

FLEXIBLE PACKAGING CONVERTER AMERPLAST'S FOCUS ON CUSTOMERS, QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY RESULTS IN TWO NEW INSTALLATIONS OF DUPONT'S CYREL® FAST 2000 TD THERMAL PLATEMAKING SYSTEM.

BACKGROUND

Amerplast provides flexible plastic packaging solutions for both food and non-food applications to the biggest brands in Europe and celebrates its 70-year jubilee this year. The company is one of Europe's largest flexo printers and bag converters, employing more than 450 people. Customers choose Amerplast because of the ability to consistently deliver high-quality flexible packaging, best-in-class service level and support, while being committed to their proactive joint sustainability, innovation and efficiency programs. Amerplast is part of a Pan-European flexible packaging group together with Hanmere Polythene and Plasmech Packaging.

The history of Amerplast goes back to the 1950s: The Finnish Suominen family founded the innovative company in 1952. While a student in the United States, Mr. Sami Suominen came across the idea for plastic pants that held baby diapers in place and, after a few years, his wife Mrs. Marja Suominen decided to try it out. She bought some machinery and began making plastic pants in the alcove of their two-room flat. Because the entire business idea and the first raw materials used were American, it was natural at the time to call the company Amerplast. Moving from making diaper pants to manufacturing plastic rain coats led the way to other plastic products and an expansion of the company. They soon realised that plastics would be unbeatable as a packaging material and started manufacturing plastic film and flexible packaging.

The golden 60s were a time of both rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. Amerplast knew the potential of plastics and thanks to plastic packaging its product range rapidly diversified. During the 1990s, the Finnish industry was undergoing a rapid process of internationalisation, which

was also reflected in Amerplast's operations. The company built an up-to-date production plant in Poland which is still today considered a bridgehead in Europe, being close to important central European markets.

Today, Amerplast operates flexographic printing at three sites with a total of 11 Central Impression wide web presses in Finland and Poland, a prepress studio and two plate-making operations. The portfolio now covers high-performance flexible packaging for consumer applications, especially for the Food, Hygiene, Beverage and Retail.



MISSION OF THE COMPANY

Amerplast's mission is to grow together with their customers, through sustainable flexible packaging solutions, completely integrated in a circular economy. Amerplast vision is to be the leading circular economy flexible packaging company in Europe and the preferred supply partner for their customers.

The company's goal is to increase the share of recycled materials used in production to 27% by 2030 and to have all packaging recyclable or reusable by 2025.

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THE CHALLENGE

Amerplast operates two platemaking departments to cover the majority of their requirements. One in Finland and one in Poland.

The operation in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Poland, already used to produce plates on the solvent-free Cyrel® FAST 1000 TD system since 2008. While steadily increasing output, Amerplast was slowly reaching the capacity limits of the system.

Features enjoyed by the operators were:

- Solvent-free, sustainable workflow
- Easy to operate equipment
- Very quick access times from file to plate, requiring less backup plates

The platemaking department in Tampere, Finland, was still working with a solvent washout process which reached its quality limits.



F.l.t.r.: Harald Förster, DuPont and Jukka Eerola, Amerplast Tampere, Finland, during the installation of the Cyrel® FAST 2000 TD processor.

SOLUTIONS AND RESULTS

Amerplast's strategic priorities "Customers, Sustainability and Quality" made them revisit the setup of their platemaking departments. This led to upgrading both facilities to state-of-the-art configurations, allowing better internal standardisation, independence from external plate suppliers, backup options and lower environmental footprint:



Artur Wilczyński and Elżbieta Marczak, Amerplast Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Poland

"After a smooth installation and running the first comparison trial versus our previous setup, we were quickly able to confirm that the overall performance improved a lot. We were getting a more stable and repeatable plate quality, isolated elements and the smoothness of vignettes improved a lot", states Elżbieta Marczak, Repro Manager at Amerplast Grodzisk Mazowiecki. She continues "besides the quality improvements, the new processor also allowed us to reduce our on-site maintenance efforts for the platemaking equipment by 75% (from 2 days downtime per month to only half a day), combined with an online remote support functionality which proved to be very helpful, not only in times of pandemic and travel restrictions."

The Finnish site installed a full platemaking line consisting of a new Imager, exposure unit and Cyrel® FAST 2000 TD thermal processor later in September 2021 and thereby replaced a solvent-based workflow and buying plates from external suppliers. "For us, the advantages are clearly that we're no longer exposed to a solvent process and platemaking got a whole lot easier", says Heidi Haipus, Repro Manager, Tampere, Finland. "The press operators are

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happy with the plates' performance. We are now able to match the print results of our colleagues in Poland and to comply with print buyers' requirements to be close to or matching rotogravure. "From a strategic point of view, investing in a modern, solvent-free platemaking system enables Amerplast to be independent from external platemakers, including having access to the latest technologies like MicroCell surface screening for maximized ink laydown.

Some of the benefits for Amerplast investing into their own platemaking workflow:

- Full ownership of the platemaking process, independence from external suppliers.
- Higher quality – next generation thermal technology.
- Higher flexibility in platemaking, enabling shorter time to market.
- Reduced VOC emission and environmental Impact.
- Reduced downtime on platemaking and printing equipment.

THE FUTURE

With standardized platemaking throughout the group, Amerplast can take on today's challenges in flexible packaging. The 2025 goal is that all packaging produced will be reusable or recyclable. "It is key to maintain the perfect balance between functionality and integrity, print quality and sustainability in order to protect what's most important: the packaged good", says Ari-Pekka Pietilä, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer, Amerplast is actively developing innovative solutions in the space of monomaterial laminates to enable a circular packaging economy.

"We are happy we were selected to support Amerplast on their journey to higher quality and higher sustainability operations through innovation on the platemaking system and plate.



Jonna Noponen, Amerplast Tampere, Finland.

Building on the good experience and collaboration throughout more than 10 years, we're extremely glad to see Amerplast's continued investment into solvent-free inhouse platemaking with Cyrel® FAST", says Ole Bech-Hansen, Sales Manager Nordic, DuPont Cyrel® Solutions.



For further information please visit the website

www.amerplast.com

Further information about DuPont™ Cyrel® or other DuPont products are available on our website

www.cyrel.eu