

Since 2017, Uteco has been using Kodak Stream continuous inkjet technology in its Sapphire EVO digital presses to deliver a resolution of 200 lines/inch with maximum production speeds of 300m/min.



# Uteco: new plant, projects and plans

**IN its ongoing quest to become a global market leader in cost-efficient and technologically advanced printing and converting solutions, Uteco Converting has transitioned from a family- to a corporately-funded and -run structure, which is investing in R&D, partnering with other technology leaders to realise Industry 4.0 goals, maximising organisational flexibility and engineering capacities, and rolling out a new business plans for its most popular machines to meet increasing market needs for shorter delivery times.**

In July 2018, NB Renaissance – a private equity fund – acquired an 81% controlling interest in the Uteco Group to increase the international scope and after-sales activities of its flexographic and rotogravure printing presses, coating and laminating machines, inkjet hybrid and digital production and high-tech tailored machines. The move will also help it to realise the corporate vision of a 'Made in Italy champion' committed to collaborations with local and global world food and beverage sector brand leaders, which continuously advances eco-sustainable packaging systems.

## Technologies and partnerships

In response to the flexible packaging market's rapidly-evolving environmental regulations, and to the need for energy savings and quicker turnaround time, Uteco has made huge investments in R&D into evolutionary printing and converting technologies.

This includes an extended partnership with Kodak to help broaden the Sapphire EVO digital press portfolio for food, personal care and liquid products in flexible packaging, as well as décor and paper/cartonboard applications in 2020.

'We have extended our partnership with Kodak because our customers are looking for sustainably-advantaged hybrid digital production to enable short-run versioning with compelling economics,' comments Uteco Group CEO, Aldo Peretti. 'Using a combination of traditional flexo and gravure, along with digital inkjet technologies, these hybrid models optimise film handling, priming, post-coating and drying to deliver the flexible packaging market's performance requirements.'

## A flexible approach

The OEM has also focused on maximising organisational flexibility and engineering capacities – backed up by a fast and efficient global customer service network – to implement these advancements.

This summer, Uteco will officially inaugurate its fourth plant, its response to exponential growth in printing press sales.

Part of this 10 700m<sup>2</sup> plant is dedicated to the construction of rotogravure presses to enable the optimisation of production processes and guarantee faster delivery times,' says rotogravure BU manager, Alessandro Bicego. 'It's adjacent to our technology centre to enable rapid in-print tests and commissioning checks before each press is shipped to the customer. This helps guarantee the shortest possible run-up times to full-scale production at customers' facilities.'

The new plant increases Uteco's continuous production capabilities. With an average of 50 machines in the four factories every day, the company produces 120 units annually. The added capacity also ensures sufficient time for machine customisation and increases flexibility in running customised demonstrations at customers' requests.

Uteco's latest development is a business plan to improve delivery times for some of its most popular and successful flexographic presses, while offering preferential maintenance contract packages and keeping prices locked at 2018 rates. Initial focus is on the ONYX 808 and ONYX XS models. The ONYX 808 is the company's best-selling flexo press over the last decade thanks to a combination of print quality, ease of use and quick job changeovers, while the ONYX XS is a more compact flexo press that's suitable for short runs and labels.

Once this plan is bedded down, Uteco will extend it to other machines across its rotogravure, coating and laminating, and digital ranges.

The company plans to host regular open house events in the build-up to K2019 (October 16 to 23) and drupa 2020 (June 16 to 23) – the top international trade fairs for the plastics and printing industries to be held at the Messe Düsseldorf Exhibition Grounds in Germany – at which it will present its latest innovations.

Uteco Group is represented in South Africa by Sareltech.

