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2026 ASIAN PACKAGING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

In this issue

Issue 2 - 2026

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Digital innovation upgrade of AMJET GROUP (Shenzhen)

As a leading enterprise in the field of packaging pre-press, Shenzhen AMJET Laser Digital Plate Making Co., Ltd. (Hereinafter referred to as "Shenzhen AMJET) has always been committed to providing high-precision laser plate making and one-stop pre-press solutions for packaging printing enterprises.

The company has a professional team composed of senior technical experts and is equipped with internationally advanced production equipment, focusing on flexo plate making and professional pre-press services. With outstanding technological standards, strict quality control systems, and relentless pursuit of technological innovation, AMJET Group has established a good reputation in high-end markets such as cigarette packaging, wine packaging, cosmetic packaging, and food packaging, becoming a trusted partner of many well-known brands, for example Coca Cola, Pepsi, HUGGIES, HUAWEI etc.

The group now owns several core production service enterprises including Shenzhen AMJET, Shanghai Yingyao, Fujian Yingcai, Qingdao Yingyao, and Vietnam AMJET, forming a high-end production service network based on flexo plate making, relying on the Pearl River Delta and the Yangtze River Delta, and facing the whole CHINA. AMJET emphasizes technological progress, with true quality and perfect service as its development goals, and has won numerous international awards at home and abroad.

In 2025, in order to better serve core customers and provide more professional and efficient pre-press services, AMJET GROUP made an important technological upgrade decision: to completely discontinue its existing color management software in Shenzhen AMJET and switch to using the CGS ORIS FlexPack color management system to control existing proofing equipment and installed the real substrate proofing and prototyping system.

Speaking of this technological transformation, Mr. Peng of Shenzhen AMJET said: "The system we used before had a high technical threshold for operators, and there were some problems with technical support, which limited our operational development; as the business grew, the software gradually showed insufficient hardware compatibility, unable to drive the new proofing printer, and the high costs of upgrades and maintenance also increased our operating costs."

Faced with these pain points, the CGS ORIS FlexPack system, with its intuitive interface, powerful automation functions, and extensive support for various brands of proofing

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printers on the market, became the ideal choice for AMJET Plate Making. In addition, by installing CGS ORIS and its supporting real-substrate proofing system, Shenzhen AMJET successfully expanded its proofing service scope, having successfully provided real material proofing services to their key accounts, helping their key accounts significantly shorten proofing time, improve customer service efficiency, and save millions of dollors in on-machine proofing costs for their key accounts in 2025.

The General Manager of Shenzhen AMJET, Mr. Peng said: "We are very appreciate with the teams of CGS ORIS Greater China for their professional and thoughtful service during the system upgrade process, which allowed us to switch from the old system to the new system seamlessly, and even more, through the real-substrate proofing services, we have gained more business opportunities in 2025."

The CEO of CGS ORIS, Mr. Bernd Ruckert said: "The ASIA market is one of the most important markets for us. We will continue to deepen our presence in the ASIA market, develop new products or further optimize existing functions based on ASIA market demand; we are very willing to listen to the voices and needs of ASIA users and involve our research and development team in key projects. We not only provide users with leading color management solutions but are also long-term partners in development with our users."

The General Manager of CGS ORIS Greater China, Lilly Xiao said: "AMJET Group is an important partner of CGS ORIS in the field of flexo printing in China. I am very glad to see that the CGS ORIS system has helped Shenzhen AMJET optimize its processes, expand its customer service scope, and boost business development; CGS ORIS systems can bring value to every customer, helping users to stand out in the market competition, which is also our mission and vision."

AMJET Group will continue to optimize workflow based on digital technologies, actively expand the scope and quality of services, and not only provide first-class plate-making services and professional pre-press services to customers, but also actively pay attention to customer pain points and provide solutions, growing and developing together with customers.

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The real impact digital on the packaging mark

Packaging has quietly evolved from a functional necessity into one of the most influential touchpoints between brands and consumers.

In a retail environment where attention spans are short and competition is relentless, the look and feel of a package can determine whether a product is noticed at all. Digital embellishment has emerged as a key driver of this shift, reshaping not only how packaging looks, but how quickly it can be produced, how sustainably it can be made, and how effectively it can communicate a brand's story.

At its core, digital embellishment refers to the use of digital printing and finishing technologies to add visual, tactile, or interactive enhancements to packaging. These enhancements range from high-definition graphics and metallic foiling to spot varnishes, variable imagery, and scannable digital elements. Unlike traditional embellishment methods that rely on plates, dies, and lengthy setup processes, digital techniques allow designs to be altered instantly, enabling flexibility and customization at scale.

One of the most immediate impacts of digital embellishment can be seen on the retail shelf. As physical and digital shopping experiences merge, packaging must work harder than ever to capture attention. Digitally embellished packaging offers sharper detail, richer color depth, and premium finishes that elevate perceived product value. Market trend data shows a steady increase in adoption of digital embellishment technologies since 2018, particularly in categories such as cosmetics, confectionery, and premium beverages. This growth reflects a broader understanding that packaging is no longer just a cost center, but a strategic brand asset.

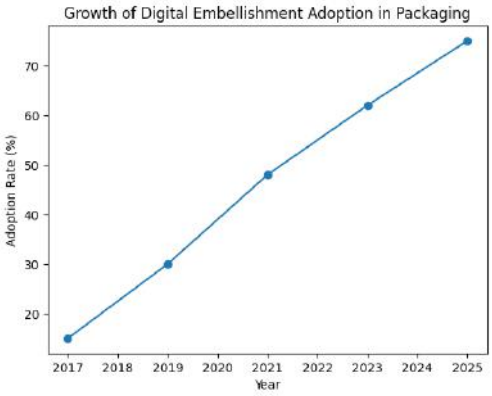
Consumer response supports this shift. Research into purchasing behavior consistently shows that shoppers are more likely to engage with

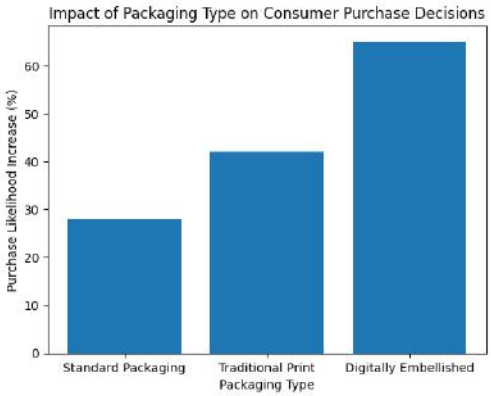
embellishment has ket

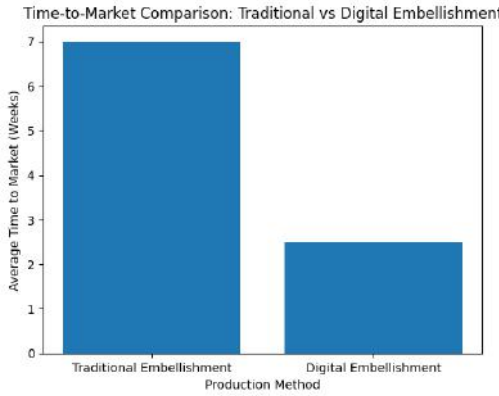
Beyond aesthetics, digital embellishment is dramatically changing how quickly products reach the market. Traditional embellishment workflows often require weeks of preparation, tooling, and approval before production can begin. Digital workflows remove many of these barriers, allowing brands to move from concept to shelf in a fraction of the time. This speed is especially valuable in trend-driven markets, where packaging needs to respond rapidly to consumer preferences, promotional windows, or social media-driven demand.

Sustainability is another area where digital embellishment is making a meaningful impact. As brands face increasing pressure to reduce waste and improve environmental performance, digital technologies offer more efficient production models. Shorter print runs reduce overproduction, while the elimination of plates and chemical-intensive processes lowers material waste. When combined with recyclable substrates and environmentally conscious inks, digital embellishment aligns more closely with modern sustainability goals without sacrificing visual impact.

A clear illustration of these benefits can be seen in the experience of SweetJoy Chocolates, a mid-sized premium confectionery brand navigating a highly



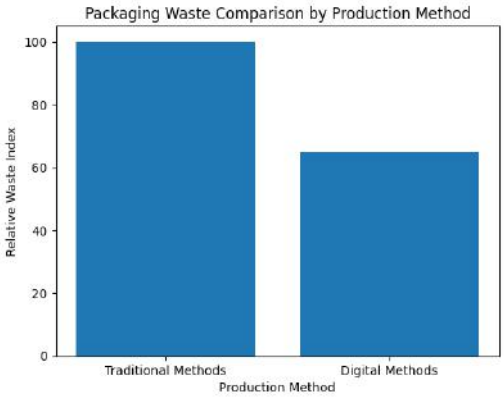




competitive retail space. SweetJoy struggled to stand out during seasonal sales periods, where packaging played a decisive role in consumer choice. Traditional production methods made it costly and time-consuming to create holiday-specific designs, limiting their ability to capitalize on peak demand.

By adopting digital embellishment, SweetJoy was able to introduce high-definition graphics and digital foiling across its seasonal packaging lines, while also incorporating variable design elements for different regions. QR codes were added to connect consumers with digital content such as recipes and brand stories. Within a year, the brand saw a noticeable improvement in shelf visibility, stronger consumer engagement, and a reduction in production costs for limited runs. Retailers reported faster sell-through, particularly during seasonal promotions, confirming the commercial value of the new approach.

The integration of digital features into packaging also reflects a broader shift toward connected consumer experiences. Scannable elements embedded in digitally embellished packaging bridge the gap between physical products and digital platforms. This connection allows brands to extend engagement beyond the point of sale, offering storytelling, loyalty programs, or interactive experiences that deepen brand relationships.



Despite its advantages, digital embellishment is not without challenges. Investment in equipment, software, and skilled operators can be significant, and not all substrates are equally suited to digital processes. However, as technologies mature and adoption becomes more widespread, these limitations are steadily diminishing. For many brands, the long-term return on investment—through increased flexibility, reduced waste, and stronger consumer engagement—outweighs the initial barriers.

Ultimately, the real impact of digital embellishment lies in how it redefines the role of packaging itself. No longer static or purely functional, packaging becomes dynamic, responsive, and deeply integrated into brand strategy. In a market where differentiation is critical and consumer expectations continue to rise, digital embellishment is not simply enhancing packaging—it is reshaping the future of the packaging industry.

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Mark Andy Strengthens Sales and Service Operations in Asia

Mark Andy has recently strengthened its sales and service structures across the Asian region.

From left to right - Budi Dermawan, Teh Chiau Khuang, Tom Cavalco and Tham Zee Cheng.

Tham Zee Cheng has been appointed Regional Sales Manager, responsible for sales development and cooperation with customers and business partners in China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia. At the same time, Teh Chiau Khuang and Budi Dermawan have joined the company's regional service organization, supporting press installations, commissioning and technical service across key Asian markets. These steps are aimed at providing customers in Asia with faster service response times, stronger local technical support and more competitive commercial conditions, tailored to the specific needs of individual markets.

Tham Zee Cheng appointed Regional Sales Manager Asia

Tham Zee Cheng brings more than ten years of experience gained in the technology and industrial sectors, including the development of advanced solutions for the packaging and label industries. In her new role, she is responsible for driving sales of Mark Andy presses and strengthening cooperation with customers and partners across the Asian region. Her responsibilities include managing regional distribution networks, building long-term relationships with key customers and supporting Mark Andy's long-term growth strategy in China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia.

Further expansion of Mark Andy's service organization in Asia

Mark Andy also continues to expand its regional service capabilities in Asia, responding to a growing installed base and increasing demand for fast, locally available technical support. Two experienced specialists have recently joined the regional service team.

Teh Chiau Khuang is electronics engineer with more than seven years of experience in installation, commissioning and servicing of advanced printing presses. His expertise includes site acceptance testing, operator training, technical diagnostics and preventive maintenance activities.

Budi Dermawan is a service engineer with extensive experience in both mechanical and electrical service of printing equipment. Throughout his career, he has been responsible for new press installations, customer technical support and preventive maintenance programs, and has completed numerous international technical training programs.

Tom Cavalco, Vice President International Sales at Mark Andy says: "We are very pleased to welcome three experienced professionals to our team, strengthening both our sales and service organizations in Asia – a region of strategic importance for Mark Andy. By further developing our local teams, we can respond more quickly to customer needs, provide more efficient technical support and offer competitive service conditions. I am confident that their experience and understanding of local markets will allow us to support our customers and partners even more effectively, while continuing to execute our global growth strategy."

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Packaging is poised to achieve a magnificent leap

As the New Year's Day holiday arrived, with the festive buzz blending into the joy of the new year, the Manroland service team was busy writing a testament to dedication in the workshop.

Recently, following the successful assembly of the Manroland ROLAND 700 Evolution 8-color coating printing press, Wenzhou Bojie Packaging is poised to achieve a magnificent leap in its competitiveness in the high-end printing and packaging market!

For printing enterprises, the commissioning efficiency of equipment is directly tied to order delivery and market opportunities.

To enable Bojie Packaging to grasp this high-end production tool as early as possible, the Manroland service team gave up their New Year's Day vacation and fully devoted themselves to the intense equipment installation and commissioning work. From the precise alignment of components and repeated calibration of system parameters, to the delicate fine-tuning of printing pressure and the perfect matching of coating processes, the engineers worked round the clock, rigorously overcoming every technical node with great care.

This perseverance during holidays has long been the norm for Manroland's services. For years, through harsh winters and scorching summers, on holidays and workdays alike, Manroland engineers have always prioritized customer needs. With their exquisite craftsmanship and efficient responsiveness, they safeguard the stable production of enterprises worldwide, acting as the strongest backstop for the development of printing companies.

As a flagship product of Manroland, the commissioning of the ROLAND 700 Evolution 8-color coating press has directly helped Bojie Packaging break through the predicaments of homogeneous competition and squeezed profits commonly faced by printing enterprises in Wenzhou at present. It realizes an all-round upgrade of production capacity and seizes the initiative in the competition of the high-end market!

A Qualitative Leap in Efficiency:
The combination of double extended delivery, fully automatic non-stop delivery and elevated base greatly boosts the pile collection efficiency. With a high printing speed of 18,200 sheets per hour, quick change device, and integrated 8-color printing plus coating, it directly achieves one-stop multi-process forming, completely eliminating the tedious multi-equipment transfer in traditional production and driving a straight surge in production efficiency.

A Step-change Upgrade in Quality:
The new dampening unit effectively reduces operational vibration, ensuring precise registration and uniform color even at high printing speeds, easily meeting the stringent detail requirements for high-end packaging. The advanced coating process endows printed products with rich texture and protective performance, perfectly adapting to diverse high-end demands such as wine packaging, cosmetics and premium gift boxes. More notably, the UV/LED-UV system compatible with the equipment not only cuts energy consumption drastically but also enables instant drying of printed products, achieving both green environmental protection and high-efficiency production.

Precise Cost Control:
The optimized feeder pile transfer system reduces start-up waste sheets; the Trip-ink flow ink circuit precisely controls ink loss and waste during changeover operations; and the on-demand cleaning mode lowers consumable usage. All these measures cut production costs for enterprises from the source.

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New Inspection Unit for its imagePRESS V Series

Canon has launched the Inspection Unit C1, an advanced accessory for the imagePRESS V series colour production printer. This innovative solution automates the inspection of variable data and barcodes which are often unreadable to the human eye. This ensures the delivery of remarkable precision and productivity for print service providers..

Inspection Unit C1

imagePRESS V1350 with Inspection Unit C1

As the demand for personalised and data-driven printing continues to grow, traditional manual inspection methods have become increasingly challenging, leading to potential errors and operational inefficiencies. The Inspection Unit C1 addresses these issues by integrating advanced inspection capabilities directly into the printing process.

It verifies barcodes during printing against pre-registered data, ensures consistency of text on both sides of printed materials, and monitors colour stability for brand-critical jobs.

By leveraging Auto Reference Data (ARD) technology, which uses RIP data as a reference image, inspections are performed with exceptional accuracy and minimal user intervention. Defective sheets are automatically purged and reprinted, ensuring flawless output without any disruption to production.

Beyond operational efficiency, the Inspection Unit C1 provides users with insights through comprehensive reporting. Detailed inspection results can be easily exported in PDF or CSV formats, providing trackable printed records that assure customers that their data remains secure.

This capability is particularly valuable for businesses handling confidential documents or jobs requiring strict colour management, such as corporate branding materials and product catalogues. This also ensures that no additional copies of customer data are printed unnecessarily and can be accounted for.

"The launch of the Inspection Unit C1 in Asia represents a significant step forward in our commitment to innovation and customer success. By automating complex inspection tasks, we empower print service providers to deliver superior output with confidence and efficiency," said Katsuya (Kurt) Tode, Director, Regional Commercial and Industrial Printing, Canon Singapore.

Beyond a technological upgrade, the Inspection Unit C1 is a strategic solution for print service providers seeking to improve reliability, reduce waste, and meet the evolving demands of modern commercial printing.

Katsuya (Kurt) Tode, Director, Regional Commercial and Industrial Printing, Canon Singapore.

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Different cultures so situations differentl

Interview with Martin Raab, Managing Director of Heliograph SEA and Division Manager of the Board Heliograph Holding, Munich.

Q: Please introduce yourself and your industry experience.

MR: I'm Martin Raab, working in the machine manufacturing for "print-form-creating", for 20 years now, and had the chance to experience real worldwide exposure to the markets. With a Master's degree in International Business and Cultural Studies, I had to learn about the printing industry "from scratch", when I started as a Sales Manager at K. Walter. I was based at the headquarter in Munich, where the machines are manufactured, and from there, I traveled for 7 years to clients worldwide, "back and forth".

Q: What happened after those 7 years of getting to know the printing world?

MR: It was great in Munich, and I was on flights more and more to South America. So, when the opportunity came up to lead the team of our Brazilian Subsidiary, I loved that idea! We - my wife, our son and back then our 5 months old baby daughter – we packed our bags and moved to Sao Paulo, to one of the most important hubs for all South Americans printing industry.

Q: Was it hard to adapt?

MR: It was new, "leaving the comfort zone", but learning the culture and language enabled many synergies and it was fun to combine known strategies with new insights into the flexible packaging industry. With support from the headquarter our Brazilian Team installed fully automated lines, gained knowledge of market challenges and we adapted European technology to local needs.

Q: But you didn´t stay in Brasil, what happened?

MR: It is a coincidence that after another 7 years, our Heliographs' subsidiary in Singapore was looking for a new Managing Director and despite the love and appreciation for the South American market, the people and their culture, we packed our bags again and moved.

Today - don´t laugh - we are settled in Singapore for 7 years now, and I´m happy to be part of the Southeast Asian Team. To stay connected with the shop floor of customers I took on an additional role as Senior Sales Manager for HELL Gravure Systems, one of the groups company which is the technology leader for direct lasering and electromechanical engraving.

Q: Martin, can you summarize in one sentence what you learnt?

MR: Different cultures solve same situations differently – not necessarily better or worse, but I learnt to be openminded and find new ideas. All these roles I live, let me partner closely with converters, engravers, brand owners and so we see automation, scalable standardization, and the transition to efficient, safer and economical print form manufacturing as essential for today.

Q: Please dive deeper into your company and what product sectors you look after across the region, along with the equipment you supply.

MR: You want to create a print form with highest quality, lowest production costs possible, with the fastest process, and as environmentally

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friendly as possible? We supply you with the right machine to achieve that. We have a great team of office staff, technicians and sales managers and we are keen to cover the South East Asian region.

Q: Gravure or Flexo, all of the applications I can think of?

MR: Yes, all of them and maybe more: Heliograph offers a synthesis of comprehensive experience and know-how from around 120 years in gravure cylinder making equipment. We provide reliable solutions for automated electroplating, surface finishing, electromechanic engraving and laser engraving systems for rotogravure printing, as well as direct laser systems for relief printing.

Q: What do you mean by direct laser in relief printing?

MR: I´m referring to flexo plates or flexo sleeve. We laser directly into elastomer, into our own rubber from "Kaspar", our US based company. The process is straight forward, we laser directly into the material, wash it off with plain water and that plate or sleeve is ready to be mounted in any flexo printing machine.

I just got back on Friday from Taiwan; they talked about stricter laws and printers looking for environmental and sustainable processes. We have the solution, this process which I just described brings this advantage over all other processes. No solvent, only water, and all with less energy compared to all the different process steps of photopolymer plate production. With only one process step we are accurate in reproducibility.

Q: You see the only future for flexo in elastomer?

MR: It is a great addition to the flexo printing industry and benefits like the long-lasting elastomer plates have advantages. Imagin a can printer printing over 4 times more cans with one elastomer plate, than with a photopolymer one. That is possible with no variations, no swelling nor losing or gaining dots.

I say, additional, because photopolymer plates are well established and also show amazing print results. We want to grow in that segment as well. Through our Heliographs' daughter company Lüscher, in Switzerland, we can combine up to four different laser diodes on one machine, which

Seen here at a trade show recently in India

allows any printing form to be imaged from flexo plates, letterpress plates, embossing clichés, flat screens and rotary screens to offset plates, on one machine.

Recently at Lüscher, we also stepped into a well-known field in the textile industry, of printing t-shirts. The team invented the MuliMesh, a small machine which creates the screen digitally. With direct imaging of the screen, different mesh structures can be used for different elements of the same design – all on a single screen, in a single process! There are many benefits, besides cost saving there are less production steps compared to the traditional screen making process. No emulsion, easy reuse of the frame, all a completely new approach to a well-known industry.

Q: Heliograph offers really "imaging" machines for every application even in Flexo.

MR: Besides the "imaging" Heliograph also offers exposing and processing in Flexo. With Glunz+Jensen, we do also LED exposure, and we deliver plate processing solutions that range from stand-alone units to fully integrated, automated production lines. From what I'm seeing, the market is gravitating towards full automation.

It tracks perfectly with our vision: driving higher operational standards by minimizing manual touchpoints across all applications. It's rewarding to see the market validate our R&D efforts; it proves that investing in high-precision innovation isn't just about 'new tech'—it's about answering to the market needs for increased throughput and process reliability. We aren't just innovating for the sake of it; we're leveraging these technological pivots to ensure our customers are utilizing the most efficient, cost-effective and cutting-edge workflows available today.

Q: How have your customers changed; what are mainstream customers like today; what questions do they ask?

MR: Today's mainstream customers in Asia are more cost and speed driven. They're pressing for standardized, fewer step workflows and all need to save costs at the same time. Customers want automation, the entire line connected from plating, engraving, quality checks, logistics, with master control, databases, and business system interfaces. They are also asking for a credible migration path from traditional production to safe and environmentally focused ways of production.

Q: That might be easier for Flexo, but how do you answer to these demands of "quality checks" and "environmental issues" in the gravure industry? What special technology do you have for your customers?

MR: A lot has happened over the last years in the development. HelioChrome NEO, the world's first hard chrome process for gravure cylinders based on trivalent chromium. It combines a dedicated tank, tailored chemistry, and integrated control and analysis software, delivering metal surface properties and plating efficiency comparable to Chrome(VI)—but without its health and environment risks.

Besides this new technology, each machine from our network of companies enhanced their quality features immensely. This means better cylinders are produced with

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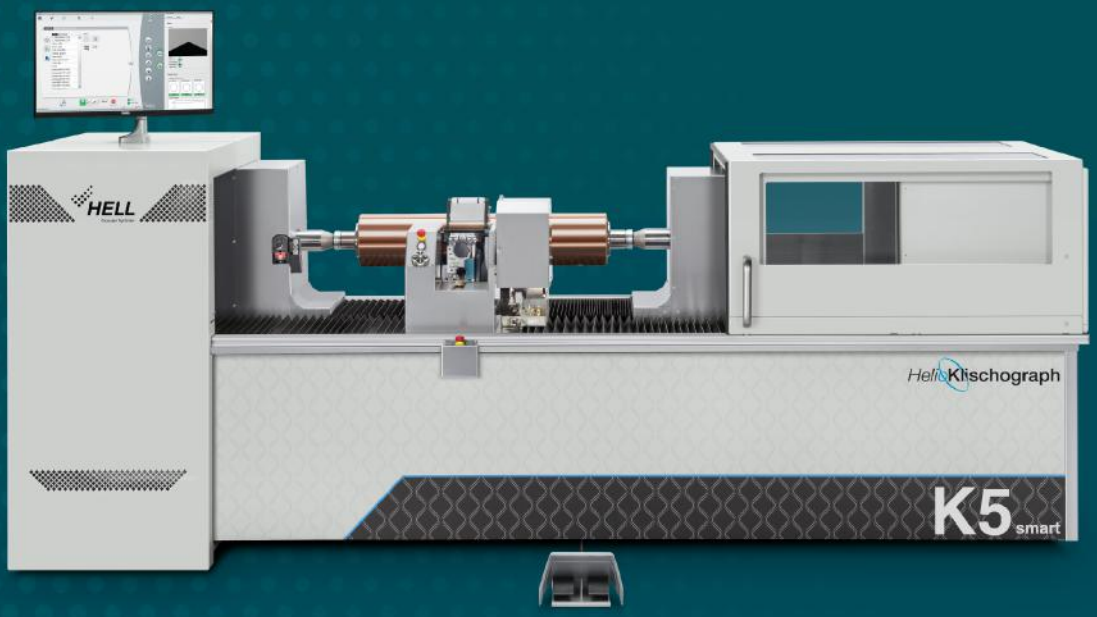

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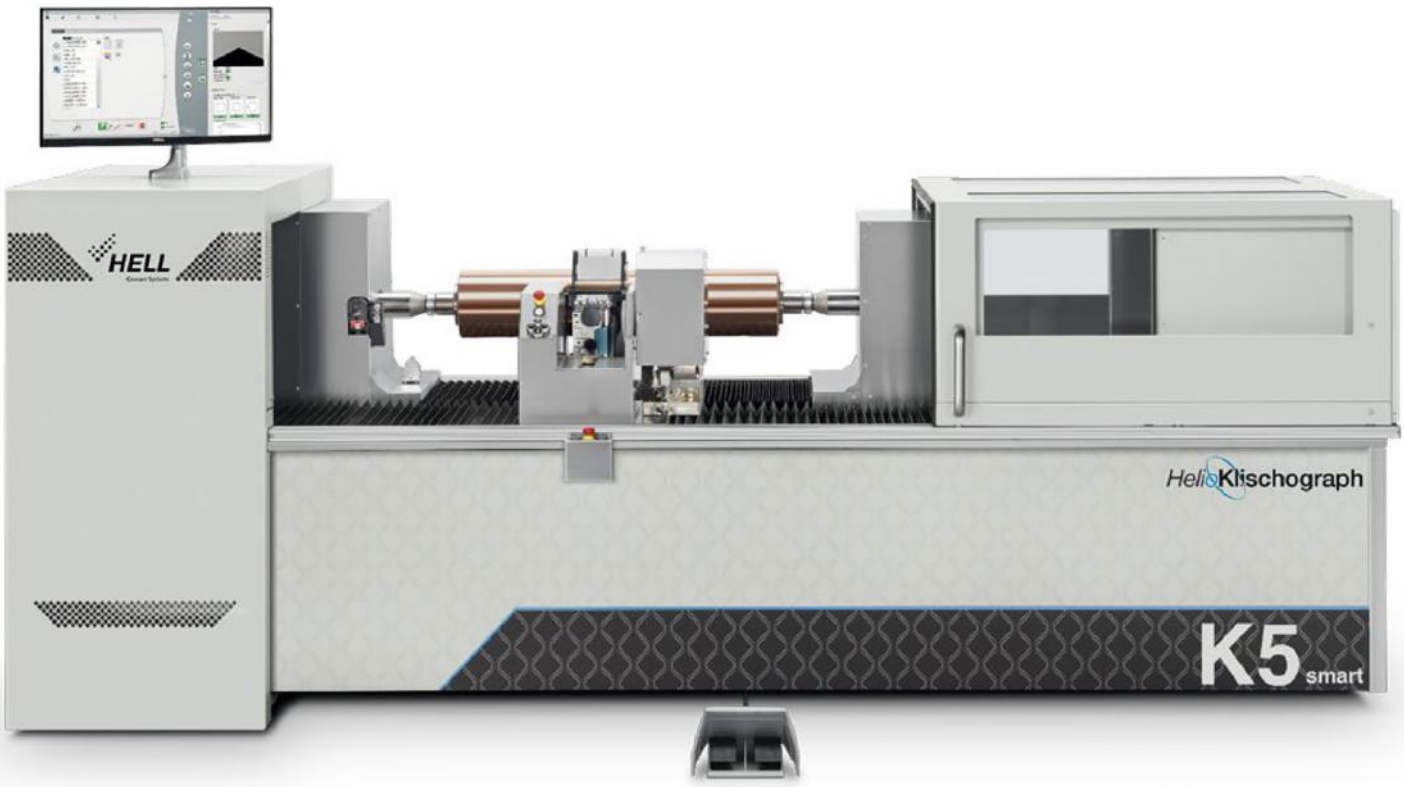

less defects and additionally, K. Walter tripled the ability of one of their machines.

The Quality Control Station always measured the copper surface of a cylinder during the production, checking roughness, hardness, "engravability" – copper structure – but now 2 completely new features were added. One, we scan the complete surface and a "learning, intelligent algorithm" alerts us, when finding a surface problem like a hole, scratch, water mark, and so on. In case the cylinder surface is not good enough, the cylinder is rejected and can be "recycled".

In the traditional process, this cylinder would have gone through all process steps, wasting energy, material, machine capacity, time and money and worst case, the problem would have only shown only up in the printing machine, printed on the substrate.

Second, this same machine scans the chrome surface to substitute the wet proof process. Together with quality checks from the other machines in the production line, like the "certified engraving" features from our HELL engraving machines, and all the data brought together in CYON, the cylinder leaves the production with a guaranteed quality standard unimaginable to the industry, even a couple of years ago.

CYON is the production viewer, on a big screen you can follow all quality and production figures of the production, with full transparency.

Q: I see how enthusiastic you are describing all of it. What is your opinion of AI and industry? Will this affect our businesses?

MR: Absolutely—positively. Our lines already collect process and QA data and support centralized control. This foundation enables AI assisted predictive maintenance, recipe optimization, and anomaly detection—raising uptime and consistency while reducing waste.

Q: With a crystal ball—where do you see technology in 10 years and beyond?

MR: At our companies 100-year celebration, our owner Max Rid said, "If you want to grow old, you must stay alive. It is more important to reduce big risks and correct mistakes than to seize every opportunity.

Having that in mind, I don´t know what the future holds, but already today we can build a future proof set up, to survive the next 10 years and beyond – and how does that look like: For Gravure, Chrome(III) mainstream and PFAS free ecosystems, with full regulatory certainty; autonomous, fully connected lines—closed loop QA from copper build to chrome finish, integrated logistics, minimal operator exposure.
For Flexo, direct engraved elastomer expanded for fast changeovers and stable color; hybrid lines where technologies co exist for best cost per job.

And there are many embossing and security features which can be enhanced to protect customers from counterfeit products. This is possible with finer micro, nano texturing via next gen lasers like we have in the Cellaxy family at HELL or Digilas family at SCHEPERS, enabling new tactile and optical brand features, all cost efficient and with short lead times.

Q: Any last words of advice for readers—and why choose your company?

MR: It is a pleasure to speak to you Paul and I look forward to many more conversations with you and partners in our industry.

As advice, "standardize, then automate". We want to help our customers strive, be productive, reduce their costs and we help them develop their business. We offer leading technology which is available right now. We want to show you and don´t hesitate to ask. Please contact me directly or contact one of our channels to connect.

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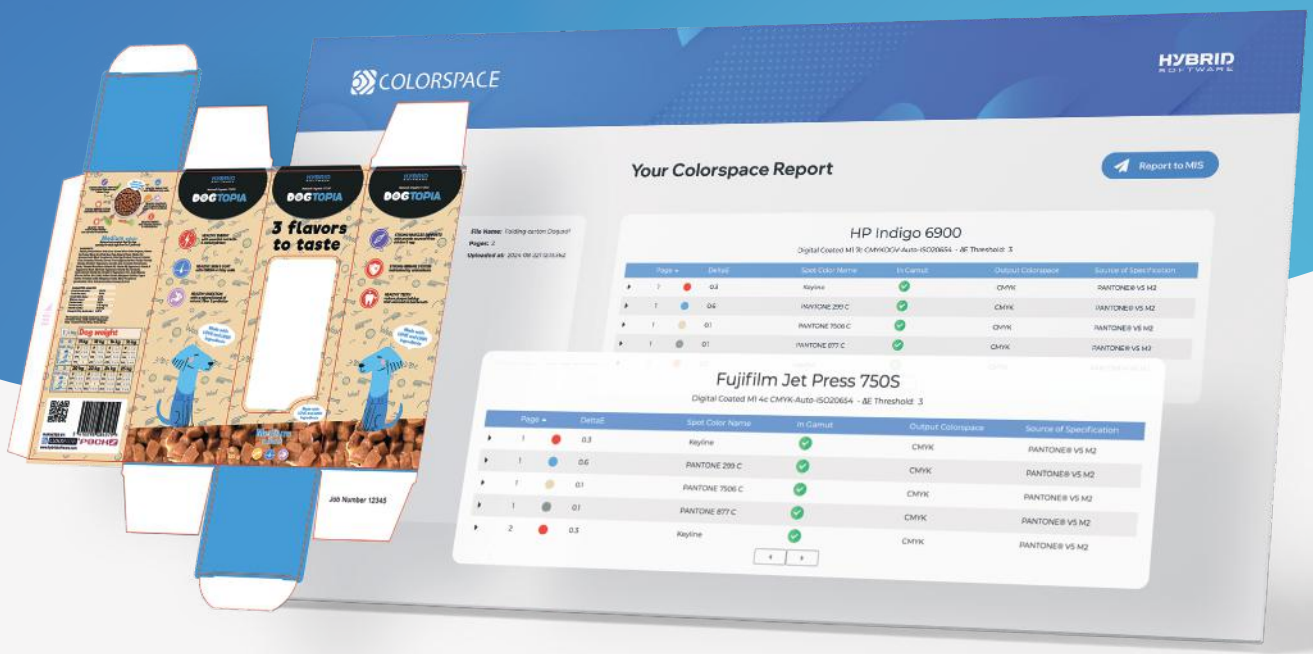

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Miraclon & W&H strengthen partnership with FLEXCEL NX Ultra 42

Miraclon has reinforced its longstanding partnership with Windmöller & Hölscher (W&H) through the installation of a new FLEXCEL NX Ultra 42 Solution at the W&H Technology Center in Lengerich, Germany.

The new system replaces the previously installed FLEXCEL NX Ultra 35 Solution, giving W&H a larger format, water processed platemaking solution to demonstrate a broader range of realistic customer applications and press configurations, enabling visitors to see the full potential of modern flexo in a real world environment.

"At W&H, our Technology Center plays a key role in showing converters how individual technologies come together to form an efficient and industrially scalable printing solution. In close partnership with Miraclon, we integrate leading platemaking technology into our press demonstrations to set the benchmark for end-to-end flexographic system performance." said Frederik Petzold, Director, Technical Sales, Windmöller & Hölscher.

"The FLEXCEL NX Ultra 42 Solution allows for improved flexibility for wide web printing, and the plate performance required to run highly controlled, data driven press demonstrations. Its consistent multi-form plate surface patterning and stable ink transfer characteristics allow us to showcase our presses operating at optimal efficiency — highlighting wider process windows, faster stabilization on press, and the repeatable print quality converters expect when evaluating advanced flexo technologies.

"Our collaboration with W&H remains a powerful platform to demonstrate the real world impact of FLEXCEL NX Technology and modern flexo," said Grant Blewett, Chief Commercial Officer at Miraclon. "The FLEXCEL NX Ultra Solution achieves the same proven on-press performance of the FLEXCEL NX System, with the added benefits of solvent-free and VOC-free platemaking that delivers consistent ink transfer, stable on press behavior and highly predictable results. Seeing it in action at W&H provides a compelling example of how modern flexo delivers efficiency, sustainability, and production control for converters around the world."

To further support high quality demonstrations, W&H has also added a FlexPose 420 ECDLF exposure unit from Glunz & Jensen, equipped with a Shine LED Lamp Kit, innovated by Miraclon. The Shine LED Lamp Kit provides stable, uniform UV output for highly consistent plate exposure, eliminating variability from aging mercury lamps. Its instanton LED design improves productivity and reduces energy use, while delivering cleaner highlights, stable dots, and predictable on-press performance.

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Efficiency + Sustainability

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Old vs New: How offset printing equipment has evolved

Offset printing has been the backbone of commercial and packaging printing for over a century. Its ability to produce consistent, high-quality prints over large volumes made it the industry standard.

Yet, like any technology, offset printing has evolved significantly, and the contrast between older presses and today's modern equipment is striking. Understanding these differences sheds light on how the industry is adapting to new demands for speed, precision, and sustainability.

Legacy Equipment: Strengths and Limitations

Older offset presses, often referred to as analog or traditional presses, were designed for durability and high-volume production. Their strengths include:

- Proven reliability for long runs
- Consistent colour reproduction once properly calibrated
- Flexibility with various substrates like paper, cardboard, and specialty stock

However, these machines also come with notable limitations in today's fast-paced market:

1. Setup Time – Plate creation, ink balancing, and press calibration could take hours or even days. Short runs were rarely cost-effective.
2. Manual Operation – Many processes required skilled operators for adjustments, making staffing a critical factor.
3. Limited Automation – Features like automatic plate changers or inline colour monitoring were absent, slowing production and increasing errors.
4. Higher Environmental Impact – Older presses often used solvent-based inks, emitted more VOCs, and consumed more energy.

While these presses were workhorses in their time, they are less suited for today's demands for agility, sustainability, and rapid turnaround.

Modern Offset Presses: Innovation and Efficiency

Contemporary offset equipment has undergone a dramatic transformation. Modern presses integrate automation, digital interfaces, and hybrid capabilities to improve efficiency and quality.

Key Improvements

1. Automation and Smart Controls

Today's presses feature automated plate changers, inline colour measurement systems, and AI-assisted calibration. These systems drastically reduce setup time, maintain colour consistency across large runs, and minimize operator intervention. What once took hours can now be completed in minutes, enabling printers to respond more quickly to client demands.

2. Speed and Throughput

Modern offset presses can print thousands of sheets per hour with greater precision, even on complex or coated substrates. Faster drying systems, UV curing, and inline finishing options allow printers to reduce bottlenecks and complete jobs faster than ever.

3. Hybrid Capabilities

Some new presses combine offset and digital printing in a single workflow. This hybrid approach allows printers to handle short, customized runs without sacrificing offset's advantages for long runs, making production highly flexible.

4. Environmental Considerations

Modern presses use eco-friendly inks, waterless processes, and energy-efficient technologies. Reduced chemical use and lower waste align

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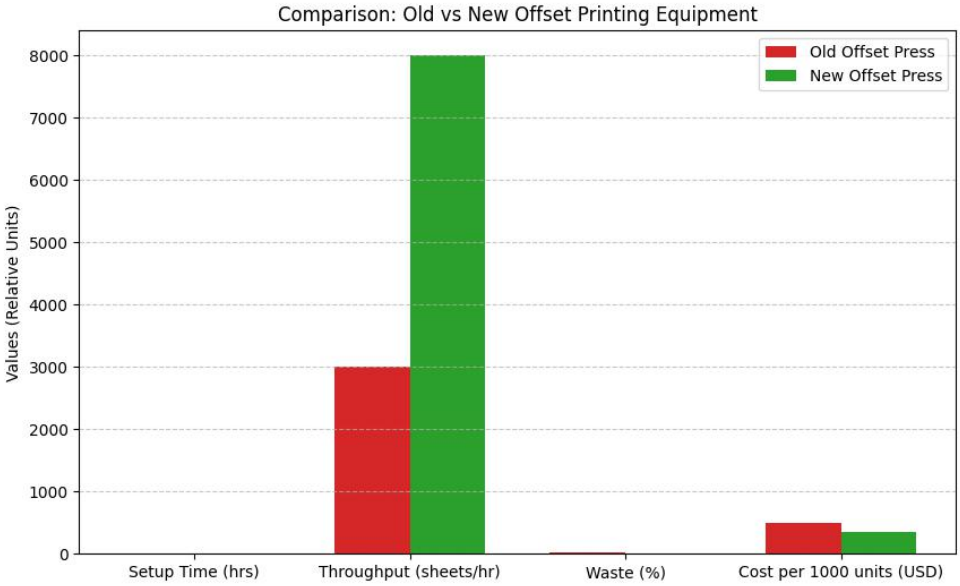

with stricter environmental regulations and growing brand sustainability commitments.

Cost and Productivity Comparisons
The difference between old and new equipment is not only technological but also economic. While older presses may have lower initial costs, they are slower, more labor-intensive, and less efficient, making them more expensive over time for short- and medium-run jobs. Modern presses require higher upfront investment but offer:

- Lower cost per unit for long runs due to speed and automation
- Reduced waste from faster setup and improved colour control
- Greater flexibility for varying print runs without retooling

These advantages make modern presses particularly attractive for printers aiming to serve both traditional high-volume clients and smaller, customized print runs.

Quality and Innovation
Older presses excelled in consistency for standard runs, but modern presses bring new levels of visual impact:

- High-definition printing with sharper images and finer detail
- Advanced coatings and finishes such as metallic inks, gloss, and spot UV
- Integration with digital embellishment for premium packaging applications

These improvements allow printers to deliver high-end, visually striking products that would have been difficult or costly on legacy equipment.

1. Consider Production Volume and Job Type
- High-volume, standardized jobs: Older presses can still perform well for long-run printing, where their speed and consistency are sufficient. In these cases, printers may keep older machines longer, even 10–15+ years, if maintenance costs are manageable.
- Short-run or high-variation jobs: Modern clients often demand faster turnarounds, personalization, or variable printing. Older presses are less flexible, so they may become a bottleneck after 5–8 years if you want to stay competitive.

2. Maintenance and Operating Costs
- Older machines generally require more manual intervention, more downtime, and more spare parts, which can add up in labor and repair costs.

- When maintenance costs start approaching or exceeding the value of the machine relative to new presses, it's usually time to upgrade.

- A good rule of thumb is that if annual maintenance costs exceed ~10–15% of the cost of a new machine and it limits throughput, replacement should be considered.

3. Technology and Quality Limitations
- Colour consistency, registration, and print quality: If an older press cannot meet the quality requirements of clients or cannot handle specialty coatings, foils, or digital embellishment, it may be outdated for certain jobs.

- Integration with digital workflows: Modern offset presses can integrate with prepress automation, hybrid digital workflows, and real-time colour management, which older presses cannot.

4. Financial Considerations
- Depreciation: Most offset presses have a useful life of 10–15 years, though they can operate longer with maintenance.

- ROI: Evaluate whether keeping the old press reduces capital expense but limits revenue opportunities. Sometimes selling an older press while it still has market value can help finance a new, more versatile machine.

5. Strategic Approach
Many printers adopt a phased replacement strategy:

1. Keep older presses for high-volume, low-complexity jobs.
2. Introduce new presses for short runs, high-quality work, or jobs requiring modern features.
3. Gradually retire older equipment once maintenance costs or market demands outweigh its advantages.

Conclusion
The gap between old and new offset printing equipment illustrates the industry's evolution from manual, labor-intensive workflows to automated, flexible, and environmentally responsible production. Legacy presses remain functional and reliable for specific high-volume applications, but they struggle to meet today's needs for speed, customization, and premium finishes.

Modern offset equipment, by contrast, provides a competitive advantage. Faster setup, higher precision, automation, hybrid workflows, and eco-friendly features ensure printers can respond to market demands with agility and quality. The future of offset printing is not about replacing tradition entirely but about enhancing it with innovation, efficiency, and sustainability.

The decision of how long to keep old offset printing equipment depends on business needs, production volume, maintenance costs, and technological relevance. Here's a detailed breakdown:

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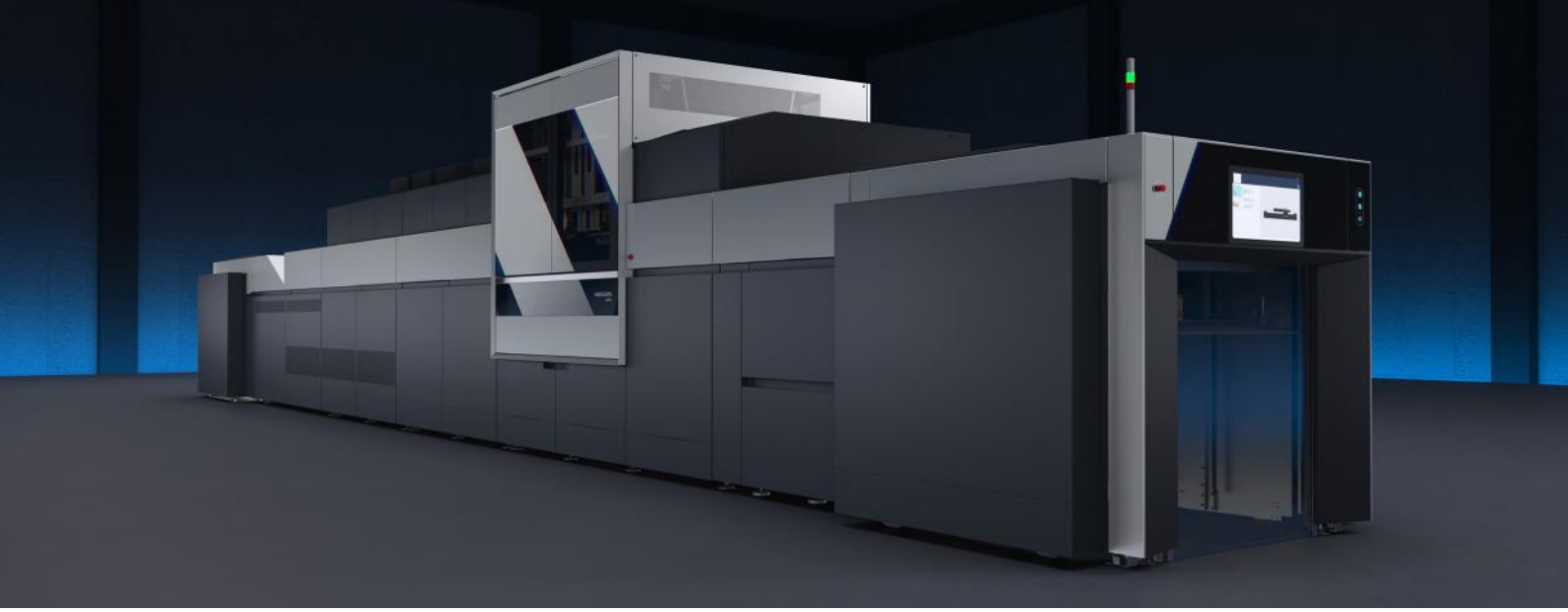

Heidelberg expands digital printing portfolio – Jetfire 75 in B2 format

Global volumes in commercial printing are continuing to develop steadily. While the average print run is becoming ever shorter, the number of print jobs is increasing. If print shops are to ensure this order structure is profitable for them, they need more flexibility and automation in their production operations, as well as digitalized processes.

Many commercial print shops are therefore increasingly turning to industrial digital printing solutions while also continuing to use highly efficient sheetfed offset printing presses for longer runs. According to forecasts, the global volume of commercial jobs being printed with inkjet technology will grow by over four percent annually up to 2030.

Heidelberg is driving this development with its digital innovations and is expanding its portfolio for industrial digital printing with the new Jetfire 75, which is now available. The Jetfire 75 is an inkjet press in B2+ format (614 mm x 750 mm) that is fully embedded in the Heidelberg digital ecosystem, which encompasses machines, software, consumables, service, and training. Postpress solutions are also to be incorporated. The Jetfire 75 offers users the best possible print quality, maximum flexibility, and a level of productivity that has never been seen before in digital printing. Customers can also access all key information and services via the Heidelberg Customer Portal.

"Following on from the successful market launch of the Jetfire 50, we are sending out a clear signal with the Jetfire 75, namely that Heidelberg is shaping the future of digital industrial print production and taking it to a whole new level," says Dr. David Schmedding, Chief Technology & Sales Officer at Heidelberg. "We are combining the strengths of our sheetfed offset printing presses with innovative digital printing solutions to create a hybrid production environment that offers our customers maximum flexibility and efficiency."

Customers can place orders for the Jetfire 75 with immediate effect. From summer 2026, the press will be available for customer demonstrations in the Print Media Center – Home of Print at the Wiesloch-Walldorf site. The first presses are to be installed starting in fall 2026. During an initial phase,

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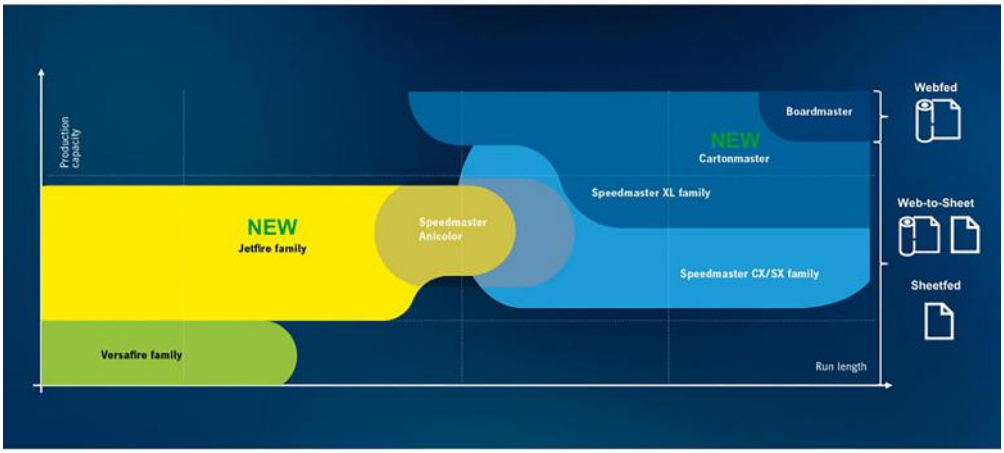

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Heidelberg is planning to roll the press out in core markets such as Germany, Switzerland, the UK, Canada, and the USA. The market launch of the Jetfire 75 is thus following up the successful global rollout of the Jetfire 50 for B3 format. Heidelberg first demonstrated the Jetfire 50 when it was unveiled at drupa 2024, which is also when the Jetfire 75 was announced.

Hybrid print production – Prinect Production and Prinect Touch Free support flexible production in digital and offset printing

The Jetfire 75 can be integrated into a print shop's overall workflow using Prinect Production and the new Prinect Touch Free workflow, thereby ensuring hybrid print production can be implemented on a cost-optimized and efficient basis. When using Prinect Touch Free, the fully automated workflow utilizes AI and leverages real-time data to determine whether digital or offset printing is the most cost-effective means of production.

Well-established color management technology from Heidelberg ensures that the production and/or reproduction of jobs is true-to-color regardless of which printing method is selected. When combined with Prinect Touch Free, the Jetfire 75 is able to process over 1,000 print jobs per day on a fully automated basis. Heidelberg has already kicked off the market launch of Prinect Touch Free.

Customers ordering a Jetfire 50 or Jetfire 75 will exclusively get the new workflow when they install their digital press. Users also benefit from excellent machine availability thanks to the "self-service" concept. This involves giving operators special training so they can carry out certain types of service work themselves. When it comes to actually operating the press, a few days of training are all that is required. What's more, print shops also have access to the wide-ranging service network at HEIDELBERG for their Jetfire systems.

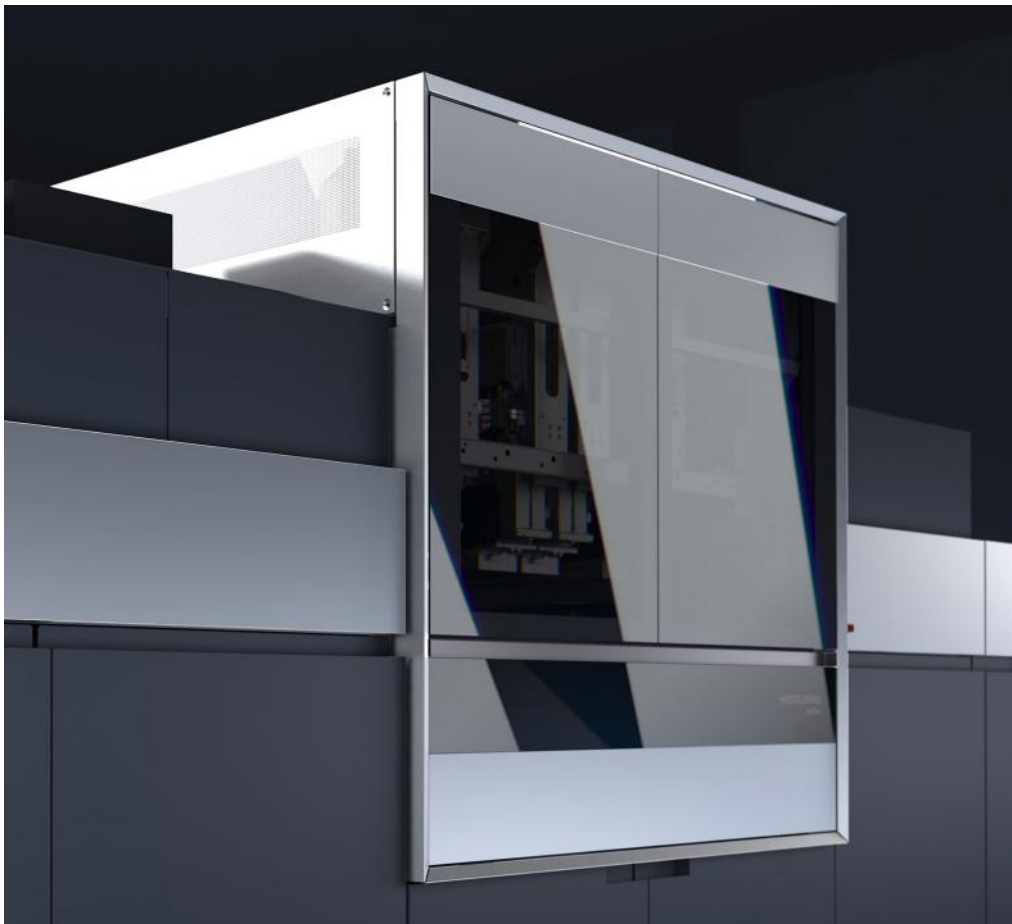
"By launching the Jetfire 75, Heidelberg is underscoring its approach as a comprehensive systems integrator in the printing sector – an approach that helps our customers become more profitable and more competitive," says Jürgen Otto, CEO of Heidelberg. "This is another milestone in the growth strategy for our core business, and one that will enable Heidelberg to leverage additional business potential."

Industrial production for everything from small to very long runs

The Jetfire 75 combines industrial productivity, the best possible print quality, and maximum flexibility for everything from short runs and personalized products to high-volume print jobs. The range of products that can be handled includes brochures, advertisements, flyers, catalogs in short runs, books, magazines, labels, stickers, posters, and calendars. Added to that are special digital print jobs such as personalized mailshots, jobs with a run size of one, photo books, time-critical print-on-demand jobs, and more besides.

The technical highlights of the Jetfire 75 at a glance:

- Water-based inkjet technology with 1200 dpi in B2+ format
- Production output: Up to 9,800 4Up sheets per hour (simplex), equivalent to approx. 39,000 A4 pages per hour; up to 7,200 6Up sheets per hour (simplex), equivalent to almost 43,000 A4 sheets per hour
- Annual production output: Up to 58 million 4Up sheets (simplex)
- Substrate range: 60–450 gsm, including selected cardboards
- Fully automated quality control and self-service concept
- Integration into Prinect Production & Prinect Touch Free for end-to-end automation



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Driving sustainable performan print service providers for the

In this interview, Koen Steert – Director of Product & Applications Management – discusses market trends, latest launches, the importance of innovation and sustainability in Agfa's developments, and future plans.

What market trends influence the company's roadmap?

Agfa's roadmap is influenced by major changes taking place in the printing industry, with efficiency and versatility being the most important. Today's print service providers (PSPs) face unpredictable conditions, with customers who expect increasingly faster responses and highly personalized work. The growing number of short run jobs negatively affects profitability, while variable costs such as energy and materials are eroding margins, which increases the emphasis on automation and resource efficiency.

In response to these conditions, demand is growing for solutions that combine speed, flexibility, and intelligent automation. This technology optimizes workflows and enables faster turnaround times, allowing PSPs to maximize their investments across a variety of applications. Sustainability and long term value also remain constant priorities, reflected in increasing expectations for equipment that minimizes waste and energy consumption, offers upgradeable functions, and integrates seamlessly with business workflow and automation.

These trends strongly influence Agfa's innovation strategy. We integrate intelligent automation into our hardware and software solutions, with automated workflows, advanced job scheduling, and intuitive interfaces that help print service providers efficiently manage numerous short run jobs.

Secondly, we focus on offering technologies with versatile designs. Our print engines and inks are compatible with a wide range of substrates and applications, making it easier for print service providers to meet diverse customer needs without having to invest in additional systems.

Do these launches meet a need within the sector?

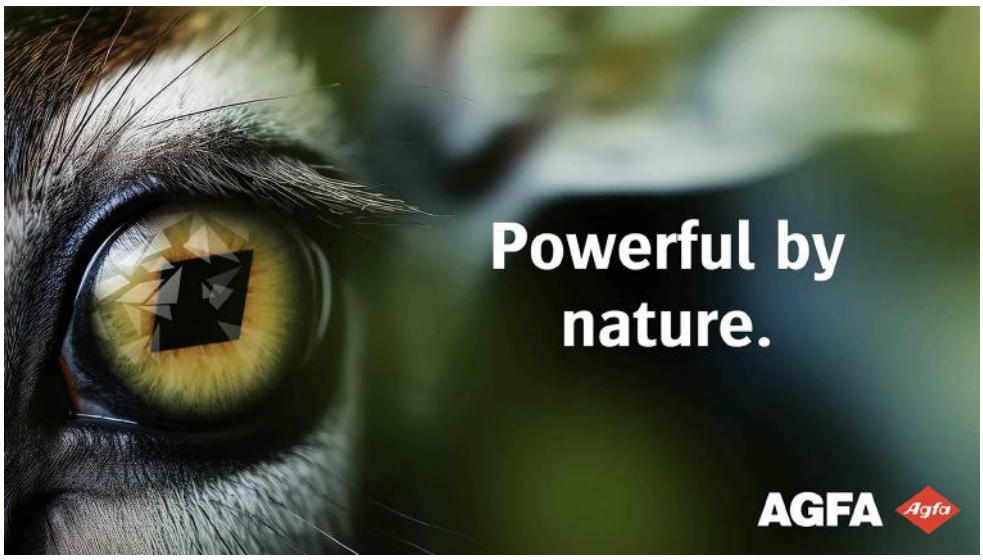
These launches are a direct response to the multiple challenges faced by printers today. Throughout the printing industry, companies are working with shorter delivery times, tighter budgets, and a constant shortage of labor, while also facing pressure to meet more ambitious sustainability goals.

Each of our solutions has been developed with these realities in mind. The new Tauro and Panthera large format presses combine high speed and superior quality with advanced automation functions, reducing manual handling and significantly cutting waste to deliver the efficiency modern printers require. Our new Ciervo models address the growing demand for agile mid size hybrid printers that also offer packaging capabilities, enabling print service providers to expand into new applications without compromising productivity.

Meanwhile, the launch of Asanti 7 reflects the clear industry demand for smarter workflow tools that provide measurable sustainability metrics, offering print service providers practical insights to reduce their environmental impact while gaining greater control over production. Together, these innovations directly address the ongoing need for solutions that strengthen competitiveness by delivering agility, profitability, and sustainability.

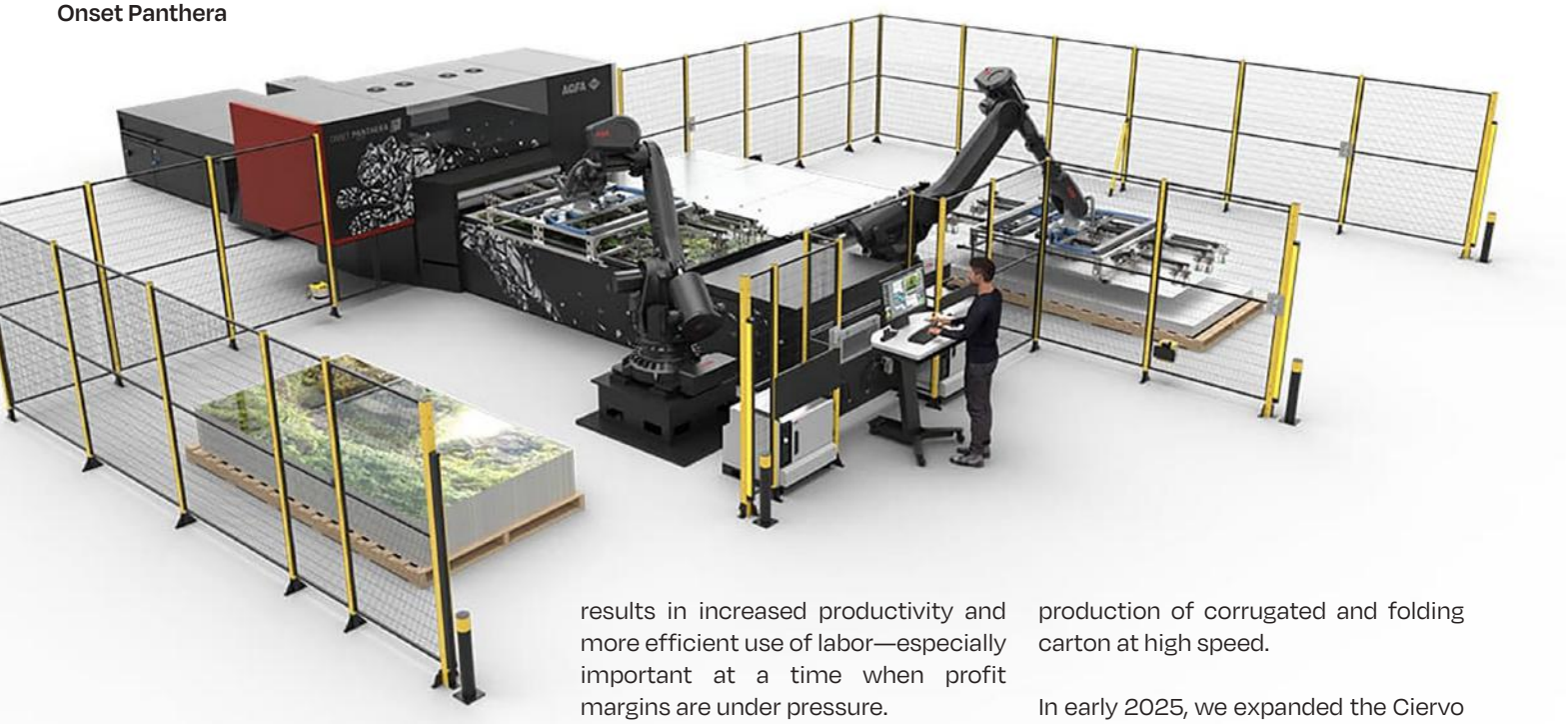
What type of companies are these products aimed at?

Agfa's products are designed for print service providers operating in the sign & display, point of sale, and retail graphics sectors. Our products also meet the needs of folding carton packaging converters who want to diversify into shorter runs and value added print



ce: How Agfa is empowering future

Onset Panthera



applications, as well as industrial printing companies that require robust and versatile technology capable of handling demanding substrates and production environments.

What benefits will these innovations bring to businesses?

Agfa's innovations are designed to deliver tangible benefits that help sign & display, exhibition, and visual communication companies become more competitive and more sustainable. Our digital technology offers unmatched flexibility to print service providers, enabling them to respond quickly to the demand for shorter runs, handle a wider range of substrates, and diversify into multiple applications without unnecessary time or cost.

Automation plays a central role in reducing production times and eliminating errors. Smart job scheduling and highly automated workflows minimize operator intervention, freeing staff to focus on higher value tasks while ensuring consistent accuracy in every run. This results in increased productivity and more efficient use of labor—especially important at a time when profit margins are under pressure.

What innovations has your company recently introduced or plans to introduce?

Over the past year, Agfa has taken significant steps to renew and expand its inkjet product portfolio, underscoring our commitment to mastering the entire print ecosystem.

From advanced presses to workflow software and more sustainable inks, our innovations focus on improving productivity, versatility, and sustainability so print service providers stay ahead in an ever evolving market. In 2024, we introduced several major new platforms, such as the Anapurna Ciervo H3200 and the hybrid Jeti Bronco H3300 printer.

These systems brought new versatility to mid and high volume applications, while the roll to roll Jeti Condor expanded our offering for large format, high quality printing on flexible substrates. For packaging markets, we also introduced the SpeedSet Orca, a water based inkjet press that meets the demand for more sustainable production of corrugated and folding carton at high speed.

In early 2025, we expanded the Ciervo family with two additional models: the Ciervo H2500 and the compact H2050. Both models feature material feeding guides designed to handle perfectly flat material, ensuring consistent, high quality print results across a wide range of substrates.

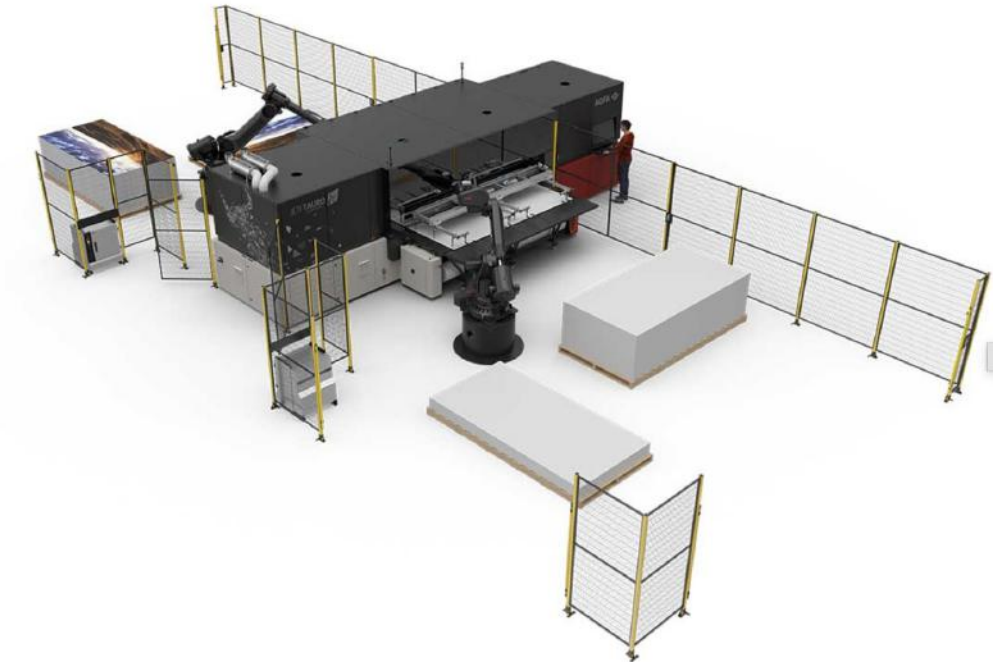
At FESPA 2025, we further expanded our portfolio with two major additions to the Agfa range. The Jeti Tauro H3300 XUHS was presented as the fastest and largest hybrid machine in the Tauro series. This press offers multiple automation options and is compatible with the new Anuvia 30 inks, offering a wider color gamut, lower environmental impact, and greater resistance to post press operations such as folding and creasing.

We also introduced the Onset Panthera FB3216, a true large format flatbed machine offering high productivity, a compact footprint, and a wide range of automation features to further optimize production.

Our recent innovations have not been limited to hardware. In software,

the release of Asanti 7 has added an entirely new dimension of intelligence to workflow management. Highlights include built in carbon footprint calculation tools for easier sustainability reporting, advanced ink saving algorithms to optimize resource use, and improved job planning tools that increase operational efficiency across all production environments.

With this wave of new products and new technologies, Agfa has almost completely renewed its inkjet portfolio in a very short time, laying the foundation for continued expansion into the packaging sector, greater automation in the sign & display industry, and software driven efficiency and sustainability for our customers.



What innovations do these new products offer?

Our latest innovations focus on redefining speed, automation, and versatility while embedding sustainability directly into print production. Each solution is designed to help print service providers achieve greater efficiency and handle more varied applications with ease.

The Jeti Tauro H3300 XUHS, winner of the Pinnacle Product Award, sets a new standard in hybrid printing with market leading speeds of up to 1280 m^2/hr. The machine includes extended vacuum zones and motorized support guides to ensure maximum control on rigid and flexible substrates.

With optional varnish and primer capabilities, this press also opens the door to value added finishes, thanks to Anuvia 30 inks, making it ideal for display and corrugated packaging applications. Integration of MAX BOTS, Agfa's award winning robotic loading/unloading system, further enhances productivity, while the MAX Flex RTR module extends the Tauro's versatility into roll to roll production.

The Onset Panthera FB3216 marks another milestone in flatbed print technology, achieving record speeds of 1514 m^2/hr while maintaining consistent quality in just two passes. Its ductile, satin, and gloss finishes expand its application range, while the Anuvo LED curing reduces energy consumption by up to 80%. Equipped with an auto guiding system and robotic unloading capability, the Panthera becomes a fully automated platform capable of managing high volume production with unparalleled efficiency.

The Anapurna H2500 and H2050 expand Agfa's hybrid platform into the packaging and point of sale market with improved feeding guides and higher productivity to satisfy the proliferation of SKUs and the diverse demands of customers. In addition, Asanti 7 software introduces a new level of sustainability and workflow intelligence.

Its integration with Dataline's MultiPress enables full tracking of resource usage and environmental performance, while advanced automation features—such as job organization, substrate recipes, and ink optimization—significantly enhance efficiency and cost control.

Reducing waste represents another major advantage of Agfa technology. Agfa's digital presses use precise ink deposition to avoid unnecessary overspray, while thin ink layer technology ensures less ink is needed to achieve the vibrant results customers expect. Combined with LED curing systems, which consume far less energy than conventional alternatives, this technology helps print service providers reduce production costs and environmental impact.

Integrated workflow tools such as Asanti 7 bring an entirely new dimension by providing measurable carbon footprint data, giving companies the information and evidence they need to support their sustainability objectives.

Consistency and versatility are also key differentiating factors. Agfa solutions offer uniform quality on both rigid and flexible substrates, enabling companies to confidently expand into adjacent markets such as retail displays, packaging prototypes, or point of purchase materials

High reliability presses designed for continuous operation ensure print service providers can meet tight deadlines without compromising uptime. With upgradeable functions and long system lifespans, our equipment also ensures long term return on investment and production sustainability as customer needs evolve.

Is sustainability considered in your innovation processes?

Yes, sustainability is integrated throughout Agfa's entire innovation process and portfolio. We consider sustainability a core principle that shapes how we design and develop our solutions. Rather than treating it as a separate initiative, we ensure that every part of our chain (hardware, software, inks, and services) works together to help print service providers operate more sustainably.

If you expect accurate brand colors, you'll love Multicolor

Spot colors are used particularly frequently in packaging printing. But how do you accurately reproduce spot colors in digital printing? And how can jobs be flexibly exchanged between conventional- and digitalprint? GMG ColorServer Multicolor automatically converts all spot colors into the desired output color space.
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BHS Corrugated Launc

A Game-Changing Workflow

BHS Corrugated proudly announces the introduction of NextGraphX – the next-generation alternative to traditional litho-lamination.

This revolutionary approach combines the proven strength of a corrugator, designed by BHS Corrugated, with the cutting-edge capabilities of a BHS Corrugated single-pass inkjet printer. Featuring an optimized working width that outperforms traditional laminators, NextGraphX sets new benchmarks for efficiency, flexibility, and sustainability in corrugated packaging.

What is NextGraphX from BHS Corrugated?
By integrating digital preprint technology into the production workflow, NextGraphX enables converters and FMCG brands to achieve high-quality graphics, shorter lead times, and significant cost savings – all while reducing environmental impact.

Embedded in Corruverse, NextGraphX is part of a connected ecosystem designed to digitally transform every step of the production process, helping producers and converters to operate better, cheaper, and faster.

Key Benefits of NextGraphX
+ BETTER
Replaces the multi-step litho-lamination workflow with a corrugator-native process to achieve higher stability, stronger OEE, and more predictable production planning

Streamlines production into three core steps: print → corrugate → convert

Enables high-quality graphics and added-value printing through the use of digital printing in the production workflow

+ CHEAPER
Lowers the overall cost of producing high-graphic corrugated packaging by eliminating the expensive and complex litho-lamination stage, including cost-intensive PVA cold-set glues

Achieves consistently lower cost per box through lighter paper grades
Minimizes waste and increases throughput by an efficient working width and digital print-to-order manufacturing

+ FASTER
Prints multiple Stock Keeping Units (SKUs) on a single roll, eliminating the rigid setup demands of litho

Significantly shortens lead times compared to traditional production methods

Runs multiple jobs in parallel through multi-lane, multi-job batch printing capability

Perspectives from BHS Corrugated Leadership

Günther Huber, Head of Business Unit Equipment:

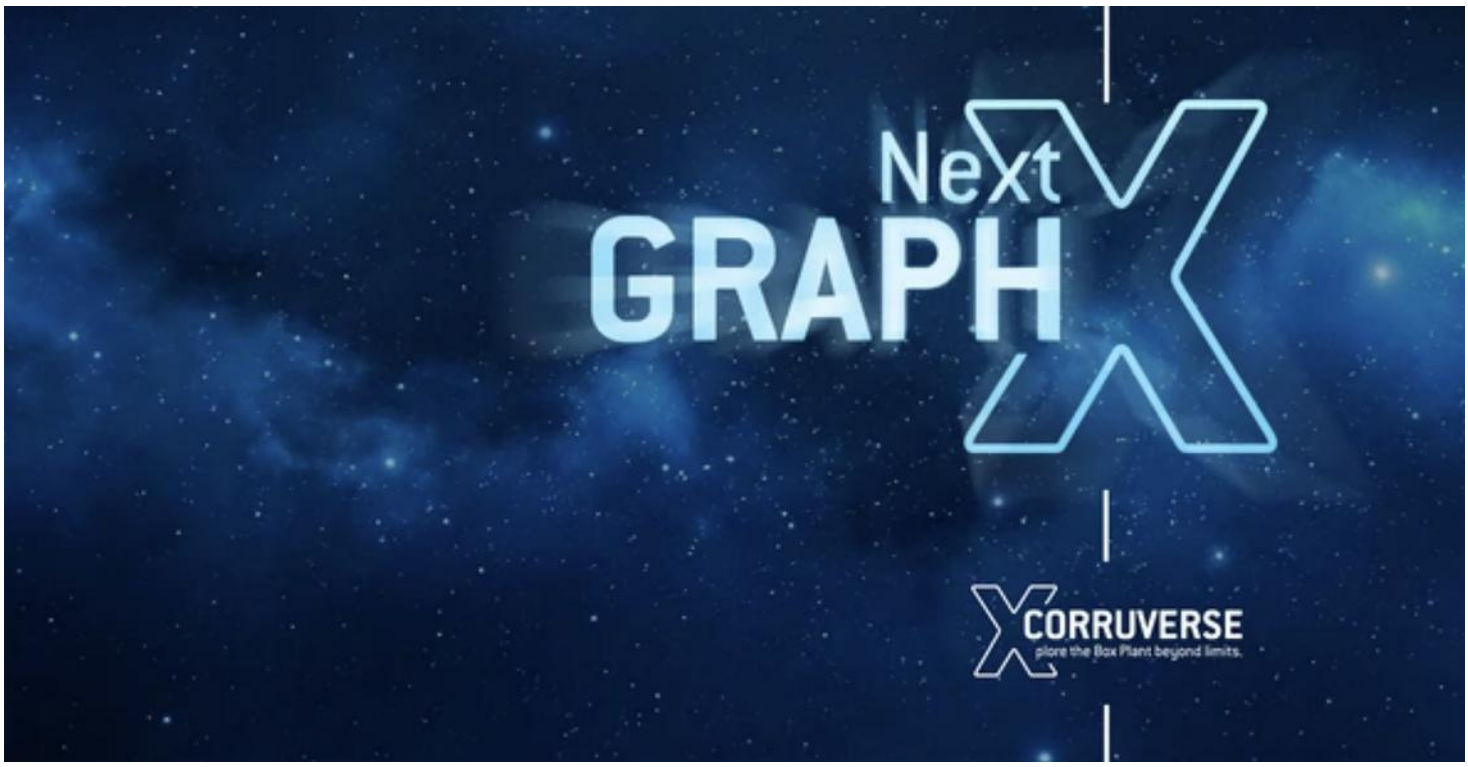
"NextGraphX represents a major leap forward for high-value box producers. By combining state-of-the-art process technology with digital printing, we deliver unmatched efficiency and flexibility. NextGraphX is not just a vision; it's a transformation of the entire value stream."

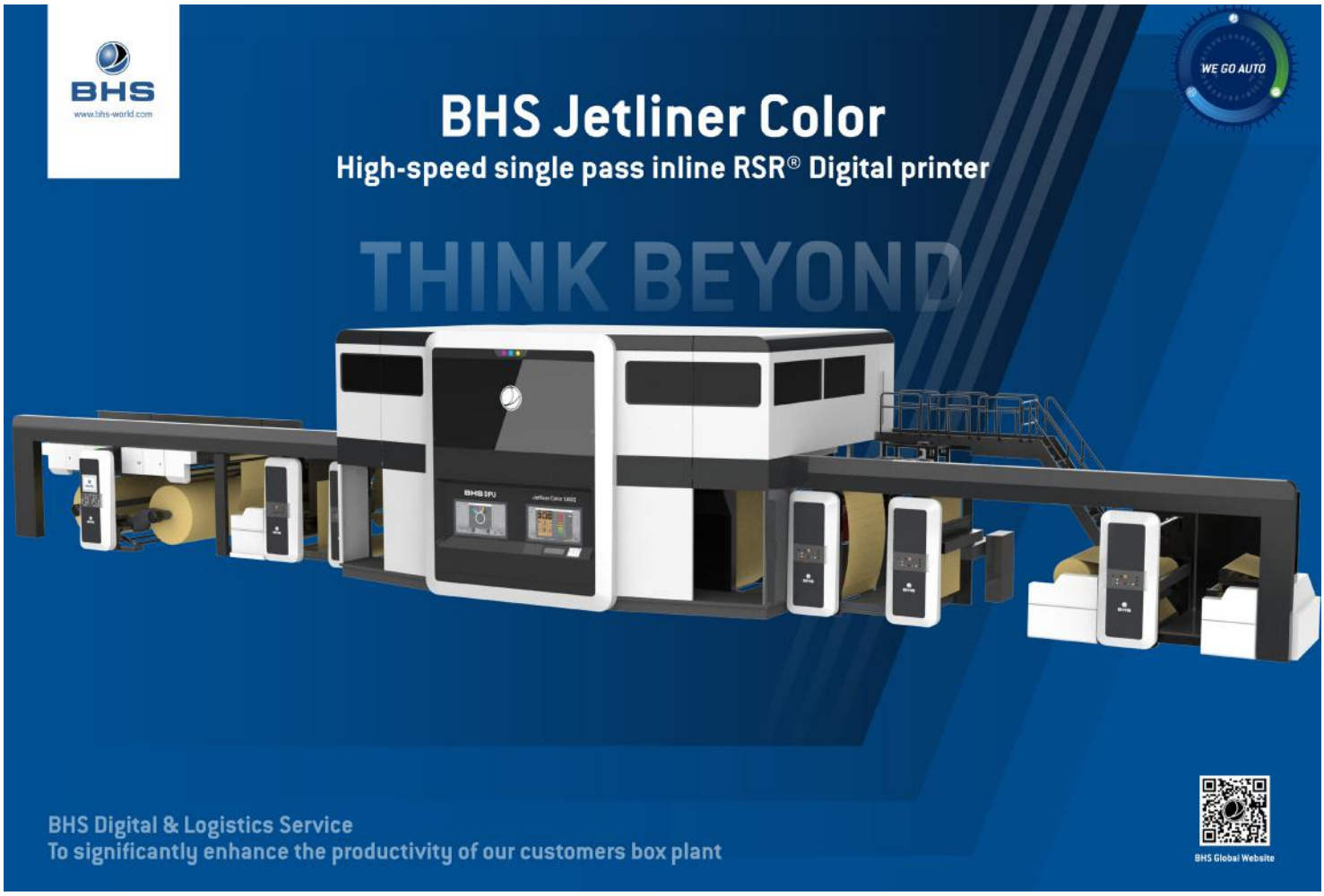
Helmut Kraus, Head of Business Unit Digital & Logistics:
"FMCG brands demand speed, agility, and sustainability. With NextGraphX, BHS Corrugated enables converters and producers to meet those demands while maintaining premium print quality. This is the future of corrugated packaging – digital, dynamic, and cost-effective."

BHS Jetliner Xceed

hes NextGraphX:

y for Corrugated Packaging





Japan's First System G38 We (LED) Curing and In-line Fold

Based in Sendai City, U-media Co., Ltd. develops a wide range of businesses centered on printing and publishing, including advertising and promotion, public relations support, web and video production, in-house media operations, and event planning and management.

In November 2024, with the goal of achieving sustainable printing, the company introduced the System G38 -- 38-inch Double-sided Web Offset Printing Press featuring the H-UV L (LED) curing system. While delivering the high productivity of a web press, the System G38 also achieves print quality comparable to that of sheetfed presses. We spoke with Hitoshi Konno, President & CEO, Hideki Abe, Executive Officer of the Printing Manufacturing Department, Kenji Suzuki, Production Team Manager, and Shinya Omura, Senior Staff, Press Group, Production Team, about the background behind this investment and the results achieved.

Contributing to the Local Community through Diversified Businesses Built on Printing

Founded in 1960, U-media Co., Ltd. has expanded its business across a wide range of fields centered on printing, publishing, web, video, and events. "Today, we are transforming our business beyond printing and evolving into a regional communication design company," says President Hitoshi Konno.

The company engages in diverse activities, including the publication and operation of in-house media such as the Sendai-based information magazine S-style as well as the planning and managing regional events such as the Sendai Oktoberfest.

"Our strength lies in our ability to undertake printing, publishing, web, and events in a one-stop manner. In addition, we are actively engaged in initiatives to communicate the value of printing, such as summer festivals where we interact with local residents and factory tours that invite local elementary school students," President Konno explains.

Investment in Printing and the Challenge of Energy-Saving Subsidies

The introduction of the System G38 had two major objectives.

"One was to clearly demonstrate internally our strong commitment to investing in printing, even as our diversified businesses grow, through a major capital investment in printing equipment. The other was to realize sustainable printing with a strong focus on energy efficiency and environmental performance," President Konno says.

To achieve this, U-media applied for a government energy-saving

eb Press with H-UV L er

"I am truly delighted that, through the introduction of state-of-the-art equipment, I have been able to share the excellence of printing both within and beyond our company." Hitoshi Konno, President & CEO

subsidy with stringent environmental requirements. "We aimed to be selected for the Advanced Energy Saving Investment Promotion Support Project. Thanks to Komori's extensive support--such as helping us develop a detailed roadmap toward installation--we were successfully approved. This selection represented strong government endorsement, and it helped our employees clearly recognize that our corporate direction aligns with national policies and initiatives," he adds.

A Flexible Production System Enabled by the System G38

The first major benefit of the installation is increased production flexibility.

President Konno explains: "With the addition of the System G38 equipped with H-UV L (LED) curing alongside our existing H-UV-equipped double-sided sheetfed presses, we have established

a production system that delivers equivalent print quality on both sheetfed and web presses.

This allows us to optimize press utilization according to peak and off-peak periods. Jobs that were previously handled on sheetfed presses can now be produced quickly on the web press, significantly enhancing production flexibility. In addition, by equipping the press with an in-line folder, folding processes that were previously outsourced for have now been brought in-house."

Executive Officer Hideki Abe adds, "Digitalization has improved operability, making it easier to assign younger operators to this press and further promote multi-skilled staffing. We aim to enhance workforce flexibility and achieve overall optimization and planned production across our entire production site."

Sheetfed Print Quality with Dramatically Improved Productivity

The second major benefit is enhanced print quality and productivity.

"With conventional heat-dryer web presses, paper waviness -- known as 'cockling' -- caused by the dryer heat was an issue. Because this press uses H-UV L (LED) curing, such cockling does not occur. This is a significant advantage in terms of print quality," emphasizes Abe.

Production Team Manager Kenji Suzuki also notes, "Compared with conventional web presses, there are no issues with surface gloss, and we can maintain print quality equivalent to sheetfed printing." President Konno adds, "Customers have also praised the print quality."

One particularly notable improvement in productivity is fast makeready.

"From start-up, at 500 rpm, color consistency, registration, and folding accuracy are all stable, allowing us to achieve OK sheets," Suzuki explains.

He continues, "The System G38 operates constantly at its maximum speed of 500 rpm, enabling production of 30,000 copies per hour. This rotational speed delivers overwhelmingly higher productivity even compared with high-speed sheetfed presses."

Regarding waste reduction, Abe summarizes, "Our goal is to limit waste sheets to fewer than 700 per job. Compared with conventional web presses, this represents a significant reduction and clearly contributes to higher productivity."

Significant Improvements in the Work Environment and Energy Savings Beyond Target Levels

The third benefit is a substantial improvement in the work environment and energy efficiency. "With conventional web presses, heat from dryers sometimes pushed room temperatures above 38°C in summer. Now, temperatures no longer exceed 30°C and noise levels have also been significantly reduced, providing a much more comfortable working environment for on-site staff," says Shinya Omura, Senior Staff of the Production Team.

With no dryer required, the press footprint was reduced, making it possible this time to install an A1 sheeter in addition to the in-line folder. President Konno expresses satisfaction with the energy-saving performance, noting, "The results have surpassed our expectations."

U-media is leading the industry as a pioneer in environmental initiatives such as certification as a carbon-zero print factory and the adoption of non-VOC inks.

President Konno outlines his future vision, saying, "We will actively communicate that this environmentally advantageous facility is located in the Tohoku region, and by collaborating with local companies and industry peers, we aim to create new markets." Through the renovation of its former plant, the company is also developing a hub for value creation beyond printing and for collaboration with the local community, advancing initiatives that contribute to regional revitalization.

He added, "We look forward to long-term, hands-on support from Komori to further stabilize production quality."

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Giving Shape to Ideas

New Diamant MC 30: The Ideal Gateway to Hardcover Production

With the new Diamant MC 30 book line, Müller Martini is launching a powerful tailored solution for companies looking to enter into industrial hardcover production. This configuration already features essential options, delivering excellent value for money.

The Diamant MC 30 impresses with a speed of up to 30 cycles per minute, fast setup times, and a high degree of automation. It provides a real competitive edge to companies previously applying manual processes. Built on the same proven Motion Control Technology as its bigger sister, the Diamant MC 60, the machine is extremely flexible.

It uses intelligent single drives at the rounding station, in the transport chains, and in the casing-in station, for instance. They ensure precise movements and a flexibility hard to find in this machine class, resulting in less downtime and more output. For example, the rubdown device is servo-driven and perfectly synchronized with the paternoster knife, ensuring the book case is rubbed down optimally and the book block is seated perfectly in the book case.

Automation as the key

Compared with manual processes, the Diamant MC 30 is both fast and smart. Automated checks, such as headband supply, incorrect book block position, and double case checks, increase process reliability significantly. The book thickness is checked in the rounder rollers, for example, to ensure that all downstream stations are configured correctly. For companies previously applying manual processes, this represents a quantum leap.

Operation is easy and intuitive. There is a central area for entering data with a measuring device and clear visualization. The clear display, preparation of the next order during ongoing production, and storage of all production data for quick setup of repeat orders make the machine very easy for employees to learn.

Convincing features

The Diamant MC 30 offers many proven functions of high-end book lines:

- Block spines are rounded evenly and under precise control
- Double backing ensures a permanent, fine fold
- Ribbon gluing device
- Head-banding station with integrated premelter for uniform glue application
Integrated hotmelt fold gluing
- Long joint forming and pressing of the fold in the EP 340.
- Data transfer to peripheral machines, such as the BLSD 650 book counter stacker
- JDF workflow connection and feedback to Connex Info Cloud

Variety without compromise

Another asset is the variety of products. Whether straight or round book spines, with or without ribbon – the machine covers a broad spectrum. Books can be produced with different paper types, in a large range of sizes and grammages. Both hard and flex cases can be separated and processed reliably.

Bottom line

The Diamant MC 30 presents a gateway to industrial hardcover production without sacrificing the quality of the end products. This configuration already features essential options, delivering excellent value for money. For me, this is a strong signal: The future of book production is automated, efficient, and versatile.

The new Diamant MC 30 book line from Müller Martini: automated, flexible, and the perfect gateway to automated hardcover production.

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More information

DIAMANT MC 30

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The Diamant MC 30 book line is the ideal solution for companies looking to enter into industrial hardcover production. It combines high performance, flexibility, and an optimal setup – perfect for switching from manual processes to automated workflows. This configuration already features essential options, delivering excellent value for money.

mullermartini.com/diamant-mc-30

The new "Print Impact Award" launches at the 26 Asian Print Awards

As the Asian Print Awards celebrates its 26th year, a significant new category has been introduced to reflect the evolving role of print in today's business landscape — the **Print Impact Award**.

Since its inception in 2001, the Asian Print Awards began as a print quality competition. Over the years, it expanded to recognize excellence in design, and later embraced innovation and technology, acknowledging the vital role these elements play in modern print and packaging production. Technological advancements have consistently shaped the direction of the industry, influencing everything from workflow to final output.

In 2026, the Awards once again raise the bar with the introduction of this new major accolade, sponsored by Konica Minolta. The Print Impact Award joins the existing premier awards:

- **Best in Digital**
(sponsored by FUJIFILM)
- **Best in Offset**
(sponsored by Heidelberg)
- **Best in Digital Embellishment**
(sponsored by MGI / Konica Minolta)
- **Best Use of Colour**
(sponsored by CGS ORIS)

While print production techniques continue to evolve — particularly in areas such as embellishment, AI, colour management, and advanced production technologies — the industry has moved beyond simply focusing on how print is produced. Today, print plays a strategic role in shaping business outcomes.

The Print Impact Award recognizes work that demonstrates how print has directly contributed to business success. Judges will not only assess entries submitted specifically for this category but will also identify projects across all categories that have significantly influenced business performance in sectors such as insurance, finance, retail, and beyond — wherever print has been a driving force behind measurable results.

\

For the 2026 competition, entrants will be required to provide a separate written explanation outlining how their printed project contributed to their client's campaign success. Too often, the printed component of a campaign is overlooked as a key factor in achieving objectives. The Asian Print Awards now formally recognizes and celebrates print's tangible business impact.

In addition to the new award category, the 2026 competition also welcomes several new industry associations, significantly expanding the Awards' reach across the region. Joining long-standing partners such as the Thai Print Association, Thai Packaging Association, and the Print & Media Association Singapore are:

- Hong Kong Printers Association
- Sri Lanka Association of Printers
- Malaysian Digital Printers Association
- Printing Technology Association of China
- Printing Industries Association of the Philippines, Inc.

ENTRY FORM

Deadline for Entries Submission: **7th August 2026, 5pm** Remember to submit **2 copies** of each job!
Why? - Just in case one is damaged. Maximum 3 entries per catergory

If you are entering the PRINT IMPACT AWARD please tick the box ☐
Recognising print that drives measurable business and marketing impact. Write and tell us why on a seperate page

The Awards also continue to benefit from the support of long-time exhibition sponsors Messe Düsseldorf Asia (PackPrint International and Corrutec Asia) and Messe Düsseldorf (Shanghai) Co., Ltd. (All in Print China).

As the industry evolves, the Asian Print Awards continues to evolve with it — recognizing not only excellence in print production, but the real-world impact print has on business success across Asia.

Note. This year's Awards Dinner will be held at All in Print China on the 15th October in Shanghai

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drupa 2028: New brand identity as a catalyst for networked printing solutions

With a new brand identity, drupa is presenting its future direction at an early stage. Two years before the start of the trade fair, the world's leading trade fair for printing solutions is thus providing an initial glimpse of its conceptual and content-related repositioning.

he central element of the new image is a symbolically used key visual: the octopus. It stands for networking, intelligence, agility, and resilience, as well as the simultaneous mastery of complex processes.

It thus refers to a technological reality in which printing solutions are increasingly conceived as integrated systems, including sophisticated applications in the packaging environment. Processes are interlinked, workflows are networked, and efficiency is created through the interaction of hardware, software, materials, and automated applications.

"drupa 2028 will be a drupa like never before," says Dr. Andreas Pleßke, Chairman of the drupa Committee. "We are setting new standards in how technological developments, applications, and markets are classified and brought together—a claim that is also consistently reflected in the new brand identity."

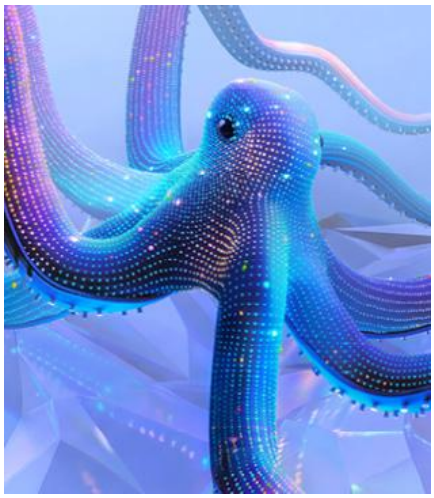
"drupa. dive into the unseen" as a communicative mission statement

The slogan "drupa. dive into the unseen" picks up on this approach and draws attention to developments whose significance often only becomes apparent in the overall context – for example, through the interaction of technologies, processes, and applications along the value chain. The slogan thus stands for a solution-oriented classification of technological innovations, beyond individual products or short-term effects.

"The slogan sums up what drupa stands for: vision, knowledge transfer, and orientation in an increasingly complex technological landscape," says Sabine Geldermann, Director drupa, Portfolio Print Technologies at Messe Düsseldorf. "It underscores drupa's claim and attitude of not presenting future topics and technological progress in isolation, but rather classifying them in a comprehensible way in the context of the market, application, and value creation."

How drupa 2028 is creating orientation for tomorrow

Against this backdrop, drupa 2028 is introducing a new experience architecture for the first time. Content, applications, and formats for exchange, collaboration, and networking will in future be bundled along clearly defined thematic clusters. This will make technological developments comprehensible and structured. The architecture serves as a common framework for exhibitors, visitors, and the media.



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COLLABORATION SETS NEW FLEXO INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS

BRILLIANT PRINT RESULTS

Kirk Group, in collaboration with **XSYS** and **Hybrid Software**, developed an advanced flexo plate solution for **RollsPack**, a leading Australian flexible packaging provider. Leveraging **XSYS nyloflex®** plates, **ThermoFlexX** imaging, **Velvet** Screening, and **Woodpecker** surface patterns, this partnership achieved outstanding print quality, improved efficiency, and cost savings while meeting sustainability goals. The innovation enhanced color accuracy, ink laydown, and print consistency, setting new benchmarks for the industry.

he Australian reprographics expert leveraged a powerful combination of technologies, utilizing nyloflex® plates, ThermoFlexX imaging, Velvet Screening, Woodpecker surface patterns and Catena+ automated processing, to create a tailored solution for the award-winning packaging supplier.

Established in 1972, Kirk Group is known throughout the industry as an innovation leader. The reprographics company, headquartered in Sydney, works with global brands and major printing companies across the ANZ region and into Asia, supplying graphic services and image carrier solutions for packaging production. Manufacturing sites are located in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Auckland, and sales offices in Christchurch, New Zealand, and Mumbai, India, all focused on the company's stated mission "to bring inspiration and innovation to marketers and brands."

With decades of experience in delivering flexo excellence, Kirk Group understands that close collaboration with technology suppliers and customers is key to success. When long-term customer RollsPack Group challenged the team to find a more cost-effective and sustainable way to print high value flexible packaging, they knew exactly where to turn.

Ben Prout, Group Technical Manager, shares: "Kirk Group has worked with RollsPack for over 20 years, so we appreciate and understand their ambitions, requirements and workflow. For this project, we also drew on the technical expertise and experience of XSYS and Hybrid Software, as well as RollsPack collaborating closely to create a customized solution that not only meets or exceeds the quality of competitors but also offers a more competitive price point."

To meet RollsPack´s specific criteria, the team carefully considered the combination of plate and specialized screening technologies necessary to achieve the desired outcome. They were able to leverage the versatility of the ThermoFlexX imaging system and Catena+ automated processing line to implement these solutions:

nyloflex® NEF D – a high durometer printing plate for flexible packaging developed by XSYS for the efficient creation of flat-top dots and reproduction of surface screenings with UV LED exposure.

Velvet Screening – a new screening type from Hybrid Software created to meet flexo requirements. As the successor to hybrid XM screening, it uses an advanced dot removal algorithm to reduce harsh edges, leading to smoother and higher-quality prints.

ThermoFlexX Woodpecker Nano – the finest surface micro pattern available for LAMS plates, suitable for platemakers and printers who need high frequency surface screens to increase quality and efficiency while reducing costs.

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Pushing the boundaries of flexo printing

The nyloflex® plates with Velvet Screening and Woodpecker micro surface patterns provided by Kirk Group ticked all the boxes for RollsPack Group, meeting its demands for quality, sustainability and costs. A family-owned company founded in 1985, it specializes in flexible packaging production, including e-commerce, food, retail, and tamper-evident solutions.

"This solution offers a lot of potential. Set up times have been reduced significantly due to precise color profiles, and longevity on press is comparable to other major players on the market," said Print Manager Thanh Huynh. Commenting on the print quality, he added, "There's a marked difference in the ink laydown on surface print; it's one of the best I've seen in flexibles. Even when printing colors on a white ink base layer, where we typically experience a drop in density – the results with Woodpecker are impressive. In addition, Velvet Screening holds the dots really well, ensuring that there are minimum hard edges."

As well as delivering top quality at great cost, RollsPack is also firmly committed to sustainability, developing environmentally friendly products for its customers. "We are dedicated to elevating the market by supplying innovations that benefit our customers and meet their sustainability goals. We successfully achieved the same high-quality print with water-based inks as with solvent-based inks.

This drives a constant need to explore new avenues and Kirk Group plays a fundamental role in this endeavor. Together we are pushing the boundaries of brilliant flexo," concluded Thanh Huynh.

Easy implementation in any workflow

In this scenario, advanced screening technology and dedicated plate surface structures simplified the challenging task of controlling the dots and the ink behavior on press. ThermoFlexX Woodpecker and Velvet Screening proved their individual strengths, to deliver a successful outcome for RollsPack. Both software solutions are truly open without any extra steps needed, meaning they can be implemented into any workflow.

Brenton King, Hybrid Software's Sales Manager for Australasia, expanded on the flexibility of Velvet Screening, "The beauty of Velvet is that the software doesn't require any proprietary information or special equipment, it just slots into the existing setup. Used at any resolution or ruling, it can be imaged onto the plate of your choice on any CTP device and then processed through your existing exposure frame." He added, "In this collaboration, Kirk Group simply applied Velvet Screening and then added the Woodpecker surface patterns during imaging. It's a very clever combination."

Maximizing opportunities and potential

On the hardware side, Kirk Group relied on ThermoFlexX technology from XSYS, including a Catena+ automated plate processing line installed at the Melbourne site in 2021. Kirk's Chief Operating Officer Robert Selvaggio commented, "The investment in Catena+ has been a great success story for us. We were among the first in the market to realize the potential of this high performance, one-touch technology which tripled our capacity and elevated plate quality." He revealed the company's' future strategy, "We're now in the process of installing a Catena+ line in Brisbane and a third one is already planned for Sydney."

"Kirk Group has been reaping the exceptional benefits of Catena+ for a few years, and we have witnessed the innovative solutions it enables, such as this special project for RollsPack Group," said Roy Schoettle, VP, XSYS Asia Pacific. "We are delighted that this partnership has been so successful and look forward to taking the next steps with the team, as they equip all their manufacturing sites with full Catena+ lines."

Robert Selvaggio concluded, "Flexo is still the largest printing technology for packaging, both in terms of volume and value, but we must maximize the market opportunities and the potential of each technology on offer. This is why collaboration is crucial for the future of our industry and for our customers."

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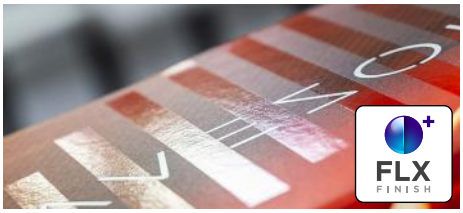

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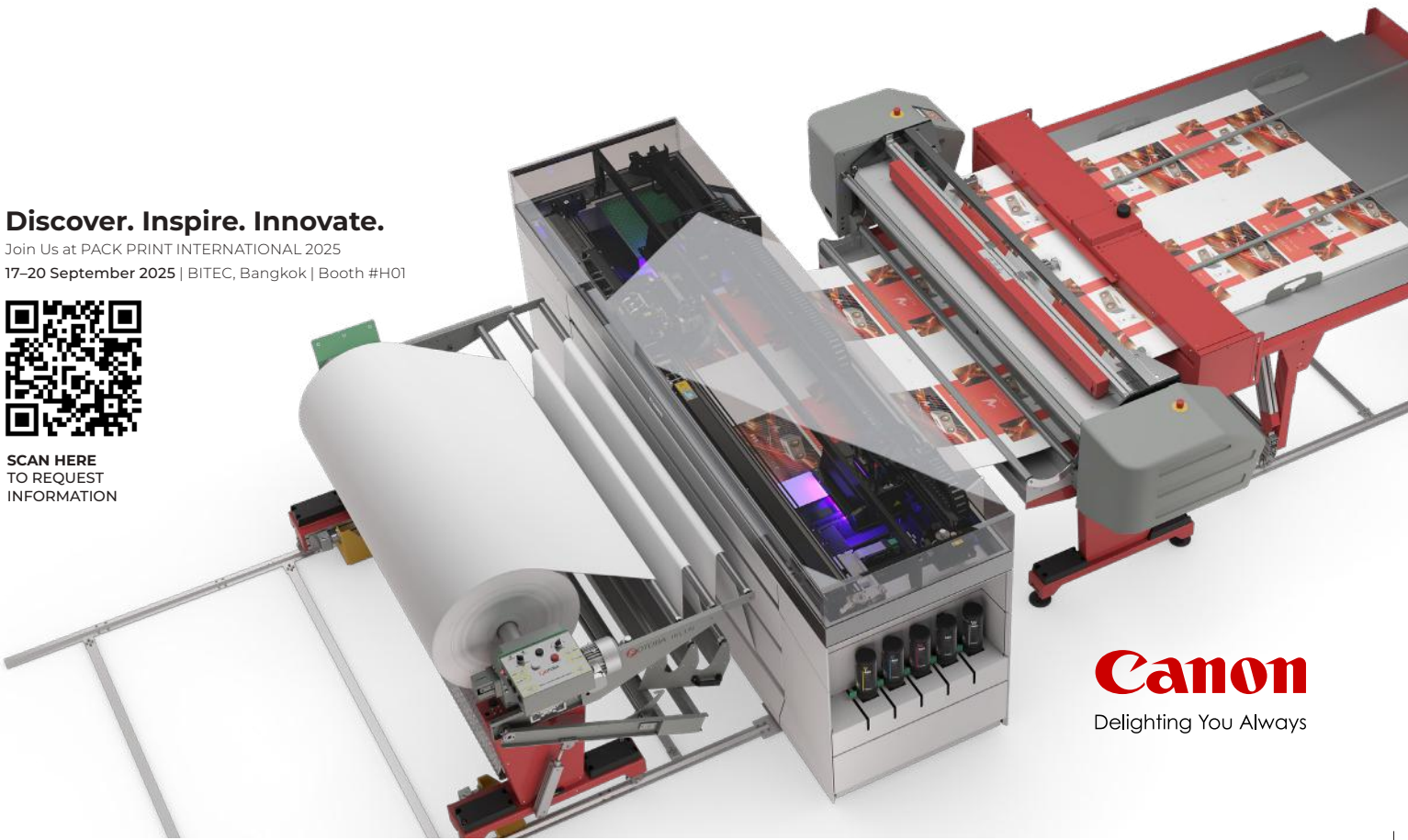

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The essentials of carton converting

Building agility and precision into modern packaging production is essential to getting the most out of carton converting, as Ludovico Frati, Sales & Marketing Director, Digital at BOBST, details.

In today's complex and challenging world of packaging production, converting sits at the heart of folding carton manufacturing.
Converting turns a brand's ingenuity and creativity into reality and brings flat sheets to life as 3D, functional objects. It is the bridge between brand intent and consumer experience.

Understanding converting
To get the most out of converting equipment and processes, it is important to understand where and how the process sits within a multi-stage manufacturing environment.

In a standard workflow, brands and their marketing teams dream up the next great product innovation, before designers and creative agencies visualize their ideas and come up with structural designs.

Pre-press teams prepare print-ready artwork and then converting kicks in. Press operators ensure designs are produced at the highest print quality to create visually striking packaging. Embellishment adds a specific look and feel to blanks, with die-cutting and folding and gluing transforming finished sheets into physical shapes.

Then comes filling, packing, distribution, storage, and retailing.

This example workflow tracks the conventional way of converting folding cartons, with each step concurrent and feeding the next.

Traditionally, folding carton converting has been a sheet-fed process, dominated by offset printing. More recently, inline processes have gained ground. The balance is shifting in their favor as advances in digital and flexo web-fed technologies reshape production economics and agility.

For example, inline printing and sheeting or inline printing and die-cutting integrate multiple steps into one process and speed up folding carton converting. This makes the process suited to short-run applications where agility and flexibility are paramount (i.e. pharma and personal care), as well as markets where volume is one of most important metrics, such as food and tobacco.

Mastering the fundamentals
Whilst technological advances are streamlining folding carton converting, it remains important to master and control essential parts of the process: control of substrates, precise die-cutting and creasing and efficient folding and gluing.

Each is a critical step where performance needs to be optimized, waste is minimized, and quality must be prioritized.

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There are three principal technologies in die cutting: flatbed, rotary solid die, and rotary flexible die systems. Each have distinct advantages depending on job length, substrate type, and required precision.

- Flatbed die-cutting is the mainstay of sheet-fed production. This process offers superior cut quality and versatility across substrates. Tooling is robust, relatively inexpensive, and easy to replace, though set-ups can be time-consuming and represent a significant investment, especially for short runs.

- Rotary solid die systems are good for higher throughput – up to 20,000 sheets per hour – and offer exceptional repeatability for long runs but come with higher tooling costs and longer lead times.

- Rotary flexible dies are optimized for short-run work and agile production. They feature minimal set-up time, are a low-cost option, and easy to store and reuse. They are less robust than flatbed and solid dies and are often not suitable for heavier gauge materials.

The correct die-cutting option will depend on material specification, run length, product mix, and end-market requirements. Increasingly, automation, smart registration, and digital control systems are helping converters bridge those trade-offs, achieving faster setup times, reduced waste, and more consistent output.

If die-cutting defines form, folding and gluing bring the pack to life. Modern folder-gluers accommodate a vast array of carton styles, from straight-line and crash-lock bottom boxes to more complex 4- and 6-corner constructions, bottle carriers, and e-commerce formats. Configurations vary but the process typically follows the same core steps: feeding, pre-breaking, folding, gluing, transfer, and delivery.

Automation, camera inspection, and modular machine designs have elevated the role of the folder-gluer from a finishing station to a key contributor to zero-fault production. In premium sectors such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and luxury goods, this capability is essential to meeting stringent brand standards and regulatory expectations.

Alongside the hardware, converters must work hard to keep substrates under control and align them with the process steps to ensure effective folding carton converting.

Paperboard and cartonboard are renewable and versatile substrates but present challenges with surface variability. Fiber direction, temperature, and humidity all influence surfaces and how sheets behave during printing, die-cutting, and folding.

As fiber-based materials, those used in folding carton manufacture are hygroscopic and inclined to draw in and absorb any water that exists in the immediate environment in which they are stored and converted. Most often, this is caused by excess condensation and high humidity that can cause sheets to warp, wrinkle, and otherwise deform. Single-pass production solutions minimize the number of steps and exposure of the substrate to external atmospheric conditions, reducing the risk of waste and non-quality.

Understanding grain direction is also particularly important: selecting a long or short grain affects stability, dimensional precision, and the strength of the finished pack. The box layout must also be orientated correctly, according to the grain direction. This differs to web/reel-fed production, where grain direction is a given, and optimizing imposition layout can sometimes be a challenge in terms of keeping production costs low for mid and long runs.

Challenges and opportunities

As technologies evolve and market pressures intensify, mastering the

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essentials of carton converting has become a strategic imperative for those who want to stay competitive and future-ready.

The folding carton industry today is navigating unprecedented complexity. Converters face pressure from multiple fronts:

Time-to-market expectations continue to shrink as brands demand faster response and shorter lead times. Zero-fault production has become the accepted norm.

Sustainability and regulatory changes drive material innovation and require traceability across the supply chain.
Profitability and cost control are under constant strain due to energy prices, raw material costs, and SKU proliferation.

Labor and skills shortages are creating operational bottlenecks that automation helps to resolve.
At the same time, consumer preferences are evolving toward premium, personalized, and sustainable packaging experiences. This is hastening technology adoption and raising the bar for both print quality and structural design; converting is following suit.

Sheet-fed offset printing remains dominant and is evolving through greater automation, extended color gamut (ECG) printing, and faster changeovers. Options for flexo web-fed processes are expanding too, particularly where embellishment and finishing can be integrated inline. Rotogravure, while still valued for long runs, is losing ground due to lower agility, cost effectiveness, and question marks around sustainability.

Digital: The next frontier

Digital technologies that have been developed and refined in label printing are now entering the folding carton arena at scale.

The digital transformation of folding carton converting is not a question of if, but how fast.

Digital printing of cartons is projected to grow with a CAGR far exceeding the industry average of 2.5%. Inkjet alone is set to grow at 11% CAGR through to 2030, having already seen its share of the digital carton market treble from 2015 to 2025. This growth is being driven by the technology's ability to manage shorter runs, enable versioning, and support faster design-to-market cycles.

Digital printing alone does not guarantee agility. True transformation lies in all-in-one digital converting. These systems integrate printing, embellishment, quality control, cutting and creasing into a seamless, automated flow, which dramatically reduces waste, costs and time-to-market.

By consolidating multiple steps into one process, converters can dramatically reduce waste, setup time, handling and production footprint, directly impacting total cost savings.

This all-in-one approach reflects a broader industry shift toward modular, connected production. Machines no longer operate as isolated units but as part of an integrated ecosystem, supported by data analytics, remote diagnostics, and predictive maintenance. The result is greater agility, transparency, and control from file to finished pack.

As converters navigate the next decade, success will depend on mastering three interconnected priorities:

Precision: Every micron matters in carton converting. Investing in advanced registration, real-time monitoring, and tooling quality ensures consistent, fault-free results.

Sustainability: Process efficiency and material stewardship are not only environmental imperatives but also business drivers. Minimizing waste and optimizing energy-use translates directly into profitability.

Speed and agility: With run lengths decreasing and customization rising, flexible production set-ups and digital integration are essential for future growth.

Carton converting may have previously been seen as a technical craft, but today it is a strategic value-adding capability. It shapes how brands deliver value, how converters differentiate, and how packaging aligns with global sustainability and market trends.

The converters who thrive will be those who embrace change and blend the legacy craftsmanship of traditional converting with the intelligence of modern automation and digital systems.

In doing so, they will not only meet today's challenges but also define the future of packaging production.

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Functional Printing: Unlocking Future O

we look ahead: What are the biggest challenges preventing widespread adoption? Which industries stand to benefit the most? How can functional printing scale up to meet demand?

While the technology of functional printing has been on the verge of breaking through for over a decade, there are strong indications that functional printing is finally gaining momentum.

Challenges Holding Back Functional Printing

Despite its potential, functional printing has not yet reached industrial scale in most sectors. Several key barriers still need to be overcome:

Quality Control & Inspection

Many functional print applications—such as printed electronics or medical sensors—can only be fully tested after assembly. This makes it difficult to detect and correct defects early in production, increasing waste rates and costs.

Solution: Advanced inline inspection systems and AI-driven quality control are being developed to improve defect detection.

Certification & Compliance

Most functional print applications fall under strict industry regulations (e.g., electronics, medical devices, automotive parts). Unlike traditional printing, functional print production must meet high safety, durability, and environmental standards.

Solution: Close collaboration with regulatory bodies and standardisation of materials and processes will help accelerate adoption.

Scaling Up Production

Paradoxically, one of the biggest challenges in functional printing is that printing is too productive for current market demand. For example, research from the University of Chemnitz suggests that a single narrow-web or B1 sheetfed press could produce all the solar panels needed worldwide.

Solution: More flexible, multi-application production lines and on-demand manufacturing models will allow companies to switch between different printed products as needed.

High Material Costs & Process Complexity

Functional printing often requires speciality inks and substrates, which are significantly more expensive than standard printing materials. In addition, each production line must be customised for specific applications, making large-scale investment risky.

Solution: Advances in material science and modular production systems will help lower costs and increase efficiency.

Industries Poised to Benefit from Functional Printing

Functional printing has long since proven its ability to transcend traditional printing applications. But which sectors recognise this potential and are actively driving its further development?

There are new opportunities for innovative applications, particularly in areas such as lightweight construction, flexibility, miniaturisation and intelligent surfaces. The following overview shows the sectors in which functional printing can be used:

Printed Electronics – Smart, Lightweight, and Flexible

Functional printing is enabling the production of thin, flexible electronics, leading to innovations such as:

- RFID tags for logistics and supply chain tracking
- Flexible circuit boards for wearables and medical devices
- Printed sensors for industrial automation

pportunities

Renewable Energy & Smart Surfaces
Printed solar cells and energy-harvesting surfaces are becoming more efficient, opening up possibilities for:
- Thin-film solar panels for buildings, vehicles, and portable energy solutions
- Printed batteries and supercapacitors for energy storage
- Smart windows with adjustale light and heat filtering

Medical & Biotech Applications
The healthcare industry is exploring functional printing for biocompatible, low-cost, and scalable solutions, such as:
- Biosensors for disease detection and health monitoring
- Printed drug delivery patches that release medication over time
- Lab-on-a-chip diagnostics, enabling rapid testing for infections or genetic conditions

Automotive & Aerospace – Lightweight and High-Performance Components
Functional printing allows the production of lightweight, high-performance parts, improving fuel efficiency and durability.
- Printed antennas for smart vehicles
- Lightweight sensors for aircraft and satellites
- Conductive coatings for electromagnetic shielding

What's Next for Functional Printing?
The future of functional printing is not about a single breakthrough moment but rather continuous, step-by-step progress. As industries move toward Industry 4.0, the demand for low-cost, high-efficiency manufacturing solutions will keep growing.

Key Developments to Watch
More Hybrid Production Models – Combining functional printing with traditional manufacturing to increase scalability.

AI-Driven Quality Control – Reducing waste and improving precision through machine learning and automation.

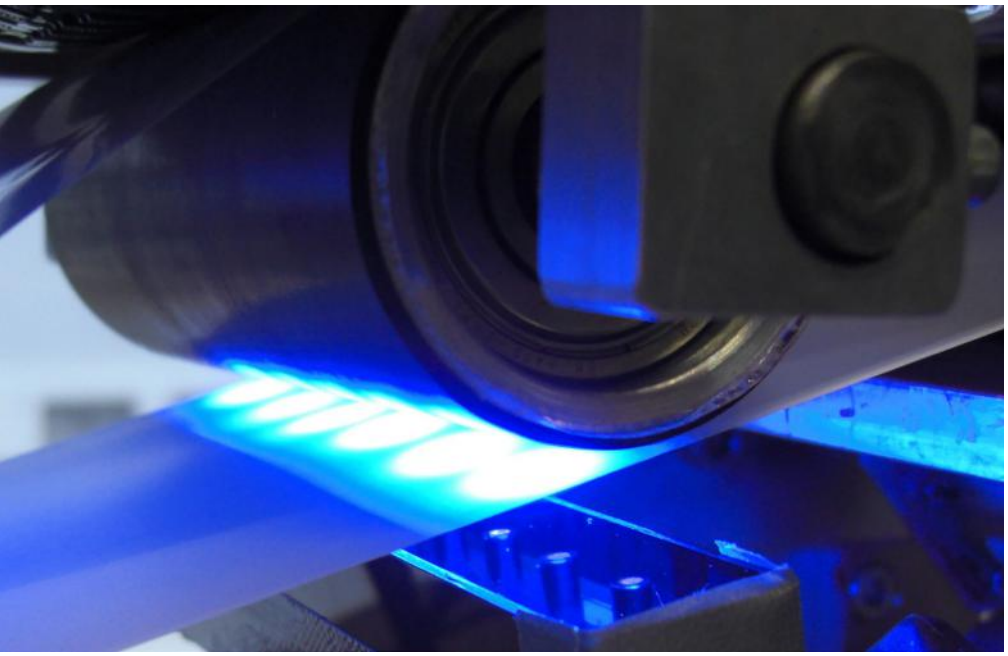
Customisable, On-Demand Production – Functional print service providers could offer multi-application production lines to meet changing market needs.

Sustainable Materials – Development of bio-based conductive inks and recyclable substrates to reduce environmental impact.

Functional printing has come a long way, and while challenges remain, its role in the future of manufacturing is undeniable.

Choosing the Right Technology
Unlike conventional print applications, where visual quality is the main focus, functional printing requires precise material deposition to achieve specific electrical, optical, or mechanical properties. This makes the choice of printing technology a crucial factor in scalability, efficiency, and product performance.

Key Printing Technologies in Functional Printing
Let's take a closer look at the leading



technologies used in functional printing, along with their strengths and limitations.

Screen Printing – High-Thickness, High-Precision Deposition
Screen printing is one of the most widely used methods in functional printing, especially for thick-layer applications like printed electronics, solar cells, and sensors.

Advantages:
- Can print thick layers in a single pass, reducing material waste
- Works with high-viscosity functional inks, including conductive pastes
- Suitable for flexible substrates, making it ideal for printed electronics

Challenges:
- Limited resolution compared to inkjet or gravure printing
- Not ideal for ultra-fine patterns or rapid design changes

Best for: Conductive inks, sensors, OLED displays, and solar cells

Inkjet Printing – Digital, Contactless, and Material-Efficient
Inkjet printing is gaining interest in functional printing due to its digital nature —eliminating the need for printing plates or screens. It's particularly useful when working with expensive functional fluids, as it minimises waste.

Advantages:
- No need for plates or stencils — ideal for rapid prototyping and custom designs
- Contactless process, reducing the risk of damaging delicate materials
- High precision, making it suitable for microfluidic devices and printed circuits

Challenges:
- Limited to low-viscosity inks — many functional inks need modification to be jettable
- Drying and adhesion challenges, especially on non-porous surfaces
- Slower throughput compared to screen or gravure printing

Best for: RFID antennas, microfluidics, bio-sensors, and flexible electronics

Gravure Printing – High-Speed Production for Thin Functional Layers
Gravure printing is known for high-speed, continuous production, making it a strong candidate for large-scale functional printing. It's particularly effective for thin, uniform coatings such as barrier layers and conductive films.

Advantages:
- High-speed process, suitable for roll-to-roll production
- Excellent ink transfer, even for low-viscosity functional fluids
- Consistent layer uniformity, ideal for printed electronics

Challenges:
- Expensive setup — engraved cylinders must be manufactured for each design
- Less flexible for small-scale production or frequent design changes

Best for: Printed batteries, capacitors, and high-volume electronic components

Flexographic Printing – Versatile and Scalable
Flexo printing is a well-established technology in packaging, but it's also being adapted for functional print applications. It offers a good balance between cost, flexibility, and production speed.

Advantages:
- Works well with a variety of substrates, including flexible films
- Scalable for mass production with moderate costs
- Good resolution for fine patterns and conductive traces

Challenges:
- Requires flexo plates, adding production costs for small-scale runs
- Ink transfer can be inconsistent with high-viscosity functional inks

Best for: Conductive circuits, printed electronics, and smart packaging

Choosing the Right Technology
Every functional printing application has its own requirements. Therefore, there is no standardised solution for all applications. Nevertheless, the following recommendations can be derived:
- Do you need thick conductive layers? → Screen printing is the best choice
- Are you processing expensive materials? → Inkjet printing minimises waste
- Are you scaling your production? → Gravure printing offers high throughput
- Do you print on flexible substrates? → Flexographic printing offers a good balance between cost and flexibility

Which process is the right one ultimately depends on the required resolution, material compatibility, production volume and costs. In many functional printing projects, several printing processes are also combined to achieve the best results.

What's Next?
Choosing the right printing technology is a key factor in successfully turning an idea into a functional product. However, whether or not functional printing takes off on a larger scale will also depend on whether a number of very practical challenges can be overcome

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