

Hamilton Adhesive Labels Reduces Makeready Time by 30% with Asahi AWP™ Flexographic Plates

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— Paul Larkin, Operations Director at Hamilton Adhesive Labels

About Hamilton Adhesive Labels

Established in 1992, Hamilton Adhesive Labels Ltd. is a leading converter of printed and plain labels for the food & drink, industrial, automotive, personal and household care markets with an annual turnover in excess of £12 million. The company operates from a 40,000 square foot manufacturing and warehousing facility centrally located in Bardon, Leicestershire, with a dedicated team of more than 65 people focused on product and service excellence.



The Challenge

Operations Director Paul Larkin, who joined the company in 2016, has more than 44 years of label industry experience. He set up a Measurement and Control initiative aimed at delivering a predictive system, right first time, whilst providing world-leading quality as a byproduct of the system. He states, **“Unless you can demonstrate a high level of quality, the market is limited for any company.”** Over his first year, Larkin examined every phase of the flexographic printing process, including flexographic plates, seeking ways to improve it. A Formula One (F1) pit stop team was then deployed to optimize productivity using the new predictive system.



The Solution

In his search for the perfect plate, Larkin tested a wide variety of flexographic plates with thousands of meters of print. **His ultimate choice was the Asahi AWP™ water-washable plates with Asahi CleanPrint, provided via the company's repro house partner, Creation Reprographics.**

The Results

"There is nothing out there like the Asahi AWP™ plates. They deliver a great tonal range and the dots are very stable," Larkin states. He notes that on standard flexographic plates, inks can have a tendency to be drawn to the dot shoulder, eventually resulting in a very dirty plate. Not only does this affect quality, but it also has a significant effect on productivity, requiring frequent press stops for plate cleaning. "With Asahi AWP™ plates with CleanPrint, it is completely different," he explains. "The ink is somehow drawn to the tip of the dot, and the press is able to print continually without stopping for plate cleaning. **It's an incredible consistent technology with world-class quality.** It's been a vital element in our quest to 'get print right the first time!'"

The technology from Asahi Photoproducts that makes this difference possible is CleanPrint. It is designed to facilitate kiss touch printing pressure for constant repeatability of printing quality and longer plate life. Unique Asahi-engineered photopolymer chemistry reduces the surface energy of the printing plate and enables better ink transfer to the substrate during printing. It produces high quality print, reduces makeready time by 30% and improves Overall Equipment Effectiveness (OEE).

At Hamilton Adhesive Labels, these claims proved to be accurate. Not only has the company attributed **a significant increase in productivity to its conversion to Asahi AWP™ plates with CleanPrint,** quality was significantly improved as evidenced by awards its output has achieved, including the EFIA Gold Award and two Flexotech awards including the Best Print and Supreme (Best in Show) Award. "This was the first time we have won this kind of awards,"

Larkin proudly reports. In presenting the award for Best Print, the judges stated, **"Incredible vignettes to paper white, smallest dots ever seen in flexo, sharp text and high colour density. A superb promoter of flexo."** This praise was echoed in the judges' statement with regard to the Supreme (Best in Show) Award: "We've been impressed at first glance; and the more we were checking the quality, the more we were convinced to be looking at a really 'first in class' piece of work."

Larkin sees a bright future for Hamilton Adhesive Labels and for the industry at large. "At Hamilton," he says, "we combine high quality printing components, including plates, inks and more, with a sustainable company culture that operates from a Measure and Control philosophy and is supported by dedicated and talented employees on our F1 team, and this is driving the quality and price/performance of label manufacturing beyond that of any other printing technology available in the market.

We are pleased to be working with Creation Reprographics and Asahi Photoproducts as critical partners that help us achieve our goals, win those prestigious awards, and look ahead to even more advances in the future."

"We have learned from our customers that the value of our technology goes beyond its quality and productivity benefits," says Dr. Dieter Niederstadt, Asahi's Technical Marketing Manager. "It eliminates volatile solvents in platemaking, speeds up the process to consume less energy, and delivers high quality and press productivity (OEE) while reducing makeready times and waste. The results achieved by Hamilton Adhesive Labels with AWP™ water-washable plates with CleanPrint are proof that we are on the right track. And we continue to improve the performance of our plates."

