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Riverwood International Doubles Plant Throughput

Productivity surges with high-speed 55-inch Kochsiek rotogravure press and A+F Automation robotic palletizer

October 14, 2002, Mystic, Connecticut – A new digitally controlled Kochsiek rotogravure press with rotary cutter, customized delivery system, and A+F Automation robotic palletizer system has doubled throughput and significantly raised the bar on productivity at Riverwood International Corporation's Cincinnati, Ohio, folding carton converting plant.

The Kochsiek press line is dedicated to producing six-pack longneck beer bottle baskets for one of the nation's largest brewers. Production from the new press equals the plant's two other presses combined, using only one-third of the personnel. Completed in February, the new line performs with the reliability needed to consistently match delivery of bottle cartons to glass house output.

The new 55-inch wide gravure system is unique in an industry that has traditionally relied on rebuilding older gravure equipment. It is the industry's first new gravure press installation in more than 20 years and is the widest of its type currently operating in North America.

Productivity breakthrough

Press-cutter system productivity soared 35 percent with the customized 1000-fpm stacker-delivery system. The remarkable performance breakthrough could only be achieved by applying the newest technology: A high-speed rotary cutter allows the system to operate at the record-breaking speeds compared to platen cutters, which can only attain 600-700 fpm.

The Kochsiek delivery system created a highly integrated operation "that pushes the

– more –

envelope." It establishes a new performance standard for folding carton producers by minimizing customer inventories while reducing per-unit costs as low as possible.

"It is important to note that gravure technology has not stood still," said Mike McGuinness, (title), PacSys Packaging Systems Solutions, Mystic, Connecticut. "This installation demonstrates that new digitally driven rotogravure equipment with its high speed and high productivity is well worth the investment compared to simply rebuilding out-of-date equipment."

An integrated system solution

PacSys integrated the press, rotary cutter, and stacker delivery system as well as palletizer into a complete highly automated web system solution, providing a single sales and marketing contact for Riverwood International in dealing with the press and material handling equipment manufacturers.

The stacker/delivery system matches the speed of the press and produces a uniformly even, 12-inch high "deck of cards" stack allowing the robotic palletizing at the delivery end of the press.

The A+F Automation robotic palletizer, which is the first to be used as part of a complete inline Kochsiek system, works in conjunction with the stacker/delivery system to enhance safety by reducing repetitive motion.

The press incorporates a high-speed Kochsiek butt splicer capable of handling rolls up to 86 inches and eight printing units, which can print up to eight colors or a combination of colors and coatings.

The press line prints four to six colors and a varnish on 18 pt. board that is manufactured at Riverwood's Macon, Georgia paper mill and shipped in at the rate of four rail car loads a day.

The system, which currently prints baskets two-across on the web, is used for a typical five-day press run of about 4.5 million bottle beer baskets.

Future growth is built into the system. The line has the capability to print up to three baskets across the 55-inch web, depending on carton size, and to print a range of color and coatings combinations.

Printed cartons coming off the palletizer are sent first to inventory, then to the folder/gluer.

To handle the higher output of the new Kochsiek / A + F Automation press line, the Riverwood organization set up a team to upgrade the speed of the folder/gluer operation at the plant, ultimately providing four right-angle, high-speed folder/gluer working on four shifts to finish the baskets.

A reliable part of the supply chain

The dedicated line at Riverwood's Cincinnati plant, which went into production February 18, has been running at a 24/7 pace. It produces baskets for their customer's best selling long neck bottle, which requires approximately 400 million cartons a year.

The completed basket carton blanks are packed in cases, palletized, shrink wrapped, and sent to a glass house from the Cincinnati plant. At the glass house the six-pack baskets are stuffed with 12-ounce longneck bottles, placed in carriers, and sent to the brewery. At the brewery, the bottles are removed, labeled, filled with beer, sealed, and placed back into the baskets.

Basket folding carton printing is synchronized to glass house production with a 10-day supply of printed cartons kept in inventory. Cartons are pulled from inventory, then folded and glued based on the glass house weekly output requirements.

The Kochsiek / A+F Automation production line at the Cincinnati plant is a highly critical part of this large, complex, and time-sensitive supply chain that stretches from the paper mill to the ultimate beverage consumer. As such, it has had to meet Riverwood International's dependability standards.

"This is a very large and carefully orchestrated process," said Mike Schmal, vice president and general manager of Riverwood International's beer business unit. "Consequently the opportunity costs of having a press down are very great. For this type of operation, we demand a high level of reliability from our equipment. Kochsiek / A+F Automation is a major supplier to our industry. They and PacSys have been proactive in meeting our needs."

Riverwood International has been very pleased with the overall performance of this unique system.

"Although we have experience with Kochsiek components, we had not purchased a complete Kochsiek / A+F Automation web printing system before, but this was one of the best startups we have had," said Schmal. "Because we needed the output of the new line as soon as possible, we would run the press for three days straight during the commissioning period and then allow the suppliers a 12-hour period for 'tweaking' the equipment. That was about half the time we normally allow vendors during a start-up, but it worked very well."

Kochsiek had staged and run some of the units in Germany and had the electronics arranged like computer elements to provide near "plug and play" connections on site.

Mark Rasmussen, manager of engineering services for Riverwood International and project manager for the installation, noted that the installation went well because of the careful coordination

and ground work that took place in the project's early stages and throughout the entire process between the Riverwood International organization, vendors, and contractors.

"Smooth coordination up front allowed the end result to be well implemented," said Rasmussen.

Tony Downey, plant manager at the Cincinnati facility, noted that training was an important part of the successful installation. Personnel from the plant traveled to Germany to test their press when staged and to see similar presses in operation. People from the Cincinnati plant also traveled to Riverwood sites in the U.S. and trained in the operation of rotary cutters.

"The 100 percent digital-drive press required us to upgrade our maintenance staff," said Riverwood's Frank Breznai, plant engineer and onsite project coordinator of the installation. "Our existing presses are 25 years old and the electronics have changed a great deal in that time."

Quality reflects on each supplier

"The consumer thinks that they are buying only beer, but in reality they are also buying paperboard from a Riverwood International mill and an attractive and durable package from our plant," said Schmal. "The quality of that package reflects on us as well as on our customer, the brewery."

Schmal emphasized that consistent quality was a direct product of building a more controlled supply chain, reflecting well on each individual supplier. "It resulted in the best possible service at the lowest possible cost because variation is minimized at each stage," he said.

Commenting on the importance of the press line to the Cincinnati operation, Downey said "This major investment in improved productivity by Riverwood International not only means serving our customers better, but it also means enhanced job security for everyone here."

In addition to Riverwood International's wide web press, Kochsiek also offers a range of digitally controlled rotogravure and flexographic press systems with high-speed wide web rotary cutters, and customized stacker delivery systems, as well as unwinders and rewinders.

Although the line at Riverwood International's Cincinnati plant is dedicated to making one product, the A+F Automation palletizer does not require a dedicated product. Others are in service doing four or five different folding carton shape sizes simultaneously. The delivery system can be customized to handle several products and is available for both new and retrofit installations.

Riverwood International is a leading integrated provider of paperboard packaging solutions to multi-national beverage and consumer products companies. Headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, Riverwood

has annual sales of over \$1.2 billion and approximately 4,000 employees worldwide.

In addition to the Cincinnati operation, Riverwood's beer business unit has manufacturing plants in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin; West Monroe, Louisiana; and Clinton, Mississippi. Two other converting plants, one also located in West Monroe, Louisiana, and the other in Perry, Georgia, are dedicated to the soft drink business.

PacSys, Inc., 12 Roosevelt Avenue, Mystic, Connecticut, was established in 1996 to focus on packaging production system solutions that provide maximum return on investment for the converting industry. They represent Kochsiek rotogravure cutting and web handling packaging systems as well as Fischer and Krecke inline and CI flexographic press program for the folding carton/paperboard industries in the U.S. PacSys, Inc., also represents A+F Automation material handling systems and products in North America. They can be reached at 860.536.1398 or pacsysmd@aol.com.