

LEAN MANUFACTURING



● Colour coded signage in all areas

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variety of wild flowers and wild life making it very environmentally friendly.

As part of the recent expansion at Thorpe, two Kodak Generation News thermal platesetters were installed. However, instead of placing them upstairs with the three original machines (which are being kept as back-up), they have been installed downstairs in the press sound haven. As Schiller reported, this has saved the company three people by removing the walking time from upstairs to downstairs. The ctp lines have also been laid out in such a way as to blur press and pre-press roles.

"I expect my pre-press people to put plates on and take them off, and I expect a number of my printers to know how the ctp runs so that if we have illness or holidays, we can keep running," said Schiller.

Other improvements in the pre-press area include the installation of a soft fan-out control which enables different grades of paper from 42 to 70 gsm to be run, plus a soft pin position control to enable every pin location on each tower to be adjusted via a computer. In addition, the

number of pre-press screens used has been reduced from 17 to three and the number of servers from nine to three.

"So there has been a massive reduction in problems in terms of managing all those systems," said Schiller.

Schiller admitted that these are quite expensive ways of making improvements. However, the company has also introduced some less costly ones which are just as effective. These included changing the press position code on plates.

As Schiller pointed out, with the traditional code, knowledge of the imposition is required to determine the plate position since all it shows is the page number, the section and the colour.

"I cannot plate up from that as I am not a printer. I can, however, plate up from our code".

This is possible since not only do the Archant plates include a bar code for the automatic sorter and product codes for tracking but they also give the plates location without the need for decoding. For example, T2 B 10S FS L represents tower 2, level B, tenth side and front side left and, if this is still too difficult, the plate position is shown graphically and lights have

been fitted to show high and low positions.

After pre-press, Schiller turned his attention to the pressroom where he reported that not only was the automatic press start-up sequence pre-determined by the management rather than the printers, but so was the closing down sequence. He admitted that the result was not always perfect but it was consistent.

"I can manage things consistently. I cannot manage the fact that someone has a hang-over," explained Schiller.

Archant has also moved away from the traditional sound haven layout where the control desks are in a straight line. This, Schiller said, tended to determine manning levels and often a long walk to pick up a copy of the paper from the folder for checking.

"So we don't do that any more. We now have two desks per folder. As they are right next door to the folder, the walking distance is considerably reduced and the connection between the number of men and the number of towers is broken. Once the press is up and away, it does not need one man per tower to keep it running".

Another area where Archant has made savings is in lighting. For instance, it used to have over 50 high bay sodium lights in the pressroom with an annual running cost of over £15,000 and that was before the recent rises in electricity costs. These have now been switched off after adding a dozen high frequency fluorescent lights to the press's top deck.

"We have put the light where it is needed, i.e. on the press, not flooding the whole building," said Schiller who also reported that a similar exercise had been carried out in the post-press area.

A further simple idea suggested by Schiller was to use standard lorry wheel nut indicators to overcome problems with the movement of press roller settings.

"We bought a bag of them. I think they cost £10 and we fitted them to all of our rollers. Now you can immediately see if the roller has moved. We have also made a slight modification to the brackets which actually reduces the likelihood of change.

"Both of these ideas came from technicians on the shop floor which demonstrates that management is not the owner of all good ideas in the business. Many more come from further down the organisation".

As with the other seminar speakers, Schiller believes that visual management is key. For instance, at Archant, colour coding is not only used for the waste bins but also for where they should be placed by having a coloured spot on the floor.

"I can walk through the plant and immediately see that

someone has not put the bins back and if you have not got the bins in place guess where the rubbish is going to go - on the floor".

A similar idea is used in the post-press area where different packing lines have different coloured strapping. As a result, the source of any issue including discarded waste can easily be identified.

Again in post-press, Schiller also explained how Archant has dealt with the noise problem.

"Post-press noise ranges from being absolutely fine to being above the legal limit but it is not practical for people to wear ear plugs all the time. So we installed noise meters. You put them on top of a machine and when the noise goes above the legal limit they light up telling the operators to wear their ear plugs. We find that people are prepared to work with this and it removes all excuses".

Another form of colour coding used at Archant is for the agency staff.

"Because they change, one

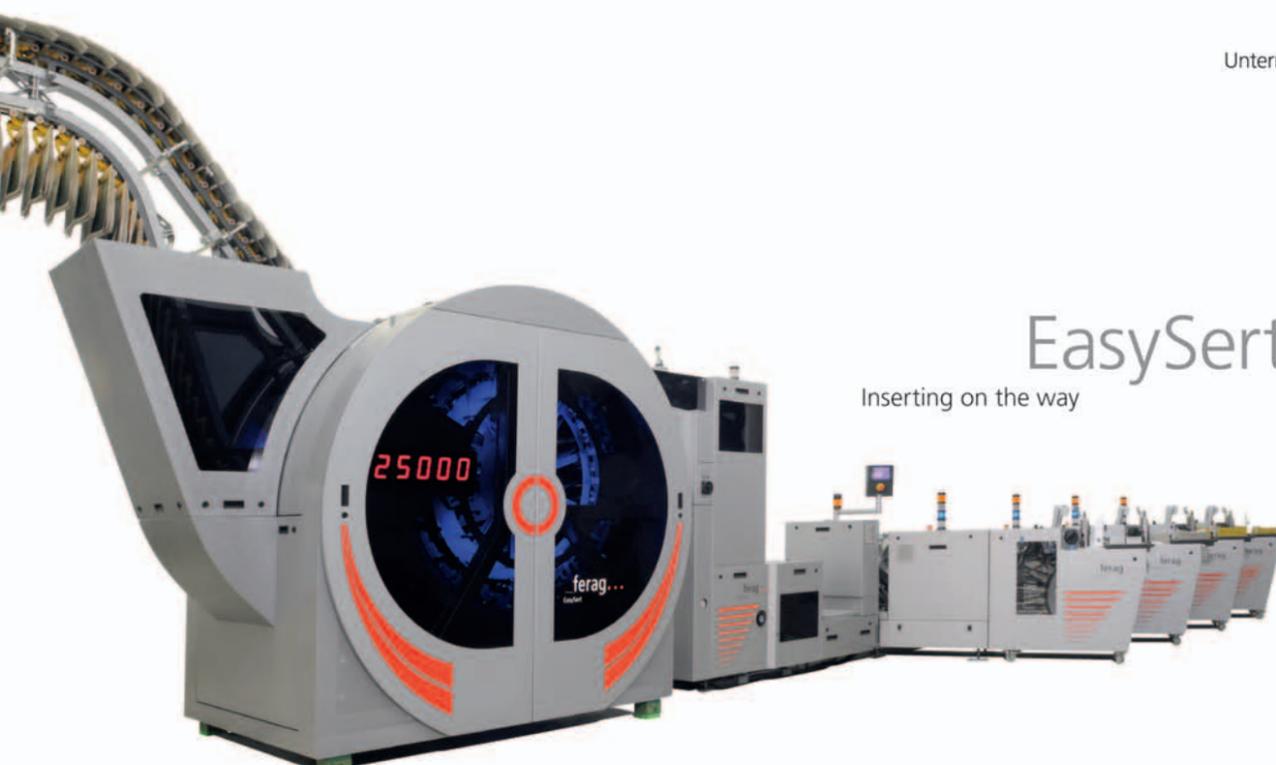
of the problems with agency staff is that you never quite know their capabilities. We have therefore come up with three colour coded hi-vis tabards which tells you what equipment they can and cannot use. So if you see someone with a green tabard you know that they are new and they should not be doing anything apart from really basic manual handling. If you see someone in red then they are qualified to do anything on the line".

Finally, Schiller turned his attention to international sourcing of consumables pointing out that all newspaper printers use this for paper but not for, say, plates and inks.

"We have spent some time looking round the world for sources of materials and have successfully found plates from China and ink from Korea and they both work very well for us in production. I think competition is healthy in all markets. It has been a challenge but it is certainly proving healthy from our point of view".



● One of five delegate groups touring the plant



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