

Press Release

Winpak First to Install CrystalCleanConnect in North America

Leading packaging company achieves improved sustainability, reduced waste, improved cycle time, reduced dependency on skilled operators, and more, with breakthrough automated flexographic platemaking solution

Tokyo, Japan & Brussels, Belgium, July 18, 2023. Asahi Photoproducts, a pioneer in flexographic photopolymer plate development, today reported that leading North America-based packaging company [Winpak Ltd.](#) is the first in the United States to install the company's CrystalClearConnect automated flexo platemaking system at their Winpak Films business unit in Senoia, Georgia. This automated system was co-developed with ESKO and Kongsberg. With [CrystalCleanConnect](#), press-ready plates are prepared in a single step, reducing operator interventions normally required in a 12-step traditional plate production.

Winpak Ltd. is a \$1.2 billion packaging company that manufactures and distributes high-quality packaging materials and related innovative packaging machines. The company uses solvent-based inks in the production of wide web flexible packaging. Its products are used primarily for the protection of perishable foods and beverages, including thermoformed cups and lids, flexible films, meat trays and covers, and other packaging comprised of flexible and rigid substrates. The company manufactures several solutions for healthcare as well. Winpak operates twelve production facilities in Canada, the United States and Mexico, offering customers global coverage and expertise.

"We were looking for a more efficient and sustainable means of producing flexo plates, including the ability to bring platemaking in-house to reduce costs and lead times," said Vishal Khushalani, General Manager at Winpak Films Inc., "Wikoff, our Asahi distributor partner, recommended that we consider CrystalCleanConnect. As we looked into the



details of the system, we found a number of truly unique benefits CrystalCleanConnect offers, and the decision was then quite easy.”

Khushalani reports that the outsourced plates were solvent-wash, so the first step was to bring platemaking in-house with an ESKO plate imager, Asahi [AWPε water-washable plates](#), an [Asahi plate processor](#), and a Kongsberg cutting table, all operating as independent units. “When we were outsourcing plates, in addition to the environmental impact of solvent wash plates, our customer lead times ran anywhere from one to two weeks,” he says. “By bringing this initial platemaking configuration in-house, we were able to produce a plate every 45 minutes to an hour, so going from a week to an hour sounded amazing, and the solution lived up to its promise.”

By converting standalone platemaking to an integrated process with CrystalCleanConnect, Winpak took its platemaking process to an entirely new level.

Breakthrough Solution Offers Significant Benefits

The initial reasons Winpak chose CrystalCleanConnect included:

- **Sustainability:** CrystalCleanConnect is known for its sustainable and environmentally friendly features. It is a water-wash platemaking process which is designed to minimize waste, reduce the consumption of resources like water and energy, and promote eco-friendly printing practices. Choosing CrystalCleanConnect aligns with the growing global emphasis on sustainability and responsible production, a specific focus for Winpak.
- **Ease of Use:** CrystalCleanConnect offers user-friendly features that make it easy to operate and integrate into existing printing processes. Its intuitive interface and streamlined workflows enhance productivity and reduce training time for operators. This can help address skill shortages and enable printers to maintain consistent quality even with less experienced operators. Because it reduces plate production from 12 steps to one, completely automated from imaging the plate material to cutting press-ready plates, there is very little opportunity for error.
- **Reduction of Waste and Cycle Time:** CrystalCleanConnect helps minimize waste by reducing makeready time, material waste, and ink consumption. Its advanced plate-making technology and process optimization features can lead to significant reductions in cycle time and material waste, improving overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Also important in the decision process was the high level and quality of support provided by Wikoff and Asahi Photoproducts, providing expertise, guidance and assistance both pre- and post-sale as well as during the implementation process. “,” Khushalani added, “The fact that we were able to improve both print quality and press productivity were also important considerations in making this investment decision.”

The Results

Bringing platemaking in-house allowed Winpak to reduce costs and lead times in platemaking, as well as to better control both quality and scheduling. Khushalani reports that CrystalCleanConnect helped to automate and simplify what could have been a steep learning curve with bringing in plate production as a new manufacturing process for the company, adding, “We were also pleased, that now we could reduce platemaking time from one hour to 15 minutes! The first plate out takes about an hour, but then it produces a press-ready plate every 15 minutes after that. It was a stunning improvement in productivity and throughput! We thought going from a week to 45 minutes was great. And now we are at 15 minutes per plate after initial setup. From a shift perspective, where we previously made 10 or 12 plates per shift, we now produce 24 to 30 plates per shift, and it requires less labor do to so, just one operator for the entire process.”

“We were also very pleased with the Asahi AWPε CleanPrint plates,” Khushalani stated. “They are known for their ability to deliver high quality print results; excellent dot reproduction, sharpness and fine detail; and a significant reduction in press stops for plate cleaning due to Asahi’s CleanPrint technology, which features improved ink transfer and ensures consistent quality throughout even long runs. The durability of the plates also ensures more press efficiency since there is no need for frequent plate changes.”

Asahi AWPε CleanPrint plates are water washable, and certified Carbon Neutral. Khushalani concludes, “Asahi AWPε plates are designed with sustainability in mind. They reduce environmental impact by minimizing ink, solvent usage, cycle time, and waste. And since they are water washable, they eliminate the need for harsh chemicals in the platemaking process. All of this is extremely important to Winpak and to our brand owner customers.”

For more information about CrystalCleanConnect, download this [informational brochure](#). For more information about products and services from Asahi Photoproducts, visit www.asahi-photoproducts.com.

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About Winpak

Winpak Ltd. manufactures and distributes high-quality materials and related packaging machines. Winpak's products are used primarily for the packaging of perishable foods, beverages and in healthcare applications. Sustainable practices are part of the Company's daily work processes and are incorporated into its guidelines and strategic planning. Learn more about Winpak at <https://www.winpak.com/>

About Asahi Photoproducts

Asahi Photoproducts was founded in 1973 and is a subsidiary of the Asahi Kasei Corporation, which has a century of operating history. Asahi Photoproducts is a leading pioneer in the development of photopolymer flexo printing plates. By creating high-quality flexographic solutions and through continued innovation, the company aims at driving print forward in harmony with the environment. Follow Asahi Photoproducts at [!\[\]\(e78f798d4ea5c530c9db49e7d26e6b95_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(034433b90593e82e5460e34e3ed48e9b_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(5f24500834b50a8307ffe63e419281a9_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(8502790a2fc8970abb55aa7f7a7a6bae_img.jpg\)](#).

More information is available at www.asahi-photoproducts.com and at:

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Image & caption:



From left to right: Winpak Films Inc. employees – Vishal Khushalani, General Manager, Jeff Lewis and Geoff Tinsley, Prepress Specialists, Kurt Welfel, Director of Operations, are pleased with the increased speed, quality and cleanliness offered by CrystalCleanConnect.

