

NEWSPRINTERS

the ideal solution at the time and it has worked very well, although both of us have been through a learning curve”.

The project has not just been about buildings and equipment but also very much about people. As McGee explains: “We have tried hard to select the best people at all sites and to provide first-class working environments. We have on-site gyms and we are developing sports and social initiatives at all three locations.

“We have invested heavily in training staff on all the new technologies. Further training will take place every year and we have recently formed a partnership with Leeds College to

develop NVQ accreditation in many areas.

“We are working hard to develop a one-team culture with Newsprinters staff and our various business partners - everyone should feel valued and part of the overall team”.

As McGee admits, the most complex part of the whole project were the presses but as he reports: “We made the right choice. Going triple-width means that we now have the most productive newspaper presses in the world”.

He adds: “The presses were delivered and installed on time and they are all running well, becoming more and more consistent”.

He puts this mainly down to the close relationship between Manroland and Newsprinters.

“We have a very hands-on relationship with Manroland. A number of our key specialists worked with their experts to get the press right from a very early stage. This was one of the most important factors that contributed to the success of the press installation and commissioning.

“Initially, we had problems with the surface of the metal-backed blankets but we have been working with the suppliers and we are now achieving pretty good print quality over the full run length... although we would like to see the price of the blankets come down!”

“Most of the technology has settled down now but it has been an interesting journey,” reports McGee.

At Broxbourne, which was the last site to install the presses and which has the largest number (12 in all), McGee says that over the next few months the press speed will be increased from 80,000 to the maximum 86,000 copies per hour, although on the most complex formats, when using all 12 reels and six formers, the speed is averaging between 60,000 to 70,000 cph. The development of the 4:7:7 folder which was specifically designed for the NI project to enable products from 12 page tabloids to 144 page broadsheets to be handled in one folder is also nearing completion.

“No one had installed a 4:7:7 folder before and we wanted 19 of them in a short time scale,” says McGee. “However, they were delivered on time and have been running extremely well. We are currently undertaking the final jaw cylinder modifications and we expect that by the end of the year everything will have been completed. When you look at what



has been accomplished in the time available, Manroland deserves full credit for its achievement”.

McGee has similar positive reports concerning the mailroom equipment which was supplied by Ferag but included Apollo conveying systems and Dan palletisers. This was despite the fact that it involved Ferag having to design a new conveying system which could handle products from 12-page tabloids to 144-page broadsheets, two per gripper, at full press speeds of 86,000 cph. As McGee points out: “That was quite a challenge but Ferag did the job. In fact, the mailroom systems have been very reliable and we are in the process of developing them further”.

This brings us nicely to the final question - ‘What about the future?’. McGee replies by saying that he thinks automated plate changing and closed loop colour control are ‘very interesting’.

“Now that we are out of the commissioning stage and have got it all off the ground, we are currently working on optimis-

ing what we have. In the future we are interested in the robotised plate changing which was being demonstrated by Manroland at Drupa, as well as the new closed loop quality control systems such as being shown by QI”.

With such a large amount of fire-power, McGee would also, of course, like to win more contract work, especially at Broxbourne which can print more than 22 million newspapers a week.

“We have been successful in winning the Telegraph business and we would like to add to this in the future. In particular, we have significant capacity available during the day”.

McGee concluded: “We have set a goal to the three Newsprinters sites to be recognised as the best newspaper manufacturers in the world. With the opportunity and level of investment we have been given, anything short of this would be unacceptable”.



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