



Bopack tackles the challenges of the future with Gallus

When talking to Marc Boehlen, founder and CEO of the Bopack Group, and his son Frédéric Boehlen, Operations Manager at Bopack Labels Belgium, there is one subject that keeps coming up – the demand for top quality. A detailed account of day-to-day work practices on the shop floor and the strict requirements also applying to the company’s suppliers proves just how seriously the matter is taken. “Bopack sells more than just labels, we offer solutions,” says the engaging Marc Boehlen. This approach demands the necessary flexibility from all the group’s employees and partners too.



Marc Boehlen

Growth through specialisation and diversification

Bopack was founded in 1969 and consists of two divisions. Bopack Labels specialises in the production of self-adhesive labels and Bopack Systems in the development of labelling and product identification systems. The company has grown over the years and is now the market leader in the Benelux countries and France, with seven production facilities and two sales offices. Last year, Bopack recorded total sales of €110 million, €90 million of which came from its label activities. 580 of the group’s 700 employees work at one of the six Bopack Labels sites (in Wommelgem, Rouen, Strasbourg, Bazouges, Lorient and Zeist).



Gallus EM 510 S

“Since I bought out my brother in 2000 and introduced private equity investors, Bopack has focussed on further expansion within Europe. This has been achieved in part through a number of excellent acquisitions in France and the Netherlands,” explains Marc Boehlen.

Although the food industry still accounts for 40% of sales, Bopack has experienced strong growth in the pharmaceuticals sector (22%) and the cosmetics industry (18%). The chemical industry is also well represented, accounting for 10% of sales. “Although we already occupy a leading position in Europe, our goal is to become a world player. It’s a familiar story – despite market globalization, local presence is still essential for good customer relations. A consistent focus on niche markets is crucial in this respect. That’s why we’ve opted to specialise in particular markets or printing techniques at all our companies,” the CEO continues.

When we ask about Bopack’s relationship with Gallus, it becomes clear that this deliberate policy of specialisation also affects suppliers. Bopack has been a Gallus customer for over 30 years. The group has a total of over 80 printing presses, 45 of them made by Gallus. On average, the Gallus presses have eight printing stations and offer a combination of printing techniques (flexographic, letterpress, screen, foil, etc.) with web widths of 200 to 500 mm.



Frédéric Boehlen

Proactive cooperation on quality

“We work closely with our suppliers. New presses are purchased in response to new opportunities that arise. We expect our suppliers to adopt a proactive approach to developments and innovations so that we can react quickly to new market trends and specific requests from our customers. Gallus has taken this on board,” explains Frédéric Boehlen. “Not only are our customers particularly demanding in terms of flexibility, they are not prepared to make compromises when it comes to quality either. On the contrary, ‘zero default’ quality is expected for the complex applications in the cosmetics and pharmaceuticals sectors,” adds Marc Boehlen.

Bopack knows that with Gallus it has made the right choice of supplier for consistent register accuracy, perfect printing of images and equally perfect die-cutting of labels. As Frédéric Boehlen explains, “Following growth in our shrink sleeve activities, we recently invested in a press that is able to print both these sleeves and ‘normal’ labels. We also asked Gallus to supply a new press for our pharmaceutical department where we print in clean rooms in compliance with the sector’s GMP standards. Gallus is definitely one of the key players when it comes to achieving this level of quality.”



Gallus EM 280

In 2007, Bopack invested in nine new presses at a total cost of around eight million euros. All these presses have a modular design because they need to be able to adapt to new jobs virtually all the time. "Set-up times are a crucial factor in boosting productivity. It should be possible to reduce the time required to set up the press between two jobs to virtually zero," stresses Marc Boehlen, bringing up a favourite subject of his. Both he and his son agree that Gallus does a good job in this respect and offers presses that are geared to the diverse jobs and shorter runs of today's market. During the tour of the printing plant, Frédéric Boehlen points out a concrete example – the sleeve cylinders which are much easier and therefore quicker to change thanks to their light weight. "We are currently working with an average delivery time of eight working days – a pretty good service," acknowledges the Operations Manager.

Talking of service, presses are capital-intensive pieces of equipment and therefore need to be used to their full capacity. This is impossible unless they are in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week. "Our printing plant in Wommelgem works round the clock. This excludes the weekend, although we regularly work at weekends to complete a specific job," explains Frédéric Boehlen. The switch to electronically controlled presses is a further positive move. According to Marc Boehlen, the remote service offered by Gallus for its new servo-drive presses has now become indispensable. "The new integrated servo technology is an excellent example of Gallus' vision for the future. In addition to self-adhesive substrates, we can also process other materials, allowing further expansion into other types of packaging printing," he says.

This brings the father and son team to their vision of the future: "In addition to a wider range of packaging printing jobs, future challenges include improving productivity and ensuring top quality. There is also still a gap between conventional and digital printing, primarily because some print results – luxury packaging and the use of certain Pantone colours are two examples – cannot currently be achieved digitally. The message remains to stay alert, and this includes keeping an eye on press prices!"

Frédéric Boehlen brings the discussion to a close by stating, "Fortunately, Gallus is never afraid of new challenges and we can work together on all kinds of different projects in an open atmosphere."

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