

INTERVIEW



About: James Thomas - *Business Development & Marketing Manager*

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1. Can you tell us a little about the history of Focus Label Machinery and the part you play in the company?

Our Company started business in 1981 with designing and building using a small printing press for printing Apparel Labels. Within a few years, the company had developed its first Flexo machine which enabled the company to grow and become established as a leading manufacturer of narrow web presses in the UK and around the World. Our company remains a family business today, and exports around 70% of its UK manufactured products around the globe. Over the Years the company has grown, and our product line has changed through our commitment to research and development driving us to be at the leading edge of new developments in Flexographic and Hybrid Digital technology. Focus has an excellent manufacturing facility combined with a dedicated training centre and fully functioning showroom.

2. Why a servo driven machine is one of the best choices for label printing?

Within a Servo Press, each print head includes 2 servo drives in order to control Web and Print registration independently. Standard features include Pre-register & Auto register. Fast set up to compete with Digital technology, less waste and automatic set up of Cylinders. Faster time to press and change over of jobs meaning more throughput as run lengths decrease in some sectors.

3. What are the competitive advantages of dFlex Machines?

The d-Flex is a highly flexible and modular press offering single-pass production from blank reel to fully finished labels, either reel to reel or reel to sheet/stacker in two press widths. The d-Flex can run inkjet and flexo together or independently in-line creating the 'Hybrid' solution. Servo driven with very accurate re-register the flexo unit can also overprint label production all into a die station, with modular additions for a cold foil system, chill rollers, turn bar for reverse print, amongst just some of the options. The d-Flex can also incorporate a pre-coat station prior to the inkjet. This increases the applications customers can

offer giving maximum opportunity to be creative and versatile. Minimal waste and high-speed changeover of jobs for today's short to medium run markets.

4. In 21st century, marketing solutions play a vital role to satisfy the diverse range of customer requirements; it is becoming more and more of a complex task to position a business adequately in the marketplace. How do you achieve that?

Using all media options whilst taking a view in relation to costs and ROI. Social media plays a huge part in engaging with the customer base, both existing and new, and if used correctly can enhance the Brand. Exhibiting at Trade shows is still also a vital part of marketing the Brand and as an international company we participate where we feel we can gain most traction. With our own dedicated showroom facilities organizing customer demonstrations and company 'Open Days' are also vital to the brand recognition positioning our company alongside partners/suppliers that also support the customer.

5. Focus Label Machinery Limited recently sponsored the Earth Island Solution Awards that took place on the 14th November at the Café De Paris London. Can you share the highlights of the event?

Earth Island are a media, marketing and publishing brand with a wealth of experience in the industry. The Solutions Awards are all about bringing together print, design, and graphic arts whilst engaging with young people, the next generation, through 'Brief Cases' an award to inspire university students across the UK to engage in the graphic arts, all wrapped around an awards dinner and industry get-together for the stars of our industry. Focus Label Machinery sponsored the Label category – Solutions for Labels – whilst other prominent companies sponsored other awards, such as Solutions for Packaging/Paper/Packaging Development/Finishing/Multi Channel/Design/Customer Service etc.

6. How do you see the label printing machines industry evolving in 2017 and beyond?

The Label industry is very stable and a good place to invest in as a Print Business. Packaging companies are making in-roads now into Labels alongside the growth of digital inkjet/toner positions the manufacturers with a healthy future.

7. How do you stay ahead or up to date with the newer technologies?

Focus Label is an engineering company by trade and therefore take on the newest technologies for today's industrial manufacturing. Focus also has our own R+D dedicated to the future of our market place where we consult with our customer base on what 'they' require to make their businesses grow.

8. In the coming years, what are the development/solutions that you will focus on? What can we expect from Focus Label Machinery?

Our developments are in Hybrid technology not only in the Label market we serve but also in the Textile/Apparel market where we started, here we strive for the newest technology and are working on some very good projects. The flexo presses have aligned with the market in speed and width offering for Narrow Web and now it is about functionality and speed of job make-ready, repeatability of work and flexibility of applications with a multitude of materials.

9. What was the biggest design breakthrough in label printing since Focus Label's conception?

Quick Change technology on Textile Label presses. Roll to roll Silk Screen for heat transfers on apparel Labels. Full UV C.I Press for flexible packaging applications. Top loading print cylinder system. Full Servo driven presses with Quick Change functionality and integration of Digital inkjet and Hybrid technology.

10. Can you share your ideas on how to maintain an edge in the label printing business?

From a business perspective the customers are driven towards generating a higher margin with old technology and can't compete. Also, the skill gaps in our industry, throughout, make it harder to train new and keep existing staff. With the modern technology customers can take the opportunity to utilize one new press over say two or even three older ones still retaining the same or increasing margin because of the running costs, speed to press/job change-overs and consistency of print. Digital technology offers customers the chance to enter the Label market even if they have never been with flexo or gives rise to offering other forms of media within an organization, as an example packaging companies being asked to print shorter more bespoke print runs.