

WESTROCK INSTALLS ANOTHER HIGH-SPEC OMEGA FOLDER GLUER

A REPORT BY NICK COOMBES

Leading international carton and corrugated packaging converter, WestRock, has invested in more folder gluer technology from Duran Machinery. The new Omega Hi-Line 110 installed at WestRock's UK facility in Yate, near Bristol, is the third Omega folder gluer – the other two are at the company's plant in Trier, Germany. Like the new machine at Yate, those in Trier are customised folder gluers to meet the exact production

requirements of the plant, with high speed nick-breaking capacities, as well as special configurations to perform the complex folding processes.

Since the installation of the first Omega at WestRock in 2011, an Allpro-SM 130, the cooperation between the technical teams of both companies has become very close. The success of the first installation led to a second at the same plant, another Allpro-SM 130,



Andy Chisholm and Patrick from Technical Support, praise the close cooperation between WestRock and Duran for the smooth commissioning of the Hi-Line 110.



The highly complex gluing section requires state-of-the-art QA control.

but with a different configuration to the first, including double nick-breakers, and the addition of an Omega Turnpro in 2013 which turns the carton flow on the machine through 90 degrees.

This cooperation formed the basis for the development project at Yate, with WestRock using its experience of the previous installations with Duran Machinery to develop another bespoke machine. The latest investment is in line with WestRock's policy of moving from straightline gluing to more complex style multi-gluing at Yate, and bringing in-house work that had previously been handled by the company's plant in Trier. Speaking for WestRock, Manufacturing Director at Yate, Andy Chisholm, explained, "We needed to increase running speeds and add more variety to our gluing capacity here. We investigated the new technology available, both in terms of capability and value for money, and from our previous experience with Duran, decided an Omega machine was the right way to go."

With the Yate plant now almost entirely dedicated to beverage carton production, Chisholm was looking for a folder gluer to handle WestRock's new design of bottle

basket. "There has been a marked shift back to bottles from cans in the beer, lager and cider markets, and to cope with the increase in demand for carton baskets, we knew we had to find a more efficient production method." This resulted in a re-design, which requires very accurate die cutting for high-speed downstream packaging, but allows the blanks to be handled on the Omega without problem.

Pinar Kucukaras, Sales Director at Duran Machinery explained, "WestRock's requirement was quite specific, so fitted our custom-build policy very well. Their new Omega Hi-Line 110 has double nick breakers and is fitted with extra folding sections that produce 4- and 6-crease cartons, as well as beverage carriers at high speed." To improve efficiency, the line also has an Omega Pre-Feeder to automate blank loading. The feeder and stacker are servo driven.

The complexity of the jobs and the new control technology on the high-speed Omega has given WestRock's operators at Yate a steep learning curve to climb, but the company's folder gluer specialist, who is accustomed to working with the Omega machines, has spent time training the Yate

crews. He commented, "Duran give us great support – in fact they do much of our thinking for us by constantly coming up with helpful suggestions to improve the smooth running of the line." This is important when it has 24 glue guns and a sophisticated HHS 100% inspection system to assure quality. The system uses top-of-the-range Siemens electronics mated with Duran's own in-house software that is specially developed for custom work.

This has already proved invaluable, as Andy Chisholm explained. "We manufacture the same pattern carton for two customers who have different types of packing lines – so we need to make small adjustments on the folder gluer to ensure the nicks break automatically for both. Cutting accuracy is the key, and the control system on the Omega allows us to do this." Even with the complexity of the new basket design, WestRock is looking to run its Omega Hi-Line at what it describes as 'best in class' speeds. This will show a commercially significant increase in production on similar work previously being handled at the company's plant in Trier, which is testament to both the new blank design and new folder gluer.

In a market that has seen declining volumes in carton multi-packs, with a move towards shrink sleeves, WestRock is proud to be bucking the trend with positive growth in 2017. "Cartons add a premium feel that shrink sleeves cannot, and are more appropriate for premium brands and use as gift packs – they're also far more environmentally-friendly. But, this must be balanced with unit cost, so we need to be as efficient as possible to grow our market share," said Chisholm. This is one of the benefits of WestRock's global operating platform, in that it allows for rapid response to local changes in demand.

With almost 250 plants spread across four continents, brand owners are never far from a WestRock facility. The Group's business segments include consumer paperboard mills, beverage packaging, folding carton production, products for the home, health and beauty markets, merchandising displays and protective

packaging. The customer portfolio reads like a 'Who's Who' of international beverage brands. The facility at Yate is one of three folding carton plants in the UK, since WestRock acquired MPS, and occupies 63,000sq/ft on an eight-acre site that employs 100 staff. Current converting capacity is up to 20,000 tonnes a year.

Commenting for Duran Machinery, Pinar Kucukaras stated, "The success of the Omega Hi-Line project at WestRock in Yate was only possible because of the close cooperation between our management and technical teams. When there is more than one challenge, for example developing new features and providing them in a short timeframe, every step needs to be carefully planned." The project had very specific requirements prior to installation and the training process, with every single day planned weeks in advance. By working closely with the WestRock team, and using



The Omega Hi-Line 110 at WestRock's plant in Yate (UK) is the third folder gluer supplied by Duran Machinery to the Group.

the technical support of the company's gluing experts, Duran was able to fulfil the brief for this specially designed folder gluer

within the given timeframe. "We are very proud to be WestRock's preferred supplier of folder gluer technology," she concluded. ■