

It's said that there is a time for talking and a time for doing, and since Woodford Litho was last in PMM's Supplier Focus almost a year ago, it has been very much a case of putting words into action. The changes that have been brought about since then have produced productivity gains throughout the Essex site, instrumental in the company's drive for new markets.

"We have delivered on all the planned objectives promised last year," states managing director Vic Marland. "We have put our money where our mouth is, and invested an additional £1.5 million on new equipment for 2008; in striving to maximise our new in-line equipment we have extended the range of press finished products providing added value to customers. As responsible producers expansion has not diluted our environmental commitments. The awarding of an FSC/PEFC certification is yet another measure of that commitment to the cause."

Woodford Litho's latest investment in leading edge technology includes a new high speed perfect binding system from Kolbus. Such is the step change this will create in Woodford Litho's output volumes, that in addition to satisfying a vast range of customer requirements it will also be able to offer trade binding services for other print suppliers. The new binder has the ability to produce both A4 and A5 efficiently as a finished size.

As a product A5 should be of particular interest being a format most printers have difficulty finishing. The option to handle PUR binding to address demands from the catalogue market place will also be a valuable addition to Woodford Litho's product range. Installation of the new Kolbus will see bindery production leap from 4,000cph on its current binder to a possible 12,000cph in A4 or 16,000cph in A5 format. Currently being installed, the new Kolbus Perfect Binder is due to start producing live work in July of this year.

"We recognised that our Perfect Binding capacity needed to be strengthened," explains Marland. "What we are installing in our bindery is such a high speed, versatile machine though, that it's actually looking ahead to where we want to be five years from now. It is a major platform on which we

Expansion continues apace at Woodford Litho

Essex based web offset printer Woodford Litho continues to invest heavily in its press finishing and perfect binding capabilities as part of planned growth.



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can grow. We recognised that there's no point in having high speed sales and front end press capabilities if you have an inefficient bindery department adding cost. We need all processes to compliment each other thereby avoiding costly bottlenecks."

Other new kit investments include a Vits sheeter for web offset cover printing on the firm's G14 16 page press. This will allow it to print 80,000 covers per hour with the option of applying a gloss or matt UV coating in-line. Around the plant, in the Pre- Press Department a new large format Agfa VLF platesetter will give it vital back up for the VLF already in place, and a soon to be installed Sitma polywrapping line can be run either with or independently to the Perfect Binding line.

Perhaps most significant of all however, is a piece of technology that was installed just before Woodford Litho was last in PMM (see PMM July 2007): a Gämmerler Spine-Gluing/Rotary Trimming unit purchased last year to fit inline on the 48-page KBA Compacta 618 web offset press.

The spine-gluing unit is extremely popular in Europe where around 500 installations have been made. Woodford Litho's research leads it to believe that no other UK print supplier is focusing on what this technology can achieve in terms of innovative products and added value to customers, in the same way that Woodford Litho itself is.

From left: Inline spine gluing is capable of providing Woodford's clients with an innovative range of products, while ISO colour standards and Delano project management software improve output and service standards

To put it simply, the Gämmerler system allows for paper to be put onto the end of the KBA web press, the brochure to be printed in the normal inline, a finished product comes off at the other end completed at full web offset production speed. This provides significant reductions in turnaround times and costs as the printed brochures can be boxed or palletised immediately for dispatch instead of having to be taken to a separate machine and potentially waiting there for further stitching and trimming. Woodford Litho refers to jobs printed and glued in-line in this way as Press Finished Products, and the jobs can be anything from a 2-page A4 leaflet, 500,000 copies per hour delivered straight off the press, to a 48-page A4 spine-glued supplement.

Sales director Phil Glossop says: "The spine gluing facility allows us to get some interesting sizes and paginations. We can get down to a finished size of 235 x 160mm trimmed and glued on press, which is within the Royal Mail PiP letter size. It shows that we're not just focusing on the print aspect when a job is within our factory; we're thinking about what happens when it leaves here, and we're helping our clients get the best from their marketing budgets."

At the moment a key initiative for Woodford Litho is to educate its customers about the possibilities that Press Finished Products can offer and

inserted within this issue of PMM can be found a specially produced press finished product guide demonstrating the range of products Woodford Litho can create (from 2-page up to 48-page), the minimum and maximum paper weights for each, minimum print runs and dimensions of each job, which readers can consult to see how they might benefit from this inline gluing technology.

A change of mind-set by a customer can also garner advantage from this technology, and Glossop gives an example of a travel operator that usually produces a 96-page A4 brochure featuring three different holiday destinations. Why not split the brochures into more bespoke, smaller versions, each focusing on a specific destination, and producing them in run lengths that correspond to the demand for each destination? The efficiency built into Woodford Litho's print and finishing operation allows for these kinds of jobs to be produced economically.

"The other plus point about Press Finished Products, is that by gluing the spine we have a stronger product than saddle stitching gives," continues Glossop, picking up an example of a spine glued piece, which he opens and tugs hard at the opposite pages to test the strength of the spine. "It's a stronger product and it's also presented flatter due to the absence of stitching wires, so that when a booklet is being inserted into a magazine or newspaper, the presentation

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of the product allows for greater speeds when inserting. Therefore we are offering added value to our customers through our manufacturing efficiency."

For Woodford Litho the result of the investments in new perfect binding capacity and increased spine gluing capability will be a capability to work more flexibly and to utilise its pressroom efficiency to cater for the needs of an increasing number of market places. It has identified six sectors where its focus will be, including the magazine sector where it is already.

Aside from magazines, the company is targeting print work such as product catalogues; the travel and tourism sector; retail print; mail order; and local authorities. It expects that the increased capability in perfect binding and the ability to offer spine gluing will be well suited to customers in many of these fields.

Mail order companies, for example, want speed and the ability to make late changes. There might be up to 800,000 copies in a print run, but within that there could be a dozen or more different versions of the catalogue. Traditionally the mail order customer would need to build significant time into the production schedule to allow for post press finishing, and would therefore need to close the catalogue and specify the size of the print run ahead of this. With the speed and efficiency provided by inline spine gluing, the mail order client can now make those decisions later and benefit from better market intelligence in terms of print volumes required.

Woodford Litho itself has had to change to develop this new market

proposition, but the workforce has seen the potential benefits for the company as a whole, Vic Marland confirms: "It has required a mindset change for all of us; we have to be more flexible and nimble. The introduction of new press and bindery crews together with changing shift patterns have proved essential in being able to satisfy a new profile of work, but the flexibility of our staff has enabled that change to be enacted very quickly. Our turnover increased by 20% last year and one of the key elements in that success was the production staff with their willingness to embrace change and ultimately want success. They remain an integral part of our continued growth."

Improvements to the efficiency of the company's operations have not just come in the post press areas either. Woodford Litho is a user of Agfa's Delano system, which customers use to approve ripped pages online, and it plans to implement the full suite of functionality that Delano offers, while integrating Delano more closely with its Technique MIS. Customer service executives and Woodford's repro are working more closely so that the executives can guide customers through uploading files to Delano, and repro can be on hand to provide more specialist technical advice and support.

Process improvements are most definitely on the agenda for 2008, as the company continues to work toward gaining the ISO 9001 quality standard now that FSC/PEFC paper certification has been obtained. The firm's operational team is also working on ISO 12647-2 colour management to tighten up colour control between proof and press. Marland adds: "All investment in new

From left: Sales director Phil Glossop demonstrates the strength of Press Finished Products; VLF computer to plate and a high speed Kolbus perfect binding are amongst recent investments

equipment the company has made recently and in the future will be assessed with regards to energy consumption due to the continually upward spiralling costs of energy and the need to reduce Woodford Litho's Carbon Footprint. The Kolbus perfect binder project, for example, has given the firm the opportunity to replace its ageing paper waste extraction system for removing trim waste with a more energy efficient one. The projected energy savings will realise a payback on the extraction equipment within seven years.

"Attaining the ISO standards and selling the benefits of what we have already put in place will be the focus of this years efforts," Marland continues. "Our flexible working patterns allow us to bolt on more shifts very quickly, producing greater flexibility to meet customer demands while at the same time increasing utilisation levels on our investments. We are a financially robust company that takes pride in our professionalism. Customers entrusting their work to Woodford Litho do so confident their print purchasing decisions are in safe hands."

Woodford Litho is more ready than ever to let its actions speak louder than words.

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