



The Gidue eight-colour S-Combat press offers clear advantages in terms of ease of operation and print quality, propelling Track & Trace Labels to a new level in the business of full-colour label printing.

# Ongoing investment at Track & Trace

Until now, despite steady growth and success, Track & Trace Labels has maintained a fairly low profile, but, as GILL LOUBSER reports, you really can't keep a good story concealed forever!

**'YOU don't have to be the biggest but you have to be the best. Quality is never by chance but always the result of intellectual effort.'** Those two sentences – included in Track & Trace Labels' mission statement – aptly sum up the company's ethos.

Track & Trace Labels started life in 1995 as a print brokerage operation – with initial premises in Lee Barnard's house – but today it's a significant producer of self-adhesive labels, boasting superbly-equipped 2 500m<sup>2</sup> premises in Crown Industria, Johannesburg.

In the early days, while Lee was busy establishing the business, he was joined by Teresa Adinolfi who handled the bookkeeping on a part-time basis. However, it wasn't long before she, too, was employed full time.



Lee Barnard and Teresa Adinolfi are proud of their new Gidue press. With them is Farhad Evans who handles Iplex Machinery's sales of self-adhesive printing and converting equipment. (To provide further context, Iplex Machinery is the local agent for Gidue and Prati, and Farhad is brother of Rafeek Evans of CCL Labels fame.)

And that was the start of a great partnership. They had met and enjoyed working together when both were employed by Jackstädt in the early 1990s and their skills have proved to be highly complementary. In broad terms, Lee handles sales while Teresa (better

The newly-installed Prati Vega FN-330 die-cutting machine and turret rewriter is helping to meet increased demand for blank labels. The machine has been nicknamed Stella (Italian for star) because the Vega is the brightest star in the Northern hemisphere! Putting her through her paces are Lee Barnard and Teresa Adinolfi, as well as Bruce Allen of Ipex Machinery (Prati's local agent).



known as Terry) manages the company's finances and administration. They are ably assisted by Lance Zeeman who heads the production team.

In 14 years, the company has grown from a two-person brokerage to a medium-sized manufacturing enterprise, with some 50 employees.

For the first three years, Track & Trace operated as a distributor of self-adhesive products. Then, for the next three years, the

growing business entered into a joint venture with Nevill Labels in order to manufacture its own products.

However, in 2001 Lee and Terry decided to take the plunge and to open their own manufacturing facility, purchasing their first six-colour Mark Andy Scout as well as a Rotoflex die-cutter and a Delphax, ion-deposition variable data printer.

Just 18 months later, with the Scout operating at full capacity, the next purchase was a two-colour Mark Andy. Soon, however, the premises were too small, and a larger unit in the same complex was acquired.

And so the story goes on ... continuing investment in increasingly sophisticated technology – both tooling and printing and converting equipment – and two more moves to ever-larger premises (although remaining in the same complex).

Today, Track & Trace has an enviable reputation as a supplier of on-line sequential barcoding and numbering, computer labels, thermal and thermal transfer labels, laser labels and commercial labels; and the company's technology line-up includes three Mark Andy presses, a Rotoflex die-cutter and two Omega rewinders – recently joined by a brand new Gidue press, a Prati Vega die-cutter and a Prati Saturn rewriter.

## Keeping pace with demand

Asked about the reasons for this latest round of investments, Lee replies:

**[intelligence]** G2  
Quality and change-overs under control



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'At the end of 2006 we started to experience capacity challenges and, frankly, we were struggling to meet demand. So we decided to purchase four additional print stations for the Mark Andy Scouts. We also bought an additional second-hand six-colour Mark Andy 2200 from Multiprint Labels.'

'Then in June 2008,' he continues, 'we invested in a new 13" Prati Vega FN-330 die-cutter and turret rewinder which allows us to produce blank labels at three times the speed of our older Rotoflex. This investment was necessary to meet increased demand for blank labels.'

Here Terry takes up the story: 'We have nicknamed the Vega "Stella" (the Italian word for star) because she is Italian and Vega is the brightest star in the Northern hemisphere. She is impressively efficient and quick!'

The latest news from this go-ahead duo was last month's commissioning of a 14" Gidue eight-colour S-Combat press that has the potential to increase Track & Trace's share of the colour market in this web width. A similar width Prati Saturn was also installed to rewind labels from the Gidue.

And, of course, with three Mark Andy presses already in operation, it begs the question – why choose a Gidue this time round?

'We are extremely happy with our Mark Andys,' Lee replies. 'but our customers are requesting UV flexo quality. We were particularly impressed by the quality, speed and efficiencies provided by the wider-web Gidue.'

At the same time, to cope with the diversity and range of the products offered, Track & Trace has invested in an Integrated Management System. Called Systec Print Solutions, it's a South African system, modular in nature from estimating to finance. 'We current use the estimating and manufacturing modules, which automatically record waste and calculate the actual costs of each job. Later we plan to use the stock control and invoicing modules,' Lee explains.

'We have already seen the benefits of its efficiency, accuracy and enhanced customer and supplier communications,' Terry adds.

But it's not all about high technology, it's also about people. The benefits of employment equity, for instance, are well understood by the partners, and they've set up a BEE programme with the assistance of PIFSA and BEE2Business. The company continually works on improving its BEE scorecard and is highly aware of its social and employee empowerment responsibilities. 'The recent closure of the Cross Media Training Centre was a major setback to our plans to improve employee skills with recognised qualifications,' Lee comments.

This is another of those great South African stories of entrepreneurship and dedication which this magazine revels in telling. It's not surprising, therefore, to learn that Track & Trace Labels was a runner-up in the Business Partners Entrepreneur of the Year Awards in 2006. Undoubtedly, we'll be writing more about this dynamic enterprise in the years to come.



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