

LATEST GENERATION MACHINES OFFER SHORT RUN SOLUTIONS

Having moved into a new, larger facility last year, Leighton Buzzard, England based Autobox Ltd has launched two new machines to expand its product offering to the boxmaking industry. A report by Daniel Brunton

Founded in 1979, Autobox Ltd is a well established manufacturer of short run, single pass box making machines. Now employing over 20 people, the company has successfully sold and installed machines throughout the world at both boxmaking companies as well as end-user customers. A comprehensive list of agents throughout the world has helped the company become one of the most successful manufacturers in this sector of the industry. "We've worked hard at developing easy to use, cost effective machines for single pass boxmaking," explains Barry Tabor, Sales Director of the Leighton Buzzard, England based manufacturer. "We are keen to show people that while our machines can be utilised effectively by the end-user market, our machines really are aimed at the boxmaker. Due to the nature of our equipment, it is easy to use, doesn't take up huge amounts of space in the factory and enables boxmakers to chase really

short order work, that may have been unthinkable a few years ago."

Export sales now account for over 60 per cent of the company's turnover, with the USA being the largest single export market. "Short run boxmaking in the US is a well established concept and US sheet plants in particular are very specific about their needs. They require machines that are robust yet flexible and our latest generation of machines provide this."

The company has a broad range of products on offer, including:

- The Boxmaker – the Generation 7 of this machine allows for quick set-up via touch screen PC (which holds over 50 FEFCO styles). Minimal training is needed for operators.

- Slitter Scorer – a simple to use machine with quick set functions

- The HiPak – slots and creases in a single pass, with a touch screen PC controlling set-up. Using servo drive motors and the company's latest control technology, the machine can produce over 1,000 A4 boxes per hour with only a 30 second start-up.

- The HiPrint IJ7000 – a brand new print system that is incorporated into the HiPak.

"With the launch of the HiPrint system in August 2006, sheet plants and packaging stockists specialising in short run orders can now print logos, bar codes, dimensions and handling instructions on

order quantities previously considered to be too small to justify flexo printing set-up costs," explains Simon Needham, Sales Manager.

Utilising digital print technology and Microsoft Windows compatible software, artwork can be quickly uploaded and stored in the HiPrint memory for future use. Without the need to produce printing stereotypes, print can be added to any short run order at minimal cost and without incurring excessive machine set-up time. The HiPrint is offered as a standard addition to the HiPak machine. "With the ease of set-up of the HiPak, we are able to offer a system that not only meets the needs of the growing short run market, but also enables larger sheet plants to reassess the single colour work that they are currently running on traditional printer slotters," continues Mr Needham. "We're pleased to confirm that to date, we've already sold five of these print units, two of which are for the US market and the other three for the UK.

"We offer a full print sample facility from our factory," says Mr Tabor. "Our customers around the world have been asking us for a simple to use and cost effective means of applying print to short and medium run lengths – the HiPrint has been developed in response to this demand. It really does provide a real opportunity to add value to the short run boxmaking business."

New or used

Privately owned, the company moved in August 2005 to its current site on the Cherrycourt Way Industrial Estate. Occupying a site twice as large as its previous factory, the company sells approximately 100 machines per annum. This number includes a small number of Encore machines – Encore being the product name given to older Autobox machines that have come back, been totally overhauled and re-wired ready for re-sale. "Encore is proving highly attractive to those boxmakers in developing markets who possibly can't quite justify buying new,"



Simon Needham and Barry Tabor

comments Mr Tabor. "We take an old machine, normally one that we have taken in part exchange for a new machine, and bring it back to our factory, where we strip the machine down, re-wire it, upgrade the electronics and computer system, and then re-spray and re-assemble. In essence, they almost have a brand new machine!"

PakMaster 2800 is new

Following quickly in the footsteps of the recently launched HiPrint, the company is in the process of launching its latest offering, the PakMaster 2800. "For the first time, we are offering an inline, cut to length and width machine," explains Mr Tabor. "The PakMaster 2800 is going to be the ultimate short or medium run boxmaking system."

Features of the new machine include:

- Converts board from B flute to triple wall board
- A maximum sheet size of 2.8m x 10m
- Creasing, slotting and scoring in a single pass

- 300 to 500 blanks per hour, one-up, but with the ability to run three up
- Trimming (both length and width)
- Die-cut for hand holes
- In-line print
- Pre-crush of the glue flap
- Touch screen PC which holds over 80 FEFCO styles.

"We're really excited by this new machine," concludes Mr Tabor. "It will elevate us to a new level in the short run machine game and give boxmakers a real competitive advantage. While the machine is still in early stages of manufacturing, we've sold the first one and believe this is the sign of good things to come. Watch this space!"

