

CONVERTING



Research pays off

USC Bag Manufacturing travels across the globe to find the "right wicketers."

By Associate Editor Jorina Fontelera

As a vertically integrated arm of US Cotton, USC Bag Manufacturing (Albuquerque, NM) focuses solely on converting zippered plastic bags used to package US Cotton's products. "The business model here is to do one thing, concentrate on it, perfect it and do it well," explains Elliot Berger, president and chief executive officer of USC.



USC Bag Manufacturing produces all the bags for US Cotton's products with the help of the Vega W 800 plus servo wicketer.

So before USC began manufacturing bags in May 2006, Berger made sure to get the right equipment for the job. USC did a considerable amount of research before deciding on machinery and made sure to include big, small, old and new bagmaking-equipment suppliers in its research. By doing so, Berger came across Mamata USA (www.mamata.com), the US division of Mamata Machinery, India's largest builder of servodriven pouch- and bagmaking machines.

Going right to the source

"I felt that here was a company that was serious about succeeding in the North American market," Berger comments. "It has been supplying (bagmaking machinery) for at least 20 years or more in other parts of the world. I wanted to be open-minded about including them in my research of available wicketing equipment."

Berger decided to make a trip to Mamata's Montgomery, IL, facility to see how its equipment performed. Unfortunately, that facility did not have the model he was interested in. So rather than looking elsewhere, Berger traveled to India to see the proper model converting wicketed zipper-closure bags. "When I saw their equipment, I was quite impressed," Berger adds.

One of the features that caught his eye was the machine's speed—mechanical rates of up to 350 cycles/min. Also significant is that each unit has 12 servo drives, which Berger credits for the machine's efficiency. "When you increase speeds, there's no difference," he says. He was so impressed that he decided to purchase three Vega W 800 plus servo wicketers. They were installed in March 2005.

However, Berger does not run the Vegas at their maximum speed. "I like to run machines overrated for what I'm doing. We don't run at those speeds because we're using them primarily to make zippered bags," Berger explains. USC manufactures monolayer polyethylene bags, which they also print with an 8-color Bobst Schiavi EF 4040 gearless sleeve CI-flexo press (www.bobst-group.com/schiavi).

"If it is designed to run at higher speeds, running it at lower speeds it'll be that much more durable," Berger says.

This tactic also gives USC the option to run faster when the situation calls for it. "We might, in the future, use these machines for bags without zippers and run them at higher speeds," Berger says.

A phased approach

Currently USC is in phase one of its business plan, which calls for the company to meet the supply needs for all of US Cotton's facilities in North America. Once accomplished, phase two will go into effect. USC will then enter the overall packaging marketplace to serve other customers who require printed rollstock and PE bags, with or without zippers. In production for only a little over a year, Berger hopes to start phase two by the beginning of the third quarter of 2007. "It is very quick because we're accomplishing our objectives by having the right equipment and the right experience," Berger says.

Mamata made sure to provide USC with both. The machines were, within a week, ready for operation. Mamata sent an engineer on several occasions to install and commission the equipment; he also provided training on system operation and production.

"I was impressed by the design and conception at the time (of purchase)," Berger says. "And having been very knowledgeable from the technical side, I feel my judgment...has been borne out with the operation of the equipment."

Specifics:

USC BAG MANUFACTURING, LLC: Albuquerque, NM
OPERATIONS: Produces plastic bags with zipper closures for US Cotton.

PLANT SIZE: 22,000 sq ft

EMPLOYEES: 17

EQUIPMENT: Three Vega W 800 plus servo wicketers; one 8-color Bobst Schiavi EF 4040 gearless sleeve CI-flexo press.



MORE INFO:

CONVERTER:

USC BAG MANUFACTURING, LLC, 505/962-6150, fax: 505/888-2920

SUPPLIERS:

MAMATA USA, 630/801-2320, fax: 630/801-2322, www.mamata.com

SCHIIVI SPA (BOBST GROUP, USA), 704/587-2450, fax: 704/587-2451,
www.bobstgroup.com/schiavi