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Autobond plans largest ever expansion of laminator range at IPEX 2006

Autobond has ordered the largest exhibition stand in its 28 year history for IpeX 2006, in order to provide the required space to demonstrate five sheet-fed film laminating machines and an encapsulator. Four of the models will have their worldwide launch at the show. In addition, the Derbyshire manufacturer is planning to laminate live jobs throughout the exhibition, supplied by printers local to Birmingham.

“There has been a tremendous amount of research and development work undertaken at our factory during the last 18 months,” says managing director John Gilmore. “The result of this is a range that includes a model for everyone, from a company with a need to laminate A4 work printed with toner-based inks on a digital press, to a large book printer requiring B1 sheets laminated at ‘industrial’ speeds of 80 metres per minute.”

The new SHEETMASTER 105 CTP

The largest machine on the Autobond stand will be the new Sheetmaster 105 CTP, a laminator with a two metre diameter drum drier that offers phenomenal drying capacity, throughput and flexibility. This Autobond model can apply thermal or water-based films, either single or double-sided in one pass. Stock can be from A4 to B1 in size and from 80 – 650 gsm in weight, while the top output speed is 80 metres per minute.

New features include a double nip facility, the first on any laminator. “During tests at the factory we discovered that if a job is put through a set of nip rollers twice then the film takes on an even better gloss. This allows the operator to save money by cutting back on adhesive coating weight. We developed this idea and on the new Sheetmaster 105 CTP have incorporated a second set of 250 mm diameter rollers - one rubber and one heated chrome - after the initial nip rollers. The results are staggering.”

The new SHEETMASTER 76E

The new Sheetmaster 76E is an encapsulator that offers a host of features not found on other machines. These include a servo-driven sheet correc-

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tional device that guarantees a precise gap between each sheet, which means that only a single cut is required by the cutter to separate work. This results in an estimated 10 per cent saving on film over 12 months.

“The gap can be altered very accurately, and if it is set at 6 mm it will remain exactly at 6 mm unless changed by the operator,” says Mr Gilmore. “The Sheetmaster 76E has been designed to be easy to use and extremely efficient. For example, the in-feed and cross cutter are both servo-driven, while there are air coolers and water chilled rollers to maintain constant temperatures.

“We’ve incorporated side slitters and an edge trim removal system that automatically chips and sucks away waste trim, via a 100 mm diameter extraction pipe, to a container outside of the plant. This ensures there is no untidy polyester trim waste around the working area of the machine.”

The new Sheetmaster 76E incorporates a servo-driven Heidelberg Speedmaster 52 feed head that enables a wide range of paper types to be fed at high speed. The new encapsulator can handle stock from A5 up to B1, in weights from 60 – 650 gsm and at speeds of 60 metres per minute. This equates to 14,000 A4 sheets an hour, a huge throughput for an encapsulator.

Other features include 300 mm diameter pre-heat rollers, controlled by a Swiss made water heater, situated prior to the nip rollers to ensure that the adhesive is at a constant and reliable temperature. The nip rollers are made using a special rubber that lasts six times longer than the traditional, easily damaged, silicon rubber normally used on competitors’ encapsulators. Sheet delivery can be to a shingle table and into a vibrating jogger.

The MINI Range

One of the biggest growth areas for Autobond during 2005 has been in the digital sector, where an increasing number of companies want to be able to laminate work printed on a digital press such as those from Xerox, Canon or Indigo. This has previously been a problem in the industry because of the difficulty of getting film to adhere to oil and toner on the paper. Autobond has overcome this hurdle with the MINI Digital 36 laminator, which provides nine tonnes of pressure in the nip rollers and up to 140 degrees Centigrade, sufficient to ensure good adhesion between film and stock.

Autobond will have three models from the MINI series on its Ipex stand. The smallest of these will be the MINI Digital TP 36, a thermal perfecter that can laminate stock up to 36 x 52 cm at speeds of 30 metres per minute. This equates to 4,500 SRA3 sheets an hour, sufficient to handle the output from several digital presses.

The laminator has a footprint of only 2.2 x 1.1 metres and benefits from the same high quality construction as the other Autobond models, including 30 mm steel side plates that ensure accuracy and robust construction.

For the first time ever Autobond will show the new MINI TP 76, a thermal perfector capable of handling A4 to 76 x 102 cm stock. The suction-drum Stahl feeder enables speeds of 30 metres per minute. The third model in the series is the MINI Digital 76 TPH, which incorporates a Heidelberg feeder that allows a throughput of laminated work at 45 metres per minute.

The Heidelberg Speedmaster feed head has separate pick up and forwarding suckers to transfer sheets on to the vacuum feed belts and into the laminating rollers. The feed head is processor controlled, and receives continuous job data from a sophisticated encoder on the laminating roller.

The MINI laminators handle matt or gloss polypropylene and acetate thermal film ranging from 90 to 650 gsm, while the perfecting option allows sheets to be laminated both sides in one pass.

Other features include a Siemens electronics and a touch screen control panel, with remote diagnostics facilities, PLC and inverter drives, a digital sheet counter, adjustable anti curl bar, pneumatically adjustable in-feed nip rollers and a pneumatic air clutch to provide a constant tension between the laminator and the sheeter.

The new COMPACT TP 105

Autobond has developed a larger version of its popular Compact laminator to handle sheets printed on 76 x 105 cm sheet-fed presses. The Compact TP 105 incorporates several new features, including front lays for greater underlap control, and will laminate stock up to 80 metres per minute. Changing film sizes is quickly and easily carried out using an air shaft, which means that short run jobs can still be laminated cost effectively. The laminators incorporate Siemens products, which provide remote machine diagnostics via a modem link to Autobond technicians in the UK.

The high level of automation means that operators do not have to be skilled. Autobond says it can train someone within a day to use one of its laminators and supports machines with a full year's warranty on parts and labour. Autobond is one of the world's leading manufacturers of sheet-fed film laminators, both thermal and water-based, and is a major supplier of thermal and water-based films and manufacturer of adhesives, which can be used on most makes of laminator. The company has customers in more than 145 countries.



The Mini 76TP with suction drum feeder



The Mini 76TPH with Heidelberg feeder