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**From Brussels to Bielefeld**

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Gallus Ferd. Rüsch AG  
Harzbüchelstrasse 34  
9016 St. Gallen  
Switzerland  
www.gallus-group.com

roger.inhelder@gallus-  
group.com  
T +41 71 242 86 86  
F +41 71 242 89 89

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### Management Summary

The bsb-group is active in a number of different fields. One of the newest additions to the bsb family is bsb-label GmbH, founded in January 2004. The company was one of the first to use the new machine concept of the Gallus ECS 340. After reserving the demo press exhibited at Labelexpo, bsb-label GmbH has been using the new unit at its premises in Bielefeld since October 2009. For bsb-label, the new Gallus ECS 340 came onto the market at just the right time. The company had already spent some time searching for the right press to help it gain a foothold in the flexographic printing sector. For shareholder and Managing Director Brigitte Alers, a key criterion in comparing possible alternatives was that the total investment in a new press complete with cutting-edge technology should ultimately only be marginally higher than that involved in purchasing a remarketed model. In order to fulfil bsb-label's core requirements, a remarketed model would have had to be retrofitted with a number of new parts. The company considered its decision very carefully indeed, not least because this investment would add a new process to its overall portfolio of printing methods. Looking back, Brigitte Alers is pleased that they opted for flexographic printing and for the Gallus ECS 340: "For bsb-label, this was definitely the right press at the right time."

### From the Gallus stand at Labelexpo, the new Gallus ECS 340 went straight into production at bsb-label

On closer inspection, innovations sometimes appear so obvious that it seems astonishing no-one has hit on them earlier. One such example is the new Gallus ECS 340 series. Introduced by the Gallus Group at last year's Labelexpo Europe, the presses are based on a core of technical granite. After being the centre of attention in Brussels, the new press was transported straight from the trade fair stand to Bielefeld, where it was installed at bsb-label GmbH.

By taking the pioneering step of using granite as the basis of the press, the Gallus Group provided a real talking point for visitors to Labelexpo. However, the success of the press manufacturing company from St. Gallen in Switzerland was due to more than just this initial stir. The Gallus ECS 340 series also boasts a range of other qualities that are clearly proving highly attractive to label printers. Indeed,

in December 2009, the company reported that over 20 sales agreements had been concluded for this press worldwide in the first three months following its market launch.



Figure 1: In September 2009, visitors to Labelexpo Europe in Brussels were able to view the new Gallus ECS 340. The press went into operation at bsb-label GmbH in Bielefeld in October.

### **Specialist for lettering and decoration**

The bsb-group is active in a range of different areas, each of which is handled by a separate business unit. In turn, these units are brought together under the bsb-bentlage sales company. Founded by Friedrich Bentlage in 1928, this is still a family-owned company. The group's current Managing Director Christopher Hettlage is the grandson of the company founder. The bsb-group employs a total workforce of 120 and achieved annual sales of around EUR 15 million in 2008. The business units bsb-proprint and bsb-label are both based in Bielefeld. bsb-proprint generates the bulk of its business from labels for lettering and decoration, most of them manufactured using large-format screen printing and offset printing. The unit's portfolio also includes numerous special features such as transfer labels, decals and tattoo labels. In contrast, bsb-label focuses on adhesive reel-fed labels.

Other members of the group include Vienna-based production company bsb-schönberg, sales office bsb-imprano in the Netherlands and bsb-spegaph, a sales organisation in Switzerland. The group of companies also maintains sales collaborations in France, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Portugal, Austria and Italy.

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## **Powering ahead**

One of the newest additions to the bsb family is bsb-label GmbH, founded in January 2004. It grew out of a department within the company that manufactured customised reel-fed labels. As this section experienced consistent growth from the moment it was founded, bsb-label continued to invest in it. It all started with a six-colour press for translatory letterpress printing. This was gradually enhanced with additional print and confectioning systems. In the years since its foundation, the company has installed a total of five new machines and now employs a workforce of ten. As a result, it now offers digital, letterpress, flexographic and offset printing. Even in the difficult economic climate of 2009, bsb-label still managed to record a ten percent rise in sales. In this respect, the increase in capacity generated by the new Gallus press creates yet more potential.

As it operates as an independent company, bsb-label GmbH occupies a special place within the group of companies. Represented by Christopher Hettlage, bsb-bentlage acts as one of the shareholders, while the other is Brigitte Alers, who is also sole Managing Director. bsb-label's self-sufficiency on the market is intentional. Although bsb-bentlage is its biggest customer, the company also handles numerous orders from external customers.

## **Labels for extreme conditions**

The close ties with and geographical proximity to the group as a whole creates many beneficial synergies, including access to various facilities such as the laboratory, prepress department, mailroom and vehicle fleet. Due to the bsb-group's extensive experience in high-quality special lettering for what can sometimes be unusual applications, the laboratory in particular is very well equipped. One example is labels for agricultural machinery. These labels must be able to withstand wind, rain, mud and high-pressure cleaners for as long as the machines themselves. With other specialties, too, labels often need to deliver specific strengths, high durability or be suitable for use in extreme conditions. In such cases, modern laboratory facilities with experienced staff are an essential part of the process when it comes to developing labels with special properties and preparing them for production. The company's customers are drawn from various sectors, such as automotive and plant engineering, automotive supply, plastics processing, consumer goods, foodstuffs, mechanical engineering and the electrical industry. Its product portfolio includes labels for product decoration, name-plates and rating plates, test and safety marks, promotional signs and much more.

## The right press at the right time

The new Gallus ECS 340 came onto the market at just the right time for bsb-label. The company had already spent some time searching for the right press to help it gain a foothold in the flexographic printing sector. Due to the limited investment budget available, the original plan had been to install a remarketed press. This was the point at which Johannes Hübner from Gallus-Group Vertriebs GmbH proposed the new machine concept of the Gallus ECS 340, which had been presented at Labelexpo Europe.



Figure 2: In front of the new Gallus ECS 340 (from left): Managing Director of bsb-label Brigitte Alers, majority shareholder and Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Gallus Group Ferdinand Rüesch, bsb-label Operations Manager Peter Bellman and Johannes Hübner from Gallus-Group Vertriebs GmbH.

For Brigitte Alers, a key criterion in comparing possible alternatives was that the total investment in a new press complete with cutting-edge technology should ultimately only be marginally higher than that involved in purchasing a remarketed model. In order to fulfil bsb-label's core requirements, a remarketed model would have had to be retrofitted with a number of new parts. There would also have been additional costs for tools. The company considered its decision very carefully indeed, not least because this investment would add a new process to its overall portfolio of printing methods. Intensive training from the Gallus Group and the commitment of other supplier companies – such as Zeller+Gmelin for inks – proved invaluable in helping to ensure bsb-label's first foray into flexographic printing went as smoothly as possible. Looking back, Brigitte Alers is pleased that they opted for

flexographic printing and for the Gallus ECS 340: “For bsb-label, this was definitely the right press at the right time.”

### **Increased capacity for new orders**

According to Brigitte Alers, it was necessary to invest in expanding production capacities because business with new customers had grown significantly in a period of just a few months. Although the applications involved in these orders could have been carried out using the existing equipment, the method of production would not have met economic needs. The new press also boosts productivity and flexibility. The company has a whole series of orders with run lengths of over one million labels. The process of manufacturing these was usually extremely laborious on the existing letterpress machine. The new flexographic press has now cut manufacturing times considerably. For that reason, explains Brigitte Alers, bsb-label will, wherever possible, use this press primarily for longer runs. “In our day-to-day work, we also receive many inquiries from customers who need specific labels within 24 hours. Thanks to the Gallus ECS 340, we are now able to be much more flexible in responding to such requests.”



Figure 3: Intuitive, user-friendly programs make it easier for printing personnel to operate the press.

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### **Integrated in existing logistics**

Prior to investing in a new press, bsb-label identified key criteria to be considered in the decision-making process – the materials to be processed, printing width and colour. Accordingly, the company was seeking a press with at least seven printing units, a web width of 340 mm and the option to print monofoils. Regardless of whether it ended up being a new or remarketed press, the machine also had to be fitted with technology that was already cutting-edge enough to ensure short makeready times and low waste levels.

As a result, the Gallus ECS 340 now installed features seven flexographic printing units, a unit for delamination and relamination, assemblies for web cleaning and corona pretreatment, a web monitoring system and a turnover device. The printing width of 340 mm suits the machinery already in place and all the peripherals in terms of existing tools and material dimensions. Labels and foils made of polyethylene and polypropylene, and paper labels for the foodstuffs and cosmetics industries are all popular substrates.

### **Trusting in the experience of the field trial customer**

As Gallus did not have a demo model in its demo centre in St. Gallen at that point, bsb-label opted for the new Gallus ECS 340 without having carried out its own printing tests on the press. However, the company did have the opportunity to examine and assess the field trial press that had already been in operation for some time at Barthel GmbH in Essen. In retrospect, Brigitte Alers feels this experience was particularly beneficial. It provided a good insight into the diverse range of materials the press can handle and also revealed a great deal of information about the new machine concept from the perspective of an experienced flexographic printer.

### **Granite ensures quiet operation**

While the press boasts many highlights, its primary feature is its granite core. Although not previously used in printing presses, granite delivers a whole range of benefits. It generates an extremely low level of vibration, is not magnetic and remains very dimensionally stable even at fluctuating temperatures. Among other things, this is key to the extremely quiet operation of the ECS 340. Achieving a comparable level of stability and precision using the traditional design with cantilever frame would require a disproportionately high outlay. One other bonus of the new press is that it does not require a ventilation system. This is due, among other things, to the water-cooled UV units. The yardstick for developing the new press system was to come up with intelligent solutions that involved as little outlay as possible.

The use of granite clearly demonstrates how it is possible to reduce the outlay involved in manufacturing the base of a press while still fulfilling the high requirements made of the mechanical engineering aspects. One other outcome of the need to keep the total investment low is the design of the printing unit. As it enables very direct web travel, the web length between each printing unit is just 1.1 metres. What's more, it has also been possible to reduce the number of individual components in the printing unit of the Gallus ECS 340 by around a third compared to a conventional flexographic printing unit. Overall, the numerous technical developments also ensure the new concept is very energy efficient. As Brigitte Alers says, this is an extremely important consideration when it comes to bsb-label's printing operations, which are certified to ISO 9001 and ISO 14001. It also rounds off the positive impression the press has made in practice thus far.



Figure 4: The new Gallus ECS 340.

## **The Gallus Group**

The Gallus Group is one of the world's leading partners for label printers. The Group develops and manufactures label printing machine systems at its headquarters in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and its development and production facility in Langgöns, Germany.

Wide-web rotary presses and die-cutters offer the folding carton sector a cost-effective means of producing folding cartons and card products inline.

Besides its portfolio of presses, the Group also supplies consumables, a global, decentralised service and spare parts network and advisory services on print and process engineering tasks.

Gallus and Heidelberg Druckmaschinen AG, the global market leader in solutions for the print and media industry, have been working in partnership since 1999. Gallus has a workforce of approximately 540. The Group is based in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

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For further information, please contact:

Gallus Ferd. Ruesch AG, Corporate Marketing

Tel.: +41 71 242 86 86

[www.gallus-group.com](http://www.gallus-group.com)

[roger.inhelder@gallus-group.com](mailto:roger.inhelder@gallus-group.com)