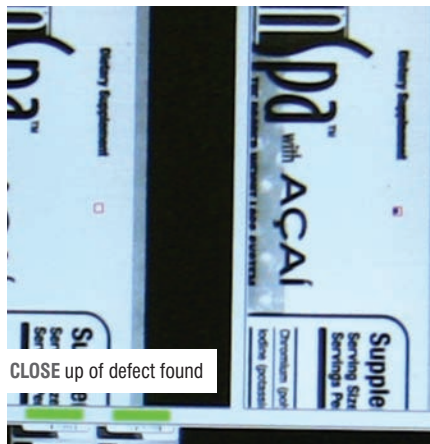




REPLACING a label



FINISHED rolls of labels



CLOSE up of defect found



CEI machine

# Expanding into film

OVER 90 YEARS IN BUSINESS, US converter Ross Printing has diversified into film products with an investment in sophisticated inspection and rewinding equipment from CEI and BST

The year was 1917. Europe was at war. In May, the Germans began bombing London. US president Woodrow Wilson vowed to keep the US neutral – until British intelligence exposed a German plot to convince Mexico to go to war against the United States.

Also in 1917, the National Hockey League was formed, the Chicago White Sox baseball team won 100 games, and 'The Babe', Babe Ruth, pitched 35 complete games.... for the Boston Red Sox!

John Fitzgerald Kennedy was born in 1917 and the Dutch dancer Mata Hari, was executed for spying outside of Paris. And 1917 was the year George Ross founded Ross Printing in Spokane, Washington.

## HISTORY

Now, 93 years later, his grandson, Alan Ross is the third generation to run this successful printing/label/converting business.

## LABELS&LABELING

Ross Printing began as a letterpress commercial printer, with a machine they have to this day. In the early days, they produced business papers, newsletters, and gummed labels. George Ross' son, Stan, took over the business after World War II. Grandson Alan joined the firm in the mid 70's and remains general manager today.

When his son, Benjamin, joined the company in the early 1990's – the fourth generation to engage in the family business – Ross Printing was the oldest continuously owned printing enterprise in the state.

Alan Ross, general manager of Ross Printing, is the third of four generations of the Ross family engaged in the 93 year old business.

Ross Printing has never stood still. In the 70's, 80's and 90's they branched into premium commercial lithography, adding a 40" five color + coater Komori, a 20" six color Heidelberg Speedmaster and other finishing equipment, as

they branched into legal and financial printing. In the 70's, they moved into flexography, and started producing pharmaceutical labels. Soon after, they added high resolution digital printing to their repertoire. Most recently, they have added film converting to the services they provide their customer base.

## TODAY

Ross Printing continues to be proficient in all four printing processes and offers its customers a wide array of products and services, supplemented with die-cutting, embossing and other finishing services. Besides the letterpress and the commercial sheet offset presses, Ross has two HP Indigo roll to sheet digital presses, which produce a variety of custom products, primarily for customers in a radius of just a few hundred miles from Spokane.

The flexo operation is comprised of two Mark Andy presses – an all-UV 10" 2200 six color and a 17" 2200 servo,



WAYNE Altringer running CEI rewinder with Shark 100% inspection



ALAN Ross, general manager

eight color, which is also all UV and water based. The flexo presses produce millions of patient inserts every year, and labels are shipped worldwide, including to Europe.

Over the last five years, Ross Printing has moved into packaging and pharmaceutical film products to meet the evolving needs of its customers and the wider market. The newer press was specifically purchased in 2009, says general manager Alan Ross, 'because we saw nothing but opportunity for a range of converted film products.'

Continued Alan, 'As we entered the film market – pouches, sleeves, shrink film – our goal was and remains, to be the premier supplier of film based packaging in the Northwest, that specializes in shorter runs.' The company is focused on runs of 10,000 to 1,000,000. Even though the overall economic climate for the past couple of years has not been great, Ross Printing has continued to grow as activity in non-traditional substrates emerges.

#### INSPECTION AND QUALITY

Just as Ross' printing business has changed and evolved over the years, so too have the inspection and quality control systems they use.

BST video systems on their presses are used to inspect the print as the jobs are being produced. Ross Printing says today's customers are more demanding than ever, so they strive to use technology at every possible juncture to keep on the leading edge of productivity and quality.

Along with the new Mark Andy press, Ross purchased a high speed slitter-rewinder from Converting Equipment International (CEI) in Lewiston, California, and a Shark 100% inspection system from BST.

Brian Seimears, flexo department

manager at Ross Printing, says 'We did a lot of research before we purchased the CEI machine. We visited their shop and spoke to numerous customers.' Other factors were CEI's after-sales customer service, the overall dependability of their machines, and of course, features.

### "100% inspection is a requirement for Ross' pharmaceutical customers, and was the driving force behind the decision to put a Shark on the re-winder"

'We really like the features of the machine,' Seimears continued. 'It's being 100 percent servo, especially when we are doing film, was the biggest attraction. We run both film and pressure sensitive materials on it.'

'Another big feature for us is the running speed. This machine is three times faster than other machines - it goes up to 1800 feet per minute! And because it has a slip differential, film runs without a hitch,' said Seimears. 'A nice tool on the machine lets us put numbers and other information on the back side of the web, which is needed for our pharmaceutical customers.'

During rewinding, the web is inspected with the BST Shark system. 100% inspection is a requirement for Ross' pharmaceutical customers, and was the driving force behind the decision to put a Shark on the re-winder. The Shark inspects 100 percent of the web, 100 percent of the time, and identifies all random and repeating defects, such as missing text, hickies, register shift, dots or splash, streaks, and improper matrix

removal on P/S stock.

Brian and his team spoke to users, visited machines and compared suppliers before selecting the Shark for the new re-winder. According to Seimears, 'Shark was found to be not only more affordable, but with better specs. And it has performed excellent. Our re-winder operator, Wayne Altringer, is extremely happy with the Shark and wouldn't have any other brand.'

'There is no comparison,' says Altringer. 'Shark is so much more user friendly and a lot easier to use. It has features the other system does not and it saves us time and money every day.'

The Shark system works with the CEI rewinder. When a defect is found, the web advances and automatically stops at the splice station for removal and replacement with a good label. Shark has an optional 'Pharma' mode which allows pharmaceutical suppliers to certify the quality and integrity of every label and roll.

Reflecting on the combination of high speed, high performance rewinder and 100% inspection, Alan Ross said 'The Shark on the CEI machine is a very powerful combination that allows us to provide the best possible product for our customers, every day, and I absolutely would recommend them both – for price, value and performance.'

#### THE FUTURE

As for the future, 'We are writing some big PO's, and I see nothing but the curve going north on film substrates,' said Ross. 'Given the impact of the recession on our more traditional products, we see a strong future in converted film products.' Maybe the expansion into film products will be the foundation to carry Ross to their 100 year anniversary in 2017, and beyond.