

## Rewinding department cracks successful formula

Over the past four years, KS Scales & Labels has partnered with Rotocon, investing in three slitter/rewinders and a plate washing machine.

**NATHAN NAIDOO exemplifies entrepreneurial spirit and determination, having branched out from repairs of retail and industrial scales to establish KS Scales & Labels, a label converting business in Alrode (South Gauteng), specialising in self-adhesive labels and price marking.**

Five years ago, Nathan relates – after numerous requests from customers, predominantly smaller-scale butcheries whose scales he was repairing – he graduated from sourcing to producing labels.

‘Having no printing industry background, I gained about 10 years’ worth of experience within the first year. Although I look back on it as the worst year of my life, because every job I took on was a loss leader and I learnt things the hard way, it made me stronger and wiser,’ he now recalls.

He rates his best initial purchase as a second-hand eight-colour flexo press, which was well-maintained and in good condition, as it offered a diverse application range for satisfying customers’ varying needs. ‘I was very impressed by the equivalent model operating at Elite Labels. It has subsequently become the workhorse of our printing operation, especially after upgrading five of the UV curing system lamps,’ he adds.

### Top-class slitting and rewinding

In 2015, the operation graduated from manual cutting and rewinding to a second-hand slitter/rewinder purchased through Rotocon. Nathan describes it as the reliable anchor of the slitting and rewinding department, thanks to its overhaul by a German technician. In addition, it’s operated by the company’s best rewinder, Precious Siwela. ‘No one can match her for quality and output. In our experience, women make better rewinders than men because they’re much faster,’ Nathan maintains.



Rotocon director, Patrick Aengenvoort, and KS Scales & Labels operator, Adam Maxola, with the Ecoline RSD 330 label die-cutting/inspection machine.

In 2017, the slitting and rewinding department expanded with the purchase of a Rotocon Ecoline RCSI 330 finishing machine. Its automated tension control, including acceleration and deceleration, allows tension to be set at any required level and the machine reaches a maximum running speed of 320m/min.

Other features include a vertical inspection zone with a LED strobe light, dual rewind, waste rewriter, splice detector, and a cartridge slitting system with an accuracy of around 0.2mm on web widths up to 340mm.

This investment was followed in January 2019 by the commissioning of a Rotocon RSD Ecoline 330 die-cutter and slitter. Its robust servo-driven die station facilitates high-speed die-cutting while the semi-automatic turret rewriter enables operator, Adam Maxola, to prepare the next roll while the current one is still running – helping to speed up production times.

Additionally, a modem for remote fault finding and maintenance allows Rotocon to respond quickly to any software and drive-related issues, says director, Patrick Aengenvoort.

Nathan reports that a slight glitch with the machine’s slowdown on core insertion, was quickly resolved by Rotocon. ‘They went back to the software development company and asked them to install a faster ramp to keep good speed.’



Steven Namakho describes Rotocon's Ecoline RCSI 330 finishing machine as easy to operate thanks to the self-explanatory icons on the moveable operator console, and the S-drive servo/software control system on the unwind, rewind and draw stations.

In addition to this improvement, the company's quality controller performs spot checks to calculate the meterage and to ensure that labels are counted as accurately as possible. Nathan emphasises that they'd rather be a little over than under, especially because catering industry customers – who use a lot of sauce barcode labels – prefer to deal with suppliers who provide them with the correct number or additional labels.

'Now that we have these three slitting/rewinding machines running non-stop, we can print, cut, rewind and box 15 000 rolls of scale labels – the equivalent of over eight-million labels or 50 000m<sup>2</sup> of paper – within three days,' Nathan enthuses. 'This type of job would previously have taken us between two and three weeks to complete with only one slitter/rewinder, and at least a month when we only had the rewinding tables.'

Such speedy turnaround times, he remarks, impress the many print brokers he deals with, creating a massive competitive advantage over similarly-sized label converters.

### Future forward

In order to ensure that the company continues on its successful trajectory, Nathan is constantly investing in skills development and equipment to improve the quality of the labels converted, and service offered.

Asked what future improvements are planned, Nathan mentions the imminent arrival of a Jet ECO plate washing machine and installation of a solar system.

The plate washer is being supplied by Rotocon through its Netherlands principal, Jet Euro, to further improve print quality by ensuring there's no UV ink residue on the flexo plate, following job changeovers (see sidebar).

The solar system, in addition to the existing 50kV generator, will ensure a more secure power supply system.

Nathan's ultimate goal is for his son to take over the business when he retires. Now 23 years old, Shalin Naidoo is studying business management and helps with label deliveries and scale repairs in his spare time.

## An injection of cleaning power

**TO complement its full circle offering to label converters, ranging from prepress to printing and finishing, Rotocon's latest agency partnership is for distributing Netherlands-based Jet Europe's printing plate and sleeve cleaners in South Africa.**

According to CEO, Michael Aengenvoort, Rotocon has partnered with this blue-chip equipment supplier because of its 30 years' experience in photopolymer plate processing, backed by a team possessing a high degree of expertise and craftsmanship.

Six models of fully-automatic Jet ECO cleaners are

available for cleaning, rinsing and drying flexo and letterpress plates – ranging from 450 to 1 400mm wide – in one production cycle.

The ECO cleaner can accommodate various plate sizes for simultaneous cleaning, utilising two brushes and a variety of cleaners for any plate/ink combination.

Plates are transported automatically by transfer rollers – the operator controls the transport speed and temperature via a touchscreen.

The sleeve cleaner unit automatically loads and unloads the sleeves (70 to 400mm) with the assistance of compressed air. Each sleeve is rotated while being cleaned with a flat brush. The process consists of pre-rinsing, washing out and pre-drying via a sponge roller and hot air.

The sleeve cleaner is equipped with a solvent tank, a flush tank and a solvent filter that retains the ink.