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Philips Lighting Streamlines its Packaging Production by Investing in Inkjet

Philips Lighting, the world's leading lighting manufacturer and part of the global consumer electronics firm Philips, has streamlined one of its fluorescent tube production lines in Roosendaal (the Netherlands), reduced costs and lowered product lead-times, by investing in a full colour, two stage inkjet packaging print solution. The solution incorporates two fully customised HSAJet printing machines, developed by Danish machine manufacturer HS Automatic, incorporating Xaar's XJ126 and XJ500 printheads.

Producing many millions of fluorescent tubes in Europe a year at its manufacturing facilities in the Netherlands, France and Poland, Philips Lighting was looking for a flexible printing solution that would enable it to print bar codes, customer logos, images and marketing materials onto its product packaging. In addition, Philips wanted a solution that would allow advertising campaign materials and co-branding, as well as regularly being able to change packaging designs at short notice and without incurring additional printing costs.

Prior to installing the two HSAJet inkjet printers, Philips Lighting was reliant on outsourcing its printed label requirements for its packaging materials. Robert Boogaard, product manager at Philips Lighting comments, "Although we operate an extremely sophisticated production line at our main production facility in Roosendaal, the Netherlands, five months ago, we were still purchasing pre-printed labels which we had to attach to our packaging. This was not only costly but it didn't allow for incorporating variable data or accommodating our customer's changing requirements. OEM and wholesale customer demands for more flexible and customised offerings led us to explore the possibility of an in-house coding & marking process, and to look at ways of printing full colour directly onto our packaging materials."

Project leader for the printer module, Christiaan van Nielen adds, "Finding a direct printing solution capable of printing variable data on-demand was crucial to our worldwide business (95% of it is European and the rest worldwide) because we have many languages to consider when it comes to labeling our packaging. In addition, with a broad customer base including leading luminaire manufacturers and worldwide active wholesalers, we need to offer the ability to print a variety of brands and marketing campaigns directly on the packaging. Therefore, finding a full colour print-on-demand solution was one of our key objectives, together with cost and the speed of production."

Philips approached Belgium based distributor Elink to provide a tailor-made coding & marking solution that would allow it to print on to its range of packaging materials, as well as serving its customers' marketing requirements.

Case study



Dominique Jeangille from Elink says, "Philips approached us looking for a solution that would enable it to incorporate a packaging print process within its established production line. It was essential for Philips to invest in a full colour printing process which could print at speeds of one metre per second. Together with HS Automatic and Xaar, we designed a fully automated two-stage variable printing process which was integrated in to Philips' main production line in August this year. The inkjet solution has enabled Philips to print full colour graphics and text on the product's primary packaging - sleeves - then apply a single colour logo directly on the secondary packaging – cardboard boxes which wrap around the outer casing. By working with all parties, Philips now has an effective solution in place that has enabled it to reduce its packaging stock references from 6,000 to 200. This means Philips no longer has to order high volumes of pre-printed labels, instead, sophisticated software controls the various coding and marking applications for each product line."

Christiaan continues, "We were impressed that through Elink we were able to work directly with the machine manufacturer HS Automatic and printhead manufacturer Xaar plc. This communication proved valuable in terms of understanding and integrating the print solution. To date we have purchased two HSAJet printing machines which allow us to print high quality text and graphics in colour directly onto the packaging material. The machines have also enabled us to specify the use of different packaging materials late in the packaging process, given their ability to print on different substrates. This has significantly lowered our material inventories and increased customer satisfaction."

"In addition, the machines have helped us reduce lead times in the production process which means we are now able to specify new packaging designs to meet the more diverse customer demands. Variable data printing has also helped eradicate our dependency on external suppliers which has made a significant impact on lowering business costs."

Mette Noergaard, Marketing Manager at HS Automatic talks about the project, "At HS Automatic we specialise in producing bespoke coding and marking applications for organisations that wish to enhance their packaging production environment. The challenge with Philips was to build a system that would compliment its modern production facilities, without compromising speed and cost. After building an initial test rig and working closely with Philips to determine its exact requirements, all three parties (Xaar, Elink and HSA) have provided the company with a fully operational system which has met the full colour, print-on-demand criteria specified from the outset."

Christiaan concludes, "We have been impressed with Elink, HS Automatic and Xaar, and with the quality of the applications produced by the machines. We also continue to liaise with all three parties for maintenance and ongoing development. Having brought the packaging print process in-house, we have managed to address customer needs and enhance our mass production environment. We are satisfied with the solution and are enjoying experiencing good results."

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Case study



About Xaar

Xaar plc is a market-leading inkjet technology company. It targets the world's office, commercial and industrial printing markets. The office printing market is approached through Xaar's licensees; the industrial printing market is targeted by XaarJet, the manufacturing arm of Xaar; and a combination of partners and key players work with Xaar to serve the commercial printing market. Vivid Print Innovations, the applications division of Xaar, provides Xaar's in-house specialist integration service.

About HS Automatic

HS Automatic ApS supplies inkjet equipment for OEM applications as well as complete and customised printing solutions through a worldwide distributor network. HS Automatic ApS develops and manufactures solutions for coding, marking, mailing including OCR, form printing, and page printing with a complete integrated software package included. Solutions from HS Automatic vary from printing systems with one printhead to advanced printing systems with multiple printheads. Always with a high resolution and in a high quality.

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