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## Building Better Graphics



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p. 67

### **INSIDE:**

- Converter of the Month:  
West Indies Paper Products Ltd.
- Amélie Dillemann:  
Corrugated Artist
- The Latest in Samplemaking



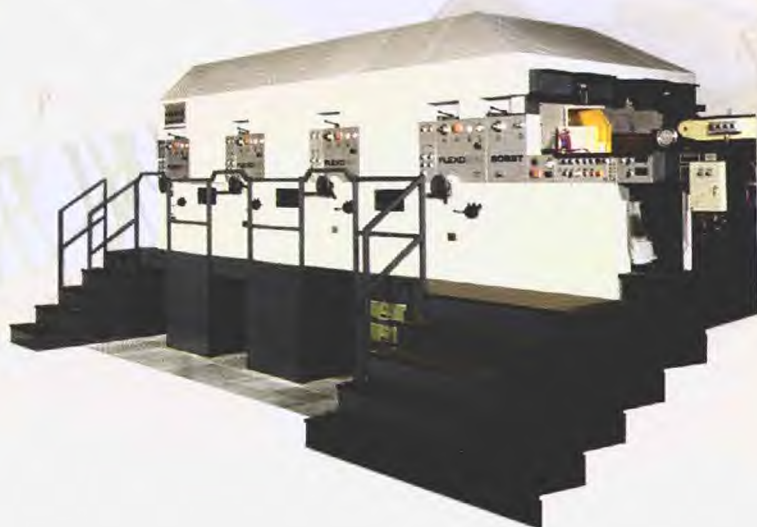


**"Peter knows more about flexo printing than anyone in the business."**

- Jeffrey Elzemeyer



Left: Jeffrey Elzemeyer, Vice President, Midland Color Corporation, Olive Branch, Mississippi with Peter Basler, Bobst's Flexo technical expert.



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Reader Response #01





From L to R: M.A. Pickersgill, general manager at West Indies Paper Products Ltd.; Joe Donohoo, part-owner of the company; Phillip White, plant manager; Noel Brown, production engineer; and Joscelyn Jolly, assistant plant manager, show off some of the banana boxes made at the independent corrugating plant in Kingston, Jamaica.





# PACKAGING in Paradise

*Don't let the idyllic scenery fool you. Running corrugated on a Caribbean island has its perks, but also its challenges. West Indies Paper Products works to meet those challenges.*

Ah, Jamaica. The name alone evokes visions of sun, sand and beaches, bougainvilleas, bare feet and bathing suits—all set to the laid back beat of reggae music. Heavy manufacturing, production and agriculture typically do not come to mind when one thinks about the Caribbean island paradise, but that's because its biggest industry is tourism. The country banks heavily on those visions of sun and sand.

But manufacturing, production and agriculture are integral to Jamaica's economy. The country's largest traditional exports are bauxite, sugar, bananas, coffee and coconuts, as well as mangoes, yams and potatoes and other root vegetables. Its less traditional but growing exports are exotic flowers and shrubs, pimento (allspice) and herbs. While heavy manufacturing is not prolific in Jamaica, there is also a handful of bottling and canning companies, most of which are located in Kingston, the island's bustling capital city located on the southeastern coast.

Kingston is also the home of a company that has contributed to and supported Jamaica's industrial and

agricultural base for almost 40 years. That company is West Indies Paper Products Ltd., a corrugating subsidiary of the West Indies Pulp & Paper Group, which is owned in part by the Cincinnati, Ohio-based Donohoo Group, which also operates Hyde Park Enterprises (HPE) Inc. HPE Inc. sells roll stock and linerboard for the corrugating industry and purchases and leases equipment.

West Indies Paper Products opened in 1962 and is one of two corrugating companies on the island. Although it currently serves nearly all of Jamaica's export industries, bananas represent about 25% of its business, with the majority of those shipments going to the United Kingdom.

"I've always been fascinated with (Jamaica)," said Joe Donohoo, founder and chairman of HPE Inc. Although he lives in Sarasota, Florida, Donohoo travels to Jamaica on a regular basis to see his business associates at West Indies Pulp & Paper Group. They are M.A. "Tony" Pickersgill, who is also general manager of the corrugating plant, and Joscelyn Jolly, who is assistant general manager at the plant. The two men have been with the company since 1970 and 1968, respectively.

In his almost 67 years in the corrugating industry, Donohoo has started up, operated and sold a number of corrugating facilities around the world. In fact, three years after opening the Jamaican

*by Christine Lyall  
BCI Senior Associate Editor*



plant, he sold his group's share to Weyerhaeuser Co. which, in turn, sold its interest to the Jamaican government in the early 1970s. In 1989, the Jamaican government asked Donohoo to buy back 50% of the company as part of a privatization plan that it had implemented. And Donohoo accepted the offer.

"I enjoy it and it gives me an opportunity to see how a small company functions," said Donohoo, who has taken on somewhat of an advisory role with the company. "And

West Indies Paper Products, for example, buys its linerboard from the United States and its semi-chemical board from Canada. Hence, distance demands careful management of the company's raw materials purchasing and warehousing, as well as efficient tracking and use of its customers' inventory.

"In order for us to keep in continuous operation, we have to have committed at any one time a minimum of three months' supply of raw materials," said Jolly. Those levels are determined based on customers' historical purchasing data and monthly take-offs, he said.

"That three-month cycle includes one month here in the plant, one month in transit on the high seas and one month in production at the mill," Jolly continued. "If that cycle is broken, we are likely to run out of paper, especially specific grades that we might not be able to get anywhere else. So that cycle has to be maintained all the time."

In the event that a customer requests an order that falls outside of its standard range of materials, West Indies Paper Products has built a certain degree of flexibility into its inventory system, said Jolly.

"From time to time, we have customers change either in terms of design or because they are going into a new product," he said. "Our packaging

department would then work along with our technical and design department to determine what the customer's needs are. And in most cases, we have the raw materials available to meet those needs."

Today's shorter delivery schedules can also present a challenge to an island business, as the company is largely dependent upon water-bound freight carriers for shipping. The company's average delivery time is currently about two weeks, which Pickersgill conceded is too long for some of his larger customers who draw down inventory on a weekly basis.

"I then have to make the decision whether we will produce for a longer period and deliver at our convenience, or go to production two or three times per month," said Pickersgill. He said that decision depends on the size of an order, its design and the number of machines required to produce it.

"With jobs that require a long set-up time in which the volumes don't compensate, the logical



seeing these two chaps (Pickersgill and Jolly) mature has been a very satisfying thing. I like the way they do business, and I'm determined they're going to make this work out really well."

#### UNIQUE CHALLENGES

While the company has enjoyed considerable success, Donohoo, Pickersgill and Jolly admit it did not come without sacrifice. Because of sluggish growth, the company shut down its corrugated paper mill in 1975, as well as a 30-year-old folding carton business in 1993. The paper group still owns and operates a tissue division, which includes a non-operating mill and an operating converting facility.

As a two-shift, corrugating and converting operation that employs 110 people, West Indies Paper Products daily faces unique challenges, not the least of which is geography. In today's increasingly global, just-in-time economy, an island business can sometimes be at a disadvantage.

Clockwise from top: graphic superintendent Calvert Hewitt demonstrates the Newarc auto-graphic computerized camera; two women operate a stitcher; technical department manager Grethel Sessing shows box samples.



thing to do is to avoid having to set up more than once a month," said Pickersgill. "We will then run the job once and hold it in inventory, provided the supply will be (used up) by the end of the month.

"We work closely with our customers to work out the best economics," he said. "As long as you demonstrate that you will pass on the benefit to the customer, the customer will work with you."

Pickersgill noted that one of West Indies Paper Products' distinguishing qualities is its high level of customer service and attention.

"One of our principles is to move away from being a box manufacturer to offering a packaging service," he said. "We have a technical department that works in concert with our sales department, and we go to our customers' operations and look at their machinery and their packaging lines, and we study their shipping system. We examine their whole supply chain and come up with (a box) that we think is appropriate."

#### AT THEIR CUSTOMERS' SERVICE

Yet another factor unique to West Indies Paper Products is Jamaica's unstable and—at present—rather weak dollar. Because the company must buy its raw materials in U.S. or Canadian dollars then sell its product in Jamaican dollars, its profit margins are squeezed. That's when it helps that the company has maintained close relationships with its customers, for it continually keeps them abreast of those market changes. That's also when the company looks at other ways to make or save money.

"There are two ways you can make money," said Donohoo. "You can either control your costs or increase your sales. We've used every angle we can to make a fair profit, and one of the things we have been able to do is bring in edge-crush-test liner. As a result, we have stabilized so that we only use about three grades of linerboard as compared to seven or eight."

Jolly said another way in which the company has tried to control costs is by improving its production capabilities. Over the past five years, the plant has undergone extensive re-engineering, as well as re-tooling and upgrading of its equipment. The company features, among a host of other pieces: an 85-in. Langston corrugator that produces B- and C-flute corrugated; a 98-in. S&S

single facer; a two-color, 60-in.-x-80-in. Ward rotary diecutter; and a 24-in.-x-30-in. Anderson & Vreeland photopolymer printing diemaker.


"We are looking at improving our capabilities in set-up by computerizing some of those functions," said Jolly. "We are also looking at upgrading our equipment to speed up the production of boxes in varying sizes and in smaller volumes so we can go after more emerging markets."

Flexibility and adaptability are qualities West Indies Paper Products has tried to emphasize as it seeks to compete in today's global economy.

"You cannot remain static in a changing world," said Jolly. "It is difficult and it is costly (to re-tool and upgrade), but if we are going to survive, it is necessary that we make these changes and rise to the occasion. We feel we have been."

Winsome Tennant, the company's sales manager, agreed with Jolly.

"We were able to increase our market share last year," she said. "From an operational standpoint, we made gains and our productivity levels improved. So I would say, based on those things, we are going in the right direction."

"The challenges are there, they really keep us on our toes," Tennant continued. "But it gives you a positive feeling because you're really very active and you're always having to do new things. And that's good." 



West Indies Paper Products installed a used, two-color, 60-in.-x-80-in. Ward rotary diecutter (top) to produce more sophisticated boxes. Its 85-in. Langston corrugator produces B- and C-flute corrugated.