The future is digital

MZ Grafics decided to invest in an EFI Jetrion inkjet printing system because the management believes inkjet is the technology of the future. Anna Naruszko reports.

MZowicze Zaklady Graficzne (MZ Grafics) is a printer located in Wysokie Mazowieckie in north east Poland, close to the Belarus border. It operates offset presses and a 250 mm wide six colour flexo press with varnish.

Earlier this year, it took delivery of a Jetrion 4830 UV inkjet press, together with a rewinder manufactured by Polish company Lesko, with the plan to profitably manufacture labels in small batches without compromising quality.

The company chose the basic version of the press in four colours without white, the option of white was not useful because it specialises in adhesive labels on paper. However, the system may be extended at any time to include white capability and add UV-LEDs enabling energy saving.

At present, labels make up around 30% of production at MZ; just a few months after the installation of the Jetrion 4830 system some 10% of label output is printed digitally. ‘The recent economic crisis has made us aware that the best prospects in printing are in manufacturing packaging and labels, and a more detailed analysis of the market and our production has shown us that it would be worthwhile to invest in digital technology,’ said co-owner Jaroslaw Zaczez, co-owner.

The company specialises in low and medium runs, from several to tens of thousands of labels. Mr Zaczez continued, ‘With such runs digital technology is not only more profitable, but also – in my opinion – the quality of printing offered by the Jetrion system we have purchased is higher than from a flexo machine it is closer to offset.’

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The new digital system installed in MZ Graf is the second Jetrion machine in Poland, supplied and supported by its agent Reprograf. The company had several reasons behind the choice of Jetrion as Mr Zaczez explained: ‘The choice of digital printing system was largely caused by economic factors. There are not that many providers in the market in comparison to offset technology, which narrows the selection down. In our case the choice was between the EFI Jetrion and HP Indigo presses.

‘The investment scale for the HP Indigo system and its operating costs were above our budget. According to numerous studies in the industry, inkjet is the technology of the future, therefore, after many discussions, we chose inkjet. Naturally, we have applied for EU subsidies and I can say that our project was evaluated very highly – it was fourth of 120 projects from the Podlasie region,’ Mr Zaczez is convinced that the share of digital technology in label production in Poland will increase from the present few percent to 20 to 30% over the next few years.

... but we just pay for ink used, and not per so called ‘click’ popular among some system providers. It is probably a question of scale, the more machines the less expensive the ink (and at present there are about 120 Jetrion system installations worldwide and EFI manufactures its inks). I have no doubts that in the future digital technology will be even more competitive in comparison to flexography, and some day it may replace it. The Jetrion prints on practically every surface that can be used by a flexo machine.’

In Poland he points out one of the faults of the Jetrion 4830 system is a lack of a Polish language interface and a metric system, although the manufacturer plans to change this in the near future. ‘The system we have purchased offers speeds of 25 metres per minute, which cannot be compared to modern flexo machines printing 150 to 200 metres per minute. But if set up time and printing forme preparation are taken out of the equation, the turn-around time for a project of up to tens of thousand of pieces is really competitive.’

A NEAR PERFECT SOLUTION

He quotes easy operation as another advantage of the Jetrion system.

Reprograf advised MZ Grafic to hire an operator with no experience in printing, so that they did not feel the need to change and adjust settings. And it was right. The lack of odour is also an advantage in comparison to flexo technology using solvent inks.

‘With our new printer we are not afraid of any label challenges, and at last we can also print small quantities of labels at a profit,’ said Mr Zaczez. ‘The cost of ink is significant,