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MAXPAK'S TRANSFORMATION

THE LAKELAND, FLA., CORRUGATOR PLANT HAS UNDERGONE SIGNIFICANT CHANGE OVER THE YEARS, DRIVEN BY NEW OWNERSHIP AND CAPITAL EQUIPMENT INVESTMENTS. BY JACKIE SCHULTZ

General Manager Steve Wasko says MaxPak doesn't want to be "all things to all people," but the corrugator plant in Lakeland, Fla., can be many things, offering a total packaging solution. "We can deliver a 15,000 sq ft order or a 150,000 sq ft order to a customer. We can be competitive with price and provide top notch quality and do it in a very timely manner."

Originally a Union Camp operation, MaxPak started as a sheet plant in the 1990s and then added a corrugator. In 2000, The Schwarz Group purchased the company, and in 2010 after The Royal Group plants and the Schwarz box plants merged, MaxPak became a Royal Group company under the Schwarz umbrella. The 147,000-sq-ft plant is a three shift operation with about 125 employees.

The plant's direction and focus has changed significantly over the years, evolving from a predominantly sheet feeding operation into a more traditional box plant. Investments in order to make that transformation have been close to $15 million. MaxPak's product mix is about 70% industrial and 30% agriculture. Prior to the Schwarz acquisition, the plant had a very different mix. "When I first got here this plant ran 80% sheets and 20% boxes and had 11 pieces of converting equipment," says Wasko, who was brought on board seven years ago to run the plant.

Ultimately, the goal was to grow the box side of the business. "We have achieved that growth," he says.

Today, the product mix is about 7 million sq ft a month of sheets and about 55 million sq ft of boxes.

GENERAL MANAGER STEVE WASKO (RIGHT) AND PRODUCTION MANAGER DAVE RODRIGUEZ.

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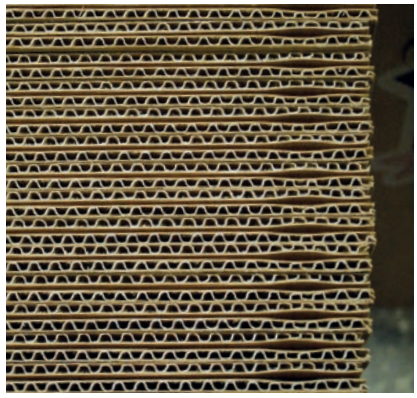
"We're now a box plant as opposed to being a giant sheet plant with a corrugator."

The 87-inch corrugator is routinely being upgraded with 98-inch components from MarquipWardUnited and MHI. The most recent investment was an A flute cartridge for the United singlefacer. The corrugator can run A-, B- and C-flute and A/C and B/C doublewall. About 80% of the sheets are C-flute, 10% are B-flute and 10% are doublewall. The machine runs two shifts and averages about 25 to 30 order changes a shift.

MaxPak often experiments with different board combinations, such as lighter basis weight liners and heavier mediums. Wasko says the words "Creative" and "Mad scientist" are often used to describe him. "My guys on the corrugator cringe when I walk out there and tell them, 'I've got a new medium I need you to try.' We work with our suppliers. If they've got a new technology, new products, even if it's at the beginning stages and they need someone to be a beta site, we will do it."



POWERFLUTE IS USED FOR ADDED STRENGTH AND MOISTURE RESISTANCE.

MaxPak was one of the first companies to use Powerflute, a premium grade semichemical medium that offers exceptional strength and moisture resistance that is ideal for long distance transport of fruit and vegetables in refrigerated containers.

Added Capacity

Converting machinery includes two 37.5-inch Ward flexo folder-gluers; a 66- x 172-inch McKinley two-color flexo folder-gluer with inline diecutting; a recently installed 66- x 110-inch Apstar HG 1628 four-color rotary diecutter with an AGS XRI stacker and an Alliance bundle breaker; and a J&L 115 specialty folder-gluer. The plant also has an ACS ink kitchen.

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In August, MaxPak will be replacing one of the Wards with a new Bobst 8.20 flexo folder-folder. With its high speed and quick setup, Wasko says the new machine will triple the capacity of the flexo it is replacing. A fourth color station and a pre-feeder was added on the newer Ward last year. Additional equipment investments will include a JB Machinery infrared drying system and an Alliance pre-feeder for the Apstar diecutter.

Last spring, MaxPak installed a C-170 flat die, rotary anvil diecutter from Baysek Machines, Inc. It replaced the first installed T-Series in the U.S. MaxPak had the T-Series diecutter for about 15 years. "We ran that machine until it couldn't run much more," Wasko says, adding that uptime and productivity has tripled with the installation of the C-170.

THE CORRUGATOR RUNS TWO SHIFTS AND AVERAGES ABOUT 25 TO 30 ORDER CHANGES A SHIFT.

LAST SPRING, MAXPAK INSTALLED A C-170 FLAT DIE, ROTARY ANVIL DIECUTTER FROM BAYSEK MACHINES.

Baysek President Dave Helbach developed the diecutting method that is the basis for the C-170, which is manufactured in the U.S. There are currently about 100 total Baysek installations. The design is ideal for accomplishing simple to complex nick free, 100% automatically stripped jobs that are difficult or next to impossible to run on traditional rotary and platen diecutters. Helbach put similar designs in the market, known as the U-Pack T-Series, and later models like the Baysek One Cut and C1700. As it turns out, Wasko was already familiar with Helbach's diecutting method prior to joining MaxPak. "We had the first One Cut machine that Dave had built installed at a sheet plant in Walden, N.Y., so I've had not only the first T-Series but the first One Cut machine."

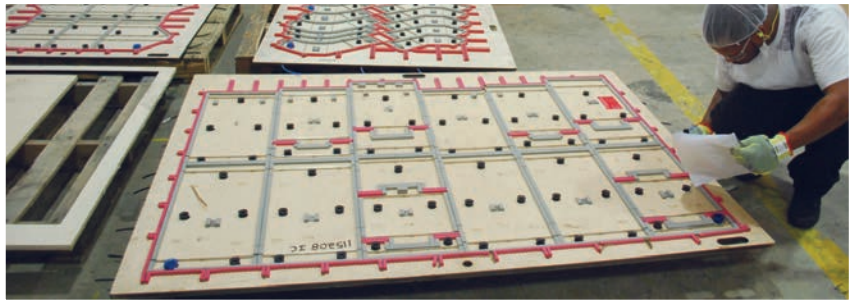
Commenting about the 20-year-old Baysek company, Wasko says Helbach visited MaxPak once a year to tune up the T-Series machine. "Baysek is a great story. It's a family business, and Dave is a remarkable individual," he says.

The one operator C-170 is a servo driven machine that can handle sheet sizes from 20 x 20 to 55 x 67 inches and flute thicknesses of E-flute up to B/C doublewall, solid board and thin board. Maximum machine speed is 1800 sheets per hour. It was initially purchased to run baking trays, however due to its versatility, MaxPak has been able to run other jobs. "We now run a lot of display parts where we can get five or six different items on the same cutting die and have it completely cut out, no trim, separated, no nicking, stacked and our fulfillment center doesn't have to deal with taking the excess trim off and breaking them apart. It has just been tremendous for us," Wasko says.

Print registration can be held to +/- 1mm and preprint flexo and litho laminated material can be successfully converted despite the inability to matrix score, according to Helbach.

Wasko says the new machine has been a cost-efficient and user-friendly addition to the production floor. "When you're running displays that have multi components like shelves and fillers and lots of small pieces, rather than having to buy eight cutting dies you can buy one or two and gang the items up on the same die board and have matched sets. I don't have to worry about having four different cutting dies for four different items where I could have 8000 pieces on one, and 7800, 8400 and 9000 pieces on the others and they're all mismatched. Now I can put all the components on one die board and have matched sets and they're clean. No trim, no nicks, and neat clean stacks."

> IN AUGUST, MAXPAK WILL BE REPLACING ONE OF THE WARDS WITH A NEW BOBST 8.20 FLEXO FOLDER-FOLDER.



WITH THE C-170 MAXPAK CAN GANG FIVE OR SIX DIFFERENT JOBS ON THE SAME CUTTING DIE.

THE NEW DIECUTTER WAS PURCHASED TO RUN BAKING TRAYS.

Speed To Market

Among its many value propositions, MaxPak excels in the area of quick turnaround. "Our speed and being able to react to our customer's needs is very impressive," Wasko says. "We have been adaptive to the changes in the marketplace and we are flexible. As a result we have been able to service our customers better. Our average lead times are in the three-day range. We do 24 hours or four

or five days. I think everyone on the independent side has had to make that kind of commitment to their customers and equip themselves to be able to do that and this plant has done that well.

"I'm very impressed with how quickly we can take a concept or request for a sample with the customer's product and turn it into a delivery – sometimes in two or three days – and then three or four days later he has boxes waiting at his door. We do that daily. That distinguishes us."

Being part of The Royal Group and Schwarz Partners provides MaxPak with capabilities well beyond a single plant operation. The larger network of facilities includes sheet feeders, box plants, high graphics packaging and design operations, and warehousing and fulfillment centers. "There's a nice interaction between this plant and our sister plants," Wasko says. "We receive a fair amount of product from Cicero (Illinois, The Royal Group headquarters) for the display business because they have a Göpfert six-color rotary diecutter. We also receive E-flute sheets from the Miami sheet feeder."

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MaxPak's two designers work closely with the other plants. Designer Bryan Baker says the synergy among the plants saves time and increases productivity and creativity because they can brainstorm solutions with the other designers to meet customer needs.

Wasko agrees. "We never tell a customer that we can't do something. We either say 'Yes,' or 'Can we have a little time to think about it so we can figure out how we can do it?' And we're going to figure out how to do it." ■