

PRINT & PACKAGING INNOVATION ASIA MAGAZINE

Serving Printing, Packaging and Publishing Industries across Asia Pacific since 1985 - Issue 3 2026



The interviews you must read



Oliver Thiele
Managing Director
IST METZ SEA
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Dario Urbinati
CEO, Gallus Group
Page 14



Nicolai Bisgaard
Sales Director Asia Pacific
Windmoeller & Hoelscher
Page 20

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China International Exhibition for All Printing Technology & Equipment



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Shanghai Printing Industry Association



ENTRY FORM

Recognising the best in Print production from across Asia Since 2001

25
 YEARS
 IN ASIA



The Awards Dinner will be held on October 15th
 Kerry Hotel Shanghai China during
All In Print China Exhibition

FUJIFILM

Best in Digital Award



Best Use of Colour Award



KONICA MINOLTA

Best In Digital Embellishment

HEIDELBERG

Best In Offset Award

Print Impact Award

Pushing Boundaries, Printing Possibilities

Recognising print that drives measurable business and marketing impact.

Tell us why your work is driving print forward on a separate page

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KONICA MINOLTA

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Please make sure we can read your handwriting

Fill out EVERY section on the entry form (Section A & B)

Maximum 3 entries in each category

You must attend the dinner if you win

Don't miss the Deadline which is August 7th 2026

Allow time for customs clearance



Offset Printing Only

Categories 1- 12 - Offset Printing Only

1. Offset Calendars
2. Sheetfed Magazines
3. Book Printing - less than 4 colours
4. Book Printing - 4 or more colours
5. Limited Editions & Artwork Reproductions (under 1000 print run)
6. Web Offset - Coated stock 70gsm and above
7. Web Offset - Light Weight Coated 65gsm or less
8. Offset Packaging - Soft Carton
9. Offset Packaging - Rigid material
10. Offset Posters
11. Offset Restaurant Menu
12. Offset Labels

Digital Printing Only

Categories 13- 27 - Digital Printing Only

13. Book Printing
14. Digital Calendars
15. Digital Personalised or Photo Books - any format
16. Digital Posters
17. Digital Showcards & Point of Sale material
18. Digital Printing Magazines
19. Digital Special Colours
20. Digital Restaurant Menus
21. Digital Limited Editions & Artwork Reproductions (under 500 print run)
22. Digital Proofing - (must supply digital proof and the printed product)
23. Digital Packaging - Soft Carton
24. Digital Packaging - Rigid Material
25. Digital Labels
26. Digital Embellishment
27. Digital Wedding Invite

Other Categories

Categories 28- 35 - Other Categories

28. Multi-Piece Productions & Campaigns
29. Innovation/Specialty Printing/New technology
30. Company Self Promotion
31. Design and Layout
32. Security Applications
33. Environmental (any process)
34. Sales Catalog (any process)
35. Education (any process)

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 category

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 separate page

SECTION A

Entered by (Company name): _____

Contact Person: _____ Email _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Country _____

Category Number: _____ (Example Cat 4)

Title of entry (ie: "Book of Birds"): _____

Printer: _____

Designer Pre Press House: _____

Brand of Printing Machine: _____

Paper used and Supplier Name _____

Ink Supplier _____

How many colour is the job 4-6-8 etc _____

Plates used if Offset _____

X _____

By signing above you accept the rules and conditions of the Asian Print Awards Competition



SECTION B (TAPE this securely to the back of each entry)

Category Number (same as above): _____ Entry number _____
(Administrative use only)

Title of entry (same as above - ie: "Book of Birds") _____

Print method: _____

Number of ink colours (4-6-8 etc) _____ Any Embellishment (foil stamping etc) _____

Quantity produced (Print run): _____ Other technical details (finishing processes etc)
Please supply on a separate page

Send your entries by 7th August 2026 - at 5pm to:

Asian Print Awards Competition 2026

c/o The Thai Printing Association

311, 311/1 Rama IX Soi 15/1 - Huaikhwang District, Bangkok 10310 Thailand Tel +662 719 6685

You MUST fill out these production details

You MUST fill out these production details



The 2026 Asian Print Awards Checklist!

1. Have you pick your **best work** to be judged?
2. Have you checked the work to make sure it's **"1st class quality"** - no hickies - no scuffing - no miss register?
3. Check it **ONE** more time!
4. Are there **2 copies** for each entry and are they packed correctly for shipment?
5. Have you completed the entry form (Section A & B) correctly and paste Section B onto the back of the entry?
6. Have you left enough time for shipment?

Friday, 7th August 2026 - 5pm is the Deadline.

7. Check that you have written the **address** correctly

Send all entries to
Asian Print Awards Competition 2026
c/o The Thai Printing Association - 311, 311/1 Rama 9 - Soi 15
 Huaikhwang District, Bangkok 10310 Thailand
 Tel: +66 2 719 6685

PLEASE ALLOW TIME FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE WHEN SHIPPING ENTRIES

Declare "No Commercial Value" for Printing Competition on the courier ticket by Friday, 7th August 2026

All entries are **non-returnable**

The Awards Dinner will be held on October 15th at Kerry Hotel Shanghai during
All in Print China Exhibition

at the Shanghai New International Expo Centre
 For more information go to <https://www.allinprint.com/en/>
 email: paul@ppiainnovation.com Tel.: +61 422 869728



The annual Asian Print Awards was founded **25 Years Ago** to recognise outstanding achievement in the print and packaging industries across Asia. With more than half the world's population represented in this fast growing area, communication in the form of printed matter links Asia's diverse cultures. It is imperative that such print achievements do not go unrecognised, especially among the population base that Asia enjoys.

The Awards are judged on a wholly quality-oriented set of criteria to ensure that fair play is enacted at all times.

The **Independent Judging Panel** comprises highly qualified personnel from within Asia and around the world. The independent judging panel has no knowledge of the actual entrants details. ALL ENTRIES ARE NUMBER-CODED. Entries must be commercially produced work.

The Asian Print Awards is the **only regional print quality competition of its kind in Asia**. Supported by leading industry-supply companies, any progressive quality print house should enter and prove that they are the best - by winning the Gold, Silver or Bronze award. Proving pride in quality awareness is what customers love to see. Win and you can prove it!

26th YEAR



ASIAN PACKAGING EXCELLENCE AWARDS:



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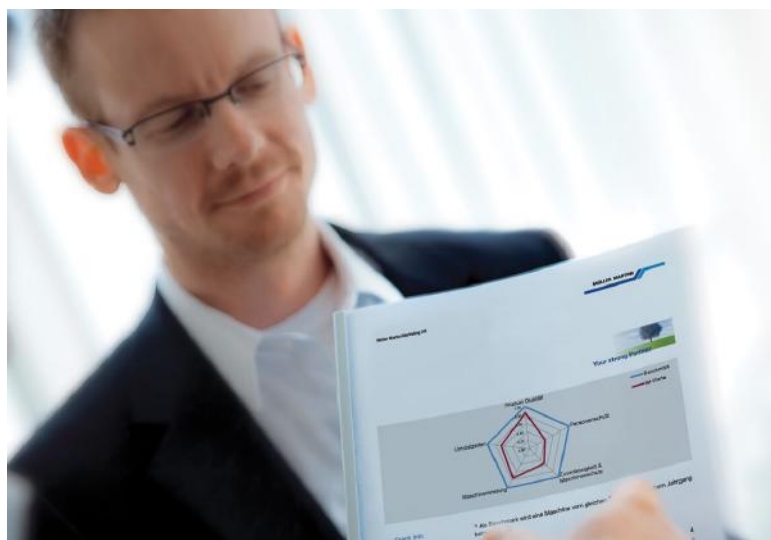
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Our innovation strategy in three key areas.

We talk to Oliver Thiele, Managing Director

Q: Please introduce yourself and your industry experience

OT: I am Oliver Thiele, Managing Director, IST METZ SEA and my career has been closely connected to the international printing and packaging machinery industry for more than two decades. I began working in international sales roles in the late 1990s with Giebeler Druckmaschinen, gaining early experience in exporting press technology to Asian markets. From there I moved to Drent Goebel, where I worked extensively with converters and security printers in Asia, the Middle East and other emerging markets.

Since 2010 I took over the role as Managing Director of IST METZ SEA in Bangkok, where my focus is supporting press manufacturers and converters across Asia with advanced curing technology. Over the years I have seen how strongly the printing technology evolves when mechanical engineering, chemistry and process control come together.

Q: Please introduce your company and the product sectors you support across the region, along with the equipment you supply

OT: IST METZ, founded in Germany in 1977 by Gerhard Metz, is one of the global leaders in UV and LED curing systems for printing and industrial applications. Over more than four decades the company has built a global network and developed curing technologies used in printing presses and industrial production lines worldwide.

In Asia we primarily support label printing, security printing, packaging printing and industrial coating applications. Our portfolio includes high-performance UV systems, LEDcure NX LED modules, intelligent control systems such as SMARTcure, and modular UV lamp cassette concepts that allow converters to retrofit or upgrade existing presses.

Beyond printing we also serve industrial sectors such as furniture coatings,



flooring and electronics. The common objective is always similar: achieving stable curing processes while reducing energy consumption and improving production efficiency.

Q: How have your customers changed? What are today's mainstream customers like and what questions do they ask you?

OT: Converters today operate in a far more complex environment than they did ten or fifteen years ago. Productivity is still important, but today discussions quickly turn to energy efficiency, sustainability and regulatory compliance.

Head office in Germany



Strategy focuses on

IST METZ SEA



Oliver Thiele, Managing Director,
IST METZ SEA

In packaging printing particularly, customers ask how they can minimize migration risks and respond to evolving chemical regulations. They opt for technologies that provide reliable curing performance while reducing dependency on certain raw materials. Another major question concerns flexibility. Converters want equipment that can adapt to different substrates, inks and market demands without large capital reinvestments. This is why modular curing systems and LED technology are becoming increasingly important in modern press configurations.

Q: What special technology do you have for your customers

A. Gravure

OT: Gravure printing remains a highly specialized process, particularly in segments such as tobacco packaging, where visual consistency, high speeds and strict product safety standards are essential.

In these applications inerted UV systems are often used to minimize oxygen inhibition and achieve extremely low migration and odor levels. Reliable curing under inert conditions ensures consistent ink polymerization even at very high web speeds.

For converters working in sensitive packaging sectors this process stability is crucial. It ensures both high production efficiency and compliance with demanding regulatory requirements.

B. Flexo

Flexo printing has become the dominant technology for high-quality label production and is increasingly important in flexible packaging as well. One of the most important developments in this field is the growing use of LED curing, particularly with systems such as LEDcure NX. LED technology provides extremely stable output, instant switching capability





The SEA regional team at the Bangkok office

and lower heat loads on sensitive substrates.

Converters benefit from reduced energy consumption, improved process stability and faster changeovers. In label printing, where short runs and frequent job changes are common, these advantages can significantly improve overall productivity and profitability.

C. Offset

In sheetfed offset printing, particularly for folding carton packaging, curing technology plays a critical role in maintaining high press productivity.

UV offset allows inks and coatings to cure immediately, enabling printers to proceed directly to further processing steps such as embossing, die cutting or finishing. Powder spray can be eliminated, and non-absorbent substrates can be printed reliably.

For converters producing premium folding cartons orders with heavy ink coverage, metallic effects or specialty coatings, stable curing is essential to maintain surface quality and production efficiency.

D. Screen Printing and Special Applications

Screen printing continues to play a strategic role in high-value label production and decorative applications.

Although often used in combination with flexo or offset, screen printing provides unique advantages such as thick ink layers, tactile effects and opaque whites. These capabilities are particularly valuable for premium packaging and security features.

In such hybrid processes, precise UV curing is essential to maintain layer integrity and ensure consistent visual effects.

Other innovative technology – FREEcure

One of the most innovative developments from IST METZ is FREEcure, a specialized UV lamp technology designed to cure certain coatings without photoinitiators or with strongly reduced photoinitiator levels.

FREEcure is based on UVC-optimized medium-pressure mercury lamps that shift the emission spectrum toward deeper wavelengths below roughly

220 nm. At these wavelengths the photon energy becomes high enough to activate double bonds within binder systems directly.

The technology was developed in cooperation with BASF, combining curing expertise with chemical formulation research. Studies demonstrated that coatings cured with FREEcure can achieve double-bond conversion rates above 90%, providing chemical resistance comparable to conventional photoinitiator-based curing systems.

This approach can significantly reduce migration potential and odor, which is highly relevant for packaging applications.

Q: What is your view on the general Packaging industry, are you seeing growth in this area?

OT: Packaging printing continues to be the strongest growth segment of the printing industry globally, and Asia in particular plays a highly significant role in that expansion.

Endless possibilities and applications of UV and LED UV



LEDcure NX
Maximum efficiency meets future-proof technology



FREEcure
Photoinitiator-free UV curing. The future is now.



SMARTcure
AI UV curing process with AI for maximum efficiency and precision



FREEcure



Growth is driven by urbanization, e-commerce and increasingly sophisticated consumer markets. At the same time brand owners expect higher sustainability standards and improved packaging performance.

These requirements create strong demand for advanced production technologies. Efficient curing systems help converters to reduce energy consumption while supporting modern ink systems which are designed for sustainable packaging.

Q: What is your view on the general Printing industry, are you seeing growth in this area?

OT: The printing industry is not declining; it is transforming.

While traditional commercial printing has contracted in some markets, industrial printing applications such as packaging, labels and product decoration continue to grow.

Printing technology is increasingly integrated into industrial manufacturing processes. As a result, reliability, process stability and automation become more important than ever.

Curing technologies play a central role in this transformation because it directly influences product quality, production speed and energy efficiency.

Q: Looking into the near future, what plans do you have to keep your products at the forefront and maybe grow the business across the region

OT: Our innovation strategy focuses on three key areas.

First, the continuous development of LED curing technologies, improving efficiency and expanding application possibilities.

Second, further advancement of specialized UV technologies such as FREEcure, which enable new coating formulations with reduced migration potential.

Third, digitalization and intelligent process monitoring. Modern curing systems are increasingly integrated into connected production environments where data-driven optimization plays an important role.

Q: What is your opinion of AI and the industry. Will this affect our businesses looking ahead

OT: Artificial intelligence will increasingly support process optimization in printing and packaging production.

At IST METZ we are already working with systems such as SMARTcure, an intelligent platform that monitors curing performance in real time. The system analyzes parameters such as

lamp output, temperature behavior and energy consumption.

Based on this data, SMARTcure can recommend optimal operating conditions, helping converters maintain stable curing while reducing energy consumption. Over time such systems will also enable predictive maintenance to improve machine uptime.

Q: The future of your industry sector – where do you see technology in 10 years

OT: In the coming decade we will likely see a strong convergence of energy efficiency, advanced photochemistry and intelligent process control.

LED technologies will continue expanding across many applications, while specialized UV technologies like FREEcure may enable entirely new coating formulations.

At the same time production lines will become increasingly connected, integrating data analysis, predictive maintenance and automated process optimization.

Q: Looking at today's drying equipment, what is the life cycle of replacing old equipment and what are the real benefits

OT: Curing systems can remain in operation for many years, but technological progress has accelerated significantly in the last decade.

Modern systems offer improved optical efficiency, lower energy consumption and more stable curing performance. For converters this can translate into substantial operational savings.

Another important factor is flexibility. Many presses can be upgraded with new curing modules rather than replaced entirely, allowing converters to modernize production lines gradually.

Q: Will your company venture into the digital Print/Packaging area

OT: Digital printing is expanding rapidly, particularly in labels and packaging.

These processes require precise curing conditions to ensure reliable ink fixation and surface performance. Our expertise in UV and LED curing technology positions us well to support these developments.

We continue to work closely with press manufacturers and technology partners to integrate curing systems into modern digital printing platforms.

Q: Final advice for readers: what should companies focus on for survival and why choose IST METZ as a partner

OT: The most successful companies in our industry are those that remain open to innovation. They invest in technologies that improve efficiency, reduce energy consumption and adapt to changing regulatory environments. Curing technology may appear to be a small component of a printing press, but it has a major impact on productivity, product quality and sustainability.

Technologies such as LEDcure NX, FREEcure and SMARTcure illustrate how curing systems continue to evolve together with modern printing processes.

A good example of technological innovation in the industry could be seen around Labelexpo Europe 2025, where Comexi demonstrated advanced packaging printing concepts

including FREEcure solutions, while also presenting electron beam technology in their technology center in Girona as part of broader industry developments.

For converters the key is to work with partners who combine engineering experience with a clear vision of the future.





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Global leader in label & printing technologies

Q&A with Dario Urbinati, CEO, Gallus Group

Q: Please introduce yourself and your industry experience.

DU: With 17 years of experience in the graphic arts and label industry, I've had the opportunity to work across global markets and in senior leadership roles with leading manufacturers, and have been serving as CEO of Gallus Group since 2022.

I first joined Gallus in 2007, where I spent nine years with the company, latterly as Managing Director for Southeast Asia. During that time, I focused on driving growth and transforming the business in a highly dynamic and diverse regional market. I then went on to lead a narrow- and mid-web business in China, followed by a role as Chief Sales and Marketing Officer at ACTEGA Metal Print.

I returned to Gallus in 2021 as Chief Sales & Service Officer, with a clear mission: together with my team, to help guide the industry towards a more successful, sustainable and profitable future. It's a journey we have been driving ever since.

Q: Please introduce your company, and what product sectors they look after across the region, along with the equipment you supply to the region.

DU: Gallus Group, a subsidiary of HEIDELBERG, is a global leader in label and narrow-web printing technologies, with the headquarter in Switzerland and production in Germany. The company has long been recognized for its heritage in conventional label printing and for the precision, reliability, and engineering quality that have defined the brand for generations. Today, we are building on that foundation to help shape the industry's next chapter – driving the shift towards smart, connected printing and more integrated production environments.

We work with converters across sectors such as food and beverage, pharmaceuticals, logistics, and consumer goods, supporting them with a broad portfolio spanning conventional flexo, offset and screen, digital inkjet, and of course hybrid technologies – supported by workflow, service, and application expertise.

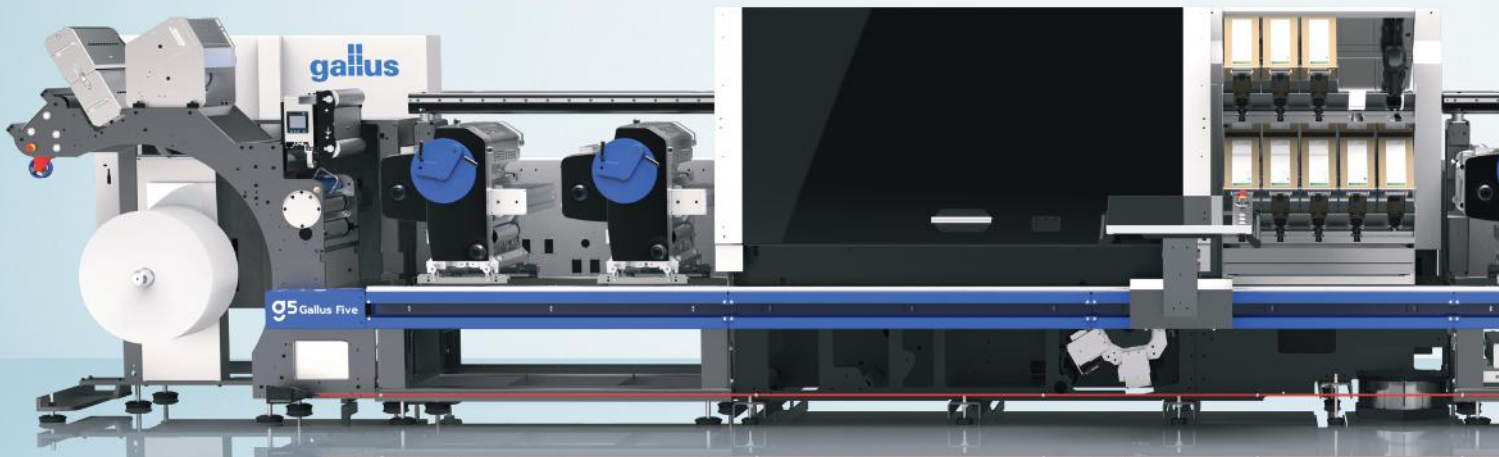
Increasingly, our role goes beyond supplying presses alone. We are focused on helping customers build more flexible, efficient, and future-ready production ecosystems.

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

DU: Our customers have undergone a fundamental shift. In Asia in particular, we see strong growth, but also increasing complexity. Shorter runs, faster turnaround times, and higher SKU variation are now standard. At the same time, market conditio

ns across the region are diverging: some countries are facing tighter labor availability and ageing workforces, while others continue to compete on labor scale and cost. In both cases, the pressure is the same: to deliver greater flexibility, efficiency and consistency in an increasingly unpredictable market. It's no longer just about print quality or speed; it's about longer-term value, including total cost of ownership (TCO)

Gallus Five



& narrow-web



and the ability to scale production without increasing complexity. This is why the conversation is moving beyond individual presses towards building adaptable, future-ready production ecosystems.

Q: What special technology do you have for your customers?

DU: As you'd expect, I could speak at length about the innovations we've

recently developed as part of our commitment to transforming the industry and addressing customer needs. These include, for example, Gallus MatteJet, the first technology to enable inline matt finishing for digital inkjet, and Gallus Five, which brings industrial-level productivity into hybrid production. But for me, what is really special is not any one technology in isolation. It is the fact that Gallus can support customers across a wide range of market needs and segments with the right mix of technologies – delivered in a way that protects investment and enables long-term adaptability.

At the heart of this approach is the System to Compose: a modular concept designed to give customers the flexibility to build the right production environment for their business today, while retaining the freedom to adapt it over time as their needs evolve.

That is how we believe we will truly move the needle: not by championing one technology in isolation, but by combining the breadth of the Gallus

gallus

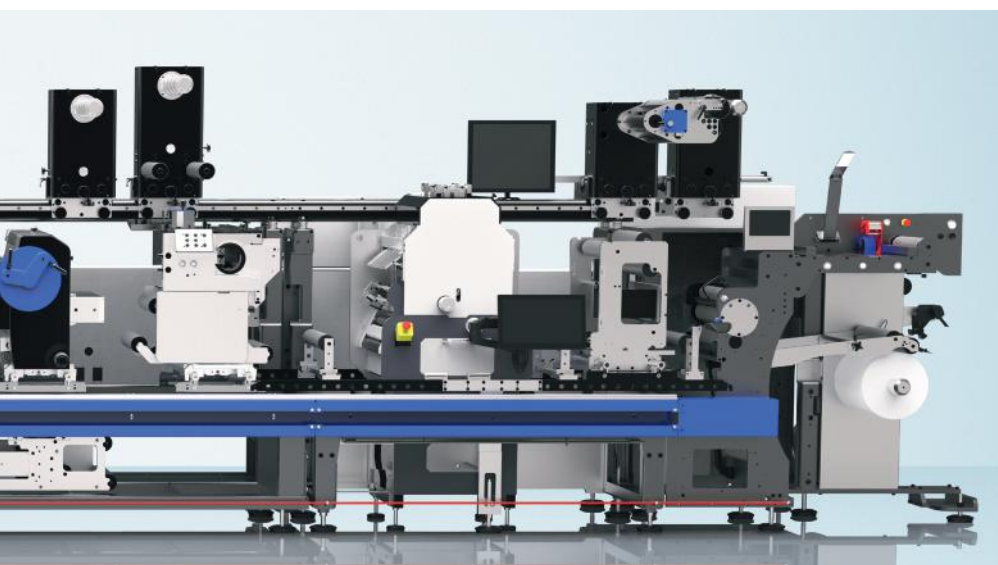
portfolio with a flexible approach to configuration and application. In this way, we help customers bring together the right technologies for their business and build a smarter, more connected print ecosystem over the long term.

Q: What is your view on the general Packaging industry? Are you seeing growth in this area?

DU: The packaging and label sector continues to represent a structurally attractive growth market, and Asia remains particularly dynamic in that respect. Demand is being fueled not only by e-commerce and urbanization, but also by increasing product diversification, tighter regulatory requirements, and growing expectations around brand presentation. For converters, that creates clear opportunity, but it also raises the bar operationally. Greater SKU complexity, shorter runs, and faster turnaround expectations mean success increasingly depends on building production environments that are both flexible and efficient.

Q: What is your view on the general Printing industry? Are you seeing growth in this area?

DU: Across the broader printing industry, we see strong progress towards more digital, automated, and intelligent workflows. The key trend is the move towards connected production, where data, software, presses, and finishing processes work together much more seamlessly than in the past. That's highly relevant for Gallus and for our market, because it reinforces the same principle we believe in strongly: that the future is not about isolated technologies, but about building the right production ecosystem around the customer's needs.





Gallus Labelmaster

Q: Looking into the near future, what plans do you have to keep your products at the forefront and maybe grow the business across the region?

DU: Our focus is on continued innovation in digital and hybrid technologies, alongside increased automation and connectivity. Asia is a key growth region for us, where we see strong demand for scalable and flexible solutions, and somewhere we will certainly continue to invest in local support, training, and partnerships. For me personally, this region is also particularly important. Having spent a significant part of my career in Asia, I have a particularly strong understanding of both the opportunities and the complexity of the market. It is a region I know well and care deeply about professionally, which only reinforces my conviction that Asia will continue to play a central role in Gallus' future growth.

Q: What is your opinion of AI and the industry. Will this affect our businesses looking ahead?

DU: AI is understandably attracting a great deal of attention across the industry, but like any major

transformation, its real impact will come through intelligent application over time, not overnight. For our industry, the most immediate value we see lies in practical areas such as predictive maintenance, workflow automation, performance optimization, and smarter decision-making. But AI is only as effective as the data and connectivity behind it. For that reason, the priority should not be adopting AI for its own sake, but building the right digital foundations and applying it where it can genuinely improve productivity, efficiency, and profitability.

Q: The future of your industry sector you provide your equipment for, if you had a crystal ball where do you see technology in 10 years and longer?

DU: Looking ahead, the industry will move towards fully integrated, automated, and connected production ecosystems, with smart, connected printing broadly becoming operational reality. Machines, workflows, and software will interact seamlessly in real time, enabling greater efficiency, more intelligent automation, and faster decision-making. AI and predictive systems will further reduce manual

intervention, while sustainability will remain a central driver, pushing continuous improvements in waste reduction, energy use, and material efficiency.

At the same time, production will become more flexible and more demand-driven, allowing converters to respond faster to changing job requirements without adding unnecessary complexity. And given the continued appetite for digital, combined with the fact that it still represents only a small share of total label output today, we see significant room for digital transformation to continue accelerating in the years ahead.

Q: Looking at today's equipment, what is the life cycle of replacing old equipment with new and what are the real benefits / impact of doing this.

DU: In label printing, equipment life cycles are often measured in decades, not years, so the real question today is less about when to replace and more about how to maximize performance and value over time.

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A new press can bring major advantages in automation, productivity, quality consistency, and connectivity, especially where customers want to access new applications or take a bigger step towards digital or hybrid production. But that does not always mean full replacement is the right answer. In many situations, upgrading an existing press can deliver strong operational and commercial benefits at a much lower level of investment.

That is exactly why we have built our approach around modularity and lifecycle value. Through Gallus Classics and our broader System to Compose philosophy, we help customers extend the life of their equipment, improve efficiency, and adapt to new market requirements – all while reducing waste and protecting long-term profitability.

Q: Will your company venture into any other areas of Print/Packaging?

DU: Our current focus remains firmly on labels and narrow-web packaging, where we have deep expertise and a strong market position. At the same time, being part of HEIDELBERG gives us access to a much broader base of expertise, market knowledge, partnerships, and technology insight from across the wider print industry.

Whether that is workflow, automation, consumables, service infrastructure, or learnings from adjacent print segments, it gives us valuable perspective that we can bring back into our own market. So while our core focus does not change, we absolutely benefit from being connected to a wider print ecosystem, and that helps us support our customers with a broader, more informed view of where the industry is heading.

Q: Any last words of advice for people reading this interview, what they need to be aware of, look out for or take on board for their business survival. And why choose your company as a business partner for equipment and services?

DU: As we've discussed, the key to long-term success in this industry is adaptability – being ready to respond, whichever direction the market takes and whatever new challenges or priorities emerge. Markets are becoming more dynamic, job requirements more complex, and resources more constrained, so flexibility can no longer be an afterthought; it needs to be built in by design.

That is why I believe the broader, more holistic view will become increasingly important. It is no longer just about investing in a machine, but

about building the right production ecosystem around your business – one that gives you the agility, efficiency, and resilience to evolve over time.

For that reason, choosing the right partner matters. You need a partner with a broad portfolio, deep expertise, a clear view of where the market is heading, and the ability to support you across that full ecosystem as your needs change. At Gallus, that is exactly where we excel: combining modularity, insight-led innovation, lifecycle support, and close customer partnership, backed by the wider strength of HEIDELBERG and a number of close industry partners.

Ultimately, when the industry moves forward, we all move forward, and we see it as our responsibility to continue helping shape that smarter, more connected, and more successful future together.





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Q&A with Nicolai Bisgaard Sales Director Asia Pacific



Q: Please introduce yourself and your industry experience?

NB: I have worked in the flexible packaging industry for 20 years and have lived in Asia for the past 15 years, currently based in Bangkok, where our regional headquarters is located. I am happily married with two children and we consider ourselves global citizens. I was born in Denmark, my wife in Brazil, and our children were born in Bangkok. Thailand and Singapore have been our homes, split roughly equally over two periods each and I have lived myself in other countries such as Zimbabwe and Australia.

Experiencing different cultures has always driven my curiosity, and I am passionate about how global trade creates value by combining diverse know-how, technologies, and resources from different locations. This inspired me to pursue a Master degree in International Business Development during my studies.

I have spent my entire career in the packaging industry, starting with the Danish company Vetaphone, the inventor of corona treatment technology. Through this role, I visited film producers, printers, and converters worldwide, mainly in Asia Pacific. This gave me strong insights into every process from extrusion, extrusion

lamination, coating, lamination, and printing. What appears to be simple everyday packaging is, in reality, highly complex structures and requires deep expertise. This sparked my passion for both the industry and the region.

I later joined Windmøller & Hölscher (W&H), a company I long admired for its innovation and technological leadership. Initially I was responsible for driving the growth in the packaging solutions for the Petrochemical markets in Asia Pacific out of Bangkok. Later I was asked to take up the position as managing director for our Malaysia and Singapore entities, when we started to develop our structures further and built local sales and support



commitments and ensure no unresolved issues



units in every country. Since mid-last year, I have been based in Bangkok as Sales Director for Asia Pacific, responsible for all technologies.

Q: Please introduce your company, and what product sectors they look after across the region, along with the equipment you supply to the region?

NB: W&H is a family-owned company with over 150 years of experience in machine building and innovation. We offer the most complete portfolio in flexible packaging production, covering cast, blown, and water quench extrusion, as well as rotogravure and flexographic printing. Many industry standards were pioneered by W&H, and we continue to push technical boundaries.

To complete the value chain, we partner with leading companies such as Nordmeccanica (lamination), Kampf (slitting/rewinding), and Beumer (bag making), representing them in selected markets.

Our extrusion technologies serve a wide range of applications from standard 3-layer films to complex 11-layer structures for products like meat and cheese packaging. Our SQUAREX water quench blown film technology delivers excellent transparency and film flatness. Other applications include medical films, electronic films (produced on FILMEX cast lines), and load-securing films. These segments are growing due to increasing quality and performance demands.

A key focus area is our "Greenovation" initiative, where we develop mono-material, recyclable structures,



reduce raw material use, and enable processing of PCR resins without compromising quality.

In printing, W&H is a market leader. Our MIRAFLEX CI flexo press, with over 1,000 units installed, is known for reliability and fast changeovers. For long, high-consistency runs, our HELIOSTAR gravure presses are top-tier.

In converting, we provide solutions that turn film or paper into finished products such as industrial sacks and consumer bags.

All of this is connected through our Packaging 4.0 approach. Our digital

platform RUBY integrates machine data, enabling real-time monitoring and optimization, now enhanced with AI. This combination of engineering and digitalization keeps our customers highly competitive.

Q: How have your customers changed, what are your mainstream customers like today. What questions do they ask you?

NB The flexible packaging industry in Asia Pacific has transformed significantly over the past decade—from high-volume, low-cost production to advanced, high-performance, and increasingly sustainable solutions.



Production has shifted from long runs to shorter runs with more SKUs. Smaller converters have evolved into technical solution providers or consolidated into larger regional players to meet global standards.

Sustainability is now a major driver. Customers increasingly demand mono-material, fully recyclable structures such as all-PE or all-PP. With the growth of e-commerce, demand is also rising for durable, "ship-ready" packaging with features like QR codes for traceability.

Customer questions have shifted from pure speed to flexibility and sustainability. For example:

- "Can this line handle 30–50% PCR content?"
- "Can this press run water-based inks to reduce VOCs while maintaining highest print register on thin PE films such as MDO PE?"

At the same time, performance remains critical:

- "How fast can we complete changeovers to reduce waste?"
- "How easy is the machine setup?"
- "How can we maintain consistent high-speed production with limited skilled labor?"

Q: What new special technology do you have for your customers?

In extrusion, one of our most significant innovations - introduced at K2025 - is EASY2RUN, an advanced automation solution for blown film lines. Running extrusion at peak performance requires deep process expertise due to the many variables affecting bubble stability and film quality. As a result, many lines in the industry are being operated with a buffer below optimal capacity.

With EASY2RUN, the operator simply starts the system, and the machine automatically evaluates and adapts all process parameters to maintain stable, high-quality production while maximizing output. This output adapts dynamically to factors such as material recipes and ambient conditions. It is a true game changer for blown film production.

In printing, we introduced our latest CI flexo press, ALPHAFLEX, at Drupa 2024. Originally designed as a standardized entry-level press, testing revealed exceptional stability and performance. It now runs at speeds of 500 m/min maintaining highest average output across different print designs. Internally, we refer to it as "the Beast" due to its consistently high average performance.

Q: What is your opinion of Ai and the industry. Will this affect our businesses looking ahead?

NB AI and big data are shifting the industry from reactive to proactive operations, predicting and preventing issues rather than reacting to them.

We have already integrated AI into our RUBY platform, allowing users to interact with machine data and gain insights from thousands of process variables. Across Asia, the industry is gradually moving from low digitalization toward greater automation and data utilization.

Today, the biggest impact comes from automated optimization - tracking job recipes, improving production planning, supporting faster changeovers, and increasing productivity.

AI's full potential will require further digitalization across the industry, but the direction is clear. Our Industry

4.0 solutions already help producers manage shorter runs with less waste, higher speeds, and minimal downtime - turning data into a competitive advantage. We are continuously developing these capabilities for the future.

Q: Any last words of advice for people reading this interview, what they need to be aware of, look out for or take on board for their business survival. And why choose your company as a business partner for equipment?

NB The industry is moving toward higher technical performance requirements and improved recyclability - two often conflicting goals. Traditional laminated structures, such as PET/PE, are being replaced by mono-material solutions like MDO PE or MDO PP. This shift significantly impacts downstream processes, including printing and bag making.

Our machines are designed for maximum process stability, enabling efficient production with these more challenging materials. With a complete portfolio from extrusion to printing, lamination, and bag making, we can advise across the entire value chain and help customers select the right technologies.

On a final note it's important to mention that Partnership is central to our approach. We deliver on our commitments and ensure no customer is left with unresolved issues. Our strong local presence across Asia enables fast response times and hands-on support. Ultimately, it is our people who make the difference, ensuring customers fully leverage the benefits our technology brings them. We want to remain a key partner for the entire lifecycle of the machines.



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PASSION FOR INNOVATION

Canon strengthens industry leadership through continued support

Canon is reinforcing its commitment to advancing Asia's print and packaging industry through its continued support of the Asian Print Awards and the Asian Packaging Excellence Awards for the third consecutive year.



Katsuya (Kurt) Tode, Director of Regional Commercial and Industrial Printing at Canon Singapore, said:

"Asia's print and packaging landscape is undergoing significant transformation. Canon's focus is to empower our customers with the technologies, expertise, and platforms they need to innovate and compete in an increasingly dynamic market. Industry initiatives such as these awards play an important role in driving standards, inspiring creativity, and accelerating progress."

Canon's participation also reflects its commitment to strengthening collaboration across the regional print value chain. By engaging with industry stakeholders, technology partners, and customers, the company continues to contribute insights on emerging trends — from digitalisation and automation to sustainability and new packaging applications.

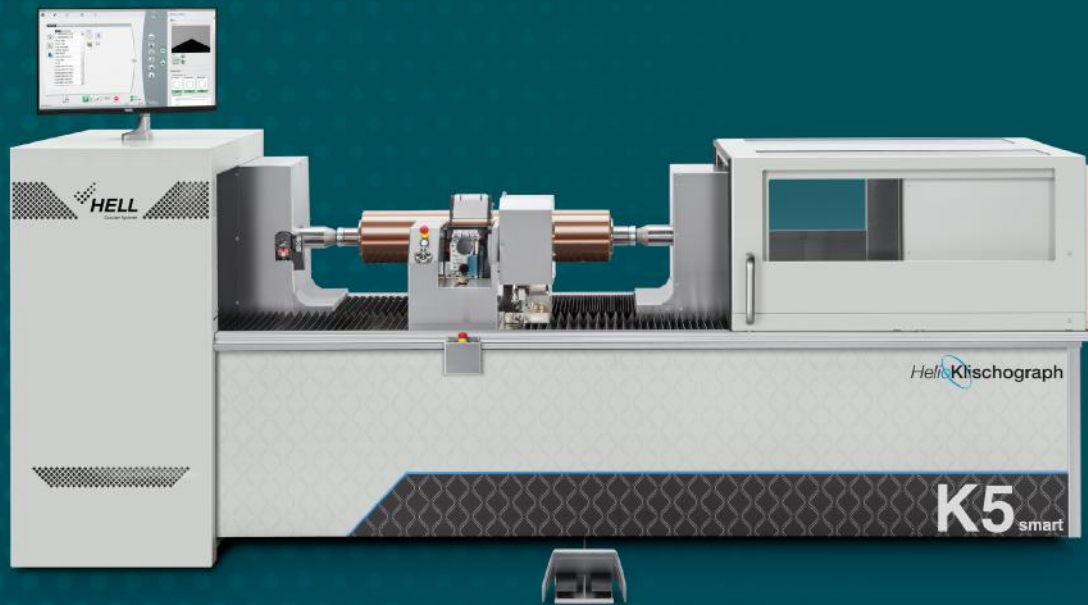
Through these efforts, Canon aims to support the industry's evolution while enabling customers to translate technological advancements into tangible business outcomes.

Beyond recognising production excellence, Canon's involvement reflects its broader role in enabling innovation, transformation, and sustainable growth across the region's rapidly evolving print ecosystem.

As market demands shift towards shorter runs, greater customisation, and higher-value applications, print

service providers and converters are increasingly adopting digital and hybrid production strategies. Canon continues to support this transition by delivering technologies and solutions that help businesses expand capabilities, improve operational agility, and unlock new revenue opportunities in commercial print and packaging.

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Next-generation plate technology for pressroom efficiency and productivity

Miraclon announces the global launch of the FLEXCEL Prime Plate, its most advanced plate technology to date. Designed to retain the industry-leading characteristics of FLEXCEL NX Plates, FLEXCEL Prime introduces new performance-driven features that help printers reduce press stops, improve plate reuse, and increase overall press uptime.

Following a multi-year research and development program and extensive field validation in commercial production environments, FLEXCEL Prime – comprising a new plate and film combination – has already been installed at over 30 customer sites across 14 countries. More than 5,000 commercial print jobs have been produced with the new plate with users confirming tangible performance improvements in daily production.

“Flexographic printing is operating in an environment of tighter tolerances and greater production demands than ever before,” said Reid Chesterfield, Chief Technology & Innovation Officer at Miraclon. “With FLEXCEL Prime, we set out to push the performance boundaries of the plate itself — reducing ink build-up and lowering impression requirements, which extend plate life. These measurable gains translate directly into increased efficiencies and more stable production on press.”

Elevated on-press performance

FLEXCEL Prime introduces two key performance enhancements developed to increase uptime, expand latitude, and deliver more consistent results on press:

- **Lift Resist Formulation:** Engineered for improved plate drape and surface consistency, the Lift Resist formulation eases mounting and re-mounting with reduced plate curl, supporting better plate reuse and contributing to wider press latitude. The plate’s optimized chemical structure requires lower impression and maintains consistent performance over time, helping reduce waste and improve overall equipment effectiveness (OEE).
- **Stay Clean Properties:** Reformulated plate surface characteristics further resist ink build-up and drying during press runs. In combination with Miraclon’s triple-form plate surface patterning (PureFlexo™ Printing), this helps keep plates cleaner for longer

periods, resulting in fewer press stops and easier cleaning between jobs. The outcome is more uptime, less waste, and improved productivity.

“The biggest sustainability gains in flexo happen in the pressroom,” said Emma Weston, Chief Marketing Officer at Miraclon. “By helping plates stay cleaner longer, improving reuse, and maintaining performance with lower impression, FLEXCEL Prime enables printers to run longer and potentially faster — while maintaining the high print quality and consistency associated with FLEXCEL NX Plates.”

Designed for seamless adoption

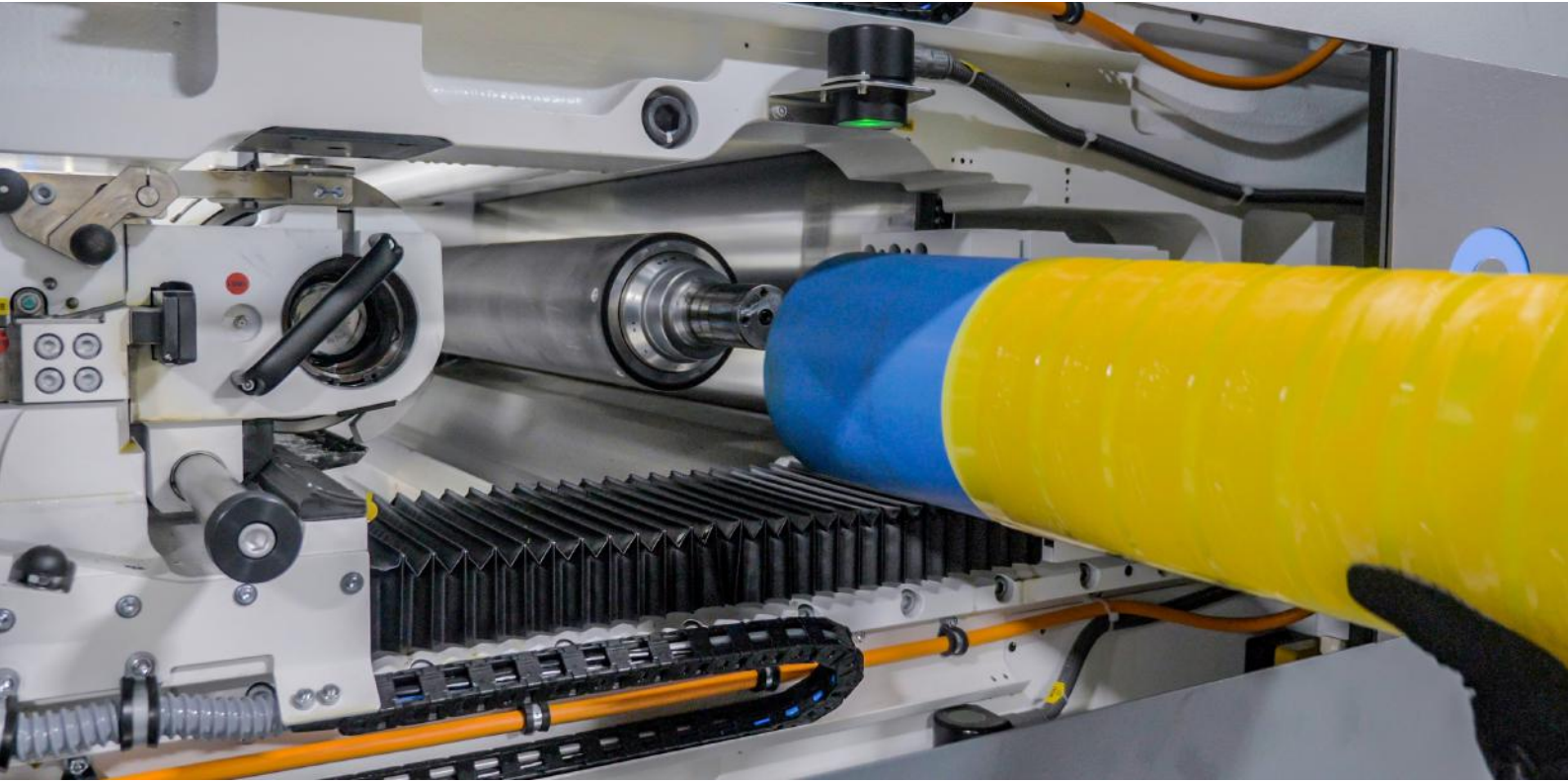
In addition to enhanced on-press performance, FLEXCEL Prime was engineered for straightforward integration. The new plate and film combination integrates seamlessly into existing FLEXCEL NX Systems, and the Seamless Fit Printing approach enables printers to run mixed FLEXCEL NXH and FLEXCEL Prime plate sets without reprofiling, curve changes, or workflow modifications. This eliminates the time, cost, and risk typically associated with introducing a new plate into production.

“For more than a decade, FLEXCEL NX Technology has enabled the adoption of modern flexo — bringing greater process control, higher productivity, and improved sustainability to flexographic printing,” continued Weston “With FLEXCEL Prime, users gain new performance advantages while continuing to operate within



Technology advances and sustainability

miraclo**n**



their established workflows. We made it better, not different."

Smarter, more efficient platemaking

While delivering enhanced performance on press, FLEXCEL Prime also streamlines plate room operations through improvements in processing, inspection, and handling:

- **Faster plate production:** A shorter de-tack/light finishing (UVC) step reduces processing time from approximately 20 minutes to around five minutes, increasing throughput.
- **Simplified inspection:** High black-and-white contrast film improves visibility for faster content and orientation checks.
- **Improved handling:** Operators peel the film from the plate rather than the plate from the film, simplifying delamination. This is particularly beneficial for larger plate formats.

"FLEXCEL Prime represents the next step in the ongoing evolution of FLEXCEL NX Technology and reflects our innovation strategy of building on the same proven platform, ensuring backwards compatibility and protecting our customers' investments," concluded Chesterfield.

"By delivering measurable performance improvements today while preserving a streamlined plate

portfolio that serves the broadest range of flexo print applications, we are helping shape a more efficient, sustainable, and future-ready flexographic production environment for our customers worldwide."

The FLEXCEL Prime Plate is commercially available now and will be integrated with customers systematically in the coming months.



Fujifilm announces Innovation Print Awards 2026

A global competition celebrating creativity and innovation in digital print

FUJIFILM Business Innovation announces the opening of the call for entries for the Innovation Print Awards 2026 (hereafter, "IPA") in April 2026. The IPA, held annually since 2008, recognizes outstanding digital print works produced by users of Fujifilm Group's printing equipment worldwide.



Best Innovation Award 2025 Global
Project team 'Every Single Day' (South Korea)



Best Innovation Award 2025 APJ
Golden Ladies Photo (Chinese Mainland)

The program evaluates printed applications created using the company's production toner and inkjet printers. In the 2025 program, the IPA received 296 submissions from 15 countries and regions, showcasing exceptional works distinguished by creativity, design excellence, and technological innovation, and

highlighting the diverse capabilities of digital print on a global stage.

For users of Fujifilm Group's printing equipment, the IPA serves as a platform to showcase printed works that fully leverage their printing technologies and capabilities, helping them gain wider recognition and create new business

opportunities. Submitted works are exhibited at FUJIFILM Business Innovation showrooms and at various events across different countries and regions, where visitors can directly experience the quality of the printed pieces. Award-winning works gain further exposure through inclusion in the IPA Winners Booklet published by the company, features on the official website and social media channels, as well as coverage in external print and packaging industry media. In addition, the award ceremony held for the winners is highly regarded as an opportunity to honor the designers, creators, and production teams behind the winning works.

Through the hosting of the IPA, FUJIFILM Business Innovation aims to share and expand the possibilities unlocked by digital print on a global scale, contributing to the continued advancement of the graphic arts industry. All works submitted to the IPA exemplify the new value created through digital printing technologies and serve as a powerful driving force that inspires the entire industry by challenging conventional boundaries. Entry Information for IPA 2026

IPA 2026 will be conducted through two parallel programs: "IPA Global," which is open to submissions from around the world, and "IPA APJ," which focuses on entries from the Asia-Pacific region. Click on the banner below for the entry form

INNOVATION PRINT AWARDS 2026

Submission Period: 01 April - 30 June 2026

INNOVATION PRINT AWARDS 2026

**The Innovation Print Awards 2026
is officially open.**

Unleash the power of creative digital printing
- showcase your innovation on the global stage!
Submissions open 1st April = don't miss your chance to shine!

For more information
Please visit:



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Value from Innovation

IPA INNOVATION
PRINT
AWARDS



Future-driven management elevates packaging production to the Next Level.

Speedmaster CX 104-7+L, MK Promatrix 106 FC, MK Diana Eye 55

Founded in 1953 and based in Kashihara City, Nara Prefecture, OKAHASHI Co., Ltd. (President: Mikio Okahashi) is stepping boldly into the future as a packaging printer where tradition and innovation coexist.

As the packaging market grows more diversified and premiumized, OKAHASHI continues to deliver end-to-end production across a wide range of sectors—from cosmetics and pharmaceuticals to food—printing on substrates including board, PP, and PET sheets. With its core operations in Nara and a network that spans Tokyo, Osaka, and Wuxi, China, the company is pursuing global growth.

In 2024, OKAHASHI installed three new state-of-the-art systems: the Speedmaster CX 104-7+L press, the MK Promatrix 106 FC hot foil stamping

machine, and the MK Diana Eye 55 inspection system. "It's not only about solving immediate problems," says President Okahashi. "The key is how these investments contribute holistically to our company's growth." With a long-term perspective, OKAHASHI is making its 70th anniversary a launchpad for a bold new era.

Driving growth through equipment investment and diverse talent

OKAHASHI is tackling the dual challenge of labor shortages and operational strain by aggressively

investing in automation. "Where machine performance can enhance our output, we proactively invest," says Okahashi, citing the measurable results already visible.

The Speedmaster CX104 was selected for its stability and reduced risk of downtime. According to Plant Manager Masayuki Fujikawa, the press now averages 340 jobs and 1.5 million sheets per month, with 30-minute makeready times and a waste rate of just 2%—a substantial leap in productivity.



**Make it real.
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UPM Communication Papers



President Mikio Okahashi and Plant Manager Masayuki Fujikawa in front of the Diana Eye 55 inspection system, installed in 2024.

Complementing the press are new machines from MK Masterwork, Heidelberg's strategic partner in China. Founded in 1995, MK Masterwork specializes in die-cutting and foil stamping solutions. "After numerous tests, we selected equipment that met our performance and quality standards," says Okahashi.

To streamline quality control, OKAHASHI has expanded its inspection processes, aiming to reduce manual visual inspection in favor of full automation. Even as these innovations take hold, Okahashi emphasizes that employee happiness remains central: "Are our employees enjoying their work? Are they fulfilled?"

Automation is also viewed as a necessary long-term solution to the anticipated shortage of skilled inspectors. OKAHASHI is breaking

traditional gender roles by encouraging more women to take up machine and press operation roles. In fact, in August 2024, the company launched a women-led, women-only production facility—a first step in shaping an inclusive, future-ready workplace.

Enhancing customer responsiveness through color management

Looking ahead, President Okahashi sees color management as the next strategic priority. Historically reliant on the skill of individual operators, OKAHASHI now aims to streamline color matching through data-driven processes that ensure consistency and efficiency.

Since last year, Heidelberg has supported the company in standardizing color across existing Speedmaster presses. The next phase is expanding these standards to the

CX 104, with target density and dot gain values currently under review. By implementing color management using Prinect's Inpress Control, the company has dramatically improved the stability of process color reproduction, reduced waste, and eased the inspection burden in final quality checks.

Okahashi anticipates a broader industry shift away from special spot colors to process equivalents: "By reproducing spot colors with CMYK, we gain flexibility and improve customer response time. To do this, color management is essential." The company is now exploring Prinect Multicolor as a means of achieving difficult color matches in packaging applications where spot color use has traditionally been the norm.

Becoming a leader in the industry

OKAHASHI's corporate slogan, "Be United", reflects the company's emphasis on connection and unity. It also serves as a prompt for each employee to reflect on what they need to thrive within the company's growth. "I want OKAHASHI to be a true industry leader—a 'Gulliver' in the field," says Okahashi. "To get there, we must build strong communication between our people and our clients, and continue bringing excellent products to the world."



President Okahashi emphasizes the importance of ensuring that employees enjoying their work.

Speedmaster CX 104. Our global bestseller.

Built for quality, efficiency, and reliability – with over 950 installations in more than 60 countries, it is the globally best-selling press from HEIDELBERG of the current generation. The Speedmaster CX 104 impresses with flexible configurations, seamless integration into the Prinect workflow and strong performance in everyday use. A genuine HEIDELBERG – made for print shops that won't settle for less.

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HEIDELBERG

Small Label, Big Impact: How Labels Drive the Circular Economy

As the global consciousness around climate change intensifies, the pressure on brands to evolve has never been greater. Consumers are no longer just passive purchasers; they are informed advocates demanding transparency and tangible action.

In response, brand owners are setting ambitious circularity goals, striving to weave sustainability into the very fabric of their products.

The mandate is clear: reduce waste, alleviate the strain on virgin raw materials, and maintain a competitive edge in an increasingly crowded market. But for many, the path to true circularity can seem complex. The solution, however, might be closer—and smaller—than you think.

The Mighty Power of the Label

Often overlooked, the label is a "small yet mighty" component of packaging with an outsized impact on a product's overall sustainability profile. It is the first point of contact with the consumer and the final frontier in creating a truly eco-conscious package. Recognizing this, we are strengthening our commitment to the circular economy by offering two distinct, impactful solutions designed to help you meet your customers' demand for higher recycled content—without compromising on quality or performance.

Whether your packaging relies on the durability of plastic or the natural aesthetic of paper, we have an easy and effective way to accelerate your circularity journey.

Solution 1: Easy approach to embrace circularity with UPM Raflatac 30% PCR PP

For brands looking to enhance the recycled content in their packaging, UPM Raflatac 30% PCR PP offers a seamless upgrade. This innovative label stock contains 30% certified post-consumer recycled (PCR) content in



the facestock, allowing you to make a significant sustainability leap with zero disruption to your operations. It delivers the same high-quality performance as standard polypropylene labels, ensuring a smooth transition.

By choosing this material, you are taking a positive climate action, actively reducing your carbon footprint compared to using standard polypropylene. Completed with an FSCTM-certified liner, this solution ensures that every component contributes to responsible forestry and a healthier planet.

Solution 2: Accelerate circularity with RECYCLED COAT PLUS PCR-FSC

For applications where the tactile, natural appeal of paper is paramount, RECYCLED COAT PLUS PCR-FSC is the ultimate expression of circularity. This range is designed to help you make conscious, sustainable choices that resonate deeply with eco-aware consumers.

RECYCLED COAT PLUS PCR-FSC – 100% fibers used in face material are coming from the recycling stream

and sold as FSC® Recycled Credit under UPM Adhesive Materials FSC certificate SGSCH-COC-004849.

The range is FSC certified, which guarantees that all fibers in this range are genuinely recycled. With recycled label material, you help to make the most of every fiber and reduce the pressure on forests. It maintains the same robust functionalities as label material from virgin fibers, making it suitable for home and personal care, retail, and secondary food packaging.

Embrace the Future of Packaging

The journey toward a circular economy requires proactive steps and innovative partnerships. Whether you choose the plastic circularity of UPM Raflatac 30% PCR or the paper-based renewal of RECYCLED COAT PLUS PCR-FSC, you are making a statement. You are demonstrating a commitment to reducing waste, conserving natural resources, and building a more sustainable future—one package at a time.

It's time to meet the demand, exceed expectations, and prove that small changes can lead to a mighty impact.



Easy approach to embrace circularity

UPM Raflatac 30% PCR PP



Contains **30% certified** post-consumer recycled (PCR) content in facestock



A positive climate action with **less carbon footprint** compared to standard polypropylene label



FSC-certified liner for a truly sustainable solution



Equal performance to standard polypropylene label

Indian packaging specialist drives market expansion with high-end automation

- Enormous output: 45 per cent capacity increase expected
- Brilliant finishing thanks to UV equipment and inline coating
- Drastic waste reduction through intelligent automation

The Indian Miracle Group, founded in 2009 by brothers Hemendra, Lokesh, and Amit Agarwal, is transforming the subcontinent's packaging landscape at record speed. With more than 3,500 employees across eight locations, the company plays a key role in the Indian market.

To profitably meet the rising demand for premium packaging, the group commissioned a highly configured Rapida 105 with seven inking units and a coating tower in December 2025. This investment is a direct response to growing market pressure, which demands increasingly shorter delivery times combined with the highest finishing quality.

"Sustained leadership in packaging comes from investing in the right technology, building robust infrastructure and empowering our teams," said Lokesh Agarwal, Managing Director, Miracle Group. "This upgrade allows us to serve customers with greater speed, precision, and confidence."

The collaboration with Koenig & Bauer extends beyond equipment to include technical expertise, application support, and long-term performance optimization – ensuring measurable value for customers and stable growth for the Group.

Technology transfer secures competitive advantages

The new Rapida 105 is tailored precisely to the complex requirements of the Miracle Group. Featuring an enlarged sheet format of 750 x 1,060



mm and a raised press foundation, the system handles even heavy board substrates with ease, even at high speeds. A central lever for profitability is the fully automatic plate changer (FAPC), which consistently converts large portions of set-up time into productive printing time.

"This system is a tool that secures our long-term competitiveness," explains Amit Agarwal, Managing Director of the Miracle Group. "We are already experiencing more stable production with significantly fewer deviations. The combination of UV technology and inline finishing gives our products a durability and visual brilliance that makes the decisive difference at the point of sale."

The investment results in an approximate 45 per cent increase in printing capacity, enabling faster deliveries and enhanced consistency for leading brand owners.

A trusted partnership powering the future of packaging



The state-of-the-art machine delivers products with superior brilliance, high surface durability, and a strong visual impact at the point of sale, while intelligent automation significantly reduces setup time, waste and process variability. This upgrade directly addresses growing market expectations for shorter lead times, repeatable quality and high-volume reliability.

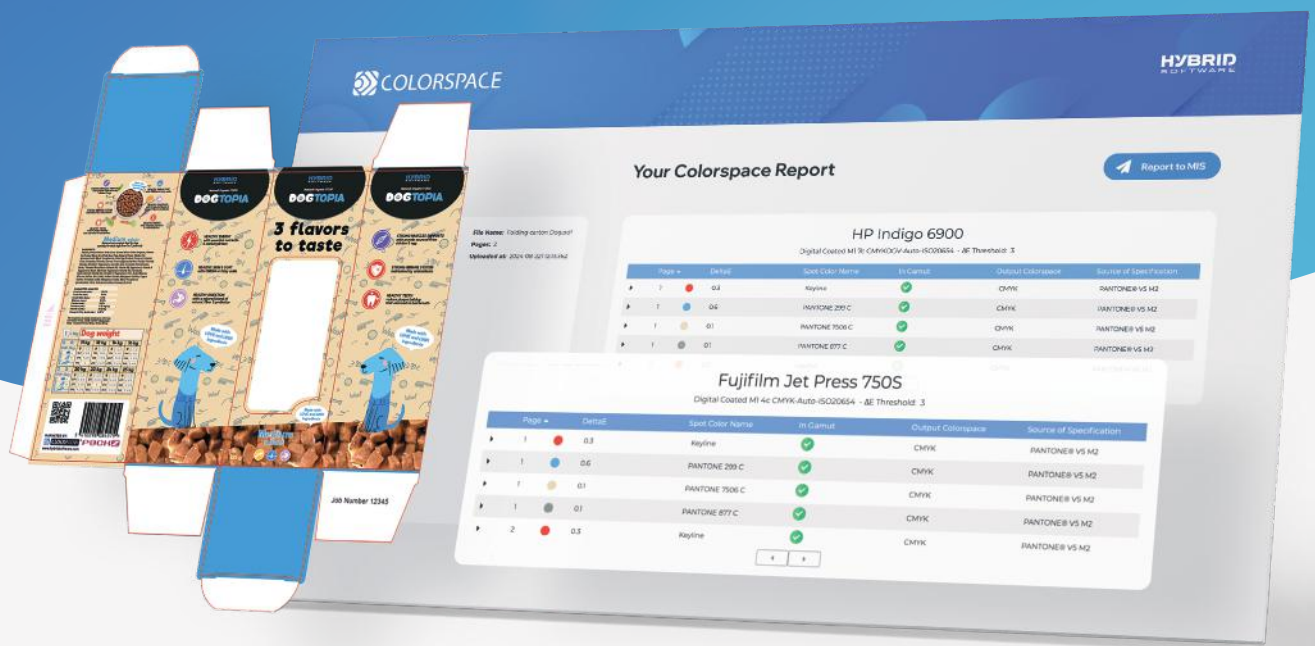
This installation is part of Miracle Group's broader strategy of continuous investment in technology and infrastructure, reinforcing its focus on operational excellence and scalable growth.

Koenig & Bauer acts as a 'Trusted Advisor' in this partnership, not only delivering machinery but also securing the Miracle Group's expansion through local support and technological expertise. The partnership aims to sustainably revolutionize the packaging world through intelligent automation and measurable P&L advantages.



Our integrated color management solution in prepress and production workflow.

- ✓ Achieve cost optimization with Extended Color Gamut printing
- ✓ Spot-on brand color matching
- ✓ Fewer plates, less ink, and digital clicks
- ✓ Increase press uptime

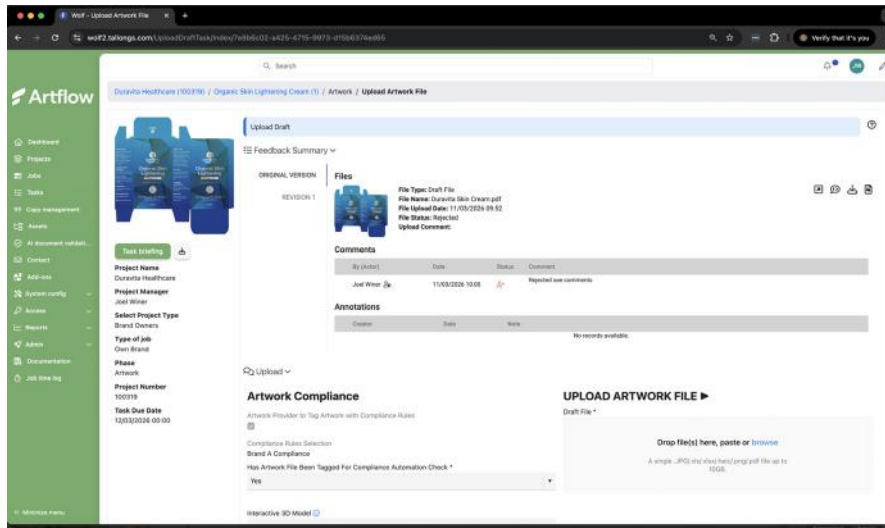


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Pharmaceutical Packaging at a Turning Point

The pharmaceutical industry continues to face increasing pressure to ensure accuracy, compliance, and speed, especially when it comes to packaging and labeling.



Packaging artwork uploaded into Artflow's SaaS platform is automatically checked against integrated compliance rules, helping identify issues early in the workflow.

and compliance text, and compare versions of artwork is helping teams improve both speed and reliability. More importantly, the conversation is shifting from detection toward prevention, with AI supporting processes that reduce the likelihood of errors before they occur.

What was once considered a downstream activity is now recognized as a critical part of product integrity and patient safety. This shift is the central theme at the 15th Pharma Packaging and Labeling Innovation Forum 2026, where industry leaders gathered to explore the future of packaging, labeling, and supply chain innovation.

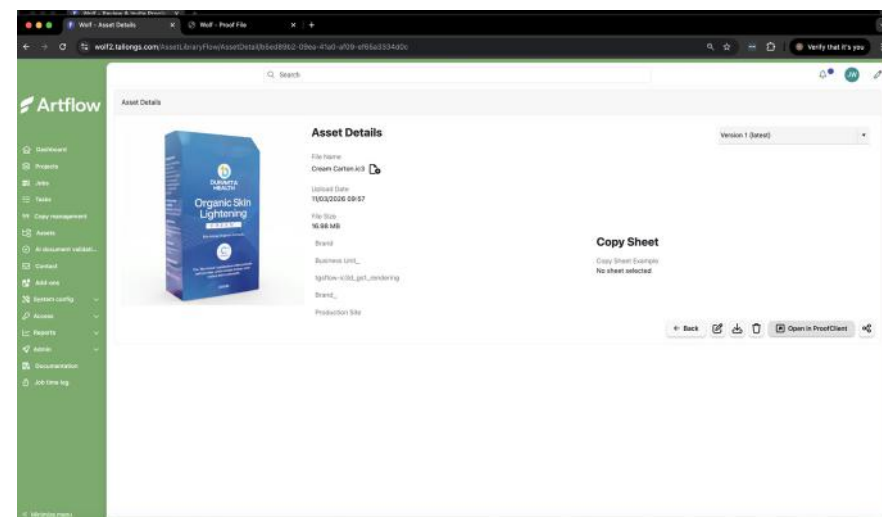
A key trend shaping the industry is the movement of quality upstream. Rather than relying solely on final-stage checks, organizations are increasingly investing in systems

that ensure accuracy from the very beginning. This includes stronger control of labeling content and data, greater use of automation in artwork workflows, and earlier validation steps that reduce downstream risk. As regulatory requirements continue to tighten, even small errors in text, layout, or data can lead to significant delays or costly recalls, making early intervention essential.

AI is expected to play a major role in these discussions. Its ability to identify inconsistencies in labeling content, validate critical data such as dosage

Another important topic is the gap between digital artwork and real-world packaging. Even when files are technically correct, issues can emerge once designs are applied to physical formats, particularly with complex shapes, materials, or finishes. Visualization and simulation technologies are increasingly being used to bridge this gap, enabling teams to preview how designs behave on actual packaging, identify potential distortions or visibility challenges, and reduce reliance on physical prototypes.

The industry is also moving toward more connected packaging ecosystems. Workflows are becoming more integrated, linking structured content and data with artwork creation, approval processes, and production readiness. This level of connectivity supports stronger collaboration across regulatory, design, and production teams while improving traceability and control.



Real-time 3D visualizations powered by iC3D are generated in minutes, enabling fast and accurate proofing before production.

By bringing together AI-supported copy management and data validation, automated artwork workflows through Artflow, and real-time 3D visualization with iC3D, the focus is on enabling earlier intervention and more consistent outcomes across the packaging lifecycle.

Software solutions for labels and packaging printing.

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CLOUDFLOW

Workflow Automation Suite
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ic3D

3D Packaging Software for Product
Visualization and Prototyping



TECH TALK

Speaking of POS

Just 30 kilometers east of Graz in Austria, you'll find a company that has a lot to say at, and about, the Point of Sale. While many competitors are still talking about advertising technology, ARIAN has long moved on to full-fledged campaign management.

Moritz Gasser is Head of Prepress at ARIAN. Together with Clemens Graf from GMG, they recently upgraded redesigned the company's color management workflow solutions. TrueColors met up with the two color experts for a tech talk – not only to look back at their project, but also to take a peek into the future.

And since ARIAN starts with an A, let's start right at the beginning: Who – or what – is ARIAN?

Moritz Gasser: We started more than 50 years ago in screen-printing. We had multi-color presses, automated screen exposure, the works. Although that was quite a while ago, even back then we already had GMG ColorProof and GMG ColorServer with GMG InkOptimizer in place. Screen printing isn't part of ARIAN's offering anymore. These days, we're focusing purely on digital printing – and fabric printing. GMG ColorProof has been with us on that entire journey, including the realignment of color management for digital printing. Things got especially interesting when we invested in our new multicolor single-pass press – running extended gamut with orange and violet. That's when I came across GMG OpenColor. We already had GMG ColorServer in-house, but until then we only used it for RGB-to-CMYK conversions.

When people hear digital printer, they probably picture a typical print factory. Is that accurate, or is there more to it?

Moritz Gasser: ARIAN lives and breathes POS. Most of what we produce is for that space. Our portfolio covers nearly everything for POS campaigns: from fabrics for lightboxes, corrugated cardboard displays, to window and floor stickers. But yes – you're right – printing isn't the whole story. As a full-service provider, we also offer complete campaign management.

Campaign management – what does that mean?

Moritz Gasser: Simply put: we make sure everything arrives at the right place and on time. That means we don't just print – we cover the whole chain, from concept to data prep, printing, customs clearance, logistics, and even installation if needed. We ship directly to individual stores – even as far as Indonesia or Australia. Our clients don't have to worry about project management, organization, or logistics.

Do you focus on specific industries?

Moritz Gasser: Not really. We cover just about everything: retail, food, entertainment, events. For retail, we produce a lot of front- and backlit banners since their stores are



Design expertise meets production know-how.

Photos: Michaela Begsteiger



Moritz Gasser, Head of Prepress, knows: "A proof is indispensable, even in digital printing."

primarily decorated with printed fabrics. With our Nozomi press, we can also make high-quality corrugated displays, which are huge in retail. Or take our counter displays – we run those on the JetPress 750. Paired with different laminating and mounting systems, we deliver outstanding results – best enjoyed close-up.

And who usually hires you – creative agencies, production agencies, shopfitters, brands, or retailers?

Moritz Gasser: It really varies. There isn't one typical scenario. No matter who our point of contact is, we adapt to the customer's needs.

Are your contacts at brands and retailers generally technically up to date, or is it easier to work with production agencies that already have more know-how?

Moritz Gasser: Good question. My experience is that brands and retailers often employ very competent people. Their technical understanding is usually high, and communication is excellent. If we suggest an optimization, the feedback is always positive. And when it comes to consistent production data, we can fully rely on GMG's technology.



Clemens Graf, Service Technician at GMG: "When it comes to know-how, ARIAN definitely ranks at the top."

GMG provides not just software but also services and consulting. Clemens, how was the collaboration with ARIAN – was it on equal footing?

Clemens Graf: ARIAN is extremely well set up. Just look at their huge, very impressively equipped press room. If I remember correctly, I even spotted an old screen-printing press in the corner.

Moritz Gasser: That one has gone now!

Clemens Graf: In any case, with the Nozomi, the JetPress, and the fabric printers, you're dealing with a completely different generation of printing presses that must be managed perfectly. How you do that impresses me immensely. I was on site for two or three days, and the collaboration was – how should I put it – smooth as silk. The installation went extremely well, thanks in part to the teams existing familiarity with our software. Everyone knew right away what we wanted to achieve. In terms of know-how, ARIAN is absolutely top tier. To this day, ARIAN's support ticket count is exactly zero.



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.

www.gmgcolor.com/products/colorserver



For large-scale campaigns, precise color matching is essential – especially when it comes to different POS products like banners, displays, counter displays, and decals, all printed on different materials.

Did you have a detailed briefing beforehand?

Clemens Graf: I got the initial brief from my sales colleagues and gathered some additional information myself, but you never really know until you're on site. And I was very pleasantly surprised. For example, when new presses are installed, there are usually questions about RIP functions. At ARIAN, the team was so well prepared we didn't have to run back to the manufacturer for clarification.

Moritz Gasser: Everything went really smoothly – even though the Nozomi 18000+ was a first for GMG too. Our expectations were fully met. Now we know exactly what the print results will look like before a job is on press. People often underestimate this, but makeready is a huge factor even in digital printing – especially on a large press. If a job has to be adjusted on press – more blue here, a little less red there – you will easily lose an hour or two, and the result is still unpredictable. GMG OpenColor helps us avoid that. But the project isn't finished yet. Clemens mentioned our varied machine park – we want consistent results across all systems, whether CMYK or 6-color. I'm now working on the JetPress.



Even with state-of-the-art machines like the JetPress 750, the trained eye of an expert is crucial to meeting customer expectations.

And what about proofing?

Moritz Gasser: GMG ColorProof has been a cornerstone for us for years. Even in digital printing, a proof is indispensable as a binding reference for the press pass – especially on presses not yet integrated with GMG OpenColor. Our clients benefit from this predictability, and so do we. For example, if we're printing on uncoated corrugated board, we can simulate the result with GMG ColorProof beforehand. What will the design look like on that material? We can answer that very reliably. Proofing isn't a new topic, but in practice it still creates plenty of "wow" moments.

So, with GMG OpenColor you're not only creating separation profiles but also proof profiles that map the entire process – including substrate properties?

Moritz Gasser: Exactly. Based on GMG OpenColor, we either send a job straight to the press or first to the proofer. The latter is of course a much more cost-effective solution. Proofing also makes sense from an ecological perspective. Some customers even send us their own proofs – very often created with GMG solutions as well. What we notice, however,

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Photo: ARIAN

Keeping up to date: ARIAN's sales teams receive regular training in new proofing methods, such as the simulation of print data on various substrates.

is that many are still working with ISO Coated v2. Given the widespread use of optical brighteners, PSO Coated v3 is often the better choice today.

Clemens Graf: I can confirm that. Even though PSO Coated v3 has been around for several years, even experienced professionals seem to resist change. On the other hand, at the GMG Academy, we're increasingly seeing people coming directly from big brands who are very open to new developments. Either way, if standard datasets are still being created with ISO Coated v2, at least you know what you're dealing with. That's still better than having 25 different files with 46 different profiles inside.

Innovation in color management is part of GMG's DNA. But if so many customers hold on to old profiles, the question is: are they even ready for new technologies? Put differently: how important is high-end color management really?

Clemens Graf: Most brand owners place great importance on their exact brand colors. On the other hand, there are also business models where that level of precision just isn't as

critical. We even have customers who honestly don't care much about color at all. They use GMG ColorServer simply to print a bit more efficiently. I think the gap between "I need perfect color" and "color doesn't really matter" will only grow wider in the future.

Moritz Gasser: At ARIAN, we like to be at the forefront, and by nature, we place great value on perfect results. That makes us very open to any innovation or technology that helps us produce even better. From our beginnings in screen printing to where we are today, we've proven our ability to transform again and again. Wherever the journey takes us – I'm absolutely certain we'll never see change as a problem. We're always welcoming new ideas.



Photo: Stefan Leitner

Strong offering: ARIAN produces POS campaigns in consistent colors across different digital printing systems.



Photo: ARIAN

From the outside, the company in Eastern Styria looks just as clear and concise as it does on the inside.

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Will AI Replace Prepress Operators Or Finally Let Them Focus on

Lately, the topic of AI in prepress has come up a number of times in conversations with converters. Some are excited about AI. Some are wondering where it's headed. And others are convinced it will replace prepress operators.

For sure, AI brings transformation and perhaps disruption. However, I've been around prepress long enough to see the industry and prepress operators reinvent themselves more than once, and the advent of AI means another instance of the same.

From my experience, every time prepress has evolved, both companies and operators have benefited. I expect this to be the case again, except perhaps that in this instance, AI and prepress operators will combine their unique brain power to create the next level of efficiency and automation together.

There was a time when a single person owned everything from design to final output. Then came specialization: interactive editing, dedicated prepress teams, and expert tools, all of which caused design to move upstream. In the early 2000s, rules-based automation was introduced, responsibilities shifted, and efficiency steadily improved.

On paper, that should have made the prepress department quieter. In reality, the opposite happened. Every time I talk to prepress operators today, I hear the same thing: "We've never been busier!"

That paradox, generally known in economics as Jevens Paradox, is what keeps this conversation interesting as well as urgent.

Automation Created Free Time, but Industry Dynamics Filled it. Yes, automation removed work and created value. But new pressures filled the gap almost immediately. The biggest one? SKU explosion:

- More variants
- More regional versions
- More frequent updates
- Lower volumes per job

What used to be a single artwork now becomes dozens of near identical files, each needing to be correct, compliant, and first-time right press ready. The total workload hasn't gone down; it's multiplied.

At the same time, designers were never expected to be prepress or print experts, and they don't have a KPI on the printability of their designs. Their focus is on design and shelf impact.

However, today, with powerful AI design tools at their fingertips, many no longer need to understand printing at all. AI helps them move faster, experiment freely, and push visual boundaries.



Esko ArtPro+ Smart Select nicely illustrates how AI assists into logical objects that operators can



AI in Esko ArtPro+ makes object replacement (e.g. a logo) only – and re



GO FURTHER

Operators — What They Do Best?



...prepress operators turning thousands of vectors
...easily select and safely edit



...update) intent aware, – to use approved assets
...versible

About the Author

Geert De Proost brings more than 30 years of experience in software, packaging, and customer-driven innovation. Over the years, he led the evolution of multiple software domains — including RIPs, screening, color management, Digital Front Ends (DFE), and workflow automation — culminating in an 11-year tenure as Esko's Director of Software Product Management. After three decades with Esko, Geert moved into his current role leading Esko's software offering for labels and packaging converters. Today, he ensures that Esko's commitment to converters is not only maintained but strengthened — translating industry insights into solutions that help converter businesses grow profitably and sustainably.



That's great for creativity and design. But it doesn't help with prepress and production.

And brands? They're fully aware that packaging is one of their most powerful marketing assets. Shelf shout, differentiation, emotional engagement... these all happen on pack. Designers now use every tool available to maximize visual impact. Many of these tools are AI-powered (think Canva, for example). The result is packaging designs with complex effects, dense artwork, and unconventional structures. Visually stunning, yet technically fragile. This complexity inevitably lands on the prepress desks, making editing more complex than ever.

Quality Expectations Haven't Relaxed. They've Tightened.

What makes this even more challenging is that quality tolerance

has effectively dropped to zero.

In packaging in general, and in regulated markets in particular, errors aren't embarrassing. They're expensive and sometimes dangerous. For example, in food safety, regulatory compliance, transparency, and traceability functions, there's no room for interpretation or approximation. This means prepress operators are expected to:

- Process more jobs
- Handle more complexity
- Catch more errors
- Work faster
- And still deliver first-time-right quality

All of this is happening while labor shortages are on the rise, and new generations are entering the workforce with very different expectations about how work should be done.

Something must give.



AI Won't Replace Prepress. It Will Redefine What "Expert" Means.

Whenever AI enters the conversation, the fear is predictable: Is this going to replace people? In my experience, that's the wrong framing. AI is not here to replace prepress expertise. It's here to protect it.

What we're seeing now is the emergence of a new efficiency layer. One that offloads the repetitive, interruption-driven and non-value-adding work that consumes expert time today.

Higher design complexity dramatically increases the risk of an operator unintentionally introducing an error while trying to fix one. When artwork contains thousands or even millions of vectors, making even a small change can become risky and time-consuming.

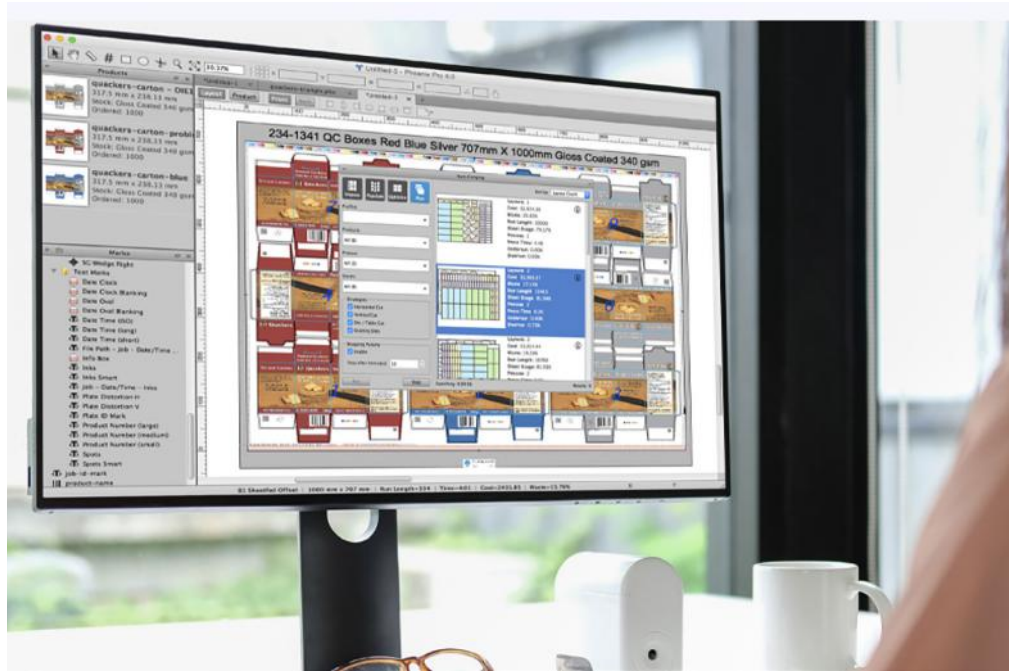
Traditional applications offer powerful tools for experts, but they were never designed for the exponential growth in design complexity we see today. This creates frustration for operators who are expected to work faster while maintaining strict quality standards.

This is where AI and prepress operators complement each other very well. Take Smart Select in Esko ArtPro+, for instance. It turns thousands of individual vectors into logical objects, allowing the prepress operator to easily select and safely edit without any risk of inadvertently introducing an error.

This doesn't deskill the job. It removes unnecessary effort, delays, and frustration, so experts can focus on the work that truly requires their expertise.

Quality Control at a Scale Humans Can't Match

AI dramatically increases both accuracy and capacity in quality



control. Unlike humans, AI doesn't get tired. It doesn't lose focus on the 37th SKU variant. It doesn't miss the same error twice. That doesn't mean the prepress and quality control teams step away from quality. It means they stop spending their days looking for problems and start focusing on solving the ones that matter.

Breaking Down Departmental Walls

One of the most underestimated drains on prepress productivity is interruption. Insights from many customer interviews provide evidence that the interruptions account for 20-40% of a prepress operator's time. This is a pure margin leak. Many interruptions come from customer service representatives, and the requests can generally be sorted into 2 categories:

Request to run a preflight on incoming jobs

In my blog about job onboarding, I elaborate how empowering CSRs with the relevant technology without requiring them to be experts can eliminate these interruptions.

Request for very small changes, such as text changes

This sounds like a logical request as all editing is done by prepress. However, this can quickly become overwhelming.

Think of a label converter serving the wine industry where hundreds of labels need to be updated. Agentic AI can

change this as it allows non-experts to use natural language to make the changes without touching the file.

However, Agentic AI alone is not the answer. The real value comes from combining embedded packaging intelligence in the graphics engine with Agentic AI. This further empowers the CSR and enables the print buyer to make these changes safely themselves (with an additional bonus that this would eliminate another approval cycle for all these SKUs as well).

In any case, it removes non-expert tasks and interruptions from the prepress operator's workload.

Honoring the Role of Prepress, Not Eroding It

I strongly believe AI helps prepress operators continue to do a top-notch job. It removes overhead from their job and allows them to focus on the things only they can do to ensure high quality work.

The role of the prepress operator isn't disappearing. If anything, it's becoming more valuable. AI ensures that future experts aren't spending their days fixing avoidable issues, but overseeing quality, defining guardrails, handling exceptions, and helping the entire value chain work smarter.

I see no replacement on the horizon, only a natural evolution to the benefit of the converters and indeed the prepress operators themselves.





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Vice President Gunwung Park, MYUNGJI P&P

Accelerates quality, efficiency, and sustainable growth with BOBST

South Korea-based flexible packaging company, MYUNGJI P&P, took a leap forward in 2021 when it invested in the BOBST RS 5003 gravure printing press and the BOBST compact multi-technology laminator, from the VISIONLAM 800 series.

Four years on, this decision has propelled the company to the verge of a major expansion with a new factory planned to significantly increase production capacity. This growth is underpinned by measurable gains in productivity, print quality and sustainability.

Founded in 1989 and headquartered in Hwaseong-si, Gyeonggi-do, MYUNGJI P&P has established itself as a one-stop manufacturer specializing in a wide range of flexible packaging solutions, including stand-up, 3-side seal, quad-seal, flat bottom, and pinch bottom formats. The company's cutting-edge rotogravure printing, lamination, and

pouching capabilities have earned it a strong global presence, serving 397 customers across sectors like pet food, retortable applications, medical packaging, and coffee & tea. With 60% of production exported, MYUNGJI P&P boasts a strong presence across Malaysia, Germany, Australia, the UK, and the USA – success driven in part by the adoption of BOBST technology.

Vice President Simon Gunwung Park highlights the strategic value of the partnership: "With three gravure presses, three solvent-based laminators, one solventless laminator, and ten pouch-making machines, MYUNGJI P&P is renowned for

excellence in printing and converting. Our five-year collaboration with BOBST has been pivotal in maximizing efficiency and delivering the superior print quality our customer's demand."

The choice to invest in BOBST equipment was driven by its global reputation and technological edge. The BOBST RS 5003 gravure printing press delivers uncompromising speed and precision with consistent ink distribution even on challenging substrates.

Its advanced automation, including the Total Automatic Pre-Register Setting (TAPS), minimizes waste and

Too Much Color for CMYK.

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accelerates job setup, boosting both throughput and sustainability.

The BOBST RS 5003 press is designed to offer superior performance on multiple flexible materials. This gravure printing platform offers high quality printing with no compromise on speed, achieving precise and uniform ink distribution even on challenging substrates.

Automation features like its Total Automatic Pre-Register Setting (TAPS) streamline production with minimal waste, bolstering throughput and sustainability alike. In addition, the RS 5003 makes it easier for operators to run the machine efficiently, helping maintain continuous production and simplify changeovers.

Complementing this, the BOBST VISIONLAM 800 laminator is ideal for medium-to-long production runs of premium flexible packaging. Featuring a 9-meter drying tunnel and motorized rollers, it supports diverse substrates at speeds up to 400 m/min. Its integrated automation and digital connectivity streamline job changeovers and enhance uptime, aligning with MYUNGJI P&P's goals for cost control and sustainability.

Despite pandemic-related challenges, the installation of these sophisticated machines was seamless. The efficiency of BOBST's technology has helped to reduce waste and downtime, supporting MYUNGJI P&P's cost control

and sustainability goals. The easy-to-use interface has been embraced by younger operators, enhancing workforce efficiency and confidence, and BOBST's ongoing support through its HELPLINE service subscription has ensured long-lasting improvements to uptime and performance.

"The new BOBST machines are helping us build both confidence and value," added Park. "They are a good fit for our operators and deliver the productivity and print quality we need to stay competitive. When we first saw them first-hand during a visit to BOBST's Changzhou factory, we immediately knew that this technology was perfect for our requirements."

As customer demand shifts toward shorter runs and recyclable mono-material packaging, MYUNGJI P&P's investments in BOBST machinery

are helping the company prepare for the future. MYUNGJI P&P has already announced plans to expand with a new factory that will increase its pouching capacity, and combined with its BOBST technology and ongoing partnership, it is positioning itself well to capture the growing demand for more sustainable packaging.

"Eco-conscious products like recyclable bags are taking a growing share in the market because they are starting to affect end-users' purchasing habits," said Park. "At MYUNGJI P&P, we treat sustainability as one of our core values, and we are committed to offering 100% recyclable, biodegradable, and compostable packaging options to meet evolving environmental demands. With BOBST as our partner, we are confident in leading this transition."





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Giving Shape to Ideas

"Connex workflow view is reshaping how production is viewed"

Sometimes how well a solution truly performs only becomes clear once it is put to use. When Connex Workflow View was first tested in live production, it quickly proved to address a genuine need.



Fabian Becker Product Manager Workflow Connex

During production, the operator was able to continue working without additional questions, without reviewing the job list, and without any uncertainties all thanks to the clear display on the large monitor. The information was easy to understand right away, ensuring smooth workflows. Why we developed Connex Workflow View

In many conversations with customers, I realized how much uncertainty an operator faces in their day-to-day work. What jobs are next? How much time do I have to prepare? When do I have to intervene, and on which machine? And how can I make sure that I don't overlook anything? This is where Connex Workflow View comes into play: It brings transparency, predictability, and reliability to production. All at a glance.

-Real-time jobs on a large screen

The heart of the module is the

visualization: All jobs loaded via Connex appear on a large monitor in real time. This sounds simple, but it changes the dynamic in the room. The order of the jobs is clear, the next steps are obvious, and no one has to switch back and forth between information systems any longer.

- Reliable order and timing

Machine operators immediately know what production job is next and which tasks they have to prepare. This helps reduce stress and prevent errors. At the same time, it results in a new form of predictability: Production is not only executed – it is planned ahead.

- The future in view

I'm especially proud of the visualization of future tasks. It shows the next 20 jobs, so everyone knows what's coming in the minutes and hours ahead. This makes production calmer, more structured, and more efficient.

A real-life example

I remember this one time visiting a customer. The three-knife trimmer was running, and the operator was unsure whether they could position new covers on the saddle stitcher or it was time for a changeover. With Connex Workflow View, the answer was immediately clear. They had time. Enough time. So they positioned the new covers without rushing, without risk, without interrupting the production flow. Precisely these moments show how valuable transparency is.

Complexity becomes manageable

Another good example: The customer loads a job with different configurations to be produced as a multi-job on the conventional saddle stitcher. We have different feeders, different signatures, and different assignments. A nightmare if you're only working with paper lists.

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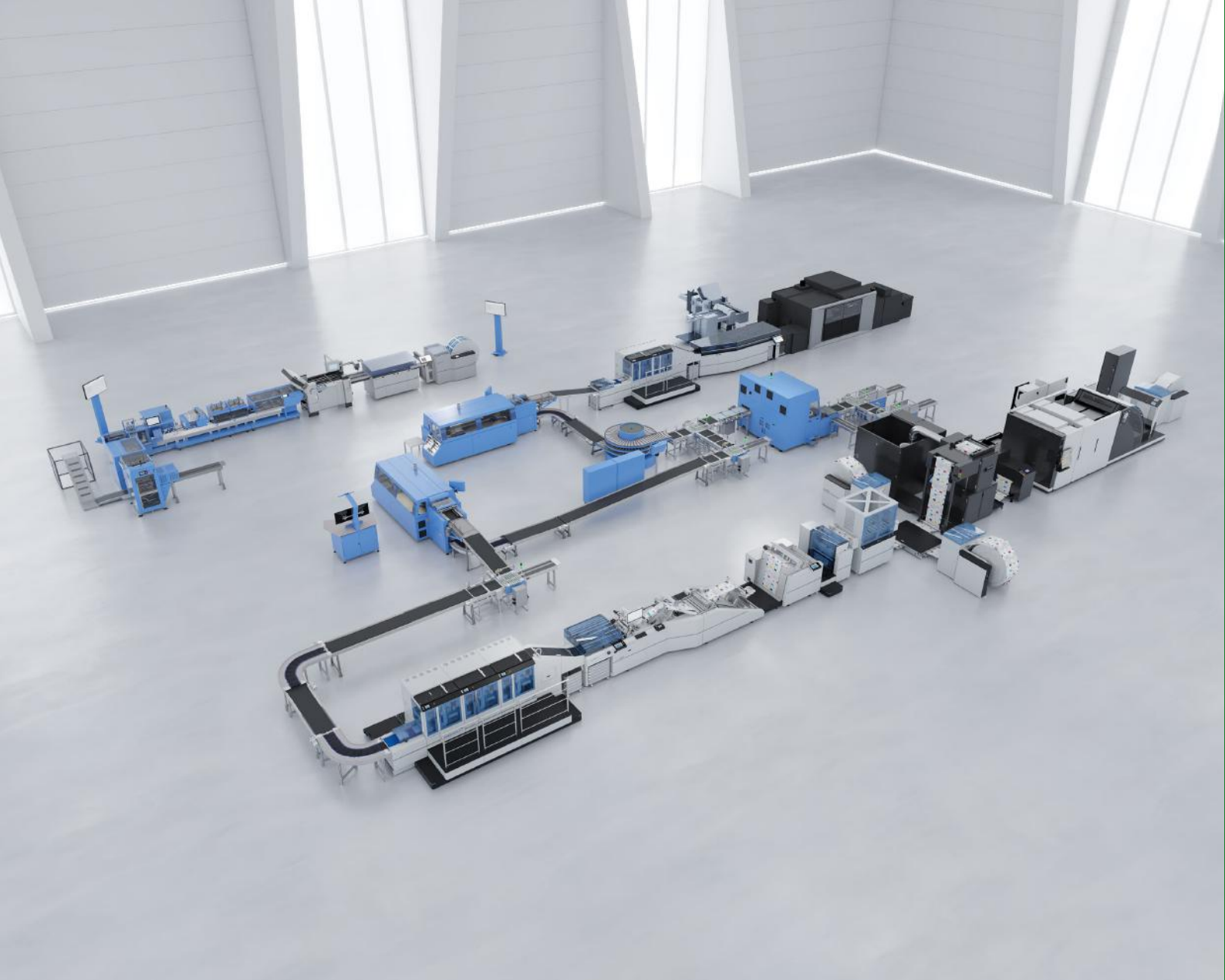
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The Antaro Digital perfect binder is not only very compact in design, but is also extremely flexible in use. In the OnDemand sector, it achieves an output rate of 2'000 cycles per hour – a figure unmatched by any other machine on the market today. And all with the lowest possible staffing levels. Incidentally, the Antaro Digital has the ideal partner for fully variable Smart Factory production in the InfiniTrim trimming robot.

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With Connex Workflow View, the operator immediately sees current and upcoming jobs. This reduces downtime and stress in your production, while giving you more control.

Flexible, configurable

We specifically focused on making Connex Workflow View configurable. There are default views, but we can also flexibly adapt job information to your needs.

Important to know:

- The Views option only works in combination with Connex LineControl.
- With saddle stitchers, it can be used in practically all applications.
- With other machines, we review availability on a case-by-case basis.

We have a clear goal: Connex Workflow View should be running on as many machines that can benefit from it as possible.

Connex Workflow View is not only yet another feature. It is a tool that noticeably improves the day-to-day work of people in production. As I said: More reliability. More transparency. More predictability. And that is exactly what modern production needs.

Connex ProdWatch for older machines
We've also developed something practical for older machines: Based on the new generation of machine control, Connex ProdWatch can be used, offering a modern interface that brings transparency to the production process.

A typical scenario: The operator loads the next job and can track the progress in real time. They always know exactly which job is currently running on the machine. Connex ProdWatch solves this issue – clearly, structured, and intuitively.



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AGFA 

Flexographic inks designed for improved press performance

ACTEGA, a global specialist in inks and coatings, and Living Ink Technologies, a leader in bio-based pigment innovation, have announced the launch of ACTExact® UV Black Algae Ink, the first commercially available UV flexographic ink formulated with carbon-negative Algae Black™ pigment.



The launch comes in tandem with its first commercial application: beverage labels printed by NextGen Label Group™ for the brand many consider to be the enviro-tech leader of the bottled water and larger beverage industry, Waiākea Hawaiian Volcanic Beverages.

The innovation was sponsored and supported by Waiākea, which earlier this year announced it would be the first food and beverage brand globally to commercialize algae-based inks on its labels across its supply chain. The brand first began R&D with partner Living Ink Technologies five years ago, aiming to replace petroleum-based carbon black ink with an algae-derived alternative for all flexographic applications.

"Waiākea has tested and co-developed a number of sustainable inks and rigid materials over the last decade. None have met the performance standards and the carbon-reduction potential needed for widespread adoption. ACTExact® UV Black Algae Ink finally checks both boxes, said Ryan Emmons, Co-Founder and CEO of

Waiākea Hawaiian Volcanic Beverages. "There was no better combination of partners whose excellence, dedication, and commitment to the mission could have brought this innovation to life."

Building on that concept, ACTEGA and Living Ink Technologies entered into a joint development agreement in 2024 and collaborated with Waiākea to advance the formulation, combining the vision of bio-based pigment expertise with advanced coating technology, ink formulation capabilities, and a nationally distributed beverage brand to bring the idea to scale for wider industry use.

Their goal: to bring a high-performance, UV-curable flexo ink to market that meets the print industry's rigorous technical demands while dramatically reducing carbon emissions.

ACTExact® UV Black Algae Ink is the latest addition to ACTEGA's popular ACTExact® product family — flexographic inks designed for improved press performance, consistency, and ease of use. The new formulation integrates Living Ink's Algae Black™ pigment, derived from discarded algae biomass and proven through a third-party Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to be carbon-negative, with a net footprint of -4.16 kg CO₂-equivalent per kilogram of pigment.

Living Ink has spent years formulating and commercializing a range of Algae Ink™ systems in-house for conventional flexographic, screen, and offset printing applications. These formulations have been used successfully across apparel, packaging, and publication projects with a growing list of sustainability-forward brands. However, this joint development agreement with



ACTEGA marks the company's first formal collaboration with an industry-renowned ink manufacturer and its entrance into the UV flexo product category — an important step toward expanding access and scalability through trusted commercial supply chains.

"Algae Black™ pigment was developed to reimagine how color can serve the planet," said Dr. Scott Fulbright, CEO and Co-founder of Living Ink Technologies. "Our long-term collaboration with ACTEGA demonstrates how industry leaders can unite innovation and impact to deliver scalable, sustainable solutions."

"ACTExact® UV Black Algae Ink represents a meaningful advancement in both performance and sustainability," said Ben Lux, CTO of ACTEGA. "Guided by our unwavering commitment to innovation and environmental stewardship, we're proud to bring to market an ink that not only meets high production standards but also helps our customers reduce their environmental footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future for our industry."



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Evolving Color Management for High-End Reprographics

Altimage is a highly respected prepress specialist known for uncompromising color fidelity. The company works with demanding publishers and production partners across multiple countries and has built its reputation on delivering absolute color integrity.

Prepress Specialist Committed to Absolute Color Integrity

Client: Altimage UK

Industry: High-End Reprographics / Prepress

Location: United Kingdom

CGS ORIS Solutions: Color Tuner, X Gamut (implemented and supported by CXF Ltd.)

As customer expectations increased and production demands evolved, Altimage evaluated whether every element of its workflow continued to support its promise of precision at the highest level. As CEO Rob King puts it, *"Our customers don't come to Altimage for 'close enough.' They choose us because we're committed to the highest possible standards in color integrity, every single time. To do that consistently, our tools need to work with us, not against the clock."*

The Challenge

- Increasing production complexity across devices and standards
- Growing need for cross-device and international consistency
- Time-intensive manual profile refinement
- Profiling cycles taking several days
- Need to maintain absolute color fidelity without slowing workflow

Key Results

- Significant reduction in profiling time
- Improved Delta-E tolerances and visual proof-to-press accuracy
- Greater consistency across devices and international production environments
- Faster workflows with increased confidence and reliability

Managing Increasing Complexity Without Slowing Production

However, Altimage was not simply looking for new software. The goal was to adopt an approach to color management that balanced



exceptional quality with speed, clarity, dependable results, and responsive support.

For many years, the company had relied on an established and widely respected color management system, including advanced profiling tools. While this solution provided a strong foundation, increasingly complex production requirements meant that achieving the desired level of consistency required significant manual refinement.

As Technical Director Mark Robson explains, *"Our previous solution gave us a solid foundation and served us well for a long time. But we were spending more time manually refining profiles than we wanted to. As volumes*

and expectations increased, that level of intervention became difficult to sustain."

Altimage began looking for a solution that would maintain the same high standards while reducing the need for ongoing manual adjustments.

Considerations

- Delivering consistent results across presses and standards
- Reducing production time without compromising color quality
- Respecting and integrating Altimage's existing expertise
- Performing reliably across international workflows

From Software to Partnership:
A Strategic Color Management Decision

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Altaimage selected CGS ORIS Color Tuner and X-Gamut, implemented and supported in the UK by CXF Ltd.

The decision was based not only on software capabilities but also on a broader approach to modern color management. Altaimage required solutions proven in real-world production environments and flexible enough to support evolving demands. Just as important was having a partner who could ensure structured implementation and long-term optimization.

Advanced 4-D Color Profiling for Accurate Proof-to-press matching

Color Tuner is CGS ORIS's solution for contract proofing. It is powered by a 4-D color profiling engine designed to produce highly accurate proofs.

For Altaimage, the benefits were immediate. There was a significant reduction in profiling time, improved Delta-E tolerances, and a visually accurate match between proofs and press sheets. The team also achieved greater color consistency across multiple devices, improved reproduction of fine details and text, faster workflows through page certification and data archiving, and simplified proofing material management.

The summary of the impact was provided by Rob King: What used to take us several days of refinement is now taking a matter of hours. That change alone has had a transformative effect on our workflow.

But it's not just about speed. It's about confidence. We can move jobs through, knowing that the results will hold up. Being able to use one proofing paper for both Fogra39 and Fogra51 has simplified things even further."

Cross-device color consistency across international production

Alongside Color Tuner, Altaimage implemented X-Gamut for cross-fleet color management.

Given Altaimage's international workflows, maintaining consistent color reproduction across devices and production environments is critical. X-Gamut's 4-D color engine



enables the creation of accurate CMYK separation profiles for virtually any process or device.

Mark Robson explains why, "X-Gamut's 4-D color engine gives us a level of confidence that's genuinely reassuring. We can create accurate CMYK separation profiles for any process or device and trust the result.

For publishers, that means shorter runs, lower risk, and repeatable outcomes, all while maintaining color integrity."

Since implementing Color Tuner and X Gamut, Altaimage has achieved:

- Faster and more efficient profiling
- Reduced reliance on manual refinement
- Improved consistency across devices and standards
- Greater confidence in proof-to-press accuracy
- Streamlined workflows without compromising quality Business outcomes at a glance
- Greater speed: Profiling tasks reduced from days to hours
- Improved accuracy: Better Delta-E

tolerances and proof-to-press matching

- Cross-device consistency: Reliable results across international workflows
- Operational confidence: Reduced manual intervention and increased reliability
- Strong implementation support: Structured onboarding and ongoing optimization

Positioned for the Future of High-Precision Color Reproduction

Accurate color remains central to Altaimage's identity and long-term ambitions. With the new setup, Altaimage feels supported rather than limited.

To conclude the case study, Rob King states, "Accurate color is everything in our business. I've always said the smell of opening a new printed book should be the eighth wonder of the world, but it's color integrity that proves we've done right by the artist. With CGS ORIS and CXF, we feel better equipped than ever to deliver as expectations continue to rise."

Supporting Long-Term Color Excellence

While CGS ORIS software formed the technical foundation, the implementation and ongoing support provided by CXF Ltd. were equally important. CXF delivered structured installation and configuration, hands-on support during the transition, and continued optimization as requirements evolved.

For Altaimage, color management is not a "set and forget" process. Mark Robson explains: "We wanted a partner we could talk to, someone who understands what happens on the production floor and wants to help us get the most out of the tools.

Transitioning after 18 years with our previous system naturally came with challenges, but CXF worked through them with us. The result isn't just a new system. It's a more efficient and practical application of color management for our business."

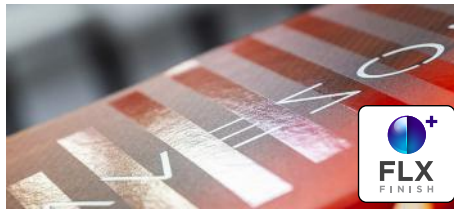
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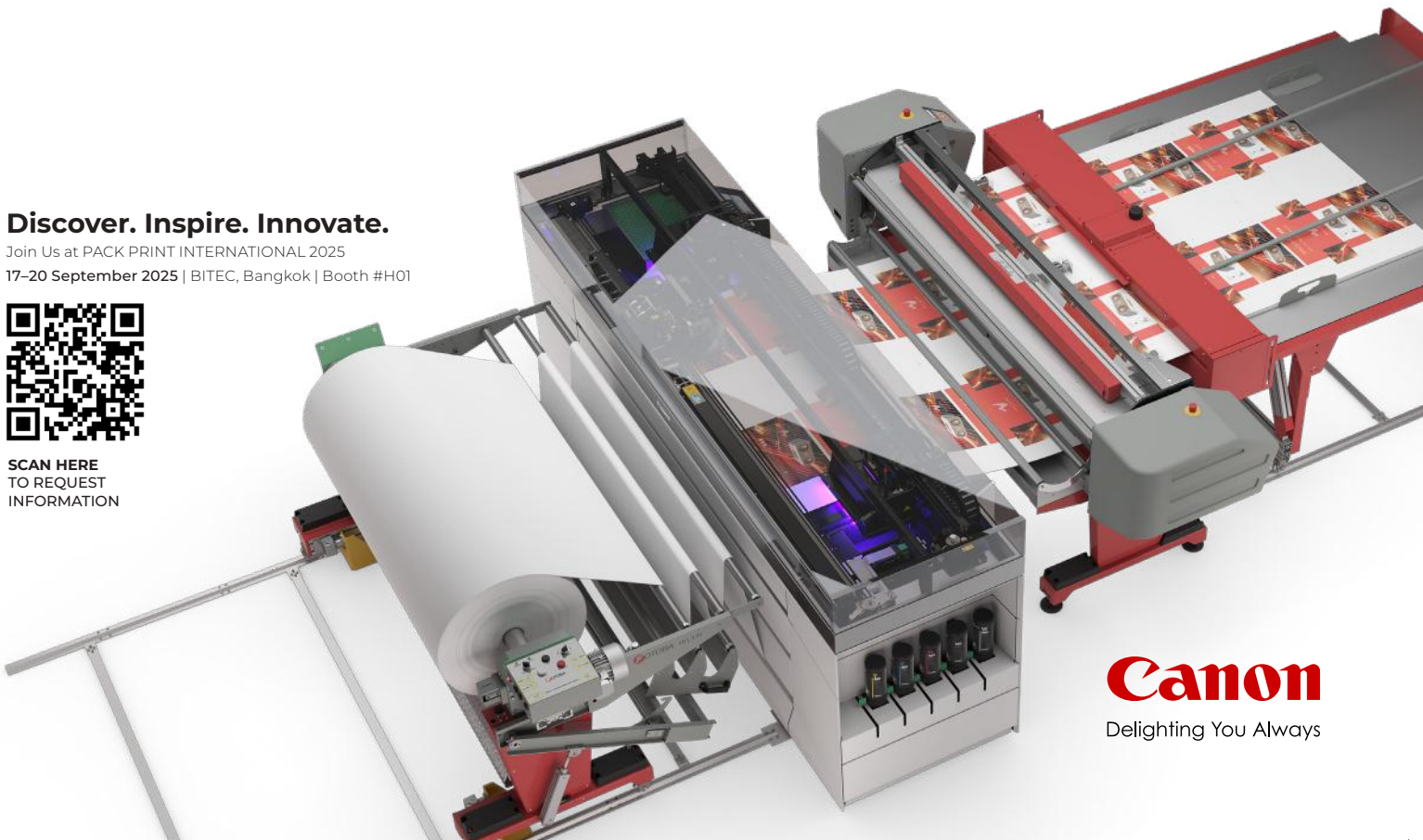
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PDF: A Powerful Connector in the Digital Textile Workflow

The textile printing industry is undergoing a remarkable transformation. Digitalisation, automation, and the demand for more agile production methods are changing the way designs are created and produced. Amidst this change, the humble PDF file, familiar to office workers, has quietly become a valuable asset in textile production.

Although PDF is not the only format or tool used in the sector, it is becoming increasingly important thanks to its ability to carry complex design, colour and production data through varied and often fragmented processes. Its versatility makes it a reliable link between creative teams, production lines and finishing departments.

From concept to fabric: The Need for Consistency

Every textile production process shares a common requirement: the design needs to remain true to the creator's intent. Whether the goal is to create a one-off direct-to-garment print, roll out hundreds of metres of patterned fabric, or produce precisely cut-and-sewn garments in a microfactory, this remains the case.

In practical terms, this involves preserving sharp details, accurate colours, correct scaling and proper alignment throughout the entire workflow. For many in the industry, the PDF format has become a reliable

means of ensuring that the final printed fabric matches the original design vision.

One format, many workflows:

Digital textile printing is far from being a single, uniform process. In fact, it encompasses several distinct production models:

Direct-to-garment (DTG) and direct-to-film (DTF): Printing directly onto finished garments or onto film for transfer, often in small batches or even in single quantities.

Roll-to-roll printing: This involves producing large volumes of fabric for fashion, interiors or industrial use, often in widths and lengths far beyond traditional printing formats.

Cut-and-sew workflows: Combining printing and automated cutting in streamlined microfactories for on-demand or customised orders.

PDFs can function as a common


container for artwork, layout data and production instructions across all of these processes. This capability helps to bridge the gap between different devices, processes and teams.

The five key advantages of PDFs for textile printing

1. Device independence and scalability
PDF files are resolution-independent. This means that a design can be printed at any size, from a small logo on a polo shirt chest to a floor-to-ceiling curtain, without losing quality. A single file can be used for multiple product sizes and applications, eliminating the need to re-create artwork for each variation.

2. Efficient handling of repeats
In textile design, motifs are often repeated over large areas. PDFs can store the repeat pattern once and reference it as needed, which dramatically reduces file sizes compared to storing the entire repeated area as raster data. This efficiency makes files faster to transfer, process and archive.

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3. High-fidelity preservation of design elements

A PDF preserves each design element in its original form: text remains editable, vector shapes remain scalable and images retain their full resolution. This structure ensures sharp edges, clean typography and detailed imagery throughout the production process, regardless of how many times the file is opened or adjusted.

4. Advanced colour management

Colour accuracy is vital in textiles, especially when digital prints must match analogue samples, dyed fabrics, or brand colour standards. PDFs can embed ICC profiles for general colour management, as well as spectral colour data (CXF), allowing for precise reproduction across different technologies and substrates. This flexibility enables different design elements within the same file to use the most suitable colour settings.

5. Integration of print and cut data

In hybrid workflows, a single PDF can contain both the visual design and the technical cutting paths. This ensures alignment between printed motifs and garment outlines, reducing waste and errors. Keeping print and cut data together helps production teams avoid the pitfalls of managing multiple file types for a single product.

Streamlining end-to-end production

This way, the structure of a PDF allows it to be more than just an image container — it can act as a complete production file. In practice, this means:

- defining print areas and knockouts

(areas intentionally left blank); - storing cutting paths alongside design data; - maintaining consistent scaling and positioning across multiple devices.

This integration is particularly valuable in an on-demand manufacturing environment. For example, a microfactory could use a PDF to produce printed fabric and precisely cut pieces in a single, streamlined process, eliminating the need for manual realignment or multiple file conversions.

Examples from the production floor:

At live demonstrations such as drupa 2024's touchpoint textile, microfactories showcased exactly how this works. A design could be created in a creative application, exported as a PDF containing colour and cut data, printed on fabric and sent directly to an automated cutter. The cutter then follows the outlines stored in the same file as the print design.

This approach is highly efficient, helping to reduce waste, prevent costly mistakes and shorten turnaround times — all of which are critical factors in a market where speed and flexibility are becoming decisive advantages.

Colour Control in Practice

Consider a home décor project in which a motif appears at different scales: a small version on cushion covers, a medium version on bed linen and an oversized version used to cover a wall. PDF's device independence ensures that all versions maintain the same crisp details.

Embedded spectral colour data also ensures that the deep blue of the cushion matches the deep blue of the wall covering, even if the two items are produced on different machines or substrates. This consistency strengthens brand identity and customer satisfaction, particularly in coordinated product ranges.

Why PDF fits into modern textile workflows

PDF's growing presence in textile production stems from its flexibility and compatibility. It can carry a mix of raster images, vector graphics, text and production metadata in a single file, making it a versatile handover format between different stages and technologies.

However, it is important to acknowledge that PDF is just one tool in the industry's digital toolkit. Depending on the design style, printing method or production requirement, other formats and software play equally important roles. In workflows where PDF is used, its combination of scalability, precision and multifunctional data handling makes it particularly well suited to bridging the gap between creative and manufacturing environments.

Looking ahead: PDF and the Future of Fabric

As the textile manufacturing process becomes increasingly digital, automated and data-driven, formats that can carry creative and technical information will become more valuable. In the years ahead, we can expect to see PDF being used more widely in integrated environments where printing, cutting, finishing and even logistics are connected through digital data. Rather than replacing other formats, PDF's strength lies in complementing them, acting as a stable link between the many stages and tools involved in textile creation.

In a fast-evolving textile landscape, maintaining design integrity from concept to final product is essential. PDF offers a robust and adaptable way to achieve this by supporting diverse workflows and production models without locking manufacturers into a single path.



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First in South China! Dongguan Modern Paper Products' Roland 900 Evolution goes into production

Recently, Modern Paper Printing Co., Ltd. has ushered in another glorious milestone in its development: the newly introduced ROLAND900 Evolution six-color with coating printing press has been successfully commissioned and put into operation!



has undoubtedly added a powerful weapon to the company's core competitiveness.

As a star model in the Manroland large-format printing press family, the new equipment supports super-large format printing up to 1450 mm, which can easily handle special-sized products such as large posters, high-end display stands and wide gift boxes. Compared with conventional format equipment, it reduces splicing processes and significantly improves the yield rate.

The launch of this key equipment has made Modern Paper Printing the benchmark enterprise in China with the largest number of Manroland super-large format printing press units. It also marks another important upgrade following the commissioning of the ROLAND900 Evolution at the Group's Vietnam production base – Shine Star Printing & Packaging (Vietnam) Co., Ltd. in August.

Evolution model introduced this time integrates Manroland's latest printing technologies and innovative designs, and is specially tailored to meet the demand for super-large format and high-end paper printing. For Modern Paper Printing, which pursues outstanding quality, the commissioning of this machine

Meanwhile, with a maximum printing speed of 15,200 sheets per hour, coupled with quick change and triple flow ink system, it greatly enhances job change efficiency, achieving "fast printing for short runs and stable production for large orders" and bringing a qualitative leap in production capacity.

Rooted in Dongguan, a fertile land for the printing industry, Dongguan Modern Paper Printing has adhered to the philosophy of "Quality as the Foundation, Innovation as the Wing" since its establishment, and has forged ahead steadily in the fields of packaging printing and commercial printing.

Manroland printing presses have long been renowned for their high precision, high efficiency and high stability. The ROLAND 900



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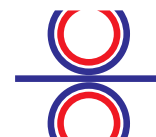
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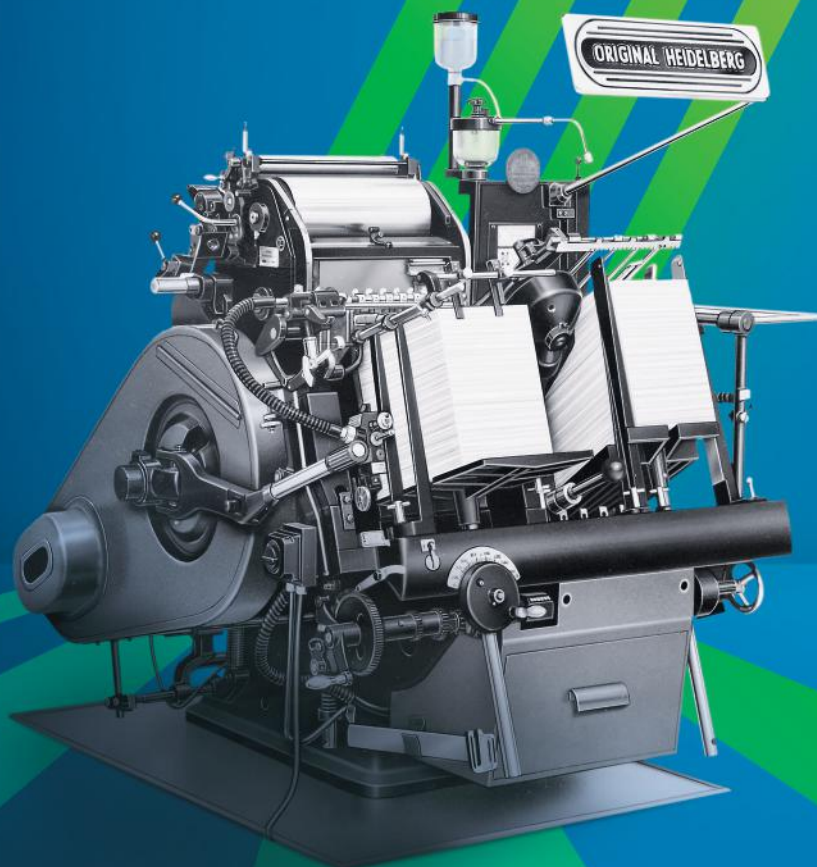
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ENTRY FORM

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ABOUT THE AWARDS

The Asian Packaging Excellence Awards have been awarding quality in Packaging Excellence for the last 25 years across Asia

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Awards Dinner held in Jakarta Indonesia on the 13th November 26. Will you join us on stage?



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INGREDIENTS

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Flexographic Categories

Categories 1- 7

1. Narrow Web Flexo (up to 500mm)
A. Paper/Board B. Film
2. Mid Web Flexo (501mm to 914mm)
A. Paper B. Film
3. Metalized Substrate
4. Wide Web Flexo (915 width and more)
A. Paper B. Film
5. Flexo Carton & Cups
6. Post Print for Corrugates
7. Pre Print for Corrugated

Categories 8- 17

8. Flexographic Labels
9. Letterpress
10. Offset Labels
11. Gravure Labels
12. Combination Printing (different processes)
13. Labels Non Pressure Sensitive Materials
14. Digital Labels - 4 colours
15. Digital Labels 5 colours
16. Digital Labels 6 colours
17. Digital Labels 7 + colours

Label Categories

Gravure Categories

Categories 18- 22

18. Gravure Paper/Board
19. Metallised Paper (surface print)
20. Aluminium Foil
21. Gravure Film
A. Surface Print B. Reverse Print
22. Specialty Gravure (must provide written explanation)

Categories 23- 36

23. Embellishment
24. Digital Embellishment
25. Mock-up/Sample
A. Rigid or B. Soft
26. Digital Mock-up/Sample
A Rigid or B Soft
27. Digital Packaging
A. Soft Carton or B. Rigid Material
28. Hybrid Printing
29. Offset Packaging
A. Soft Carton or B. Rigid Material
30. Company Self Promotion
31. Packaging - Point Of Sale
32. Digital Food Pouches
33. Innovation New Technology
34. Packaging Proofing
35. Digital Packaging - Wide Format
36. Offset Packaging - Corrugated

Other Competition Categories

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37. Open to all trade houses. **The jobs must be printed in Asia.** You must supply prints of your choice of the best work produced by you and the printers. If any special process used please provide on a separate paper.



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ENTRY FORM ASIAN PACKAGING EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2026

Deadline for Entries Submission: **4th September 2026, 5pm**

Remember to submit **2** copies of each job! Why? - Just in case one is damaged.

Maximum **3** entries per category

SECTION A

Category Number Entered (See opposite page) _____

Printing Company _____

Company Address _____

Country _____ Contact Number _____

Title of Entry _____

Your Name _____ Email _____

Signature _____



SECTION B - TAPE THIS TO THE BACK OF THE ENTRY

Category Entered _____ Number of colours _____

Title of Entry _____

*Brand of Machine _____ *Ink Supplier _____

*Plate Supplier _____ *Tape Supplier _____

*Pre Press by _____ *Printed Quantity _____

*Paper/Board/Film/Label supplier _____

Send all entries to - **APEA Competition 2026**
c/o The Thai Printing Association - 311, 311/1 Rama 9 - Soi 15 - Huaikhwang District,
Bangkok 10310 Thailand Tel: +66 2 719 6685

PLEASE ALLOW TIME FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE WHEN SHIPPING ENTRIES

Declare "Non Commercial Value" - Printing Competition on courier ticket

All entries are **non-returnable**

email:paul@ppiainnovation.com Tel.: +61 422 869728

You **MUST** fill out these production details

You **MUST** fill out these production details



The 2026 Asian Packaging Excellence Awards Checklist!

1. Have you pick your **best work** to be judged?
2. Have you checked the work to make sure it's **1st class quality** - no hickies - no scuffing - no miss register?
3. Check it **ONE** more time!
4. Are there **2 copies** for each entry and are they packed correctly for shipment?
5. Have you completed the entry form (Section A & B) correctly and pasted Section B onto the back of the entry?
6. Have you left enough time for shipment?

Friday, 4th September 2026 - 5pm is the Deadline.

7. Check that you have written the **address** correctly
8. If you win YOU MUST attend the awards dinner to receive your award



Send all entries to
APEA Competition 2026
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 Huaikhwang District, Bangkok 10310 Thailand
 Tel: +66 2 719 6685

PLEASE ALLOW TIME FOR CUSTOMS CLEARANCE WHEN SHIPPING ENTRIES

Declare "No Commercial Value" for Printing Competition on the courier ticket by Friday, 4th September 2026

All entries are **non-returnable**

The Awards Dinner will be held on November 13th in Jakarta Indonesia

email:paul@ppiainnovation.com Tel.: +61 422 869728

The annual Asian Packaging Excellence Awards was founded **25 Years Ago** to recognise outstanding achievement in the packaging industries across Asia. With more than half the world's population represented in this fast growing area, communication in the form of printed matter links Asia's diverse cultures. It is imperative that such print achievements do not go unrecognised, especially among the population base that Asia enjoys.

The Awards are judged on a wholly quality-oriented set of criteria to ensure that fair play is enacted at all times.

The **Independent Judging Panel** comprises highly qualified personnel from within Asia and around the world. The independent judging panel has no knowledge of the actual entrants details. ALL ENTRIES ARE NUMBER-CODED. Entries must be commercially produced work.

The Asian Packaging Excellence Awards is the **only regional print quality competition of its kind in Asia**. Supported by leading industry-supply companies, any progressive quality packaging print house should enter and prove that they are the best - by winning the Gold, Silver or Bronze award. Proving pride in quality awareness is what customers love to see. Win and you can prove it!