Bobst demonstrates the future of flexible packaging production at virtual Open House event

**Bobst virtual Open House**

Bobst hosted a unique virtual event from its state-of-the-art Competence Centers in Bielefeld, Germany and San Giorgio Monferrato, Italy, which enabled attendees to see the future of flexible packaging production from the comfort of their own homes.

The ‘Innovation in Flexible Packaging’ event on 20th January dedicated to CI flexo printing and laminating technologies featured keynote speakers including the CEO of Bobst, Jean-Pascal Bobst, and live demonstrations of three innovative products that are helping to shape the future of the CI flexo industry.

Valuable insights into the evolving requirements and outlook for the future in different segments of the flexible packaging industry were shared by three major converting companies with operations in Europe and the USA.

“We are driving the future of flexible packaging production around four key elements - connectivity, digitalization, automation and sustainability,” said Jean-Pascal Bobst. “Even before the events of 2020, we were living in a world where much better agility and sustainability were required, particularly in flexible packaging. Now these needs have increased even further. We are answering these needs by fundamentally shaping the future of the packaging world, and there is no better example of that commitment than our latest products in CI flexo and lamination.”

The three machines on show at the Open House event were the Vision CI flexo press, the solventless Nova SX 550 Laminator and the Master CI flexo press. Attendees were able to see live demonstrations of each machine.

The Vision CI is designed to deliver the most efficient performance for all production lengths on a wide range of substrates. For converters, it ticks all the boxes, providing outstanding print quality, performance and sustainability. In a world where guarantee of quality at high speed is essential, the Vision CI delivers exactly the same consistent print and performance quality with each print reel, for any run length. Fast to setup and change over, it features technical innovations and automation that ensure repeatable process consistency, minimum waste and easy manufacturing.

The Nova SX 550 Laminator meanwhile is the ideal production tool when true flexibility is required by converters, and Bobst believes it will soon become the new benchmark in the market. This plug & play solventless machine has been specifically conceived to reach three ambitious targets: unparalleled flexibility of use, high level of automation for a compact machine, and outstanding productivity. Furthermore, it is Industry 4.0 ready. Irrespective of job lengths, substrate and adhesive
types, this small great machine will increase the user’s competitive edge with cost-effective, reliable and sustainable operation. Finally, the Master CI is simply the master of performance when it comes to CI flexo printing, and epitomizes Bobst’s focus on connectivity, digitalization, automation and sustainability. It combines advanced technologies and smart innovations in CI flexo printing to enable the highest productivity, process stability and flexibility independent of the operator’s skill level. Advanced robotics guarantees a fully automated press setup, and it boasts a digitalized production workflow from file to finished product with creation of a digital twin of the produced reels. Its modular design enables fast installation and commissioning in less than 4 weeks.

“These products enable a level of performance in CI flexo printing and lamination that can really propel converters’ flexible packaging operations into the future,” said Jean-Pascal Bobst. “While we would of course always prefer to see our customers in person, we were thrilled to be able to demonstrate the capabilities of these machines through a digital connected platform online. When it comes to flexible packaging, Bobst has the widest solution portfolio available, and it’s a portfolio that will help our customers to excel in the current environment and remain future-proof no matter what happens in the years ahead.”

**Kyocera develops 1200 dpi inkjet printheads with ink circulation system**

Kyocera announces the development of a new inkjet printhead for high-speed, high-resolution printing for a wide range of applications in the printing industry, primarily in the graphics sector. Called the Kyocera KJ4B-EX 1200, the printhead will be commercially available from December 2020. The new KJ4B-EX 1200 model offers higher speed, improved resolution and more stable performance. Kyocera’s KJ4EX series printheads use large integrated piezo actuators that enable higher resolution printing by homogenising image quality within the printhead. The first model in the series, the 600dpi KJ4B-EX600 printhead, went on sale in April 2020. The KJ4B-EX 1200 is Kyocera’s latest model for a wide range of printing applications, primarily in graphics. The 1200 dpi ink circulation system achieves high-resolution print results at 25% faster print speeds than conventional models. Kyocera plans to gradually expand its product range with higher volume models and UV compatibility.

Demand for digital printing systems continues to grow due to their productivity benefits and reduced environmental impact from the elimination of plates, plate cleaning chemicals and liquid waste. Digital inkjet printing is not only used for printing on paper, but also on a variety of non-traditional media such as apparel, food packaging and building materials. Inkjet technology for this variety of media requires robust, high-speed, high-resolution printheads.

Kyocera developed a large integrated piezo actuator based on its proprietary material design technology for dense polycrystalline ceramic actuators and manufacturing process technology for thin piezoelectric ceramic substrates. Kyocera’s new design uses a single large integrated piezo actuator in each printhead instead of multiple individual piezo actuators, which enables image homogenisation within the printhead and provides higher resolution. By optimising the ink channel design and printhead structure, Kyocera has improved the maximum ink ejection frequency of the printhead and the stability of the ink jet. The maximum ejection frequency has been increased to 80 kHz, which is a 25% increase over the conventional model and enables single-pass printing at up to 100 m/min when printing in the feed direction at 1200 dpi.

Integrated piezo actuators enable a simple and robust design for a resilient, stable and durable printhead. By incorporating an analogue waveform circuit that can generate drive shafts in any shape, Kyocera’s design generates a drive shaft shape suitable for stable ejection of extremely small droplets as small as 1.5pl. In addition, for stable, continuous high-speed pressure, degradation of the ejection characteristics is minimised by incorporating a water-cooling system that prevents the ejection component from being affected by the temperature development of the circuit.

**Highcon and EFI announce global partnership**

Highcon Systems Ltd. and EFI announced that the two companies have entered into a global partnership agreement. With a common group of core customers, together with EFi’s ability to deliver industry-focused ERP software solutions, the goal is to offer customers an integrated, end-to-end business productivity and workflow solution, providing a flexible foundation for digital growth.

The industry leading EFI Packaging and Corrugated Suites deliver off the shelf productivity benefits that target specific business areas to reduce waste and inefficiency in the packaging production process, driving cost savings with integrated eCommerce, ERP and shop floor data collection.

In the coming Highcon Euclid and Beam software release, Highcon customers will be able to integrate with the EFI MarketDirect PackCentral online customer ordering portal and EFI Auto-Count 4D software, which automatically collects accurate, up-to-the-minute production data for digital presses and cutting devices. This exciting partnership will significantly improve lead times for printed material development by delivering a fully optimized supply chain that brings together buyers, converters, and digital converting equipment through robust two-way connectivity. This comprehensive platform delivers real value to businesses looking to improve efficiency, manage and optimize paper and inventory, reduce process waste and improve profits by leveraging automation.
West Press has experienced drastic improvements in its overall throughput and efficiency.

West Press, who takes pride in continuously investing in its employees, technology, and customers’ welfare, wanted a machine that would bring new ideas and business opportunities for its sales team and its customers. Previously only equipped with conventional equipment, West Press is now able to print on a wider gamut of substrates and can get jobs from the press to postpress faster thanks to the addition of LE UV technology on the new XL 75. According to President, Kristy Scharf, “With our older press, we had one particular job on plastic that would take us a full week to run. With the new press, it’s now in the finishing department within 5 hours. The time savings is incredible!”

In addition to running synthetics faster and more efficiently, West Press is also able to better handle uncoated jobs with the LE UV technology and has significantly decreased its makeready times from 30 minutes to 5 minutes. This is due to advanced features on the press like Heidelberg’s Push-to-Stop autonomous manufacturing approach - driven by Intellistart, a unique integrated software system that greatly reduces the number of operating steps during a job change, and AutoPlate Pro, a fully automatic plate change system that controls precise plate feeding for exact and fast registration at the start of each job.

“We run a lot of signature work with many changeovers, so the Push-to-Stop technology has been tremendous for us. The press does so many things on its own - plates up, plate down, automatically setting the guides, washing the blankets - and then you’re running again. This technology has saved us hours, even days, on some of our larger jobs,” said Scharf.

In an effort to improve and track its impressive productivity advancements, West Press is also signed up for Heidelberg Assistant with Performance Data and Online Advisement. The service just went online at the end of 2020, but the online portal will provide easy-to-understand production data and metrics that will aid West Press in its business decision-making processes in the future and track improvements to the print shop’s Overall Equipment Effectiveness.

“No press better than a Heidelberg”

A firm believer in the mantra, “If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the customers,” West Press looked no further than its press operators when seeking advice on making the investment in the XL 75. “Our pressmen have run other presses in the past and know the competition. They say there is no press better than a Heidelberg,” said Scharf. When making the change from an older Speedmaster SM 74 to the advanced technology of the Push-to-Stop XL 75, the press operators at West Press got up to speed quickly thanks to the “over the top, perfect” training from Heidelberg’s SystemService team.

To keep up with the new technology advancements of the press and optimize its workflow from prepress to press to postpress, West Press also made the decision to upgrade to Prinect Production Manager and purchase a second Suprasetter CtP device. Through the Production Manager subscription model, West Press receives technical support for all fixes and upgrades, so it is always up-to-date on the latest versions and newest Prinect modules as they are developed. The new workflow has aided the company in getting files from preflighting to press much faster. Additionally, the XL 75 exclusively runs Heidelberg Saphira Consumables, which ensures the press achieves the highest quality possible.