Lauterbach Group drives business with increased collaboration

While we all talk about and explore the ways technology allows us to be better businesses and converters, we can lose too much human interaction. When that happens, some of the improvements we've explored may be counter-productive. The Lauterbach Group strongly believes that speaking person to person – backed with a robust technology system – is the most effective way to operate.

Headquartered in Sussex, WI, USA, the Lauterbach Group manufactures high-quality product labels and converting for a wide range of customer uses, from food/beverage to product security and authentication.

Through its OmniMark Management System, the Lauterbach Group strives to alleviate touch points. It does that by providing digital asset warehousing, product art and design, project management, and quality control systems. This makes clients' jobs easier, more efficient, and helps bring products to market quicker.

Tony Tyler, production supervisor, Lauterbach Group

"We are very focused on our employees, whom we call group members," emphasizes Shane Lauterbach, president. "We try to create an environment to generate value for our group members so they can create value for themselves. In doing so, they generate value for our clients."

Lauterbach is making it easier for people to do business with them, using an operating model built on standardization of materials, processes, and specifications. It offers speed, quality, differentiation, and decoration – the unique added value delivered with their embellishments.

The Lauterbach Group believes that a complete automation process excluding manual transactional work allows more time to connect to people. "We want technology to work with people on a solutions level," says Lauterbach. "Rather than multiple emails, we prefer to call and say, 'How can I help you?' By talking directly with customers, we improve their businesses.

"We look at a goal as 'What's next?'," adds Lauterbach. "Rather than multi-year plans, we develop one-year operating plans. That lets us pivot,

react and adapt faster."

High-quality proofing is still significant, but Lauterbach prefers to remove the inefficient back and forth process. "Think how many times via email you discuss fonts, traps, or colors," considers Lauterbach. "By discussing that personally in 30 minutes, everybody's better off. The customer still gets a reliable, physical proof, but it's the final result.

"We'll draw flexo with us, but workflows are first being built around digital," asserts Lauterbach.

Originally, Lauterbach had problems connecting to its Label Traxx ERP and communicating with customers. Hybrid Software's open architecture is very aligned to Lauterbach's three HP Indigo presses – including a new 25K. They also work with the Label Traxx Siteline CSR portal front-end system. "Hybrid Software was the first cornerstone of our automation world. They were more open and easier to integrate," comments Lauterbach. "Our first step was bringing in HP, Label Traxx, Hybrid Software and our own development team to re-imagine our process. They assessed what we were doing and suggested automated ways to deliver more time with clients."

The OmniMark front-end system provides both sales generation and order processes. It also includes asset management for client art. They integrate projects with clients online.

Employees are excited about the speed and ease in which Lauterbach can develop workflows.

"We're working with two core clients who find great value in the simplicity to get proofs and return approvals," comments Lauterbach. "They can easily look at different SKUs and understand what was done – or repeat orders with changes. We're eliminating time from their day so they can focus on other things."

These two clients have many SKUs with, typically, medium-run jobs, but Lauterbach occasionally receives orders for up to 20 products with run lengths of 100,000 feet. "Trying to manage the SKUs and the art is different with every order," explains Lauterbach. "By setting them up so we see them properly – with the sequencing in our automated system – issues have considerably diminished. We're already seeing massive efficiency increases just by how the production workflow organizes work and passes it on to the ERP."

Lauterbach had a variable print job utilizing the HP SmartStream Collage personalization process. "They're challenging to set up, but with our new system the latest job printed with no issues at all," remarks Lauterbach. "The automation delivers speed and greater quality – along with our differentiated embellishments."

This year, Lauterbach is rebuilding its online ordering process. It's currently only used for stock products, but integrated improvements in OmniMark are planned for custom packaging, shrink, and label products.

"We're working to expand our footprint, but in a way that all client interactions, ordering and selling is done at our main facility. It's a hub and spoke approach where microcells will deliver speed to the market, taking logistical challenges out of the process. These spokes could be geographic or different types of operating units. For example, we invested in the HP Indigo 25K so we can run both flexo and digital shrink at wider formats," concludes Lauterbach. – *Mike Agness*