

DuPont Packaging Graphics

THE SCIENCE OF COLOR AND PRINTING TECHNOLOGIES

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X-LABEL – A RESOLUTE SWITCH TO CYREL® FAST DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

X-label ek print GmbH in Lübbecke has invested heavily in new technology. The company decided to make the switch to a completely new technology to satisfy its customer and its printing plate production requirements.

X-label ek print GmbH in Lübbecke (Germany) replaced the conventional equipment used for the preparation of flexo printing plates with DuPont™ Cyrel® FAST, latest DuPont thermal technology.

The new Cyrel® FAST 1000TD (thermal developer) installed in X-label ek print GmbH allows the production of Cyrel® FAST finished plates of up to 900 mm by 1200 mm (35.4 inch by 47.2 inch) in less than one hour, making it the ideal just-in-time platemaking system for a market that demands quick turnaround at the highest possible quality.

To better understand the impressions and reasons that led X-label to choose DuPont as both supplier of production equipment and materials, we spoke to Torsten Wietholz.

According to Torsten Wietholz, Managing Director of X-label ek print GmbH, it was key to the future of their company to substitute the analogue plate production with a totally digital solution. In fact, that is why X-label invested in the new Esko-Graphics Cyrel® Digital Imager (CDI) Spark and the new DuPont™ Cyrel® FAST processor rather than in a classic image setter and a conventional plate processing line.

What was driving your decision to replace the entire plate production with Cyrel® FAST?

“The decision was taken on the basis of a comparison between three potential alternatives for plate production: the traditional, analogue process, the digital production method with the addition of Cyrel® FAST as well as a possible transitional measure, the use of the Cyrel® FAST process with analogue printing plates.

The parameters taken into considerations were the print quality that could be obtained with each one of the potential solutions and the operating costs for the different systems, including the maintenance costs.

Several tests were carried out to judge the achievable quality and make a methodical comparison. The quality of the Cyrel® FAST digital plate was much higher than that of the other samples and what was particularly noticeable were the differences in the contrast of the illustrations and the raster patterns.”

At present, you are only working with Cyrel® FAST digital. Was that a specific request coming from your clients?

“When it goes down to plate production, our customers are not always aware of the latest technical developments and unless we inform them of the most recent discover-



The Cyrel® FAST 1000TD produces finished plates of up to 35.5 inch by 47.2 inch in less than one hour.

The Cyrel® Digital Imager (CDI) system provides a fast, reliable and high-quality digital plate imaging solution.



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ies they may not be up-to-the-minute. Our clients trust us. However, I also have to add that often our customers benchmark our products with others previously printed in gravure."

What motivated you to use Cyrel® FAST rather than traditional methods?

"In the face of these multiple demands, we are convinced that the traditional plate production technology is increasingly out of its depth. When it came to investing in the digital technology, we therefore saw an opportunity to ensure the required level of quality in the long term."

What is your typical customer like? and how important it is quality for them?

"Print quality plays a central role for X-label's customers. Our customers are becoming increasingly demanding when it comes to quality. That is especially true for food packaging labels, which make up a large percentage of our business."

Am I correct in saying that this is not your first experience with Cyrel® FAST?

"Yes, that is correct. The X-label group has two production sites, one in Gebesee and the other in Lübbecke. The sister plants use identical Cyrel® printing plates and production technology."

Are you leveraging on your two production sites?

"In view of the fact that both plants use identical Cyrel® printing plates and production technology, it was only logical for the group to supply both sites with repro data from one central pre-press. Therefore, we created a central repro department that supplies the pre-press to both sites and at present, the X-label group has almost completely concentrated its repro work in Gebesee. From there, the data is transferred to Lübbecke for the laser setting of the printing plates via an ISDN connection."

Does your current set-up provide you with differentiation that allows you to take additional business opportunities?

"Our current set-up allows us to receive data setting from external sites, agencies for example, along the same channel."

What other advantages do your twin Cyrel® FAST systems provide you with?

"When determining the full plate production capacity, a conscious decision was taken within the group to keep a certain amount of free capacity on both sites. This means that there is a mutual safety net on which the two companies can fall back in the event of a crisis."



From the left, Gerald Rettberg, DuPont Packaging Graphics Territory Manager; Torsten Wietholz, Managing Director of X-label ek print GmbH.

Earlier you were mentioning that your decision to install Cyrel® FAST was also dictated by lower operating cost.

What is your actual experience?

"It became clear after only a few months that the investment in the new Cyrel® FAST thermal technology was definitely paying off financially. In fact, several costs could be completely eliminated. These include consumables such as films or chemicals. But it is also much easier to organise the plate production environment as, for example, solvent and water treatment is no longer necessary."

Since you have installed Cyrel® FAST, have you experienced any other advantages?

"Another advantage is that the new technology also helps to shorten production times. With digital imaging and thermal development, the printing plates becomes are available to production much faster than usual and we can make better use of our printing presses.

With the former conventional working method we were able to optimize the plate format through a clever rearrangement of several films reducing plate waste to a minimum level. The digital production process we have today allows a similar working method. The only difference is that the optimization has to be done earlier. It has to happen before we start imaging the plates in the CDI. It is actually easier for the placing of individual patterns using a built-in drag and drop function supported by the computer."

How do the new Cyrel® FAST plates behave in your printing presses?

"The new Cyrel® FAST digital plates have demonstrated a longer lifetime. The Cyrel® DFH plates have demonstrated extraordinary stability and that gives them a longer lifetime compared with the previously used, water washable plates."

Finally, what more does DuPont offer you over other suppliers?

"DuPont has also given us a strong support to our transformation project. We think of DuPont as a key partner in the growth and development of our business and I have to say that, to date, it has not disappointed us."



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