1 water filtration unit to Aztec Label. Owner, Colin Le Gresley, said: 'The design of the processor provides efficient plate handling and makes the whole platemaking process quicker than ever before.'

Additionally, the PRC-1 filtration unit works in unison on both processors. The unit works to extend the bath life of the processors and reduces the amount of water required. The system results in a cleaner processor, extending the time between cleaning, allowing maintenance costs to be reduced, and improving environmental performance. Aztec is a long-time Fujifilm customer. It acquired its first C-Touch processor from Fujifilm in early 2021, along with Fujifilm's Flenex water-washable flexo plates; Sericol JJ LED UV inks and an LED UV curing system.

UV curing systems manufacturer **GEW**, who was also exhibiting at Labelexpo Europe 2023, had a good run. The company presented its full product range at the show, with a focus on its air-cooled UV LED system AeroLED, which was of particular interest to many visitors and contributed to GEW's stand being a hub of activity. The company also reported that many of its UV curing systems were operating at the show, with GEW lampheads running on most of the leading manufacturers' presses.

Hybrid Software wrapped up the show with sales of more than EUR 1.5 million from 30 customers for packaging workflow and editing software at Labelexpo Europe 2023. With new product launches and demos, its booth was among the showstoppers. It also successfully launched the Global Graphics' SmartDFE, among the fastest available Digital Front End (DFE) for digital printing of labels and packaging.

'This was my 16th appearance at Labelexpo in Brussels, one of the most important events for our industry,' stated Guido Van der Schueren, chairman of Hybrid Software. 'Although I look forward to the next incarnation of Labelexpo Europe in Barcelona, I will always remember the Brussels exhibitions fondly and am very pleased that the final Brussels show was such a big success for Hybrid Software.'



Continue reading for more coverage from the Label Industry Global Awards at Labelexpo Europe 2023

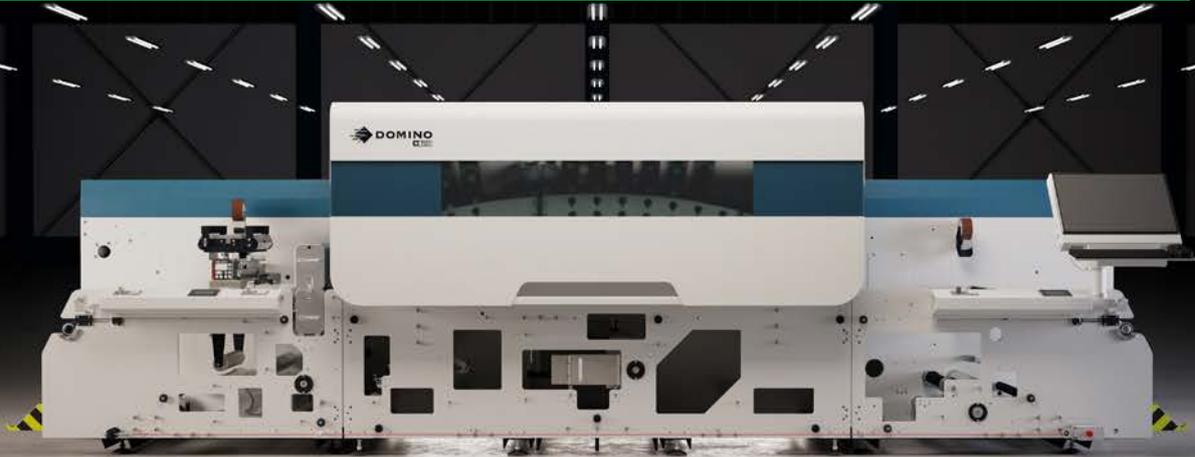


Konica Minolta stand at Labelexpo Europe 2023



Daco Solutions' stand at Labelexpo Europe 2023

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LABEL INDUSTRY GLOBAL AWARDS 2023 WINNERS REVEALED

Label Industry Global Awards 2023 winners were announced during the first evening of Labelexpo Europe 2023 at Brussels Expo, Akanksha Meena reports

Now in its 18th edition, the Label Industry Global Awards recognize organizations and individuals who have excelled in the label and package printing sector through innovation and personal example.

The Label Industry Global Awards 2023 judging panel consisted of Philippe Voet, president of Finat; Tim McDonough, TLMI chairman; Chelsea McDougall, editor of Labels & Labeling; Greg Hrinya, editor of Label & Narrow Web; and Jean Poncet, editor of Etiq & Pack. The judging panel was chaired by Andy Thomas-Emans, strategic director of the Informa (Tarsus) labels and packaging group.

This year, there were a total of seven awards: the Global Achievement Award, the Global Team Achievement Award, the Innovation Award for companies with up to 300 employees, the Innovation Award for companies with more than 300 employees, the Rising Star Award, the Sustainability Award and Converter of the Year.

The Team Achievement Award was introduced and was awarded to Mercian Labels and its partners Screen, Cerm and ABG for their six-year 'lights-out' converting project. The award recognizes the critical importance of teamwork and is open to industry suppliers, converters and end users.

The judges were impressed with this six-year team project led by Mercian Labels which set out to achieve a fully automated 'lights out' workflow for converting digitally printed self-adhesive label rolls without any operator intervention. This involved Mercian Labels working closely with a team of suppliers including ABG, Cerm and Screen.

The judges noted that the fact this has been achieved, with on-the-fly automated changeovers creating only 3 meters of waste, makes an important contribution to the future development of the labels industry.

Lintec Corporation won the Innovation Award for companies with more than 300 employees. This award is for the development of a specific innovation by a supplier or converter company in 2022.

The Label Awards judging panel said: 'Lintec impressed the judges with its new polyester-based adhesive, which will greatly assist in the development of a circular materials economy by assisting in the clean separation of PET container waste.'

A typical PET/acrylic PS label contains around 20 percent acrylic, which will contaminate the PET recycling stream. Lintec's polyester-based mono-material labelstock, by contrast, consists of more than 95 percent polyester resin.

Along with this, Lintec has developed a top coat that allows printing inks to delaminate in a container recycling system.

The Innovation Award for companies with up to 300 employees went to Cartes who impressed the judges with its fully automated end-to-end digital embellishment line, which integrates inkjet embellishment, digital metalization and laser die-cutting modules.

At a time when label converters are facing a skilled labor crisis, any development that replaces operators with automation is to be welcomed.

Furthermore, integrating several digital finishing processes without the requirement to change tooling and with

“THIS AWARD RECOGNIZES MALCOLM RAE’S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION, THROUGH GEW, TO THE NARROW WEB INDUSTRY’S TRANSITION TO UV CURING”

barcode-driven automated job change will reduce makeready times and waste, making for a more sustainable finishing solution.

Tom Schouten, the operational manager at Geostick in the Netherlands, won the Rising Star Award.

The judges were impressed with his drive and passion for process optimization and continuous improvement which set him out as a future industry leader.

'Now 30 years old and with only four years of working experience in the business, he has managed a process of rapid change at Geostick, overseeing the successful integration of digital technologies, with the result that Tom's responsibilities now extend to plant manager and overseeing operations at the two Geostick plants. Tom has worked closely with external partners, who already regard him as a thought leader. He takes an active role in Finat discussions for moving the industry forward to a new era of automation. All these qualities make Tom a worthy winner of the Rising Star award,' the judges say.

Schouten comments: 'After four years it's great to be here [at Labelexpo Europe 2023] and it is an amazing feeling to win this award. These last four years have been hectic for the label



▲ Malcolm Rae, founder of GEW, won the Global Achievement Award

► The awards recognize organizations and individuals who have excelled in the label and package printing sector through innovation and personal example. Cartes pictured here

▼ The 18th edition of the Label Industry Global Awards winners were announced on the first evening of Labelexpo Europe 2023



“THESE LAST FOUR YEARS HAVE BEEN HECTIC FOR THE LABEL INDUSTRY, SO TO GET SUCH AN AWARD IS AMAZING”

industry, so to get such an award is amazing. I have made my work into my hobby, and I think the label industry appreciates that so that is where the dedication comes from and that's what the award is for.'

The Sustainability Award went to UPM Raflatac, for its Ocean Action Label, made from ocean-bound plastic, which is a major step towards creating a real commercial market for plastic waste.

UPM Raflatac's Ocean Action label, made from ocean-bound plastic, is a major step towards creating a real commercial market for plastic waste which would otherwise be clogging up the world's oceans. This took real commitment on UPM Raflatac's part, involving pulling together a global chain of partners including a Malaysian-based plastic recycling company; SABIC which uses the chemical recycled pyrolysis oil to create high-quality PP plastic granulates; and Taghleef Industries which produces the label film used to produce the final label material by UPM Raflatac. The Ocean Action label material has the same performance as the current fossil-based labels.

The Converter of the Year Award was won by Baker Labels. The judges were impressed with the culture of the company which encourages among its 112 staff a passion for continuous learning, inclusivity and an active participation in a wide range of charitable and local community initiatives.

Bakers is a worthy winner of the Converter of the Year award. Celebrating its 50th year of business, this is an excellent example of a vibrant and successful family-owned and run business, now seeing its third generation entering management positions. In terms of customer satisfaction Bakers has continuously innovated, moving early into digital print and materials coating and most recently setting up a digital flexible packaging operation including pouch making, becoming a truly one-stop shop for its industry partners.

The final award, the prestigious Global Achievement Award, went to GEW founder Malcolm Rae. The Global Achievement Award recognizes an individual who has made a key contribution

to the promotion and growth of the label industry and has been a high-profile industry influencer and motivator.

According to the Label Awards judging panel: 'Malcolm Rae is a worthy winner of the Global Achievement Award. This recognizes his unique contribution, through GEW, the company he founded, to the narrow web industry's transition to UV curing and to the subsequent technological development of the UV curing industry.'

Rae comments: 'The award means a lot to me! Thirty-two years of doing anything is a long time and 30 years is widely regarded as a generation and I have been in the business for a generation. I feel deeply honored that I should have been selected when I am sure there are equally worthy people out there, but I gave it my best shot.

'I think the main reason [for winning the award] is that our product is everywhere. Wherever there is a printing machine there is UV and more often than not it is our UV. That is not a coincidence because we have developed, priced and made the product that can sold at that price and be ubiquitous.'

Andy Thomas-Emans, chair of the judging panel says: 'We have been very impressed by the high quality of entries received for this year's Label Industry Global Awards. I would like to thank everybody who submitted nominations and on behalf of the judging panel, I would like to congratulate all the winners and finalists. The full range of innovation, team energy and powerful sustainability initiatives shone through during the judging process.'

Jade Grace, managing director, Labelexpo Global Series comments: 'I would like to congratulate all of this year's Label Industry Global Awards finalists and winners. I would also like to thank our sponsors – Gallus, Bobst, Durst, GEW, Flint Group and Labels & Labeling magazine – for their support in making these awards possible and supporting innovation in our industry.'



For more on rising star Tom Schouten and his company, Geostick, turn to page 31



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PRESS TECHNOLOGY

With both flexo and digital technology reaching a technological peak, the emphasis was on automation and different kinds of integration between the two technologies. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

It was a fantastic sight to see so much state-of-the-art flexo press technology at Labelexpo Europe 2023 after all the talk about the 'death of flexo' after Labelexpo Americas last year.

It was not only the presses themselves but also the surrounding eco-system of more sustainable plate production, new anilox engraving and screening technologies, quick-change rotary and semi-rotary dies and extended color gamut inking systems, all of which continue to make the flexo process more efficient and sustainable.

The most easily visible trend was towards wider presses in the mid-web sweet spot of 26in/670mm. This is wide enough to handle the larger formats required for shrink sleeves, flexible packaging and in-mold labels.

Bobst demonstrated its Master M6 with a full automation package. These include on-the-fly exchange of printing cylinders and automated print pressure and registration setting and monitoring through the print run.

Combined with Bobst's oneECG 7-color extended color gamut system (more on ECG below), the press was shown changing between jobs in around one minute with a minimum of waste.

The press also incorporated GEW's mUVm inline UV measurement system which measures lamp output close to the web surface continuously throughout the print run. Bobst calls this 'UV track', a feature for certifying UV as safe for food packaging. Bobst has been closely involved with the UVFoodSafe project run by Finat, whose initial results were presented by Sun Chemical's Jonathan Sexton at the show.

Matteo Cardinotti, head of narrow mid-web printing & converting and CEO of Bobst Firenze, believes these presses will make an impact, not only in the flexpack market but in the commodity label markets where automation is the key to profitable production, while more bespoke value-added applications will increasingly migrate to hybrid digital/flexo press systems.

Nilpeter showed for the first time its FA-26 mid-web press, selling three at the show and garnering a number of firm leads. The FA-26 prints at speeds up to 250m/min and was equipped with GEW's LeoLED water-cooled LED-UV lamp systems.

'I call this the Swiss Army Knife of short-run added value flexible packaging,' says Nilpeter's Jakob Landberg. 'It is worth remembering that what is a short run for a flexible packaging converter of 15,000 meters, is a really great longer run for a label converter.'

The high levels of automation present on these mid-web machines cut down on the number of operators required. 'The only thing that is conventional about these presses is we use plates and anilox,' says Landberg. 'They are more like robot systems that can be run from any point of the press by a single operator.'

Lombardi demonstrated a fully automated 11-color Invicta i1 mid-web press fitted with cold foil and multi-layer booklet facilities and a Lynex-S 100 percent inspection camera.

The company also previewed its new Invicta i2 and announced the sale through distributor Vinsak of an 870mm-wide i2 to Prakash Printers and Coaters in India. A 670mm-wide Invicta i1 press was sold to MGN at the show.

Nicola Lombardi, Lombardi's marketing manager, said the Invicta presses were mainly being used for flexible packaging applications – including aluminum lids and thermal-sensitive materials – and



“THE EMPHASIS WAS ON INCREASING EFFICIENCY THROUGH AUTOMATION AND THE INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL PRINT AND EMBELLISHMENT MODULES TO DEVELOP NEW FORMS OF HYBRID PRESS SYSTEMS”

shrink sleeve applications rather than PS labels because they allow converters to innovate in these markets, with most machines going to India or Asia.

NARROW WEB FLEXO

Turning to the more standard width narrow web flexo presses, it seems fair to say that flexo technology has reached a technological peak. The emphasis at this show was more on increasing efficiency through automation and the integration of various forms of digital print and embellishment modules to develop new forms of hybrid press systems. We also saw a raft of increasingly sophisticated flexo presses from manufacturers located outside Europe and the US.

Mark Andy introduced its Pro Series flexo press, which is field upgradable to a hybrid with the addition of the 5-color toner module seen on the company's DPro Max press. The press is designed to run both L-R and R-L to allow for this new configuration. The Pro Series is fully modular, allowing the press to be broken at any point to insert the digital unit.

Phil Baldwin, European sales manager for Mark Andy, says the Pro Series was designed as an entry-level fully servo-driven alternative to shaft-driven presses. 'For the smaller guys, it is no longer possible to be competitive on shaft-driven machines. We are talking here about a 50-70 percent reduction in waste over a mechanically-driven press. At the same time, the Pro Series can give the larger converter more capacity.'

Nilpeter also showed a 17in FA-17 press alongside its FA-26 with a high-build digital varnish unit as a replacement for rotary screen or flexo spot varnish and doming. The unit can be retrofitted at any

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IN BRIEF

- **Anytron** highlighted its Any-Jet II integrated digital print and laser die-cutting machine, offering a combination of digital print, lamination, laser cutting, slitting and matrix removal.
- **Arrow Systems** launched the ArrowJet Aqua 330R Hybrid Pro, combining digital printing and flexo varnishing, powered by Memjet's DuraFlex technology to deliver speeds up to 195ft/min at a 1600 x 1600dpi resolution on a print width of 12.75in.
- **Dilli** presented the latest version Neo Picasso inkjet press with upgraded tension control. The press prints at 50m/min CMYK+OV and double White at a resolution of 600 x 1200dpi. Corona treater and chill roller are integrated as standard.
- First-time Chinese exhibitor **KingT** launched its first digital label press, the 330mm-wide L-Press 330s, using Samba printheads for a print resolution of 1200 x 1200dpi at speeds of 80m/min at a drop size of 2pl and Pantone coverage of up to 95 percent.

point on the Nilpeter press.

Lombardi also demonstrated a 430mm-wide Synchronline 430 in a configuration with rotary screen and digital embellishment modules. The press was sold to Italian converter Etipress.

Omet showed the latest version of its KFlex modular UV flexo press platform. New features included the Swing semi-rotary die-cutting unit, allowing die-cutting using a single magnetic cylinder for all label sizes and formats and with automatic plate loading and ejection.

Two new rail-mounted units were shown on the press – the Jet-Bar module for inkjet printing of raised varnishes, and the Cold Foil Saver unit, which enables standard foil application with a 50 percent reduction in raw material usage.

Chinese suppliers are starting to make a significant impact in flexo export markets following a strategic shift from intermittent offset to inline flexo press manufacture. **Weigang** displayed its sleeve-based 450mm-wide ZJR inline flexo press equipped with chill rolls for handling extensible films. The press runs at up to 180m/min and was configured with delam/relam.

Label Source launched its YTP-F6 inline flexo press at the show, configured with chill drum and automated unwind and rewind. The press arrives with an automation package including auto registration with data saving and recall. The press was configured with a second pass scanner for re-registration work.

Hontec has diversified from converting machinery to its first fully-fledged flexo press, the 350mm-wide fully servo-driven Ultimate Series.

This sleeve-based press is designed to handle a wide range of materials from PS to shrink sleeve labels. The press features pre-registration and a short web path to minimize waste. Printing at up to 150m/min, the press was configured with cold foil, delam/relam and turn bar.

India has also produced some high-flying flexo press manufacturers now putting their machines in front of a global audience.

In addition to **Multitec** (see below), AKO was demonstrating its Delta-series inline flexo press, fitted with horizontal die-cutting station and liquid-cooled ink chambers. The press is configured for a wide range of unsupported materials as well as PS labels.

Intermittent flexo was an emerging trend at this show, sold to converters as an alternative to digital printing while being able to use existing flexo plates.

Iwasaki launched its 5-color IF-330 intermittent flexo press

“IT WAS NOT ONLY THE PRESSES BUT THE SURROUNDING ECO-SYSTEM OF MORE SUSTAINABLE TECHNOLOGY”



including optional automatic registration system. The web width is 330mm and the repeat length variable between 50 and 320mm.

Malaysia-based **Sen Labels Machinery** showed its Sen IF-350 intermittent flexo press configured with six colors and a cold foil unit and with LED-UV curing throughout.

OFFSET THRIVES

Although there were no rotary offset presses on the show floor, the technology was represented by units from DG Press and Comexi. **DG Press** showed a print unit from its new variable sleeve-based DG-Auxo web offset press, available in print widths of 520mm, 900mm and 1085mm.

Comexi displayed a central impression (CI) drum from its CI-8 offset press, which is dedicated to short- to medium-run production of flexible packaging and unsupported film labels.

There was a particularly strong showing of intermittent offset presses from Chinese press suppliers, who are securing niche markets in the short run, high value-added wine and cosmetics sectors in particular, where they are marketed as an alternative to digital.

Wanjie demonstrated its WJPS machine equipped with remote inking, LED-UV curing and electronic register control, while **Weigang** showed its ZX intermittent offset press configured with flexo coating, embossing/hot stamping and die-cutting (the usual configuration of these machines is with off-line die-cutting).

Zonten demonstrated its 340mm-wide Multiprint intermittent offset press configured with pre-register tension control and an automation package including pressure adjustment, inking roll washup and roller impression and semi-automatic plate change.

Nickel exhibited its strikingly designed LED-UV curing FS350 intermittent offset press with an automation package including pre-register, semi-automated plate loading and ejection and electronic registration. Each print unit is controlled by its own independent touch screen.

Even letterpress is not entirely dead. First-time exhibitor **Caisheng** showed its latest CS-JQ350G-6C letterpress machine, which has two working modes, intermittent and full rotary.

Miyakoshi is an established supplier of intermittent offset press technology, and at this show demonstrated an upgraded MLP press incorporating the company's Yaless AI intelligent press management system, allowing automated makeready and job data storage and recall.

“THERE WAS A PARTICULARLY STRONG SHOWING OF INTERMITTENT OFFSET PRESSES FROM CHINESE PRESS SUPPLIERS, WHO ARE SECURING NICHE MARKETS IN THE SHORT RUN, HIGH VALUE-ADDED WINE AND COSMETICS SECTORS”

DIGITAL STANDS ALONE

Stand-alone digital presses with near- or offline finishing continue to be the most popular format for digital printing and converting of labels. Labelexpo Europe 2023 demonstrated that toner technology at the high end is now competing with flexo in terms of speed and productivity, while the core inkjet printhead providers are enabling a huge spread of new entrants to the four- to seven-color inkjet market.

HP Indigo launched its V12 high-speed digital press to the European market following its debut in Chicago last year. The V12 prints at 120m/min in six colors - 60m/min in up to 12 colors - using HP Indigo's new LEPx technology platform, which uses a rotary rather than intermittent feed blanket. HP Indigo was presenting the press as a replacement for multiple legacy flexo presses in terms of productivity, with significant reductions in makeready waste and manpower requirements.

As well as the global launch of the 200k (see below), the company also showed the established HP Indigo 6k workhorse in a web-to-print ecosystem including e-printing software and digital shopfront and fully digital finishing - digital embellishment and laser die-cutting - on an ABG Digicon converter.

HP Indigo also continued to develop its automation and Cloud-based connectivity platforms, including the launch of a Cloud-enabled Spot Master package enabling converters to reach spot colors in

minutes and keep them consistent during the run - including between presses at remote locations.

Keikon made a string of announcements headed up by the launch of a new high-volume toner press, the **Keikon LX3000 'Lion'**.

Built for a web width of 330mm and with 1200dpi resolution, the LX3000 is a 5-color dry toner press printing at 42 m/min - a 40 percent speed increase from Keikon's current 30m/min capability. The press incorporates Keikon's Cruise Control system, which utilizes AI-driven vision technology to continuously monitor and automatically adjust print production settings as well as providing quantitative production data for later analysis.

The Lion press was printing with Keikon's new Eco toners, formulated with over 60 percent high-grade recycled PET. Free from fluorine, Bisphenol A (BPA), TPO and mineral oils, as well as being fully vegan, Eco toners comply with international restrictions around food safety.

On the inkjet side of its business, Keikon introduced PantherCure LED-UV inks with no price premium over conventional inks. Combined with Keikon's new Dionysus screening and bespoke waveforms, ink consumption is reduced by up to 30 percent and up to 88.7 percent of the Pantone book can be simulated with four colors at DeltaE 2. The PantherCure LED-UV inks are available for the entry-level Label Discovery Panther and Keikon PX2200

GLOBAL PRESENCE

Labelexpo 2023 showed how press manufacturers from outside Europe and the US are now setting up European sales and service organizations to better support their local sales, service and spare parts operations.

Brazilian flexo press manufacturer **Etirama** announced it will set up a European showroom next year. This follows the setting up of Etirama Europe and a sales and service office in Lisbon, Portugal, last year. At the show, Etirama launched its SPS3 flexo press in a 6-color 350mm web width configuration including cold foil and lamination. The press is equipped with electronic pre-register and runs at speeds up to 150m/min, featuring 'Industry 4.0' connectivity with remote technical assistance and the ability to provide information on production parameters in real time.

The machine is part of Etirama's Global Series press line, which standardizes its presses on a single platform. A fourth machine in the range - the Etirama SPS4 - will be launched in the first quarter of next year. It will feature a 450mm web width and a chill drum for printing unsupported flexible films with conventional UV drying.

Multitec, a well-established India-based flexo press manufacturer, announced a distribution partnership for the European market. The company demonstrated its new S2 press in an 8-color configuration equipped with GEW's AeroLED air-cooled LED cassette system, multi-layer label module and cold foil. The press had been sold to Hungarian label converter MBZ Converting, which will now act as Multitec's main dealer, demo center and servicing hub in Switzerland, Germany, Hungary and Poland.

MBZ is a part of the Swiss-based Qualiprint Group, which has interests in paper converting, label printing, sheet printing and packaging. As more presses are delivered to the group, those sites will also become demo centers for Multitec presses in Europe.

Chinese suppliers continue to strengthen their foothold in the European market. Wanjie is a good example with its established Wanjie Europe operation based in Madrid with its own service team for installation, training and after sales service. Barcelona-based ZZE (Zonten Europe) has been the official representative of Zonten in both Europe and Latin America since 2019.





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AUTOMATION AND INTEGRATION

As noted earlier, a key trend at this Labelexpo was the integration of flexo and hybrid presses into the Cloud-based digital world through a suite of 'Industry 4.0' technologies, to boost automation capabilities, remote monitoring and diagnostics and integrating these presses into MIS factory management systems.

Nilpeter introduced what it called a 'Digital Shadow' for its flexo presses. This refers to the comprehensive digital footprint left by a press as it operates, capturing crucial data on usage, performance, and maintenance requirements. This allows users to measure performance, improve job design, run simulations and utilize this powerful tool to train and educate operators and plant managers. 'It allows you to re-run a complete job digitally to see how the process can be improved – like using a flight recorder,' explained Jakob Landberg.

Mark Andy's sMArt link is a set of on-press production monitoring tools that enables operators to make data-driven decisions based on real-time data collection. sMArt link is available on all new Mark Andy presses and can be retrofitted to Mark Andy and other brands of production equipment.

Mark Andy also premiered its ProWorx Label Suite, an Adobe Creative Cloud extension tailored to the company's hybrid presses. This includes an imposition tool that automates job set up for both inline printing and embellishment processes.

Mark Andy also staged a demonstration of a fully automated turret-to-packing workflow. This involved a Martin Automatic turret taking rolls from an HD Series hybrid press, ejecting the rolls to a robot system that automatically assembles the packing case, loads the rolls, labels and seals the box, then palletizes - all with just one operator.

Omet demonstrated its Sfera digital platform which monitors in real-time all connected Omet machines and analyzes data to assist customers in making better operational decisions. Sfera will be further developed with AI and IoT tools to take full advantage of Industry 4.0 workflows.

Bobst demonstrated its Connect system, which is being built as a common platform for all the company's converting equipment, including its flexo inline and hybrid platforms. Connect is designed to provide process management and production data to improve planning and decision-making and as a tool for continuous optimization.

In a similar move, **Gallus** previewed the Heidelberg Customer Portal (HCP), which again is under development with AI tools to offer services including predictive maintenance. The Gallus press portfolio will be included at a later stage.

A pioneer in flexo press integration, **MPS** discussed its connectivity platform including Virtual Coach operator training program.

“LABELEXPO EUROPE DEMONSTRATED THAT TONER TECHNOLOGY AT THE HIGH END IS NOW COMPETING WITH FLEXO IN TERMS OF SPEED AND PRODUCTIVITY”

and PX3300 presses.

Gallus demonstrated the recently launched GallusOne standalone digital press, built on the Labelmaster flexo press platform, and announced a new configuration that includes integrated semi-rotary die-cutting, flexo unit and inspection.

Although Gallus did not have a conventional press on its stand, it did highlight the newly available Digital Print Unit (DPU) which allows the ECS 340 ('granite') press to be field-upgraded to a LabelFire 340 hybrid. Both presses share a common platform.

Durst unveiled its Hawk Eye real-time nozzle compensation technology, enabled by an AI-driven inline vision system. Hawk Eye automatically detects the exact position of a defective nozzle and the color. Neighboring nozzles then print larger drops to compensate at full production speed. There is no set-up required and no need to print a special test pattern.

Durst also announced the availability of LED-UV Tau RSC inks, available in CMYK with optional orange, violet, green and white, along with new Tau RSC UV Inks formulated without TPO photoinitiators. Durst sold a Tau RSC 340 E LED-UV press at the show to PrintLounge in New Zealand.

The company demonstrated a Tau 510 RSCi press on the stand equipped with double white stations, allowing high opacity white ink printing at 80m/min.

Dantex showed the results of a partnership with Ricoh which boosts the resolution of its Pico UV inkjet digital press to 2400dpi. The jointly developed DRS (Digital Resolution System) utilizes Ricoh's latest printhead technology encased in a stainless steel housing.

Dantex also unveiled a partnership with Actega Metal Print which sees the integration of its Ecoleaf digital metalization technology into the Pico press platform. Dantex was producing multi-color metallic labels using the Color-Logic system after having become a certified partner last year.

Further developments included the addition of Violet to the Picojet print engine, the inclusion of the Aegis inspection camera to monitor the press through Dantex's proprietary Knight Guard system, along with a new semi-rotary die-cutting module.

Konica Minolta launched in Europe its AccurioLabel 400 toner-based digital press, an addition to the hugely successful AccurioLabel 230. The AL400 prints at up to 39.9m/min and is fitted with automated color and density control and a white toner station along with a re-registration scanner.

The AL230 was also present, configured with GM's DC330Mini finisher. The setup included an integrated inkjet unit from Industrial Inkjet (IIJ) demonstrating inline security printing with reactive UV inks.

The company was also promoting its AccurioPro software suite which now includes Flux Label impose and Dashboard, promoting automation of job set-up and VDP implementation and feedback of real-time machine status.

Also shown was the PKG-1300 inkjet press designed for short-run digital box printing.

Screen announced the development of an inline inkjet primer station for its flagship Truepress LABEL 350UV SAI, which was launched at the show to address the issue of poor ink adhesion on some substrates.

The Truepress LABEL 350UV SAI A prints at 60m/min CMYK+WOB with chill roller for handling unsupported materials.

“FOR THE SMALLER GUYS, IT IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE TO BE COMPETITIVE ON SHAFT-DRIVEN MACHINES. WE ARE TALKING HERE ABOUT A 50-70 PERCENT REDUCTION IN WASTE OVER A MECHANICALLY DRIVEN PRESS”



A web reverse option allows the press to be configured as part of a hybrid press line. Screen also announced a new EuPIA compliant ink set.

India's **Monotech** unveiled its Jetsci 2.0 dSpark digital label embellishment line with digital varnish and cold foiling capabilities alongside the company's flagship KolorSmart+ digital UV inkjet label press. The KolorSmart+ press comes equipped with a pre-inkjet flexo-station for priming, coating, or single-color printing, followed by a 6-color print engine (W+CMYK+O). Print speed is 50m/min.

Epson showed its L-4733AW flatbed water-based inkjet press for the first time at a European trade show using Epson's newly improved AQ4 ink set. Also shown was the SurePress L-6534VW printing CMYK+W and in-line digital varnish inline with a GM DC330 Mini compact label finisher. Making its show debut was Epson's new series of Cloud-enabled ColorWorks label printers. This follows a partnership announcement between Epson and Loftware, the world's largest cloud-based enterprise labeling and artwork management provider.

Turkish manufacturer **Jetron** made its show debut with the D2Roll LB3350 LED-UV inkjet press, running at 50m/min at a print resolution of 600 x 1200dpi and up to seven colors (CMYK+WOG). Maximum

print width is 350mm. Jetron sees a gap in the market in terms of pricing between far eastern manufactured presses and 'high-end' digital platforms. The company has developed its own workflow software.

DIGITAL FLEX PACK

Digital printing of flexible packaging was pioneered by **HP Indigo** with its highly successful 20000 press, now with 340 active installations. Not only did HP Indigo make this Labelexpo the occasion for the world premiere of the 200K – successor to the 20000/25k – but other manufacturers entered the digital flexible packaging arena, mainly emphasizing the opportunities presented by the shift towards paper-based flexible packaging from film.

The HP Indigo 200K digital press offers 30 percent higher speed, and, says the company, 45 percent more productivity than the HP Indigo 25K digital press. The 200k was shown as part of a wider flexible packaging ecosystem, the Digital Pouch Factory, which included both lamination and pouch making machines provided by Karlville.

Xeikon launched its Titon dry toner system along with the TX-500 press developed specifically for this application. The Titon technology involves encasing dry toners in a UV-cured polyester shell which

gives them a high degree of durability and heat resistance to temperatures up to 220-260degC – critical to withstand heat sealing processes.

Xeikon promoted the TX-500/Titon combination for paper-based pouches. The Titon toners are food-safe and resistant to chemical and mechanical abrasion, meaning they do not need to be over-varnished or laminated to protect the print.

Screen was also focusing on paper-based flexible packaging for the introduction of its Truepress PAC 520P inkjet press. The press uses water-based pigment inks that comply with appropriate food-safety regulations. The press is designed to print on uncoated paper from 45-250gsm at speeds of 80m/min on a 520mm web width. It is supplied with a full-color VDP capability. At its press conference Screen showed examples from Japan of digitally printed barrier paper packaging for multiple variants of a chocolate brand.

HYBRID IMPACT

'Hybrid' is becoming increasingly difficult to define, as digital presses start to incorporate flexo stations and flexo presses are fitted with digital processing modules, both print and embellishment. There is also some dispute about whether we should use the term 'hybrid' at all to describe

FOCUS ON EXTENDED COLOR GAMUT

Labelexpo Europe 2023 and ECG expert Dr Kai Lankinen organized a series of seminars focusing on expanded color gamut (ECG) printing at the show. Called Flexo's Future – ECG, the collaboration included a series of presentations which were supported by guided tours across the show floor focusing on ECG and its impact on efficiency and sustainability for printing.

Participants in the feature included Nilpeter, Siegwirk, Sandon Global, XSYS, Hybrid Software, Asahi Photoproducts, Esko, Hamillroad, Tesa, and Sun Chemical.

Commented Dr Lankinen: 'The enthusiasm and commitment to the ECG solution were tangible. The tour participants were globally active professionals in the printing industry,

and supply chain. The feedback from visitors was really positive. This new show feature to Labelexpo marked a pivotal moment for the diverse and exciting industry of label and package printing, providing a strong foundation to proceed with further ECG implementation.' A full report will appear in the next edition of Labels & Labeling.

Livasta

Mono-materialized labelstock



Features

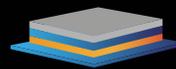
Mono-materialized labelstock (same material) as the polyester container.

Designed for application to polyester surfaces, the material is constructed using the same material for the face film and the ADHESIVE.

Due to the unique surface treatment, the ink layer can be easily removed during the PET container recycling washing phase (warm alkaline water wash).

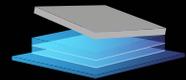
Advantages of mono-material labelstock compared to conventional labelstock

Conventional labelstock



Ink layer is difficult to remove, and different materials are present so recycling efficiency decreases.

Mono-material labelstock



Ink layer can be removed during recycling washing phase and all materials originate from the same chemical components so recycling efficiency increases.

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flexo-inkjet combination machines, with **Bobst**, for example, favoring 'All-in-One'.

What we can certainly say is that Labelexpo Europe 2023 saw deepening relationships between flexo and digital press manufacturers to jointly develop inline integrated flexo-inkjet presses.

Durst and **Omet** signaled a strengthening of their strategic partnership, with a commitment to jointly develop and manufacture the next generation of hybrid presses – and for Durst to fully integrate sales and support of the hybrid presses throughout its global sales and service network. Omet demonstrated the current version of the XJet Omet-Durst hybrid press on its stand.

Screen and **Nilpeter** introduced the latest generation of their jointly developed press (Nilpeter no longer uses the term 'hybrid'), combining Screen's new Truepress Label 350UV SAI technology with Nilpeter's FA-Line flexo platform. The Truepress Label 350UV SAI S unit offers up to seven colors, enabling expanded gamut along with high-performance white printing. The FA-4 UV flexo stations are sleeve-based with closed chamber ink trays and can use any combination of LED-UV or mercury UV curing. The press incorporates a quick-change semi-rotative die station.

With its established partnerships with **Konica Minolta** and **Domino** and its self-developed HD Series press, **Mark Andy** now offers six hybrid configurations that match flexo with inkjet or toner depending on the price point and application. The DPro Max takes full advantage of Konica Minolta's new Accurio 400 engine to offer higher speeds and a white toner along with CMYK. Mark Andy's new Pro Series flexo press is now field-upgradable to this hybrid combination.

A particular point of hybrid interest on the Mark Andy stand was the addition of a Kurz Distorun metalization module on an HD Series press, allowing registered placement of foils and holograms. 'This kind of embellishment is the future,' says Phil Baldwin. 'The quality is the same as using tooling and shows how flexo and digital complement each other – that's the way the market is shifting towards hybrid fusions.'

Bobst announced a new 'All-in-One' press, the Digital Expert 340, built on the same platform as the Digital Master press which the company showed on its stand. The Digital Expert press will operate at 65m/min with the ability to upgrade to 100m/min and

LABELXPO FOUNDER CLIVE SMITH PASSES AWAY

It is with great sadness that the Tarsus Labels Group announces the death of Clive Smith, founder of Labelexpo.

Clive Smith launched the first Labelex show in London in 1980 to showcase coding, marking and labeling technology for the garment and wider package and product labeling industries. The show was sponsored by Mike Fairley's Labels & Labeling magazine published by his Cowise group, a partnership that was to endure throughout the show's history.

In 1985 Smith moved the show to Europe, running at the Rogier Centre in Brussels. Finat supported the seminar program for the first time, and this was later followed by an agreement to exclusively partner with the European show.

Smith signed an agreement with TLMI to exclusively support Labelexpo America, with the first show taking place at the Rosemont Center Chicago in 1990. In 1991, the first Labelexpo Asia show took place at the World Trade Centre, in Singapore.

In 1998 Tarsus took over ownership of the Labelex/Cowise group.

At Labelexpo Europe 2019, Smith was honored with a Global Label Industry Special Recognition Award.

“HYBRID IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO DEFINE, AS DIGITAL PRESSES START TO INCORPORATE FLEXO STATIONS AND FLEXO PRESSES ARE FITTED WITH DIGITAL PROCESSING MODULES”

the option to incorporate a flexo unit.

Bobst revealed a strategic partnership with Asteria Group which involves Asteria's investment in multiple Digital Master All-in-One production platforms throughout Europe.

Bobst also announced that Visutech has been appointed distributor for the Nordic countries representing the company's complete narrow-mid-web product portfolio including flexo, digital and All-in-One machines.

Domino launched its N610i-R digital retrofit module targeted at OEMs and converters looking to add digital printing into existing flexographic presses. The N610i-R digital retrofit module is available in four or five colors (CMYK+W), with a double white option (WW+CMYK). The five-color version allows for printing in high opacity digital white (72 percent) – often used as a replacement for silk-screen printing – at 50m/min (164ft/min). Both color versions are available with Domino-manufactured UV90 and UV95 ink sets. The UV95 ink set is suitable for non-direct contact food packaging applications and is produced in line with Nestlé's guidance on food packaging, EuPIA guidelines, and the Swiss Ordinance for Food Packaging Inks.

Amica Systems made a major move into the LED-UV inkjet sector with the launch of two presses at Labelexpo – the LPS330 and the narrower web (up to 108mm) 6-color Scorpio press. The LPS330 prints at 720x1200dpi configured with White, CMYK and digital varnish. The Scorpio prints in six colors, CMYK+OG. Also on show was the new Gemini 330 4-color UV inkjet press fitted with automatic purge, wipe and cap functionality with print resolution of 600x1200dpi.

Chinese suppliers made a sizeable impact with hybrid press launches. First-time Labelexpo Europe exhibitor **Flora** has diversified from its wide format technology base to launch its first narrow web inline press, the J-450 Pro hybrid. The Flora J-450 prints in up to six colors at up to 60m/min with a maximum print resolution of 1200 x 600dpi. It was demonstrated integrated with pre-coating, cold stamping and flexo printing modules.

HanGlobal unveiled its LabStar330S Hybrid, which combines 7-color digital printing with flexo, cold foil stamping, lamination and die-cutting at 50m/min.

Upgrading from five to seven colors allows the LabStar330S engine to cover over 90 percent of Pantone colors. Optionally to adding OVG, along with White, inkjet varnish can also be selected for tactile effects and digital spot varnish.

Pulisi launched its Aobeat multi-functional digital press. The press demonstrated at Labelexpo, seen for the first time in Europe, was specially configured with multiple hybrid modules including front flexo primer, 7-color (CMYK+white/orange/varnish) digital engine, cold foil stamping and inspection. The press uses Epson printheads for a resolution of 600 x 1200dpi in CMYK+W.



The next opportunity to see the Chinese press systems mentioned above in action will be at Labelexpo Asia 2023 in Shanghai in December. For more information, visit www.labelexpo-asia.com

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FINISHING AND CONVERTERING

Digital embellishment and faster die-cutting units were key trends at Labelexpo Europe 2023. James Quirk and Andy Thomas-Emans report

Just as since the last Labelexpo Europe, in 2019, digital and flexo printing presses have made great strides – the former in speed; the latter in automation and efficiency – so have there been significant developments in the finishing and converting machines that complement them.

Among the key developments in finishing and converting equipment on display in Brussels were increasingly sophisticated digital embellishment options – primarily inkjet varnish, various forms of digital metallization, and laser die-cutting – and faster die-cutting systems that help enable more automated and more efficient flexo printing, helping it push back against digital technology when it comes to production of shorter runs.

Elsewhere on the show floor were the latest developments in inspection rewind units, shrink sleeve converting equipment, specialist units for production of RFID labels, and more.

DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT

Digital embellishment – the replacement of tool-based analog decoration and converting processes with fully digital processes – was a key trend among the converting technology on display. It can be achieved through different configurations, from integrated digital embellishment lines that combine inkjet varnishing, digital metallization and laser die-cutting into fully automated one-pass label converting systems, to retrofittable inkjet modules that can turn conventional printing or converting machines into hybrid systems capable of applying tactile varnishes or variable white, black and spot colors.

In the latter category, **AB Graphic International (ABG)** demonstrated the **JetFX**-powered DigiJet 330 print bar, **Domino** launched a digital retrofit module for both flexo presses and finishing equipment, and **FujiFilm** marked the Labelexpo debut of its 42K imprinting bar system, successor to the Samba 42000.

Fully integrated digital embellishment systems included **ABG** demonstrating its DigiLase 4.0 laser die cutter as part of an integrated DigiCon line.

Anytron showed its versatile Any-Jet II which integrates digital printing, lamination, laser die-cutting, slitting and matrix removal.

Cartes demonstrated its GE363VJL



“AMONG THE KEY DEVELOPMENTS WERE INCREASINGLY SOPHISTICATED DIGITAL EMBELLISHMENT OPTIONS”

digital finishing technology consisting of a Jet D-Screen (JDS) inkjet module combined with laser die-cutting and converting, all based around the company's Gemini production platform. The Jet D-Screen digital screen technology, making its European trade show debut following its launch last year at Labelexpo Americas, won Cartes the Innovation Award for companies with up to 300 employees at the Label Industry Global Awards.

GM launched a digital varnish module for its DC350 converting line, featuring digital foil and digital screen varnish, and sold two of the systems during the first two days of the show.

Prati, celebrating its 50th anniversary, showed the DigiFastOne integrated digital finishing line, based on the company's Futura field-upgradable open platform technology. The line is fully digital from inkjet module to laser die-cutting and turret rewind and offers the capability to produce short-run promotional labels in the food and beverage, wine and spirits, cosmetics, personal care and home care sectors.

Prati also launched the DigiFast 20000, aimed at the mid-web package printing sector. It can operate as a stand-alone system or be integrated into the new HP Indigo 20K digital press.

It is configurable to meet individual finishing requirements from varnishing to full or selective printing, embellishing and finishing a job either in roll or in sheet for further processing.

SEI Laser showed its Labelmaster laser die-cutting and finishing system in-line with its new high-resolution KyoJet UV inkjet module, representing a single-pass system from PDF to shipping.

Digital metallization, meanwhile, continues to make great strides via a range of different technology approaches.

ABG demonstrated the zero-waste Actega EcoLeaf metallization system, which uses a donor roll of nano-metallic flakes attracted to a printed trigger image.

Kurz introduced its DM-Uniliner 2D/3D digital embellishment systems and the Distorun module, a material-saving cold transfer unit for processing single images and endless décor. It operates by reading a print mark on the web and positioning the images in relation, at the same time monitoring and syncing with the speed of the press. Kurz also premiered an in-line metallization solution developed specifically for the Xeikon toner press, using a part-cured 'tacky' toner to adhere the metallization effect to the substrate. 'Embellishment is a key trend: it makes the difference for brand owners,' says Stéphane



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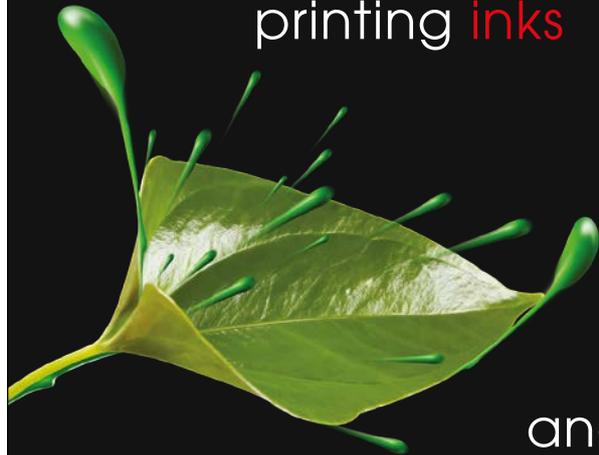


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Royère, head of the business area packaging and print. 'We at Kurz have the answer to this need.'

Automation is a key feature of this new generation of digital finishing systems. **ABG** showcased ABG Connect, a key component for integrating Digicon finishing lines into wider factory communication networks. Developed over 10 years, and involving collaborations with a leading self-adhesive label converter and MIS specialist Cerm, the ABG Connect is a state-of-the-art, plug-and-play system that uses the latest industry-standard JDF/JMF messaging format to connect converters' management information systems to their ABG finishing lines.

Grafotronic unveiled its IQ automation system, which places smart cameras on the unwind, varnish, die-cut and slitting stations of a DCL2 finishing line. The cameras allow for automated set-up and monitoring of each station, all using simple reference marks printed between the label lanes. An IQ-equipped DCL2 could be seen in action in the Automation Arena.

RAPID DIE-CUTTING

Two key die-cutting developments were on show in Brussels. Firstly, the continued development of high-speed semi-rotary die-cutting modules – **GM** now claims an industry best of 200m/min. Of course, we have had semi-rotary die-cutting for some time on finishing machines optimized for short runs of digitally printed labels. The benefits of not having to change magnetic cylinders between jobs were evident. But the new generation of faster units is now impacting the efficiency of flexo presses. Not having to change cylinders between jobs is matched by the ability to automatically load and eject die plates, reducing set-up times between jobs.

Taken together with automation on the flexo print stations and ECG color this has the potential to revolutionize the ability of the flexo press to economically produce shorter runs, pushing back against the digital cut-off point (at the same time as faster digital presses push into the medium run length sector traditionally dominated by flexo).

Quick change rotary die systems were also displayed at Labelexpo Europe 2023, allowing the rapid exchange of dies using side-address trolleys with automated pre-registration.

Die systems manufacturers have at the same time been fitting their die stations with the ability to intelligently respond to

**“FASTER DIE-CUTTING SYSTEMS HELP
ENABLE MORE AUTOMATED AND MORE
EFFICIENT FLEXO PRINTING”**



variations in liner thickness. The **Maxcess/RotoMetrics** RotoScan intelligent die station is a good example, and this unit is also set up to provide Industry 4.0-level real-time data capture and reporting. Kocher + Beck introduced a range of systems that reduce or eliminate manual intervention, including the GapMaster EM and KMS digital pressure gauge. **ETI Converting's** Pellicut system can die-cut down to 12 micron.

Tecnocut presented the E-Diffsystem, an electronically adjustable anvil. It also showcased the Pit Stop quick-change cylinder system and a waste matrix removal system. The latest model of the Label Mover unit moves the web by a few millimeters for more efficient waste removal.

Stand-alone die-cutting systems are also benefiting from Industry 4.0 integration tools. The **Berhalter** Swiss Die-Cutter B4, with a production speed of 500 strokes a minute, incorporates digitally monitored penetration depth control, and the company's Cutcontrol technology allows operators to access real-time data streams from the machine, accessories, and punching tools.

SPECIALIST APPLICATIONS

Specialist machines dedicated to the wine sector were shown by **Emmendinger Maschinenbau (EMB)**, which exhibited sparkling wine capsule machines that offer a wide range of decoration and functional possibilities. **GM** showed, among other converting machines, its DC350Flex+ Wine line for foiling and embossing, incorporating both screen and flexo varnish effects and a 50-ton pressure hot stamping module. The unit can work standalone or in-line with a digital press.

Schobert technologies' RSM410 IML/MX is specially designed for the high-speed die-cutting and stacking of in-mold labels including the Spider robot-automated stacking and counting system.

Karlville demonstrated a complete system for laminating then manufacturing stand-up pouches, operating as part of HP Indigo's 'Pouch factory'. The Karlville Swiss compact KS-SUP-400 pouch machine offers the capability to manufacture custom-shaped pouches. This was the first time the company showcased this line at a Labelexpo show.

Accraply showed its new generation Revolve seaming technology, configured to make shrink sleeve seaming simpler and more efficient, while **Brotech** introduced its SMS shrink sleeve label seaming unit to the European market, alongside a range of differently configured digital label finishing lines.

DCM Usimeca presented a shrink sleeve seaming machine equipped with laser perforation, and a doctoring rewinder for quality control and correction of reels, equipped with a 100 percent inspection system. It also showed a bi-directional narrow web slitter rewinder for inspection and doctoring.

HCI Converting Equipment promoted the new FP-X250-2 shrink sleeve seaming machine with rewind auto splicing, ultrasonic lay-flat measuring and solvent detection technology, with both seaming and doctoring processes on the same machine. The machine runs at a speed of 500m/min.

For shrink sleeves, **Karlville** displayed its latest seamer and inspection combo. Its third-generation Plus series seamer, K3 Plus, operates at 500m/min and forms the sleeves via an automatic adjustable forming section.

An interesting decoration technology for shrink sleeves was shown by **Pantec**, which introduced its Cheetah N rotary embellishment system for applying single 3D images to shrink sleeves. Such effects cannot be achieved on shrink sleeves by embossing. The customized 3D images are applied to the shrink sleeve by heat and pressure from a carrier film at up to 20 images a second. 'It's a totally new shrink sleeve embellishment,' says CEO René Abächerli. 'Many major shrink sleeve players around the world are interested in the machine.'

Specialist converting units for RFID label production was another

feature of the show.

Delta ModTech demonstrated an updated Crusader Converter incorporating precision RFID antennae placement. The system integrates multiple processes such as rotary die cutting, winding, conveying and accurate part placement.

Graphimecc spoke about how RFID and QR codes fit into wider Cloud-based track and trace systems at daily talks in the Automation Arena while promoting its own abilities in that area.

LemuGroup introduced the LI 220 RFID converter for multilayer label production and NFC/RFID chip inserts. The LI 220 offers two operational alternatives in a single module. It enables the production of multilayer labels and also allows NFC/RFID chip inserts, between the liner and the label, without hindering the visual design of the label.

Melzer showed the SC-X Smart Label Production Line with integrated punching units and trim removal. This production line for RFID labels and tickets can process both dry and wet inlays at full speed of up to 60 m/min.

Mühlbauer showcased the CL40000, a flexible RFID inlay converting system suitable for mid and high-volume production. This machine can produce various output products such as smart labels, smart tickets and wet inlays, and features a high throughput rate, label/ticket lamination, die-cutting and 100 percent output testing. It achieves a throughput of up to 40m/min.

Voyantic demonstrated the Tagsurance 3 in-line quality testing system for RFID tag and label production lines. The system offers full visibility into the RF performance of labels and measures the performance of UHF and HF RFID inlays, tags and labels at different production stages. It is scalable to various production volume needs from one to eight lanes with one to five stations per lane, handling lane speeds up to 200m/min.

AROUND THE STANDS

ABG, among 17 machines on its stand, launched a new turret unit and introduced the Converter, a compact, fully modular high-speed converting line incorporating an automated flexo coating station. Among other products on display were a Digicon with screen and Ecoleaf unit for sustainable metallization, DigiLase 4.0, DigiJet 330, DigiLite, SRI3 430 with monochrome inkjet, shrink sleeve seaming (SR), doctoring solutions (DR), an entry-level SRI, in addition to a booklet module.

Ashe Converting launched the Diamond duplex slitter series for wider web applications and the Opal TST range of high-speed blank label converters with auto two-spindle turret rewind.



“IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BE PART OF THE AUTOMATION ARENA – IT HELPED US TO DEMONSTRATE OUR AUTOMATION CAPABILITIES”

Also operating on the stand was a fully automated 'glueless/coreless' four-spindle turret slitter, an Opal ISR with 100 percent camera inspection and a mid-web sized (800mm wide) Solitaire duplex slitter for flexible packaging products. The latter was bought on the show floor by a US-based label converter. Ashe was sharing a stand with its partner Parkland International, a manufacturer of core cutters.

Bar Graphic Machinery (BGM) launched its BGM Elite Digiflex 330 flexo die-cutting and converting system with semi-rotary print station, quick-change ink system and screen-printing unit, and the new BGM Elite Dieflex E. Achieving speeds up to 160m/min, the Digiflex 330 is designed with servo infeed and outfeed, a semi-rotary re-register flexo print station with LED drying, and cold foiling and laminating units. The new BGM Elite Dieflex E is a high-speed plain-label converting and finishing line that can also be equipped with an adjustable anvil.

Brotech launched the SDF Plus digital converting system, which supports multiple processes including hot foil stamping, flexo printing, cold foil/adhesive lamination, screen printing, varnishing, die-cutting, slitting, snowball waste removal and dual rewinds.

Also displayed was the modular SDF-E series which can be expanded with options such as additional flexo coating stations, printing, cold foil/lamination, hot air (I/R) dryer for water-based primer or printing, auto-slitting unit, sheeting or IML stations.

Cartes presented six machine configurations. The GE363VJL digital finishing technology is a Jet DScreen

(JDS) on the Gemini platform, combined with laser die-cutting. The GT360 series with Jet D-Screen (JDS) is integrated with flexo, silkscreen printing, hot stamping and semi-rotary die-cutting. The GE362WL+turret rewinder laser die-cutting machine will be shown with automatic job change. The ILC laser cutter allows cutting of colored substrate without leaving white edges or can remove white borders from dark labels. GE361L is an entry-level laser die-cutting and converting machine. GE364VHWR is equipped with hot stamping on the Gemini platform, along with two flexo stations and a semi-rotary die-cutting unit.

Daco Solutions launched its SRV350 inspection slitter rewinder. The servo-driven machine features an inspection system from Nikka, closed-loop unwind tension control, and a fully automatic slitting unit with servo-driven positioning of the knives. It runs at speeds of up to 300m/min with a 350mm web width and 800mm unwind diameter. An optional accumulator can be added, so any labels replaced on the web will pass back underneath the camera to ensure 100 percent inspection. Daco also exhibited the PLD350 with a rotary die station for blank label production.

Darui China showcased a new generation of laser label die-cutting machines. This technology offers both roll-to-roll and roll-to-sheet finishing options. The fully digital laser process system performs well in handling small and medium-sized orders.

DPR showed Aries and Taurus label finishing systems, which are equipped with rotary module or laser technology

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and can handle up to 350mm media width. The machines offer UV flexo varnish, lamination, die-cutting, slitting and dual shaft rewind functionality in a single pass. DPR also introduces the Virgo and Scorpio X2 series, powered by cutting knife technology and featuring two in-line plotters with two separate and independent cutting heads.

DYM Machinery showed its nonstop roll-changing technology for narrow and mid-web applications. Its portfolio includes automatic butt splicer unwinder, nonstop cold stamping film systems, nonstop waste matrix collector and automatic turret rewriter.

Eclipse Label Equipment showcased its latest 'print and finish' systems designed for in-line label production from blank labelstock. It also presented a new in-line laser label finishing machine, the Eclipse LF220-LAS. This is designed to operate either with a pre-printed roll of media or in line with any digital label press or finishing system.

Ecosystem Costruzioni showcased its new single pass roll-to-roll finishing line. It handles reels up to a diameter of 1,000mm with speeds up to 90m/min. The base system can be expanded to a double bar version for simultaneous metal transfer and high-build varnish application.

Errepi showed an updated Leonardo automatic rewriter and featured products from its portfolio including the Volta and Archimede winders, Galileo flexo printing machine, Giotto inspection machines, and die-cutting machines such as the Dante and the Vittoria and Vittorino core cutters.

ETI Converting promoted its Cohesio converting, printing and coating machine for in-line pressure-sensitive label manufacturing, launching a new nitrogen curing chamber for UV silicone and a new modular coating station. 'There is a clear trend towards in-house coating, and we make it easy,' says president Maxime Bayzelon. 'After the Covid material shortages, companies want to remove uncertainty from the supply chain. Sustainability is another driver.'

Gietz showed its ROFO 450 web-fed flatbed hot foil stamping system for narrow web embellishment processes. The ROFO 450 Eco processes PS materials, paper, cardboard, film and composite substrates. The machine achieves speeds of up to 120m/min with a dynamic foil web transport with a 90-degree rotating foiling unit. Gietz also introduced a wider version, ROFO 570 Eco, with a larger stamping surface.

Golden Laser launched a new sheet-fed laser die-cutting system. It also showed a laser die-cutting machine designed for the roll-to-roll or roll-to-sheet finishing of package printing. Golden Laser's laser die-cutters work with all pre-press and post-press

systems including rotary die-cutting, flatbed die-cutting, screen printing, flexo printing, digital die-cutting, varnish, laminating, hot stamping and cold foil.

Grafisk Maskinfabrik (GM) demonstrated nine machines, including the DC350Flex+ wine line for foiling and embossing, screen colors, and flexo varnish effects. With 130m/min rotary die-cutting (80m/min semi-rotary) and a 50-ton pressure hot stamping module, the DC350Flex+ series is fully customizable and can work either standalone or in line with a digital press. The new HF350 hot foil machine adds embossing and foiling effects in a compact footprint.

The company also showed the DC350Mini compact label finisher – the most compact in-line finishing system available on the market, according to GM – and the DC350Nano.

The SR350 slitter inspection rewriter and the LR250+ inspection rewriter were also on display. The machine can be configured for pharma labels and even turned into a mini-inkjet digital press. Also shown were the CC160S semi-automatic core cutter, and the CS350 high-speed sheeter.

CEO Uffe Nielsen reported particular interest from visitors in GM's compact finishing lines. 'Space is at a premium in factories,' he explains. 'We have also seen many more private label visitors than usual.'

Grafotronic showed 10 machines, eight of which featured new technology. The company showed Revolver, a hot stamping machine with rotating head; new modules for full in-register lamination, crossover and printing on the glue side; and the DCL2 in five different configurations. Grafotronic demonstrated five machines equipped with the AI-based computer vision system Grafotronic IQ – described by business development director Morten Toksværd as a 'virtual operator – which allows autonomous job changes, handling all job settings automatically.

In the Automation Arena, Grafotronic was the exclusive finishing partner. Together with Xeikon, Esko and Cerm, Grafotronic showed how the converting processes can be automated, showing an IQ-equipped DCL integrated into a fully automated end-to-end workflow.

Also on display was the new Haptic series, with two new screen modules, a new hot stamping machine and the latest digital embellishment system powered by Kurz.

Grafotronic also showed its SCI-FI laser for the digital converting of printed labels and stickers. The company also presented its Boon-Tech auxiliary machines including slitter/rewinder, fan-folding equipment, core cutter and label cutter.

'It has been a fantastic show,' says Toksværd. 'We have sold numerous machines and seen lots of new companies as well as existing customers. It was important to be part of the Automation Arena – it helped us to demonstrate our automation capabilities.'

HCI Converting Equipment launched its latest FSL-TR1300 turret rewriter designed for slitting labelstock, wraparound labels, shrink sleeve label films and flexible packaging films. It features automatic splicing and roll changing, stand-by paper cores with auto-positioning, finished roll eject and an unloading device.

Hontec promoted the MPX series finishing system based on the company's Digifini platform. It combines a variety of process modules, such as flatbed hot stamping, intermittent flexo printing, flatbed silkscreen printing, rotary die-cutting, flatbed die-cutting, laser die-cutting, buffer and turret rewinding, and sheet cutting.

Inglese exhibited with its partners Toray Industries, DuPont Cyrel, Esko, Refine Finishing, Breit Technologies and Azul Sistemi. It demonstrated the Refine 17in-wide Compact 2 finishing system, with features such as a semi-rotary flexo unit, UV LED curing system, cold foil lamination, semi-rotary die-cutting and

semi-automatic turret.

Jurmet exhibited its Langer3 inspection machine, suitable for wraparound labels and other monofoil, linerless as well as lined labels. The machine is equipped with a 100 percent inspection camera, has a working width of 520mm, and can operate at speeds of 500m/min.

Labeltech highlighted the Ortles slitter rewriter equipped with the new E+L Smartscan MIS2 4K inspection system and an upgraded version of the Lavaredo automatic knife positioning system, for both razor and rotary knives.

Labeltech also debuted Reit, a small versatile rewriter available in several configurations (bidirectional doctoring machine, slitter rewriter, inkjet printer). The machine is designed to meet the growing demand for small-batch productions.

The latest version of the Stelvio modular converting machine, with Lombardi flexo unit for printing/varnish, UV-LED curing, cold foil lamination, full/semi-rotary die cut and Vajolet semi-automatic turret rewriter was on display.

LemuGroup launched the MA 350+GTU for premium finishing of digitally printed labels, and the fully automatic GTU 440 with a boxing system that can automatically pack label rolls. MA 350+, connected to a GBS turret, is targeted at the production of premium finishes for digitally printed labels in the wine, cosmetics and pharmaceutical markets.

Martin Automatic displayed an MBS automatic unwind butt splicer and an LRD transfer rewriter. Both machines had been sold to German label printer Krämer Druck and were to be installed directly after the show. These machines save space, can be installed directly against walls at either end of the press and still allow access for maintenance and roll loading and unloading.

Nepata Systems presented new products from its Saga Label brand – an all-in-one machine for processing labels after digital printing. The LC30 PRO label finisher combines five functions in one device: laminating, contour cutting, trimming, slitting and winding.

The Label Finisher provides variable production of labels in small to medium runs. The contour cut enables the production of labels with complex contours and the simultaneous production of various shapes and sizes in one pass, without any cutting die.

The Saga Label SALF-350, a roll-to-roll label printing, laminating, slitting and rewinding machine, features an integrated four-color Epson Colorworks printer.

Pantec showed the Rhino S, an embellishment system with a new RSD tool change system for improved machine uptime. This enables the time-consuming set-up process to be done outside the Rhino to increase machine up-time.

Polar showcased the LabelSystem DCC-12 die-cutting system, designed for automated in-line production of die-cut labels made of compressible materials. The system is designed for highly automated in-line production of banded die-cut labels made of compressible materials, such as OPP foils for in-mold, and allows for remote maintenance and diagnostics, and integration into the digital workflow.

Prisma introduced the modular LF-350 finishing line for self-adhesive labels. The line is configured with a flatbed silkscreen unit, hot stamping/embossing, a flexo station, and semi-rotary die-cutting and rewriter. The machine operates at 50m/min in semi-rotary mode.

Reborn showed its RBJ-Ares 350 digital plotter. The machine is equipped with three blades, 350mm width, 980mm repeat length, and 500mm unwind/rewind diameter. It can automatically register and adjust cutting pressure by inputting the thickness of liners. Label converters just need to input/transfer their cutting artwork in AI/DXF/PDF format, without any die tooling.

Rhyguan showcased a compact fully digitally controlled finishing machine with corona, full rotary flexo (flood varnish),



“AFTER THE COVID MATERIAL SHORTAGES, COMPANIES WANT TO REMOVE UNCERTAINTY FROM THE SUPPLY CHAIN”

digital die-cutting and automatic slitting. The machine is designed for the efficient finishing of short-run jobs without any tools and is prepared for a JDF workflow and standard QR code scanning for automatic set-up. For wine labels, the modular Plus330 was shown with a new fast silkscreen unit, Silkfoil, and a heavy-duty hot foil module with dual heating zones. For longer runs, Rhyguan showed a machine with 50 percent improved productivity by increasing the semi-rotary die-cut speed from 60m/min to 90m/min.

Rosas Maschinenbau demonstrated its third-generation Gazelle high-speed bidirectional rewriter for imprinting a variety of labels. The new Gazelle III 6-color digital imprinting machine features an unwind diameter 650mm, web widths from 40-330mm, print width up to 200mm, corona treatment, a flexo primer station, Graph-Tech's EZ 202 DOD color inkjet head based on Epson S3200 technology, double white DOD UV inkjet with 600 dpi, a 4C DOD UV inkjet with 600 dpi, and an LED UV curing unit.

Also shown were two of Rosas' tabletop rewinders: the Cheetah 500 with AI technology for label inspection with an advanced RFID HF and UHF tag serialization module; and the Leopard 300, with a Smartscan label inspection system, 2k resolution, and 180m/min inspection speed. Two Cheetah 500 inspection rewinders were sold during the first two days of the show, according to owner David Rosas Wolf.

Rotocontrol EMT presented a portfolio of finishing machines for label slitting, rewinding, inspection, die-cutting, overprinting, digital and booklet printed labels.

Sermar Machines presented a compact vertical fan folder and showcased the new sheeter range models Smart Cut and Easy 2 Cut with electronic guillotine size change size. Sermar Machines also presented a new label converting unit in line with a spiral fan folder, the model SP-508-E, which operates at speeds up to 150m/min.

Starfoil Technology presented the Value Line 1300SXL spooling/slitting machine featuring a higher speed of 250m/min and larger diameter rolls up to 350mm. It also introduced the CLC-600XLR, a cantilevered, compact model.

Vicut released a series of roll label cutters and a new model DTF cutter VFC90 with an auto-feeding conveyor table. It is compatible with Cadlink RIP software.



Keep reading to learn more from material suppliers at Labelexpo Europe 2023

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MATERIALS

Labelexpo Europe 2023 was a manifestation of an industry-wide commitment to environmental concerns and innovation, Akanksha Meena reports

Eco-consciousness dominated the Labelexpo Europe 2023 show floor in materials segment in light of fast-approaching circular economy legislation in different parts of the world.

A central theme across exhibitor stands was the incorporation of post-consumer recycled (PCR) content into label materials, with some manufacturers presenting materials made entirely of recycled content to enable circular economy.

A second trend that was apparent at the show was exploring fossil fuel alternatives in the production of labelstock. With the ongoing global emphasis on reducing carbon footprints and embracing cleaner energy sources, manufacturers were keen to introduce label materials that are not dependent on fossil fuels.

Patricia Rodrigo, international key account manager, release liner, Mondi, says: 'Mondi takes sustainability very seriously. Our map says that by 2025 all of our products will be recyclable, reusable or compostable. More customers are demanding recycled content liners and liners that are easy to recycle. There is also a trend of reducing product in the final application and reducing emissions.'

She continues: 'Many of the products that are sold in the market are made of virgin fibers and polymers. And there are collection streams but not so many. We use recycled content as much as we can. We are also using alternate coatings that are not silicone. If it is silicone, then it comes from renewable resources. And polymers also come from renewable sources.'

Elodie Picard, global marketing and strategy director of tapes and labels/pressure sensitive adhesives, Henkel sums up the trend: 'Sustainability is a mega trend and everyone is trying to figure out how to provide sustainability in the label industry. That means we need to work together from materials and adhesives to inks suppliers – the whole industry – to achieve this goal.'

RECYCLABLE AND PCR CONTENT MATERIALS

Italstick presented papers made from 100 percent post-consumer paper waste; grass papers, made of up to 40 percent grass fibers without coloring agents; and RippedBrown kraft, natural, unbleached, uncoated paper. It also offered phthalate-free PVC and a wide range of plastic films for offset and digital printing, all made with water-based acrylic adhesives.

Ahlstrom showcased Acti-V RF glassine release paper with over 15 percent PCR cellulose fiber and comes in light yellow color for release liners. Acti-V RF Natural glassine release paper in a natural kraft color, crafted from at least 15 percent post-consumer recycled cellulose fiber and unbleached cellulose fibers. The company also offered Acti-V Industrial RF Natural, a custom double-sided silicone-coated paper for double-sided PSA tapes.

Klöckner Pentaplast introduced SmartCycle Pro heat shrink sleeve film that is recyclable in the RIC 1 stream and made from 30 percent certified PCR material.

Polyart Group launched r-Polyart synthetic paper made of 30 percent PCR material, and Fiberskin weather-resistant paper that's recyclable, biodegradable and printable by dry toner, for short-term outdoor exposure, outdoor tags, labels and signage. The company also introduced Polyart Laser Food, a food-compliant synthetic paper for dry toner printing.

Synthogra introduced its new film, SYN-BOPP transparent HB top coated 70 percent REC UCO, made with 70 percent used cooking oil. The product is produced from bio-based feedstock.

Herma unveiled an eco-conscious labelstock with three key components: grade 856 rPE PCR white film, a zero carbon footprint



“MORE CUSTOMERS ARE DEMANDING RECYCLED CONTENT LINERS AND LINERS THAT ARE EASY TO RECYCLE. THERE IS ALSO A TREND OF REDUCING PRODUCT IN THE FINAL APPLICATION AND REDUCING EMISSIONS”

adhesive (72F), and an efficient resource-saving paper backing material. The rPE PCR white (grade 856) label material is crafted solely from PCR plastic. Adhesive 72F, a joint venture of Herma and BASF, boasts zero carbon footprint and excellent adhesion properties. The paper backing minimizes resource consumption.

Toyobo offered Crisper and Kamishine white PET films for label applications with up to 25 percent PCR content.

Aluminium Féron showed new Monotex tag materials such as PE films with PCR, as well as recyclable PO films for laser printing. A tear-resistant Tritex product with 100 percent recycled paper and 90 percent PCR core was also introduced.

VPF's stand featured its range of 12 sustainable paper based face materials including exclusive hemp and grass paper, sustainable film based face materials, rPET liner with 90 percent PCR content, liner with 70 percent recycled content. A new VPFine range of thinner and lighter materials was also introduced.

Lecta presented its new 'Recy' papers, made from recycled fibers. One notable new feature was its Adestor Collect&Recycle service for the collection and recycling of glassine paper. The company also showed sustainable label materials for wine labeling, two laminates certified for waste paper recycling, a new comprehensive laminate film program with UV stable and scratch-resistant variants and soft touch. It also showed wash-off adhesives 602 (for papers) and HM725UV (for films) for recycling processes.

Henan Yinjinda New Materials introduced YMR206H(c) crystallizable shrink film. The film is 100 percent recyclable with PET bottles. Another new product shown was YMR206H(r)-50 rigid PETG shrink film for shrink sleeve labels. The film contains 50 percent PCR materials.

Fedrigoni Self-Adhesives introduced the RE-Play material range, utilizing a closed-loop recycling system with recovered

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“WE ARE SEEING SUSTAINABILITY AS A TREND COMING THROUGH IN DIFFERENT WAYS ENSURING LOCAL SOURCING, AND SHORTER SUPPLY CHAINS. WE ARE ALSO SEEING A WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH THINNER MATERIALS AND RECYCLED CONTENT”

and recycled siliconized backing for luxury label face stocks. It launched Manter, a premium self-adhesive neck label range for wine and spirits. The company also unveiled premium wash-off labels for wine and spirits, for ice immersion and easy removal in alkaline solutions at 80 degrees C. Luxury labeling products included 100 percent recycled papers, alternative fiber papers, and pharma-specific products for small containers, syringes, ampoules, and more.

Mondi showed release liners with recycled content fibers and polymers. It also promoted the use of silicones from renewable resources. Polymers that come from renewable resources and are fossil free were also a highlight.

Lintec Europe launched MMP Mono Material Polyester (PET) labelstock designed for single-use PET containers. Both film and adhesive are manufactured from polyester, reducing the risk of contamination if the labels are not removed before the washing and grinding process. The adhesive contains 40 percent bio-mass content. A special top coating also enables the labels to be de-inked in an alkaline washing process. The product won Label Industry Global Award for innovation.

Taghleef Industries presented biobased PP films and reLife films manufactured with PCR content and unveiled Shape360 TDS, a floatable shrink sleeve label film.

Leonardus launched certified recyclable plastic-free holographic 70gsm metalized paper that delivers the same performance as traditional holographic film.

UPM Raflatac introduced materials and services for labels that enable reduction, recycling, renewal and reuse. Highlights included the Ocean Action Labels, made from ocean-bound plastic waste, and the PureCycle paper wash-off labels that cleanly separate from primary packaging in PET and HDPE recycling streams. The RAFNXT+ paper label material range is certified as carbon neutral, and the company’s linerless label materials provide a way to reduce waste.

Breit-Technologies displayed eco-friendly cast and cure

embellishing films. PP Cast and Cure films, with a width up to 1,016mm, are reusable multiple times and fully recyclable. Films are available in several patterns for holographic or textured effects, matte soft touch and extra clear. It includes anti-suff and anti-counterfeiting applications.

LINERLESS LABELS

Another shift in the label industry is the pursuit of waste reduction, particularly focusing on the elimination of liners from labels. This effort has given rise to the trend of linerless labels. In conventional label production, the liner serves as a temporary carrier for labels but is subsequently discarded after a single use, resulting in volumes of waste. Linerless labels present a promising solution. By removing the need for liners, they hold the potential to drastically reduce waste in label manufacturing.

Exhibitors such as **Avery Dennison** displayed new linerless products. The company introduced a new lineup of VI and decorative linerless labels. It showcased the ADLInrSave linerless system for prime labels, a collaboration with Bobst to develop an inline silicone coating head and Harland Machine which developed the applicator. ADLInrConvert decorative linerless products use patented micro-perforation technology. AD XeroLiner DT measures environmental impact using Avery Dennison carbon trust tools. Avery Dennison emphasized sustainability and digital integration through RFID and atma.io technology, offering data-driven insights and traceability. Its AD RDX portfolio featured wash-off and removable products for recyclable and refillable packaging in PET and colored HDPE packaging with label products like AD CleanFlake S7000ER.

Steve Flannery, senior vice president and general manager of Materials Group EMENA, says: ‘At Avery Dennison, we put sustainability at the core of everything we do and envision a connected and circular future. Labelexpo is a great opportunity for us to showcase our new solutions and also engage with our partners and customers on the key issues that will shape the future of our industry over the next few years such as Digital Product Passports and the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.’

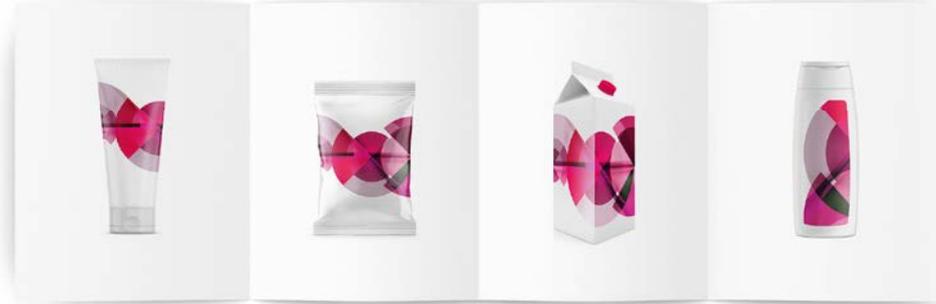
Sihl presented materials for water-based on-demand inkjet printing, including films with up to 90 percent recycled content. The company also focused on pre-made stand-up pouches and tear-resistant, hang and linerless tags. Many of its products are FSC-certified and recyclable. The company also showed PressureTAC, linerless tags for logistic applications.

Cosmo Films introduced PET G high shrink films for cosmetics, personal care, dairy food, beverages and pharma packaging. Another new product was direct thermal printable films and Top Coated On Metallized Side Scratch Resistant Film. Apart from these the company showed range of packaging and label films.

Pankaj Poddar, group CEO, Cosmo First, says: ‘The show has been



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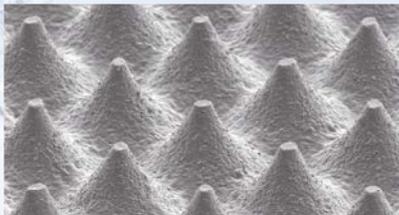
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really successful for us. We have met lots of customers and have supplier meetings and material provider meetings as well. It is the place to come and be if you want to meet people working in the industry. Platforms like Labelexpo Europe 2023, open a plethora of opportunities for businesses across the globe to foster new collaborations and partnerships, exchange industry knowledge, and gain a deeper understanding of our customer's requirements.

'Cosmo First had a successful presence at the expo engaging with customers, industry leaders, and visitors who can open the door to new collaborations and partnerships, while also allowing businesses to gain valuable insights into customer requirements. It gave us an opportunity to meet and interact with the customers and industry leaders of the region and widen our clientele. This accentuates our commitment to delivering innovative, industry-first, and environmentally conscious solutions to our esteemed clientele.'

COMPOSTABLE MATERIALS

Complementing this eco-friendly drive were advancements in compostable materials.

Bio4Life showcased its certified compostable materials for fruit labels. The face materials are made from renewable resources and are coated with the BioTAK compostable adhesive. The product range includes paper from agricultural waste, FSC and PEFC certified paper and a variety of bioplastics.

Premier Coating & Converters displayed its Premeco biomass-based and PCR content films. These materials are biodegradable or compostable.

Gulf Pack launched biodegradable BOPP label film that biodegrades in two years after it is discarded. Sanjay Choudhary, director of sales and marketing, Gulf pack, says: 'There are parts of the world where the waste collection system is not very strong. This product will start biodegrading in open air. It just needs sunlight and oxygen to biodegrade.'

Speaking of Labelexpo Europe Choudhary says: 'It is a good show. We got very unexpected results. Of course, we expect to see customers from Europe who are certainly here, but we did not expect customers from Latin America and Southeast Asia to be at the show and they are interested in our products. We are strategically located in Saudi Arabia where we have competitive advantage to service customers in the MEA region. We have had lots of enquiries from customers from Africa and people also visited us from Angola and Congo.'

THINNER AND LIGHTER MATERIALS

Exhibitors were also discussing lighter, thinner materials to reduce the ecological footprint of labels.

Ricardo Lobo, CEO of **Beontag** says: 'We are seeing sustainability as a trend coming through in different ways ensuring local sourcing, shorter supply chains. We are also seeing willingness to work with thinner materials and recycled content. Everyone is in search of something that is not just sustainable but also economical which is a key trend going forward and a key focus for our company.'



'It is a real privilege for us and an honor to be with our clients here at Labelexpo Europe. This is the first time we have a big stand. We are very happy to be in Brussels and being a part of Labelexpo yet again.'

Busitel showed new resin ribbon P314. Based on a 4-micron PET film, P314 allows up to 12 percent plastic reduction for each roll.

delfort showed its Tersil UltraLightBase glassine for self-adhesive applications, claimed up to 40 percent lighter than current market alternatives.

Jindal SMI introduced Polyolefin base Conformable PP that delivers conformability and flexibility. Available in both clear and white finish, it is 40 percent thinner compared to usual PE films. Another new product was PCR PP made with mechanical recycling technology with the same properties as standard PP films. PCR PP with 30 percent post-consumer recycled content is available in both clear and white finish.

Akash Goyal, regional business lead – Americas, SMI Coated Products, said: 'For us, Labelexpo Europe 2023 was a brilliant occasion to reconnect with our esteemed partners and customers. We had a busy four days.'

'Among the key trends at the show we saw an active urgency and interest across geographies scouting for sustainable solutions as it was a part of many conversations. We also gauge this by the amazing response we got for our sustainability portfolio with PCR and down-gauged PP filmic facestocks. We saw a general concern over unpredictable supply chain, especially from some key players in the industry. Overall, the outlook was still bullish from many customers in spite of some headwinds that hit the region.'

Innovia Films presented Rayoface CPE45 and WPE45, clear and white-label facestock films intended to replace PE and MDO films in health and personal care applications. These films are claimed to be thinner than alternative facestock films. The company also showcased Rayofloat APO and APO-HS (high shrink), floatable polyolefin shrink sleeve films designed to improve the purity of recycled PET bottles. Kurz presented a new service to produce thermal transfer ribbons not only in standard black but to customer-specific special colors and security solutions. The company has reduced its transfer carrier thickness from 12 microns to 6 microns for cold foil applications. Kurz also discussed its Recosys program. It collects customers' embossed PET carrier material.

Durico showed new direct thermal films that are phenol-free and heat stable, as well as films resistant to solvent, alcohol, hot water and tallow. Durico also displayed translucent direct thermal films and durable inkjet PP films that comply with BS5609 and GHS.

Univacco showcased its ultra-thin transfer foils, which provide decorative embellishments for labels.

BRAND PROTECTION TECHNOLOGIES

The global issue of counterfeiting was also addressed at the show. Exhibitors showcased the latest in temper-evident labels and RFID

“SUSTAINABILITY IS A MEGA TREND AND EVERYONE IS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO PROVIDE SUSTAINABILITY IN THE LABEL INDUSTRY. THAT MEANS WE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER FROM MATERIALS, ADHESIVES TO INKS SUPPLIERS – THE WHOLE INDUSTRY – TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL”



technology to ensure product authenticity and safety in a global marketplace. The integration of RFID and tamper-evident technologies within product labels is becoming increasingly crucial to ensure product authenticity and security. RFID technology enables real-time tracking and authentication of products, providing a robust defense against counterfeiting and unauthorized tampering.

Coupled with other tamper-evident features, such as holographic seals or specialized adhesives, these labels not only safeguard the integrity of products but also enhance consumer trust. These advanced technologies empower businesses to protect their brand reputation while delivering peace of mind to consumers.

GIC launched the Taginnov line for RFID airline baggage tags, clothing labels, tracking tags, logistics labels, pharmaceutical labels, tickets for events or

transport, skiing lift tickets and packaging. New line consists of systems for integration of wet or dry RFID tags in adhesive or cardboard substrates.

Seal King showed high-quality security products, including tamper-evident labels and security tapes. The tamper-evident label materials are available in different colors and transfers such as non-transfer, total transfer and partial transfer. The security tapes function as an anti-theft and counterfeit measure, leaving behind a visible 'VOID' message when opened.

Shenzhen Dicheng showed customized anti-counterfeiting printing materials and Li-ion battery strapping tape. The product appears as a regular tape but reveals a hidden message when removed, providing security protection.

Holostik showed Optashield anti-counterfeit innovation to enable end-consumers to authenticate products

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without any special devices. Optashield exhibits a gradual shift between two colors when tilted either way from the viewing angle. It can be laminated on PET, HDPE, LDPE and paper. Holostik can provide Optashield with labels, holograms and revenue stamps. The company also displayed paper hologram labels, made through the application of holography on paper instead of the traditionally used polyester.

Armor limak focused on the transformation of barcode to GS1 Digital Link and 2D barcodes. Linear barcodes provide limited non variable information while GS1 QR code or Datamatrix carry large amount of data that can be read by barcode scanners and smartphones. Thermal transfer technology is ready for this revolution as it prints every kind of barcodes on labels and flexible packaging. The sharpness and contrast of QR codes can be scanned and they can be printed at the speed of up to 60m/min. Armor limak showed thermal transfer printer ribbons for this application. Armor limak is GS1 premium member to support the implementation of GS1 Digital Link in light of Sunrise 2027.

Shosky Security exhibited a paper

void label material. This product provides an environmentally friendly alternative to plastic, featuring a translucent paper facstock that reveals a security message when removed.

WATER-BASED ADHESIVES

Adhesives and coatings on labels play an equally crucial role in the recyclability of materials. With an eye on environmental responsibility, the industry is witnessing a shift towards water-based and water-washable solutions, making it easier to remove labels from PET bottles during the recycling process. Moreover, manufacturers are embracing solvent-free silicone release coatings with minimal volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, aligning their products with regulatory requirements and sustainability objectives of brands.

Dow launched SYL-Off Protect – a carbon-neutral version of SYL-Off silicone release coatings. Solvent-free silicone release coatings were also a focus. Dow also launched its Invisu 7007 washable adhesive for filmic labels. This adhesive allows PSA labels and PET bottles to be separated in a recycling system.

Baltink was showing water-based and

UV-curable coatings, including those for special effects such as soft touch, matte, deep matte and structured. Baltink also promoted water-dispersion coatings with barrier properties intended for direct food contact and to provide a barrier to fats, oils and liquids.



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HB Fuller introduced Swifttak PS 8405 water-based pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) with non-water whitening properties. It is designed for premium PET label with a no-label look. The company also promoted ultra-removable and highly repositionable Gel-Tac products based on water-based acrylic, pressure-sensitive microsphere technology.

Henkel showcased PSA technologies including water-based, solvent-based acrylic, rubber hotmelt and UV hotmelt PSA. Henkel's UV hotmelt PSA is designed particularly for solvent-free adhesives applications with minimal VOC emission to help meet regulatory requirements and sustainability goals. Henkel also presented its Eco and RE PSA portfolio for labels, with targets of reducing carbon emission in label production, reducing waste, and enabling usage of high-quality recycle.

Herma introduced label adhesive 72Gpw for PET packaging recycling. This adhesive offers double the initial adhesion of standard wash-off adhesives and supports residue-free PET separation during recycling.

Michelman showed water-based primers and overprint varnishes for digital printing on a range of recyclable and renewably sourced substrates.

Eukalin Special-Adhesives showcased a pressure-sensitive adhesive range and water-based adhesive for shrink sleeves.

INX featured EcoStage GB-XA coatings that address food safety, sustainability and recycling, allowing mono-material packaging for select food applications, extending shelf life, and reducing waste.

hubergroup presented the Hydro-X Green Line Premium series that includes cradle-to-cradle certified components. Water-based coatings in the Hydro-LAC series were also shown, that provide heat, scuff resistance, and anti-slip properties. Hydro-LAC GA and Hydro-X GA coatings enhance mono-material packaging's oxygen, water, and grease resistance. The company showed Gecko, a solvent-based portfolio of varnishes, additives, and primers.

Elkem introduced the Silcolase UV LED Series release coatings.

Evonik launched its next generation of Tego RC products made using recycled silicone feedstocks and can be cured using either LED or traditional mercury lamps. Evonik also launched a single-component, ready-to-use release coating.

UV LED, SUSTAINABLE AND FOOD-SAFE INKS

Among the standout offerings in inks at the show were UV LED inks illustrating both energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In addition, water-based inks emerged as a prominent trend on the show floor. These inks are designed to avoid discoloration in recycled PET, ensuring that the resulting PET flakes remain clean and suitable for reuse - championing a circular economy. Furthermore, exhibitors showcased low-migration inks, an essential element for label printing in the food industry, delivering both

quality and safety in the packaging of consumables.

Exhibitors such as **Siegwerk** stayed the top of the game by bringing UV, LED-UV, solvent-based and water-based inks including special whites suitable for shrink sleeves for non-food and food packaging applications. These inks are available as standard and low-migration systems. Siegwerk also showcased an ink series for the direct-to-object printing market and for sensitive applications, as well as innovations for improving packaging recyclability. It also showed newly developed TMPTA-free LED-UV curing systems Sicura Flex Dual Cure for non-food applications as well as Sicura Nutriflex LEDTec for food, pharma and hygiene packaging applications.

Zeller+Gmelin launched two new offset ink series: Uvalux U540 LED UV and Uvalux LED FCM U581 for food packaging printing. The company also introduced Uvaflex UV-LED FCM Y581 and NON-FCM Y580, two ink series for flexo and the latest generation UV and UV-LED inkjet inks for packaging and industrial applications.

Afford Inks showcased its LED UV narrow web flexo inks.

Flint Group's narrow web and digital team, Xeikon, unveiled Cheetah 3.0 technology for label printing, featuring Eco Toner tech made of 60 percent recycled content, PFAS, TPO, BPA, and flourine-free and is 100 percent vegan. It also showcased UV LED inks and Panther digital press with PantherCure LED inks. Xeikon introduced the Lion toner press using Eco Toner technology. Flint introduced and Evolution varnish for PET packaging, ensuring recyclability. Evolution coatings comply with FCM grade standards for wash-off labels. The company also discussed de-inking primer for shrink sleeves. Flint also presented EkoCure UV LED inks and coatings, EkoCure Ancora F2 inks for food packaging, and sustainable Evolution primers and varnishes. Lastly, Flint launched FlintLink, a B2B platform for customer support and information.

INX showcased INXFlex Contour and Genesis washable inks. INXFlex Contour flexographic inks cure under both UV and LED, eliminating post-shrink adhesion loss and ink flaking. INX Dual Cure (DC) version enable unit-by-unit switching between UV and LED allowing converters to gradually make the shift from conventional UV to UV LED. It also showed Genesis washable inks that are de-inkable from cPET films and compatible with roll-fed OPP labels, aiding recycling. They minimize bleed in caustic wash solutions and reduce recycled PET discoloration for clear bottle production.

hubergroup Print Solutions presented Hydro-X modular ink mixing system for flexo and gravure printing. It includes concentrates, blends, and additives that can be freely combined for applications such as flexible packaging, plastic film, corrugated board and folding cartons. The Gecko Green Line Premium series also features Cradle to Cradle Certified Bronze printing inks.



Nazdar Ink Technologies displayed the latest LED curing Nestlé Compliant inks, coatings and adhesives. In addition, the company promoted new water-based flexible packaging inks.

Radior exhibited the latest generation of UV flexo metallic inks, scratch-off inks and release coatings. It also displayed its LED UV metallic and fluorescent inks. The company introduced the latest versions of Radiorplus Ecogreen mineral oil-free metallic ink and the Radiorplus Foodpack low-migration metallic inks.

The company also presented new water-based inks for food packaging. New Liquimetal W LMFP for coating units and Smart Inks W LMFP for narrow web were also shown.

Sun Chemical presented its portfolio for the packaging and narrow web, tag and label markets. Sun Chemical uses its '5Rs' framework (reuse, reduce, renew, recycle and redesign) to develop the eco-efficiency and sustainability of packaging that uses its inks, coatings and adhesives. The company showed products under its SunEco portfolio, which are bio-renewable, compostable and recyclable. The company focused on its color management system Colorbox to create the required colors on site.

Nikola M Juhasz, global technical director, sustainability, Sun Chemical says: 'We use reusable materials, reduce the use of materials, use renewable sources in our raw material formulations and regenerative bio-based materials instead of petroleum, fossil fuels derived materials. We think a lot about recyclability and compostability and repulability of our materials as well.

'We have designed our coating in place of top film that is durable and resistant and enables you to take away that top film to reduce the weight of the overall structure without loss of performance and that can be more recyclable than a two-layer system. This applies to the packaging and

“IT IS A GOOD SHOW. WE GOT VERY UNEXPECTED RESULTS. OF COURSE, WE EXPECT TO SEE CUSTOMERS FROM EUROPE, WHO ARE CERTAINLY HERE, BUT WE DID NOT EXPECT CUSTOMERS FROM LATIN AMERICA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA TO BE AT THE SHOW AND THEY ARE INTERESTED IN OUR PRODUCTS”

not just to labels – from multiple layers to mono-layer systems.'

ECG PRINTING

Extended Color Gamut (ECG) printing is gaining traction in flexo printing as it enables achieving spot colors with typically CMYK plus orange, violet and green. The process results in faster and more sustainable printing as it requires lesser ink and solvent usage and decreases press wash up between jobs.

Pulse focused on ECG printing at the show by sharing the benefits of both its Monolox Fixed Anilox Printing and its PureTone DC dual cure inks. Visitors saw the benefits of using a single anilox volume for their print jobs with Pulse's PureTone ink range. Pulse also showcased new food packaging-compliant PureTone DC, which can be cured with UV LED lamps. The range also includes CMYK+OGV for extended color gamut printing.

INKS FOR SPECIAL EFFECTS

Actega presented its Ecoleaf technology, a sustainable alternative to traditional metallic decoration. Actega's range of haptic and visual effect coatings offer soft touch, matte and raised image effects. Actega also focused on its white and metallic inks.

Sirpi presented UV screen inks and UV varnishes for special effects. It showed black matte UV ink for wine labels. The

company has screen and flexo varnishes for overprinting digital labels that can accept hot stamping.

An interesting launch by **Luminochem** was LuminoMark pigments, organic UV fluorescent pigments suitable for brand protection, labels or direct product marking and creative design. These pigments are virtually invisible in ambient light but show their vivid colors when exposed to UVA light.

Not to be overlooked, were inks specifically engineered to reduce paper waste.

Siltech showed inks for variable information printing with liner-free labels, aimed at reducing paper waste. The inks are available in multiple colors and can turn any substrate into a thermal-activated area. The inks that can be used on a flexo machine like a standard UV processing ink. It is applied on label underneath the release coating to produce a UV-decorated label with variable information. The ink can be used on paper, foils and films such as BOPP polypropylene and polyethylene. The company claims to be only one to offer these inks for linerless UV printed labels with variable information.



Keep reading to learn more from workflow and inspection suppliers at Labelexpo Europe

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WORKFLOW AND INSPECTION

Automation and industry collaboration were key trends on display for workflow, software and inspection suppliers at Labelexpo Europe 2023. Chelsea McDougall reports

Today's label and packaging converters are more efficiency-savvy than ever, and looking for suppliers that can help them streamline production and get more out of their equipment at a time when workers are in short supply.

CCL's group vice president, of healthcare and specialty, Lee Prestell put a finer point on it during a panel discussion hosted by HP during Labelexpo Europe 2023.

'If we can't find people, we need to find suppliers that can make it so we don't need as many people,' he says. 'Automation happens in small steps, but we're really going to push our suppliers hard on this. We can't afford to throw more people at production uptime because we don't have any more people to throw at it.'

Automation was undoubtedly the key talking point at Labelexpo Europe 2023. It's clear Labelexpo exhibitors in the workflow and inspection category took note of converters' critical need to produce faster, leaner and smarter as the industry moves to an end-to-end digitized and agile workflow.

MORE THAN MACHINES

Automation isn't just about the machinery. Perhaps more critically, workflow software provides the backbone of a seamless production line.

'Automation is often linked to hardware, but where I think there's still a lot of opportunity is automating in the front end,' said Esko's marketing director Jan de Roeck. 'A big part of the automation story is getting the press ready. If we do a good job in the beginning, the less work we have to do further into the production cycle. An error becomes more expensive the later in the printing process it occurs. That's why it's so important to automate your process and standardize your workflow.'

He continues: 'Error and waste reduction have a direct impact on the environmental footprint of packaging businesses. With sustainability and digitalization fundamentally altering how the industry operates, it is imperative that today's label and packaging companies invest in digital workflow technology that enables them to boost efficiency, reduce costs and improve their overall productivity.'

At the show, **Esko**, together with **X-Rite Pantone**, showed an automated workflow, as well as color management, flexo plate making, digital print and print inspection tools. Esko also participated in the Automation Arena, where de Roeck hosted.

Esko highlighted its Phoenix software, an AI-based tool for planning and imposition productivity with an interface between prepress and production data. Additionally, Esko demonstrated how it collaborates with X-Rite Pantone in color management software and measurement solutions to support digital workflows.

Cerm used the show to promote its smart MIS software and was also featured as a key partner on the Automation Arena.

'The MIS is the backbone of the Automation Arena,' says Geert Van Damme, Cerm CEO. 'By removing the actions of operators, you can save time, you can increase your quality and you can make fewer errors and become 30 percent more productive.'

Cerm offers an automated workflow connecting all elements of the converting business. The company hosted panel discussions with customers and partners to showcase its MIS software to improve productivity and process more orders faster and better by connecting all systems into one interactive workflow.

Meanwhile, **Hybrid Software** reported an excellent Labelexpo



“AUTOMATION IS OFTEN LINKED TO HARDWARE, BUT WHERE I THINK THERE’S STILL A LOT OF OPPORTUNITY IS AUTOMATING IN THE FRONT END. A BIG PART OF THE AUTOMATION STORY IS GETTING THE PRESS READY”

Europe showing, with more than 550 companies visiting its booth, and customers placing orders valued at more than 1.5M USD. Hybrid Software shared the stand with group companies ColorLogic, Global Graphics Software, Meteor Inkjet and Xitron.

At the show, Global Graphics' SmartDFE, was launched. The digital front end combines technology from all Hybrid Software companies: fast rasterization from Harlequin Direct, spot color matching for CMYK and extended gamut digital presses from ColorLogic, as well as workflow automation tools adapted from Hybrid's Cloudflow software and file preparation and VDP tools based on Packs. SmartDFE and Xitron's Navigator DFE were on display at several partner booths at Labelexpo.

Over at the **EyeC** booth, the company promoted its workflow integration with Hybrid Software. The direct integration of the web-based artwork proofreading system EyeC ProofText into Cloudflow by Hybrid Software enables maximum efficiency in the artwork creation process.

EyeC ProofText uses Mako Core technology from Global Graphics Software to process PDF documents. Mako Core uses a unique document object model (DOM) to control color, fonts, text, images, vector content and metadata. Through DOM APIs, content can be queried and edited across formats and platforms, and digital documents can be modified. The web-based artwork proofreading system EyeC ProofText detects and evaluates deviations within the revision check, including content and font style, within a single process step.

TECHNOLOGY

Bel used the show to showcase an integration with its Overprint MIS with Bobst technology. Yiannis Katis, bel's CEO commented: 'The activity at our booth and at the show far exceeded our

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“THE MIS IS THE BACKBONE OF THE AUTOMATION ARENA. BY REMOVING THE ACTIONS OF OPERATORS, YOU CAN SAVE TIME, YOU CAN INCREASE YOUR QUALITY AND YOU CAN MAKE FEWER ERRORS AND BECOME 30 PERCENT MORE PRODUCTIVE”



expectations. There was considerable interest in our system, especially in the newly developed Bobst integration and our highly established IML offering.’

Overprint MIS is optimized with improved materials management, traceability and quality control features. Additionally, bel showcased its system for automated real-time data collection utilizing IoT devices on the shop floor. The latest innovations that leverage the power of technology, connectivity, and machine learning were introduced, such as real-time job ticket submission via JDF integration on a DFE and incorporating inspection reports from other systems into the job ticket. Overprint MIS has undergone many enhancements, with a focus on materials management, traceability, and quality control.

eProductivity Software (ePS) used the show to showcase its latest integration between ePS Radius ERP and HP Indigo. The integration between its Packaging Suite and HP Indigo PrintOS means that it fully automates the process from order receipt through job estimating, planning, prepress and scheduling. The system also features an integrated data collection system, real-time visibility, and full traceability for any job on HP Indigo presses.

eProductivity Software also demonstrated its eFlow Enterprise Service Bus which ties the Packaging Suite together along with third-party software that includes a new ePS Automator capability. ePS Automator is a business process automation engine that watches for specific events that trigger an automated action, providing business-specific workflow orchestration, third-party integration, event notification and workflow and system monitoring to make dramatic improvements in optimizing workflows across the enterprise while providing actionable insight notifications to users to drive improved business performance and customer satisfaction.

ePS also unveiled its recently acquired Tharstern SMB Cloud ERP system, designed specifically for small and mid-sized label converters.

Web-to-print is gaining more traction, particularly in the digital production space. Web-to-print expert **Infigo** promoted its latest integration with Cerm that brings together Infigo’s e-commerce and personalization expertise with Cerm’s estimating, workflow and job management technology. The integration allows label converters to retrieve estimates, create products from estimates, push orders into Cerm, and reorder directly, synch both customers and contacts, view estimates, products and order history. Converters also can upload artwork directly from Infigo to Cerm, and pre-flight all artwork before passing it into Cerm.

Infigo illustrated its web-to-print capabilities in a mockup storefront that allowed attendees to see how a personalized beer label can be designed, ordered and paid for before it’s pre-flighted and proofed, placed into the workflow, printed and converted – all with minimal human interaction. The promotion was a partnership with HP Indigo, AB Graphic, Hybrid Software and Cerm.

Infigo’s head of global marketing Chris Minn sees today’s popular AI tools as a boon for future label production. ‘We’re predicting that print will be digitalized in the near future – the likes of ChatGPT and other AI tools will only strengthen it,’ Minn said. ‘Don’t fear it, embrace it. It can help you make more money.’

Label Traxx showed its MIS/ERP software for the labels and flexible packaging segments. Its latest Version 9 modernizes the user experience and introduces Cloud API, data warehouse, Siteline Sales Portal / CRM, and batched automated scheduling enhancements.

OneVision showed its Label Automation Suite, a flexible, modular automation software that combines production planning with print file optimization. The company says Automation Suite ensures an error-free and fast production process, with increased throughput and maximum transparency and reliability across all production steps.

Optimus showed its MIS software solutions in conjunction with its long-standing Italian distributor Servizio Informatica, including Optimus dash.

Lenze presented its digital networking services including Nupano, an open automation platform. The company promoted its other digital services including machine condition monitoring, without requiring extra sensors. The company uses AI for machine optimization and predictive maintenance to ensure improved machine availability. If a fault occurs, the machine automatically creates a ticket to inform service technicians.

Priber showed its SQ Label barcode and labeling software, a single-page designer for uncomplicated tasks, and a comprehensive job designer for a detailed look at print jobs. The company also offered the SQ Label Barcode and Labeling Software for customized printing capabilities.

Sistrade showcased its latest software version V.12.13 which highlights the label technical data sheet (TDS) as the main data repository, which in combination with graphical process management and digital job order contains all the technical data necessary for a smart production and full data traceability. Graphical process management allows users to control in real-time the status of all the different graphical processes of the products and confirm if the customer approves all the information, design files and samples.

SQ Label presents its customizable barcode and labeling software. It supports various printer models, allowing for advanced printer features and settings.

The Grey Elephant took Labelexpo Europe to showcase a new way to help flexo label and packaging printers automating their printing tool inventory. The company’s technology automatically compares art files for commonalities, and schedules print sequences for the day based on the complexity of each job and the plates already on the press. Its offerings include Brain4Tools automation software, Scan4Tools, a handheld scanner that identifies print tools and knows which plate is needed for what job.

‘Flexo manufacturers have an average of 30,000 to 40,000 plates in the archive in their plate room,’ CEO Robert Kohl says. ‘More complex work, means more tools, means more to archive.’

“WE’RE PREDICTING THAT PRINT WILL BE DIGITALIZED IN THE NEAR FUTURE – THE LIKES OF CHATGPT AND OTHER AI TOOLS WILL ONLY STRENGTHEN IT. DON’T FEAR IT, EMBRACE IT. IT CAN HELP YOU MAKE MORE MONEY”

This is a very easy way to make an educated decision on what plates to choose, what plates to use, and what plates to destroy.’

COLOR MANAGEMENT

Repeating the same color, regardless of the print process and print job is a crucial step for label converters. Suppliers in this realm also kept an eye on automation.

ColorConsulting showcased its color and ink management technology. The company also unveiled InkWeigh version 6.0 with a new ‘Smart Traceability’ feature allowing tracking of production batches including orders, leftovers and warehouse locations.

GSE unveiled software and dispensing solutions for fully automated ink and color management in label printing. SE Ink Manager provides technology for automating every ink-related step in the print house. It features programs for purchasing, inventory control, reusing press returns, ink batch tracing, color formulations and management reports. GSE also showcased its Colorsat ink dispensing systems, which blend accurate spot color on-demand, while cutting out waste, errors and delays in color preparation, and potentially reduce ink consumption by up to 30 percent.

INSPECTION SYSTEMS

Axicon Auto ID promoted the Axicon 15000 series of 2D and linear barcode verifiers. The 15200 and 15500 models can measure and grade the quality of DPM (direct part marked) symbols, as well as conventionally printed 2D matrix codes, such as Data Matrix, QR Code, GS1 DataMatrix, and GS1 QR Code, as well as PDF417.

Baldwin launched its upgraded Guardian PQV 4.0 with a new Wizard-iQ Interface. Wizard-iQ can set up a repeatable process with a few clicks, lowering the barrier of entry for new employees. PQV 4.0 incorporates automated-Delta-E color monitoring and both single- and dual-sided 100 percent print quality inspection.

BST showed its BST TubeScan Eagle View 100 percent inspection system. BST also demonstrated dynamic job changes in realistic production environments where multiple jobs are printed on one roll. TubeScan automatically detects the new job and retrieves the corresponding master image in real-time without stopping the press.

DecoSystem presented a full range of inspection systems. Sentinel is a 100 percent print inspection system including color control, 2D and 3D code grading and variable data verification. The Sentinel Workflow option enables connection between the press and rewinder to minimize waste and monitor production. Scandiff2 proof software identifies pre-press issues early in the work cycle. Multilabel is optimized for pharmaceutical labels and includes the Sentinel print inspection system and numbering inkjet system.

Durst Group introduced Hawk Eye technology, which uses camera vision systems and artificial intelligence to automate print quality and significantly reduce set-up time and waste, resulting in enhanced efficiency and a more competitive total cost of owners (TCO) for the RSC platform presses.

Nikka Research showed the Alis camera used for optical inspection on printing presses and rewinders. The Alis cameras cover web widths from 250 to 880mm and are offered in three



lines: M entry-level, L modular and H high-resolution inspection. All models are suitable for new or existing equipment and can be linked in workflows. The company also offers a range of apps for enhancing the functions of the camera. It also introduced a quick job change technology for 100 percent inspection of short production runs. This PDF-driven process enables automatic setup and inspection from the first copy in digital printing and converting lines.

GTI Graphic Technology showcased its D50 LED color viewing systems, which all conform to the ISO 3664:2009 viewing standard.

The company demonstrated a PDV-3e desktop viewer with dimming. PDV desktop viewers have a hinged design that allows for easy set-up, transport, and storage. A lower luminaire and side walls are available as options.

Re SpA launched at Labelexpo Europe ReVision Net, a web viewing and control system integrated with compact high-quality cameras and a 16X Zoom feature. The company also introduced its web guiding systems, tension control systems, pneumatic and electromagnetic powder brakes, safety chucks, pneumatic air shafts and friction shafts.

Unilux presented UniPrint, a web inspection system. UniPrint features touch-screen operation and users can choose between a standard software package or an upgraded Pro version with advanced inspection features. Unilux also offers over 45 models of stroboscopic lights for surface inspection, ranging from portable battery-powered units to wide-area fixed-mount units.

AUTOMATION ARENA

The Automation Arena at Labelexpo Europe 2023 put a spotlight on a ‘lights out’ production with a dedicated feature that showed an automated workflow from file creation to digital printing, converting and inspection.

The participants were Cerm, Esko, Xeikon, Kurz, Grafotronic and Fedrigoni Self-Adhesive. As well as automated setup and inspection of both printing and converting processes, the Cerm MIS collected real-time information via a Cloud portal which visitors could monitor on their smart devices. Cerm demonstrated the printing of closing labels on each roll on the turret rewinder.

Equipment on the stand included the Esko Automation Engine prepress software; a Xeikon TX500 digital press with Kurz inline digital metallization module; Grafotronic DCL2 converter with new IQ workflow automation and fully automatic turret; Esko AVT 100 percent automated print inspection system; and Boon-tech Velox automatic core cutter. The labels were printed on a sustainable media by Fedrigoni Self-Adhesive.



Next up, read about plates and platemaking as our Labelexpo Europe 2023 review continues

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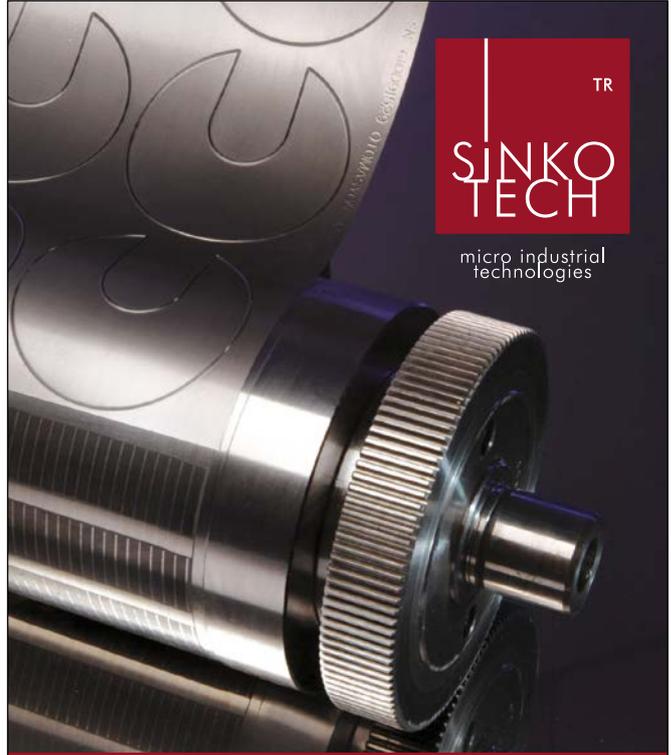
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PLATES AND PLATEMAKING

Automation and water processing were key trends seen in the plates and platemaking sector. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

“ANOTHER NEW ENTRANT TO THE FLEXO PLATEMAKING SECTOR AND WITH AN IMPRESSIVE PEDIGREE BEHIND IT IS ECO3. ECO3 WAS LAUNCHED BY THE AURELIUS PRIVATE EQUITY GROUP FOLLOWING ITS ACQUISITION OF AGFA OFFSET SOLUTIONS”

Advancements in water-wash flexo plate technology played a major role at Labelexpo Europe 2023, offering faster and more sustainable flexo plate production and banishing the negative quality perceptions of older generations of water-wash technology.

Fujifilm demonstrated its Flenex FW water-wash plate system. Utilizing a Luscher XPose 330L platesetter and C-Touch processor, Flenex FW plates were produced in under 40 minutes to a 200lpi line screen at 4,400dpi resolution, achieving a 1 percent flat top dot.

Flenex FW photopolymer plates contain a rubber-based compound which minimizes the effect oxygen has on the dot shape and the complexity of the system to eliminate oxygen from the plate production process. The other advantages of a rubber-based plate material include reduced plate swell and a mild washout with just water and dishwasher soap.

Asahi Photoproducts promoted its water-wash plate system in a joint project with **Hamillroad**, whose Bellissima DMS screening printing on filmic label material showed the kind of impressive quality levels now achievable with water-wash plate technology.

Asahi launched an updated wastewater recycling unit for its AWPTM water-wash plate processing system. The unit's proprietary filtering system uses hollow fiber membrane separation technology developed by parent company Asahi Kasei, which reduces waste water consumption by 75 percent and detergent usage by 40 percent. Asahi also announced that its AWP-DEW CleanPrint flexographic plates have been certified Carbon Neutral by the Carbon Trust.

Another route to the elimination of solvents – and indeed all chemical processing – is direct laser exposure, and this technology was demonstrated by Swiss company **Drop AG**, founded by industry veteran Hans Lüscher. Drop DirectPoser is a direct exposure system for flexo plates based on EPDM materials, engraving plates directly with a fiber laser and without chemicals.

XSYS is a company with an interesting history. It was originally spun off as a separate division by Flint Group, combining Flint Group Flexographic and Xeikon Prepress portfolios. Last year Flint sold XSYS to private equity group Lone Star, which aims to make



the company a powerhouse in the flexo platemaking space.

At Labelexpo Europe, **XSYS** showed the ThermoFlexX TFxX 30 and larger 48 model plate imager. The ThermoFlexX 48 was connected to the new Catena-E 48 LED exposure unit, imaging a nyloflex FTV flexo plate and demonstrating how automation is changing the platemaking process.

Another new entrant to the flexo platemaking sector and with an impressive pedigree behind it is **ECO3**. ECO3 was launched by the Aurelius private equity group following its acquisition of Agfa Offset Solutions, which had itself acquired some impressive pre-press brands over a decades-long history.

At Labelexpo Europe, ECO3 was showcasing a full range of systems for in-house prepress and plate making for narrow- and mid-web flexo applications. These included the Amfortis PDF workflow, a range of screening technologies, Magis P-Eco water-wash flat top dot plates and the Magis DI digital imager, capable of imaging plates to a resolution of 4,800dpi.

Chinese suppliers are making an increasing impact in the plates and platemaking arena.

Strong Europe is a cooperative venture between Spain's Abetzeta Group and China's Shanghai Strong State. The group was demonstrating the SF-DFT digital flexo plate, a hard durometer digital printing plate featuring Strong's built-in flat-top dot technology. SF-DFT offers near one-to-one mask-to-plate imaging capability, eliminating the need for a bump curve, which helps printers expand the available color gamut and print a smaller dot.

Hangzhou Cron introduced the HDI-920 high-definition digital flexo Imager for polyester-based letterpress plates, thermal offset plates, digital flexo plates, ablative film, and metal-based letterpress plates.

The HDI-920 is equipped with Cron's SMFO optical laser, imaging at up to 9600dpi. It is equipped with a fully automatic double-plate clamping system as standard, eliminating the need for adhesive fixing tape.

FUJIFILM ANNOUNCES LÜSCHER CTP PARTNERSHIP

Fujifilm announced a new partnership with Swiss CTP equipment manufacturer Lüscher Technologies, allowing Fujifilm to distribute globally Lüscher's MultiDX and Xpose platesetter models. Lüscher's Laser Diode Technology offers 980nm IR imaging for any ablative material including flexo and letterpress plates and ablative films. The tie-up benefits from Fujifilm's existing partnership with Hybrid Software, announced earlier this year, with multiple Hybrid RIP options optimized for Lüscher CTP technology.



Our Labelexpo Europe review continues with dies and tooling



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DIES AND TOOLING

Dies and tooling suppliers zero in on automation, efficiency and waste reduction. Andy Thomas-Emans reports

At Labelexpo Europe 2023, we saw an increased focus on automation, efficiency and waste reduction on both inline flexo presses and digital press finishing lines.

Indeed, there are good reasons to believe that we have reached something of a technology plateau in terms of speed and print resolution of narrow/mid-web presses, so future productivity gains are likely to come from the increased efficiency and automation of post-print converting and embellishment operations.

Setting and monitoring correct die-cutting pressure is an operation that has a huge impact on the overall productivity and waste levels of a flexo or digitally label printing operation. At Labelexpo Europe 2023, visitors saw a continued move towards automation, starting with the introduction of motors to drive pressure settings along with the ability to store and recall jobs.

TECHNOLOGY

Kocher + Beck introduced the Gapmaster EM (Electronic Move), a retrofittable electrical drive unit that replaces the mechanical handle on existing Gapmaster units. Onboard motors allow for easier gap alterations from 0.25 – 10 microns. Adjustments can either be made by touch entry or a rotary dial which provides haptic feedback for the operator while observing the cutting results. Kocher + Beck also displayed its latest KMS digital pressure gauge for detecting changes in cutting pressure.

Maxcess Group, which includes

“SETTING AND MONITORING CORRECT DIE-CUTTING PRESSURE IS AN OPERATION THAT HAS A HUGE IMPACT ON OVERALL PRODUCTIVITY”

RotoMetrics, showed its AccuAdjust technology designed to solve liner variability issues across all liner material types. AccuAdjust allows for independent or simultaneous bearer adjustment using a digital controller. The system can be adjusted on both sides at a standstill or when the machine is running. Each AccuAdjust unit comes automation-ready for the upcoming RotoAdjust operator interface upgrade, which will add electronic motors for touchscreen adjustment and Industry 4.0 analytics, along with the ability to store and recall jobs.

Maxcess previewed its next-generation RotoMetrics Rotoscan adjustable anvil, claimed to be ‘the industry’s first fully automated intelligent die station’ delivering real-time adjustment for material variation. Proactive monitoring will reduce scrap and waste with Industry 4.0 analytics and one-touch ordering of new dies. The unit will be commercially available in 2024.

Tecnocut showed its E-Diffssystem adjustable anvil, designed to control the movement of the anvil roller electronically to +/- 1 micron tolerance. It works by

replacing the existing anvil roller or any existing die-cutting unit. The module includes a calibration function to automatically return to zero position and jobs can be stored and recalled.

FLEXIBLE DIES

The main development in flexible dies is more effective coating technologies. Kocher + Beck showed a new FDA-certified anti-stick coating that results in less adhesive residue on the cutting edges. **Lartec** presented new finishes for flexible dies that provide greater durability and cutting precision. Maxcess introduced a new range of flexible dies, while complete die and rotary tooling systems were also shown by **Rotary Sp. z o.o.** and **Rotary Technology (Guangzhou)**.

A game-changer on the converting end of the press and finishing line has been the development of fast semi-rotary die-cutting units now installed on both flexo presses and high-speed digital label converting lines. **Omet**, for example, demonstrated a semi-rotary die-cutting running at 100m/min with fully automated die loading and eject.

Also critical has been quick-change rotary die-cutting assemblies. **Tecnocut** showcased its Pit Stop die-cutting cylinder system being changed in 30 seconds, while Kocher & Beck demonstrated its quick-change die-cutting station.



Continue reading, as our Labelexpo Europe review continues with ancillary products



IN BRIEF

Maxcess demonstrated the Tidland RD AutoScore scoring system including fully automated lateral and depth control, reducing setup time while increasing operator safety.

Tecnocut showed the latest model of its Label Mover waste matrix removal system, which moves the web by a few millimeters for more efficient waste removal, alongside a motorized slitting station.

Fortisblades showed its slitting razorblades designed for use on all types of film. High resistance to wear and tear is critical for cutting complex structures or recycled materials.

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ANCILLARY PRODUCTS

Heather Roth provides an A-Z round up of the technology on display at Labelexpo Europe 2023 from suppliers of ancillary label and packaging technology

Ancillary products play an important supporting role in the production of labels and flexible packaging—from anilox rolls, barcode systems, doctor blades, cleaning solutions, curing, platemaking, web guiding systems and more.

Efficiency, energy savings and safety were key themes in the products presented at the 2023 edition of Labelexpo Europe.

Many of the products from the below exhibitors were also featured in live demonstrations on presses and finishing machines throughout the expo halls.

TECHNOLOGY

Acme RollTech showed samples of its ACE (Advanced Channel Engraving) technology, ATAC (Acme Tactile) anilox rolls for embellishment and screen-type raised effects and AHDW (Acme High-Density White) for opaque white printing for solids and text.

Agergaard Graphic Supplies showcased their high-performance coatSeal Flexi 3D end seal series made to withstand abrasive and viscous UV inks. Also shown were its low-wear steel and plastic doctor blades (steelBlade and polyBlade) designed for high-quality label and packaging printing. Agergaard and their sister company AkeBoose were part of the inaugural Flex Pack Trail.

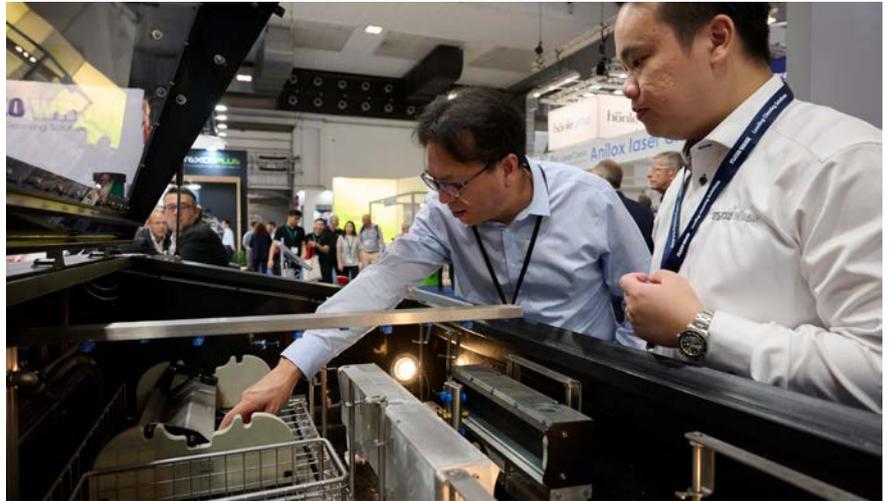
Alphasonics demonstrated their Plaeto automatic plate loading system that automatically feeds up to 30 plates directly into the PCX unit. The company also showed a new proofing roll cleaning system and an array of anilox cleaning systems.

Applied Laser Engineering introduced its Twin Track cell engraving technology enabling users to achieve high anilox cell volumes with a low depth of engraving.

Apex International showcased its patented GTT engraving technology. The open slalom ink channel geometry offered by GTT allows an exact ink volume to flow smoothly onto the printing plate for precision.

Apex also launched its embossing technology for textures and raised effects and showed its latest offering in anilox technology, Conical Anilox, for high print quality and optimal ink transfer, even on challenging substrates such as paper cups.

Asahi Photoproducts unveiled its roadmap towards a Solvent Zero. It also debuted its updated AWP wastewater



“ANCILLARY PRODUCTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT SUPPORTING ROLE IN THE PRODUCTION OF LABELS AND FLEXIBLE PACKAGING”

recycling unit for use with the AWP plate processing system. The unit features proprietary filtering technology said to reduce wastewater by 75 percent and detergent usage by 40 percent.

Axicon Auto ID introduced the Axicon 15000 series of 2D and linear barcode verifiers. The 15200 and 15500 models can now measure and grade the quality of DPM (direct part marked) symbols, as well as conventionally printed 2D matrix codes, such as Data Matrix, QR Code, GS1 DataMatrix, and GS1 QR Code, as well as PDF417.

The verifiers also grade the quality of conventional linear barcodes such as EAN-13, UPC-A, and UPC-E provided they are not too large for each verifier's field of view.

The 15200 is set up for smaller symbols, and its field of view is 60x45mm meaning it is suitable for codes typically used on retail, pharmaceutical and healthcare items. The larger field of view of the 15500, 95x75mm can also be used to grade the symbols typically used on outer cases and logistics labels.

Baldwin launched its upgraded Guardian PQV 4.0 with the new Wizard-iQ Interface. Wizard-iQ can set up a repeatable process with a few clicks, lowering the barrier of entry for new employees. PQV 4.0 incorporates automated-Delta-E color

monitoring and both single- and dual-sided 100 percent print quality inspection.

Debuted was the Corona Narrow Web, a modified version of its corona surface treatment system for the narrow web industry with improved handling on a higher level. The handle grip is designed for easy removal of the cassette from the corona unit, allowing for simple cleaning and maintenance.

Benford UV showcased its latest Eco LED UV system designed for web presses and its UV, LED UV and IR/hot air technology for all types of press and industrial applications.

ChemInstruments launched the 180° Peel Adhesive Testing Machine, offering precise measurements for 180deg peel tests. With advanced digital speed control, it utilizes a stepper motor for consistent performance. The integrated touchscreen display allows for stand-alone operation, while data can be easily downloaded to ChemInstruments' EZ Data software for comprehensive management.

Cheshire Anilox Technology launched a new anilox sleeve design developed to lengthen lifespan by protecting the roll edges, and a new engraving designed to enhance ink transfer, reduce pin holing and enable printers to use finer line counts.

It also showcased Maxflo+ engraving designed to improve the way ink is



Products require labeling

Information printed on labels provides the conditions for correct distribution, traceability, smooth workflows and economic calculability. Printing operations are individual. Print volumes and widths are directives, so are label sizes and print image quality. cab offers solutions in printing, dispensing and applying labels, with or without liner material.

Fully automatic printing and applying

When applying printed labels onto goods, industrial companies demand equipment capable of high processing speeds. Processing variable data and goods succeeding each other at short intervals on a conveyor each play a role. Whether goods are in motion or at rest at the time of label transfer is another factor, so is the direction from which the labels are applied.

cab print and apply systems have proven their worth in this respect. **SQUIX** print units, but in particular **HERMES Q**, can be added by applicators. Depending on an operation, labels may be pressed onto goods, rolled on along a belt or blown onto a surface from a distance by compressed air. Labels can as well be wrapped around cylindrical items, attached to lab samples, or applied as flags to cables. cab has just developed a table tray for depositing printed labels. These may be picked up by a robot, for example. In cases of an operation changing, the applicator can be replaced. The modular concept is worldwide due to standardization. Adding an UHF RFID read/write module and a RFID antenna to a printer enables Smart Label operations.



Smart, highly flexible, future-proof

cab print and apply systems are designed for a wide range of operations, highly adaptable and integrable to automation plants. All necessary interfaces, Industry 4.0 protocols included, are provided for this purpose. cab has digitally modeled an interface that enables cab equipment be used immediately in automation and robotics solutions. cab printers, or print and apply systems, are therefore integrated to the development software of a German startup company. They thus comply with other modules of the marketplace kit. Individual integration to process technology requires minimum effort.



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“EFFICIENCY, ENERGY SAVINGS AS WELL AS SAFETY WERE KEY THEMES IN THE PRODUCTS PRESENTED AT THE 2023 EDITION OF LABELEXPO EUROPE”

transferred to the plate, reducing foaming, UV ink spitting, mottling, pin holing, plugging and dot gain. The engraving is available in a variety of volume options and can be utilized in multiple print applications, from fine print to flood coat.

Cheshire also demonstrated its full range of engraving technology including TactiLoX for high-build tactile effects, easyFlo HD for high opacity whites in a single pass, and Proflo for high-definition process print.

Continental presented its expanded printing blanket technology portfolio following the acquisition of Trelleborg's printing technology business. Featured were the Axcyl and Laserline brands. The Axcyl wide-web and narrow-web plate offer low weight, high stiffness, stability and optimizes filter vibrations from the printing plate. The Conti Laserline product range was expanded for flexographic printing with the addition of versatile printing plates and sleeve technology for water- or solvent-based and UV curing ink systems.

Daetwyler SwissTec displayed its range of MDC doctor blades for flexo printing with a focus on its Goldstar providing high reliability due to the very hard base coating and corrosion-resistant coating. Also featured was their flagship Longlife doctor blade that provides clean doctoring, reduces drag-outs and increases cylinder life.

DR Höhle, UV Technology presented LED-UV curing devices for pinning and final curing of printing inks and varnishes in label printing applications. The new water-cooled LED Powerline LC HV is supplied with a voltage of 400 V DC. The two device versions differ in the width of the light aperture and thus in the irradiation intensity, reaching up to 25,000 mW/sqcm and offers the option of a variable format switch-off. The length of the device can be modularly adapted to the application.

Höhle also presented the air-cooled LED Powerline AC/IC HP with intensities up to 16,000 mW/sqcm featuring a compact design and lightweight. For larger irradiation widths, LED heads can be lined up without gaps.

Co-exhibitors at the Höhle booth were its two subsidiaries PrintConcept UVTechnik and UV-Technik Speziallampen. They show LED and UV curing devices as well as inert curing systems for web offset printing or tailor-made UV and IR emitters as well as measuring technology.

Erhardt+Leimer exhibited new rotary drives, its new generation Smartsan MIS2 print inspection system, in addition to its full product range of web guiding, web tension control and print monitoring systems.

Smartsan MIS2 is faster and more compact with the 2K resolution offering speeds up to 600m/min and the 4K with speeds

reaching 400m/min. Web widths of 660mm (26 inches) and 760mm (30 inches) are also now available in addition to 560mm (22 inches).

The company recently added rotary actuating drives to its actuator product range with type AD 11 and AD 12 marketed under the EL Motion brand as 'intelligent' drives with an integrated controller. The drives can be used for position control, speed control or torque control.

Esterlam International showed its line of synthetic doctor blades featuring less dot gain, longer blade life, lower blade pressures, and a direct replacement for steel. Shown was their E5 0.5mm containment blade, E600 0.6mm double laminate doctor blade and E10 1.0 double laminate doctor blade.

Flexo Wash demonstrated its range of cleaning products and introduced the FW 850 laser anilox cleaner. FW 850 series models clean up to two narrow web rolls in one cycle and can be installed without a water supply or drain. It can handle aniloxes up to 180mm (7in) in diameter, a maximum cleaning length of 700mm (27.6in) and maximum weight per anilox of 50kg (110lbs).

Fortisblades exhibited industrial slitting razorblades for efficient and dust-free slitting. Fortis, Fortis+ and Fortius series are designed for use on all types of film. The high resistance to wear and tear ensures a smooth cut, even in complex structures and/or recycled materials.

Hoya introduced its NX Series LED-UV air cooled space and energy-saving curing system for new and retrofit flexo printing presses. Features include a complete neuron microchip network for constant monitoring of the curing process, intelligent status head indicators (on each unit) and intuitive GUI with easy-to-use symbols and diagnostic tools, 25W/sqcm peak irradiance, modular system for easy maintenance, digital AC/DC converter, pure stable voltage and an aesthetic power supply architecture for up to 2 LED-UV head units per box w status PS indication LED on each unit.

GEW showed its full product range with the debut of its AeroLED air-cooled UV LED system. AeroLED is a high-power system for full cure, printing, coating and converting applications up to 60cm wide.

The design update makes AeroLED compatible with GEW's ArcLED system. Using the same fan and ducting arrangement as the E2C, printers have the flexibility to switch between arc and LED curing on any station.

In an AeroLED system, air is extracted by a single centralized fan sited away from the press. AeroLED features the same LED chassis and core components as GEW's water-cooled LeoLED lamphead. AeroLED's design enables the lowest energy usage of all GEW products.

The company held a press conference with All4Labels to discuss the upgrade of 600+ GEW UV lampheads at the converter's operating plants, including the new AeroLED UV curing systems. Discussed were the benefits of the air-cooled AeroLED UV curing system compared to water-cooled systems, in addition to the system's energy efficiency, process reliability and ArcLED compatibility.

Robert Rae, Managing Director of Sales, GEW said: 'It was fantastic to return to Labelexpo Europe for the first time since 2019. The exhibition was exceptional for GEW, with a record number of visitors to our stand, and a very healthy order book to show for it. We displayed our full product range but UV LED was top of the agenda for most of our visitors.'

GEW also staged a series of on-press presentations at the Omet and Mark Andy stands to demonstrate energy and cost savings when upgrading curing technology on a press from conventional UV Arc to UV LED.

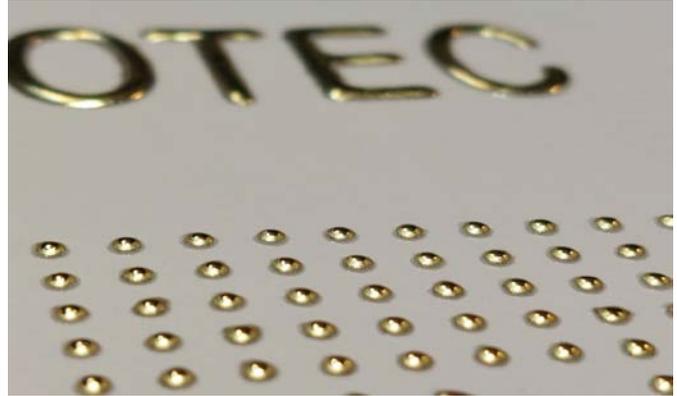
Hamamatsu presented a new family of high-performing air-cooled UV-LEDs and excimer lamp light sources for curing

DG-SCREEN

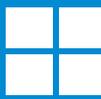
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“IT WAS FANTASTIC TO RETURN TO LABELXPO EUROPE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2019. WE DISPLAYED OUR FULL PRODUCT RANGE BUT UV LED WAS TOP OF THE AGENDA FOR MOST OF OUR VISITORS”



and printing applications. Their flagship product GH-103A UV-LED lamp can provide an irradiance of 24 W/sqcm with a patented air-cooling mechanism, Thermal observation Sylphy air Material (ThoMaS).

Height-LED brought its latest UV-LED curing products. The LED array delivers an intensity of 26W/sqcm or 40W/sqcm for flexographic printing applications.

Ibes Gestión y Desarrollo presented a lineup of in-house manufactured products sold internationally for flexo printing and sleeve manufacturing: seaming solvent for shrink sleeves, ink cleaners (UV, water and solvent-based), end seals for flexo inkwell, tinting sleeves, anilox for UV inks and anilox cleaning products.

IST Metz presented its product portfolio of UV and LED systems for label printing with a focus on its air-cooled MBSc designed for mixed operation with LED-UV and its Modulux LED-UV high-performance and modular system which includes a basic LED unit, cooling, control cabinet and control system.

Laserclean unveiled the ALCS 1000 SF Anilox laser cleaning system which includes advanced safety features and a user-friendly interface. The system provides real-time monitoring and hazard alert systems to ensure operator safety, and the interface enables easy navigation and operation.

Lundberg Tech showed live demonstrations of the MatrixCompactor 200 for label matrix handling on an ABG DigiCon Lite finishing line at speeds of 120 m/min. The system enhances production throughput, reduces waste of virgin material, decreases the CO2 footprint, reduces unnecessary disposal of paper cores, and reduces the number of heavy lifts for operators all while contributing to a more sustainable production process.

Martignoni showed its compact corona treater, contact web cleaner and a new 24Vdc antistatic bar.

Meech unveiled the Hyperion 650QAC, a quasi AC (QAC) ionizing bar that offers a flexible and adjustable solution for effective ionization in various production environments. Designed for RFID tag production, the 650QAC bar controls static charges in unwinding, printing, drying and rewinding processes, preventing catastrophic failure and latent defects. Also on display were Meech's Hyperion 929 and 960 static bars and Cyclean and TakClean web cleaners.

MFT Automation demonstrated its Impresso Labeler and Friction Feeder system. The combined system forms a labeling system with high rates of repeatable accuracy. The Friction Feeder stabilizes the base product while aligning the product into the correct position for precise and accurate labeling. The Impresso Labeler has a 1000-watt brushless servo motor for unwind and rewind, and durable stainless-steel shafts to provide maximum life expectancy. The system's compact build allows it to fit into tight spaces, easily integrating into existing production lines or saving space on the floor as a stand-alone system.

MoistTech Corp showed the IR 3000 moisture sensor, which measures moisture levels, as well as water, solvent-based coatings and coat weight thicknesses during the paper/converting process. This improves product quality and increases productivity with significant cost savings. The company's moisture sensors provide

continuous, reliable readings with zero maintenance and a one-time calibration. The sensors feature a non-drift optical design allowing operational personnel to confidently make immediate process adjustments based on real-time measurements.

Nanovis presented a fast, thorough and environmentally friendly cleaning process for HP Indigo accessories. The Bella's DC-1300 can optionally clean up to four BIDS simultaneously, combined with manual brush cleaning for the pump sensor units. The company also offers a Bella Trolley with a capacity for 7 BIDs and 4 ink tanks for safe and efficient transportation between the printing and cleaning machines. Nanovis also exhibited sustainable cleaning solutions for all conventional printing presses.

Negri Lame presented its circular cutting tools of upper knives, bottom knives and cutting systems which are produced in-house. Their flexibility provides custom-made pieces for both small batches and large-scale production.

Phoseon Technology showcased the latest UV LED curing solutions featuring the Nexus ONE air- and water-cooled UV LED curing systems delivering increased print speeds, improved adhesion, detailed cloud and app-based remote monitoring capability and status indicator lights feature. Also on display were the Firejet UV LED air-cooled system for UV Inkjet wide format systems; FireEdge UV LED air-cooled system is designed as a simple, low-cost, small form factor air-cooled LED light source for pinning and curing of inks, coatings, and adhesives; and the FireLine UV LED water cooled system designed for a wide variety of web/conveyor-based UV curing applications.

Postek showed its MX print-and-apply system featuring a built-in logic controller and Python-based printer programming language to provide low-level access APIs. The MX series print-and-apply applicator provides a full printing solution without a PLC or PC.

Praxair Surface Technologies, a Linde Company presented its high-precision engraved printing rolls and quality-controlled laser engraving process.

PrintConcept, a member of the Hönle Group, launched its technology that combines UV and LED technology with a patented cassette technology so that UV modules can be easily replaced with LED modules. The company specializes in UV curing solutions for web applications in offset and flexo printing, in addition to nitrogen inertization designed to achieve optimum curing and facilitate low migration.

PrimeBlade Sweden AB presented its Nano patented Doctor Blade series made from three different premium quality Swedish steel and fully recyclable. Nano I for solvent and UV inks; Nano II for water-based inks; and Nano III for abrasive inks such as white. The manufacturing process induces changes in the steel that provide reduced wear and longer lifetime, as well as improved surface quality.

Print Systems introduced products for the automated washing of photopolymers, anilox rollers and press parts. The company demonstrated the new Quicker UV-LED exposure unit for flexo and letterpress plate production. Also presented was a water-washable plate processor with a unique filtration system.

“MANY OF THE PRODUCTS WERE FEATURED ON EQUIPMENT THROUGHOUT THE EXPO”

Renova showed brakes and clutches designed for the unwinding and rewinding of rolls of any size and material. Pneumatic brakes and magnetic powder brakes fit any application and maintain the high torque ratio necessary to obtain accurate web tension. The company also offers core chucks, safety chucks and expanding shafts in addition to web tension control systems, web tension sensors, and load cells

RK PrintCoat Instruments introduced the FlexiProof 100 machine, which incorporates a custom-designed LED UV unit as an alternative to the dichroic mercury arc vapor lamps. This machine's main components are identical to a standard flexographic press. FlexiProof 100 utilizes a doctored ceramic anilox roller and a photopolymer plate, and, with a maximum speed of 100m/min, realistic printability testing can be undertaken on all types of flexo substrates. The company also showed the VCML Pilot coater, a reel-to-reel machine developed for printing, coating and laminating for R&D and product development. Other displays included the GP100, Esi Proof, Klox Complete and K Hand Coater.

Roosen BPL showed pneumatic reel handling equipment designed with safety features to reduce the risk of injuries and worker fatigue and includes a range of reel lifting and turning equipment.

Sandon Global showcased its anilox engravings designed to boost print performance and increase anilox return on investment. Its products include Fluid HEX, Fluid UV, HOW (high opacity white) and its patented GMX Anilox, all designed to overcome common narrow web print issues and technical challenges such as ink spitting or coatings with large particle deposits. The company also highlighted how it recently strengthened its commercial and technical presence in mainland Europe with additional investments in its facilities, leading-edge laser equipment and advanced coating technologies.

Its aniloxes were featured by Nilpeter and AB Graphic International in live printing demonstrations.

Sibress showed the Veritas measurement microscope. The company recently took on the distribution of US company MicroDynamics' Veritas measurement microscope for anilox rollers in Europe and neighboring countries. Veritas provides +/- 1 percent measurement repeatability, with data results appearing in under eight seconds, and was awarded the 2023 technical innovation award in the pre-press category by the Flexographic Technical

Association (FTA).

Swedev presented its flexo printing doctor blades M-Flex plus, Microkote G, H9, Micronox II, M-Flex I, and M-Flex II. Swedcut doctor blades are made of Swedish steel and offer a patented surface coating method to reduce friction and increase blade lifetime.

TEG Technologies introduced the Sitexco Label L20 anilox cleaning system, a laser system designed to clean anilox up to 850mm using the Sitexco Plus technology for the narrow web industry. The Sitexco laser cleaning technology is designed to be fast, safe and cost-effective.

Teknek presented the Tek-NW3, a web cleaner designed to deliver defect-free production. Made from 70 percent recyclable aluminum, it meets the OECD Sustainable Manufacturing Framework guidelines. The Tek-NW3 incorporates the new cleaning roller guard feature, preventing the machine from running without adhesive and protecting the cleaning rollers. This helps prolong its own service life.

Tesa presented its adhesive solutions for flexographic label printing including plate mounting solutions with tesa Softprint and tesa Twinlock, splicing, roller wrapping, edge sealing, core starting, failure flagging, and end tabbing. Tesa also sponsored the Expanded Color Gamut (ECG) seminar that explained why and how to make the transition from traditional spot color printing to modern expanded color gamut printing.

TKM presented the new PolyPrint UHMW doctor blade suitable for abrasive inks and resistant to solvents and various chemicals. Also presented was the enporex 95 Plus line of cleaning solutions for anilox rollers, print cylinders and printing rollers, and the Duroblade, CeraPrint, and CeraFlex coated doctor blades.

Troika Systems introduced and showed live demonstrations of the AniCAM HD Plus. The device is a 3D Volumetric Scanning device with all settings completely automatic, including lens recognition, focusing and lighting. Also presented was its SurfaceCAM 3D scanning microscopes which facilitate accurate measurements and data management. Quality control management can provide up to 15 percent savings in make-ready waste and a 55 percent reduction in ink waste.

Ulmex Industrie System together with Zecher GmbH presented the new Evolux Compact 1500 anilox laser washing machine.



UV One showed the new EvoLED, a UV curing system designed for industrial printers that allows five interchangeable printing technologies in a single polymerization system. It offers high UV power with minimal energy consumption and can adapt to flexo and offset presses. The EvoLED system includes the EvoCure cassette, EvoPower power supply unit, EvoTouch panel and EvoChill chiller. The latest UV LED technology provides environmental and economic benefits.

UV Ray unveiled the new PowerMaxx suite of power supplies with three options: Pure (UV), LED, and Hybrid. The PowerMaxx LED is a standalone power supply specifically dedicated to LEDs supporting up to three lamps in a single unit.

Also displayed was its range of curing systems offering solutions for the three main curing technologies of UV, LED, and Hybrid that support a range of applications in the printing industry and beyond.

Voyantic demonstrated its next-generation Tagsurance 3, an inline quality testing system for RFID tag and label production lines with upgraded hardware, software, and technology stack. The system offers full visibility into the RF performance of labels and measures the performance of UHF and HF RFID inlays, tags and labels at different production stages. The modular system scales to various production volume needs from one to eight lanes with one to five stations per lane, handling lane speeds up to 200m/min.

Zecher together with Ulmex Industrie System presented the new Evolux Compact 1500 anilox laser washing machine for flexible packaging and narrow web labels.



Continue reading to learn more about Chinese exhibitors at Labelexpo Europe 2023



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CHINESE EXHIBITORS FIND SUCCESS AT LABELEXPO EUROPE

Many Chinese exhibitors view Labelexpo Europe as the launchpad for Western markets, writes L&L China editor Yolanda Wang

A record 161 Chinese companies attended Labelexpo Europe 2023, demonstrating products and services that covered the entire label supply chain, from materials, to inks, printing equipment, finishing equipment, rollers and curing solutions.

Among these Chinese exhibitors – over half, 81 – were exhibiting at Labelexpo Europe for the first time. These included Flora, Hongsheng, iFiN, KingT, Jwei, Jindali, Caisheng, Youhua, IECHO, Dangs, Yozho and Furi.

Many Chinese exhibitors view Labelexpo Europe as the launchpad for Western markets, while others were exposed to the event through other Labelexpo platforms. Several companies signed up for more global events, as the Chinese exhibitors showcase their technology on a worldwide platform.

PRINTING PRESSES

During Labelexpo Europe 2023, Chinese conventional press supplier exhibitors included Weigang, Zonten, Wanjie, Label Source, Caisheng, Nickel, AKO and Hontec.

Weigang, one of China's leading conventional press manufacturers, has installed 2,800 ZX intermittent offset series and 380 ZJR flexo series presses in the label printing industry.

Spring Xu, international sales manager of Weigang tells L&L: 'Weigang is a loyal follower of Labelexpo. This is our seventh time attending Labelexpo Europe and the result is that export orders now represent 25-30 percent of the company's business. Our presses have been exported to more than 80 countries across Europe, America, Africa, Australia, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.'

Another seven-time exhibitor is Zonten, which exhibited its latest Multi Print 340/520 and Multi Conver 370 at the show. Overseas orders now account for fully 40 percent of the company's business.

Wanjie's Flexless intermittent flexo press series, launched in 2022, debuted at Labelexpo Europe 2023. During the show, Italian label converter Verprint srl ordered this machine, which is its second Wanjei press to expand production capacity.

Label Source launched its F6 flexo press at the show. Li Xiangheng, president



“THIS IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SHOW WE HAVE ATTENDED. THE PROFESSIONALISM AND NUMBER OF VISITORS FAR EXCEEDED OUR EXPECTATIONS”

of Label Source says: 'At present, our exports in the European and American markets are not much. We hope to find more like-minded partners and customers through this exhibition.'

First-time exhibitor Caisheng showed the latest CS-JQ350G-6C letterpress machine, which has two working modes, intermittent and full rotary mode.

'We have attended Labelexpo Asia many times. This is our first time attending Labelexpo Europe. We are very happy to choose this biggest show in the label printing industry as the first launch platform for this new machine,' says Li Kangwen, CEO of Caisheng.

Other conventional press suppliers include Nickel, which exhibited its FS350 intertent offset press and AKO unveiled its α-series inline flexo press. Hontec launched its first flexo press, the Ultimate-350/460 flexo press. Until now, Hontec has mainly produced finishing machines.

Chinese digital press suppliers including Flora, Pulisi, HanGlobal and KingT also exhibited at Labelexpo Europe 2023.

Flora launched its J-450 Pro hybrid press. The Flora J-450 prints in up to six colors at up to 60m/min with a maximum print resolution of 1200 x 600dpi. It can be integrated with pre-coating, cold stamping, flexo printing and other

processing modules.

'Since its launch in 2017, the Flora series of digital label presses have won wide acclaim from users around the world,' says Sunney Lee, overseas sales manager of Flora. We have already installed 100 machines, and now we want to explore the overseas market.'

Flora has now attended Labelexpo Americas, Labelexpo Asia, Labelexpo Southeast Asia and Labelexpo Mexico. 'We trust this platform and want to develop further our business with the Labelexpo Global Series,' says Lee.

Pulisi launched its Aobead multi-functional digital press. Aobead is equipped with multiple hybrid modules including front flexo primer, 7-color (CMYK+white/orange/varnish) digital engine, cold foil stamping and inspection.

'Since its official release in 2021, this is our first opportunity to show our digital press in the European market. This Aobead is a customized high-end version we configured specially for this exhibition,' Olive Liu, general manager of Pulisi says.

HanGlobal unveiled its LabStar330S Hybrid, which combines 7-color digital printing, with flexo, cold foil stamping, lamination and die-cutting. Earlier this year, HanGlobal set up a new sales company called HanLabel with Chinese flexo press

supplier Label Source. This new machine will be sold globally through their respective sales networks.

First-time exhibitor, **KingT** showed its new generation of industrial-grade digital label press, the L-Press 330s, at Labelexpo Europe. This is the company's first digital press developed for the label market. The group has more than 13 years of experience in inkjet printing technology in the packaging, corrugated, textile printing and advertising fields.

FINISHING MACHINES

Post-press equipment manufacturers including Brotech, Rhyguan, Reborn, Hontec, Daba, Jwei, Denchern, Iecho, Jinyun, Darui and Jindali all exhibited at Labelexpo Europe 2023.

Two **Brotech** finishing systems were sold at the show by the company's India distributor Weldon Celloplast: a CDF 420 to Asean Pack in Ahmedabad and a DL-420 to Chromaprint in Coimbatore.

Rhyguan showed finishing machines for different market applications, such as the Plus 330 smart converter. According to Alvin Cai, CEO of Rhyguan group, this is their fifth time attending Labelexpo Europe, and today, one-half of all machines are exported to overseas markets, including Europe, the United States, South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam and Australia.

First-time exhibitor **Jwei** showed its RSF-330 converter for the label market, equipped with an auto-registration system.

'We first attended Labelexpo Asia, then discovered this global platform,' says Waylon Wang, sales manager of Jwei. 'We attended Labelexpo Southeast Asia in Thailand and the effect amazed us. This time we want to find a new agency for the European market.'

First-time exhibitor **Darui China** launched its new generation of laser label die-cutting machines at Labelexpo Europe. 'This is our first time exploring the European market to promote this new machine, and we are very optimistic about the potential of this region,' says Alice Yang, general manager for overseas sales of Darui China.

They are also looking for agents in Europe.

Iecho is another new face at Labelexpo Europe. They showed an LCT350 laser die-cutter. 'We launched this machine in 2022. This time we want to find agencies for this new machine,' says Xu, sales manager of Iecho.

Another laser die-cutting supplier is **Jinyun**. Nichelle Wang, its Europe regional manager, shares: 'This is the most successful show we have attended, ever better than Labelexpo Europe 2019. The professionalism and number of visitors far exceeded our expectations.'

This was the second Labelexpo Europe for non-stop unwinder and rewinder solutions supplier **DYM**. 'The last time we did not bring equipment. This year we showed our latest HAU-450 onsite and we have added a number of new customers in the European market,' says Cai Yefu, managing director of DYM.

First-time exhibitor Jindali showed its latest shrink sleeve seaming machine S300.

This machine runs at 450m/min max speed and handles a wide range of materials including PVC, PETG and OPS.

'We know Labelexpo from our business partner HP,' says Wu Yilin, GM of Jindali. 'We were amazed by the effect of Labelexpo Asia 2019, which motivated our participation at Labelexpo Europe. We want to find some agencies to further explore this market.'

MATERIALS

Materials suppliers accounted for the largest proportion of Chinese exhibitors at Labelexpo Europe 2023. In addition to multi-time exhibitors such as Fuzhou, Jinda, Lecco, Guan hao, Dragon Foil, Zhuoli, Soontomax, first-time exhibitors included iFiN, Youhua, Dangs, Qingdao Focue paper, Yushi Packaging, HSF, Yinjingda, Piao zhihua, Yozho and TNME. Their products on display cover a



“THIS IS OUR SEVENTH TIME ATTENDING LABELEXPO EUROPE AND THE RESULT IS THAT EXPORT ORDERS NOW REPRESENT 25-30 PERCENT OF THE COMPANY’S BUSINESS”

variety of self-adhesive materials, facestock, release liner, ribbons, foil, adhesives and silicone.

'We started to participate at Labelexpo Europe in 2005 and without interruption. With this platform, we explored our overseas business. Now the European market accounts for more than half of our overseas market,' says Leo Deng, sales director of **Jinda**.

Dangs is a specialist paper supplier. 'This is our first time to attend a show in the label industry. The effect is fantastic. We want to explore the European and American markets through this platform,' says Bill Lian, sales manager of Dangs. They have booked the next Labelexpo Europe 2025 in Barcelona.

Jack Chen, the founder and CEO of **iFiN**, has been in the label industry for more than 15 years. 'I know Labelexpo from my previous company. This is the most professional show in this industry. After setting up my own company, I'm sure to launch new products and find new customers here,' shares Chen.

Foil supplier **Yushi Packaging** participated in Labelexpo Asia many times before deciding to exhibit for the first time at Labelexpo Europe. The company has already booked into Labelexpo Europe 2025 and Labelexpo Americas 2024.

Founded in 2020, **Youhua** is a new brand company in the PS label material market. 'With the increasing competition in our domestic market, we want to explore the overseas market for new development opportunities. During this Europe show, we also met many visitors from South America and Mexico,' shares Leo, sales manager of Youhua. They also attended Labelexpo Mexico earlier this year.

Yozho has focused on the silicone industry for more than 20 years and their business is concentrated in the domestic market. 'We know our competitors like Elkem, Dow attend this show. Now we think it's time for us to explore overseas markets,' the company shares.

HSF is a regular customer of Labelexpo Asia and Americas. Its first European attendance motivated them to book Labelexpo Southeast Asia in Thailand.

Qingdao Focue Paper found out about the Labelexpo Global Series from its customers in Latin America. This led them to attend the first Labelexpo Mexico show and now Labelexpo Europe 2023.



Labelexpo moves to Asia from December 5-8. For more information, visit www.labelexpo-asia.com

ILLUSTRATED SELF-ADHESIVE LABELS

Self-adhesive Labels offers a comprehensive introduction to self-adhesive / pressure-sensitive label technology, the individual components, materials and specific applications. Also covered are performance requirements and sustainability.

This brand new Label Academy guide is a must-have resource for label converters, brand owners, designers and the wider label supply chain.

The chapters in this book will specifically look at:

- + Introduction to the self-adhesive label market
- + Silicone release liner technology
- + Pressure-sensitive adhesive technologies
- + Identification and characteristics of PS label materials
- + Test methods for pressure-sensitive labels

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Label trends

The first edition of Labelexpo Europe since 2019 closed on a high note, with 637 exhibitors taking part in the show, which took place between 11-14 September at Brussels Expo in Belgium. Spread across nine halls, this year's show featured over 250 product launches focused particularly on flexible packaging, digitization and automation.

637
Exhibitors

36,588sqm
Exhibition area

35,889
Visitors

96%
Rebooked onsite
for 2025

138
Countries
represented

Top 10 visiting countries



Germany



Italy



France



United Kingdom



Belgium



Spain



Netherlands



Poland



United States



China

Visitor profile: areas of interest

A majority of visitors at Labelexpo Europe 2023 were interested in flexo printing presses followed by offset, letterpress, gravure and screen printing presses respectively.

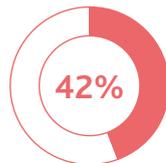
59 percent of visitors were interested in digital toner presses while 48 percent of them leaned toward inkjet presses.



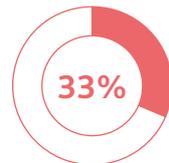
Flexo printing presses



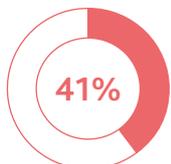
Offset printing presses



Label stocks / film



Pre-press materials & technology



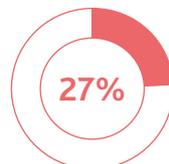
Label application technology



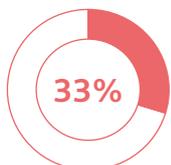
Inks, coatings, foils



Dies, cutters, rollers



RFID/smart labels



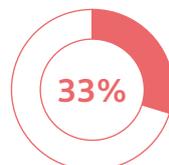
Slitters and rewinders



Digital printing presses (inkjet)



Digital printing presses (toner)



Hybrid printing presses

LUSTER



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