

Cartoncare's new Gallus CCS 510 S
is a 7-colour press.

NORTHERN IRELAND'S FIRST MINISTER UNVEILS NEW LINE AT **CARTONCARE**

**THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PETER
ROBINSON MP MLA, OFFICIALLY
LAUNCHES THE FIRST GALLUS
CARTON LINE IN UK AND IRELAND.**

A report by Nick Coombes

Newry based Cartoncare Ltd recently held an Open Day for its customers and suppliers to celebrate the commissioning of its new Gallus carton line. The CCS 510 S narrow web inline flexo press is the first of its type to be installed in the UK and Ireland, and was chosen specifically to produce high value small format cartons for the pharmaceutical, health, and beauty care markets. The new press, which is part of a major £2m investment programme at Cartoncare, supported by 'Invest Northern Ireland', comes at the

**Peter Robinson MP MLA
responded to Mr Chalmers' welcome
by congratulating Cartoncare on making
its investment at a difficult time.**

end of three years' detailed research by the company into the technology available from leading manufacturers around the World.

Speaking for Cartoncare, Chairman Ralph Chalmers told the invited audience: "Today's event represents an exciting and very significant moment in the journey of a small Northern Ireland company. The Gallus offers state-of-the-art technology that will allow us to meet the challenges of global competition and realise new opportunities in the market. Equally important is the positive contribution it will make to the local economy by allowing us to grow and employ more people."

Responding, First Minister, Peter Robinson said: "Despite the current challenging global economic climate, local companies can reap significant benefits from investing in new products and processes that differentiate them from competitors. With this investment, Cartoncare will add value to its operation and expand its



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business into new export markets.”

Cartoncare began life back in 1996, as part of the Americk Group, but it was around the millennium, when Ralph Chalmers became involved, initially as an adviser, that things began to happen. “I had a background in corporate finance and investment, so was able to bring financial expertise from outside the print market — this was vital,” explained



Chairman Ralph Chalmers welcomed Ireland's First Minister and other VIP guests to their recent Open House.

Chalmers, who in 2001, with the support of fellow investors Dermot McDermott and David Mc Cleery, established DRD Holdings to take over the company.

Work in those days largely revolved around producing small format cartons for the soap industry, with the balance made up of pharmaceutical packaging. Printing was carried out on a narrow web flexo line manufactured in America by Propheteer. The Propheteer Ultra line, which is still in operation today, has a 450mm web width and six UV flexo print stations with inline embossing and a sheeter (simple die station).

With little work required to be delivered on the reel, Cartoncare employed an Iijima flat bed die cutter and an Escomat folder gluer. The Iijima is still in daily use, while the old folder gluer was replaced by a new Vega Orion 820 model in 2004. The new gluer has a Pafra overhead glue system and is also fitted with a pharmaceutical code reader device.

Speaking for Cartoncare, General Manager, Dermot McDermott, explained the lengths he went to in the search for a new printing line. “We started looking in 2004, and our initial list included Propheteer, Mark Andy, Nilpeter and Edale, all of which were

well known names and had established reputations in the market. As we became more familiar with the technology, our focus really came down to Comco, Gallus, and Omet as the specialists for inline flexo cartons with the most appropriate technology.”

Over a lengthy period, Cartoncare embarked on a series of print trials and sought advice and information from converters with first hand experience of the different technology available. “What became clear was that none of the shortlist would be a wrong choice, so in the end, it was the quality of the demonstrations we had at Gallus that swung the decision their way,” he added.

In the period between negotiating the order and delivery of the new machine, the Swiss based Gallus company acquired one of the industry's benchmark manufacturers, BHS, which for many years had designed and built inline flexo technology for the packaging market, for both filmic and cartonboard substrates. By selecting Gallus, Cartoncare inadvertently tapped into a vastly increased wealth of knowledge and technical know-how that can only be seen as an added benefit.

Getting the specification of the new press right was crucial if maximum benefit were to

The CCS offers added value finishing in the way of printing on the reverse side, embossing, cold foiling and laminating.



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be gained from all those added value techniques that the high end packaging buyers demand, and which make a significant contribution to margins. "We have always prided ourselves on the service we offer," explained Chalmers, adding, "the Care part of our company name is there for a reason."

The new 510 mm wide Gallus is one of its CCS servo lines fitted with seven flexo print units, and the ability to print on the reverse of the substrate. Additional features for adding value to the carton are screen printing, embossing, cold foiling and laminating. There is also a facility for UV or water base varnish application, and the line is completed by a rotary die station with automatic ducted waste removal. At the front end, and feeding the Gallus line, which has a top running speed of 150 m/min, is a Martin Automatic reel unit.

The beauty of the line, as McDermott puts it, is that it carries out all of the processes in one single pass from unprinted roll to finished carton blank. Board capability is up to 600 micron. Apart from the obvious

advantage of reduced floorspace requirements for both machinery and work in progress, the inline flexo carton method offers much that offset/offline production cannot, making it ideal for niche markets and test marketing.

As run lengths diminish and Brand Managers demand ever shorter turnaround times, the flexibility offered by an inline press becomes a stronger case for this type of investment. If nothing else, board is generally cheaper to buy in the reel, and by stocking various widths, Cartoncare is well placed to respond to last minute orders. Already, interest in the new Gallus' capability has "opened lines of enquiry from a number of leading pharmaceutical and health and beauty care manufacturers who were previously outside our league," said Sales Director, José Calixto, who prizes the better margins that this type of work can offer.

Determined to set out its stall as better than a 'me too' carton converter, Cartoncare committed to picking generously from the Gallus extras list to ensure that the new line

would cover its customers' existing requirements, and as far as is possible, cater for what can be foreseen. Dermot McDermott explained: "We have a close working relationship with our customers, many of whom have pledged their ongoing support to Cartoncare by co-operating on carton styles that suited our capability. In return, we offer them unstinting service and a commitment to invest in state-of-the-art technology."

Picking up on the customer loyalty theme, Ralph Chalmers cited one incident that he described as 'heart warming'. On a recent visit to New Zealand, he had occasion to shop in a local chemist store. There, on one of the shelves he spotted a carton that the company had printed, and furthermore, it contained a product also manufactured by a local company in Ireland. "In that instant, I knew the real meaning of the global market," he quipped, adding, "and I know now that we have the capability to tap into more of

The Vega Orion 820 folder gluer will shortly have a pharma code reader fitted.



The company's 12 year old Propheteer Ultra (left), which has done yeoman service, was not capable of taking Cartoncare into new markets.



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this work as a direct consequence of the investment we have made.”

As with all companies, Cartoncare places high value on the skill and dedication of its workforce. Chalmers explained: “We are only small but staff numbers had risen to 12 when we were hit by the loss of 40% of our business overnight back in 2005. Our crisis plan resolved to keep the team together and back ourselves to restore financial viability. With the help of our customers and suppliers we managed to turn it around, and the proof of our success is the new Gallus.” By determining what the company was good at, and what it needed to invest in to move forward, Cartoncare leant heavily on its dedication to service — and the policy worked.

The company has ambitious plans to expand its operation in Newry, either on the present site, which currently offers 12,000 sq ft of production space, or at a new location within the local area. “We are lucky in that it is a purpose built unit that allows us a good workflow pattern on the floor, but we are



The Iijima die cutter uses the Wupa system of moving lower platen.

bursting at the seams, particularly with the size of cartonboard rolls we have to store to maintain production,” added McDermott, pointing out that to reap the price advantage of volume buying, he has to work with their main board supplier (Igggesund) who store board for them in nearby Warrenpoint for call off. Wherever the new square footage is found, Cartoncare will be looking to add significantly to its staff numbers in the future, news that the First Minister enjoyed hearing, and reward for the ‘Invest Northern Ireland’ scheme.

Thanking long term customers Denman International (professional haircare products) and Athlone Laboratories (pharmaceuticals),

among others, Ralph Chalmers said that the route to success was a three-way partnership that starts with technology suppliers, moves on through converters, and finishes with the end user. Board supplier Igggesund, Sun Chemical (Solar Inks), Flexographic Plate Plan (Dublin), Polywest (Sleeves) and Sandon (anilox rolls) were singled out by Chalmers as significant pieces in the Cartoncare jigsaw. “We believe in building partnerships here — and they have to work both ways,” he commented.

The actual renaissance of Cartoncare will not finally be achieved until the Gallus, which ‘went live’ in September, is fully into its stride, and the promised new work arrives on the company’s doorstep. But from the ashes of 2005, the enthusiastic team at Newry have built the foundations of a better and more secure business that now looks forward to a profitable future. Ralph Chalmers and his team know that ‘delivering’ is everything, and only those that do, will survive the current downturn.