



The Codimag Viva 340 5-color waterless offset press at Gràphiques Lappi Martorell in Abrera, near Barcelona

Offset strategy

Spanish printer Grupo Lappi's recent purchase of an offset press from Codimag is another step in the company's aggressive expansion plan. **James Quirk** reports

Offset printing technology has enjoyed a well-documented surge in popularity in Europe in recent years. Often it is driven by the brand-owners, who specify the use of offset for printing labels for high-end products in sectors such as wine, spirits and cosmetics.

For Spanish printer Grupo Lappi, the recent purchase of a Codimag Viva 340 waterless 5-color offset press forms part of its plan to expand its product offering while also increasing its regional presence.

Founded in 1959, Grupo Lappi is headquartered in 18,000 square meter facility in Seville. It began specializing in labels in 1974, and produces wet-glue, self-adhesive and sleeve labels for the wine and spirit, mineral water and food sectors. In 2004 it bought Gràphiques Martorell, based in Abrera, just outside Barcelona. For ambitious owner Antonio Lappi, this move represented just the first in an ongoing plan to cover the Spanish market.

'We are looking to buy more companies in Spain,' he states. 'We want four in total, spread around the country to serve all the regions.'

Grupo Lappi has a turnover of 17 million euros and employees 149 people over its two factories. The company's expansion plan is so precise that Antonio Lappi's aim is to achieve a turnover of 33 million euros and have 248 employees by 2011. The 3,500 square meter factory in Abrera, Barcelona, is currently being expanded.

The company is mainly present in its local market, though 22 percent of its business is in the UK and Ireland, France, Portugal and the Caribbean.

The offset press from Codimag was installed in March of this year at what is now Gràphiques Lappi Martorell, and complements the company's range of flexo, letterpress and sheetfed offset presses from companies such as Heidelberg, Man Roland, Omet and Nilpeter.

The Viva 340 is equipped with two Stork rotary screen systems, a flexo varnish unit and hot stamping, and Lappi believes it will help the company diversify its product offering.

'To have a machine with this flexibility and configuration allows us to enter different markets with no barriers,' he says. 'Our clients are looking for increasing quality, and this gives us the

Antonio Lappi: 'We are looking to buy two more companies in Spain'



opportunity to offer them a label with greater specifications.'

'The combination aspect is key,' he continues. 'We can do offset, flexo and rotary screen on one label. Codimag's press has the advantage of not needing cassettes to be changed, and it produces great quality.'

The Codimag Viva 340 is particularly suited to the wine sector where Grupo Lappi is most prominent. 'We like to work in high value markets, such as wine, Cava and Champagne,' says Lappi. 'We want to drive the markets that offer this extra value.'

This is Codimag's fourteenth offset press sold into Spain, and export manager Pierre Panel reveals that they are all printing wine labels: 'The wine label market has always been strong for offset,' he says. 'Now we are also seeing it more and more for cosmetics and household products.'

Codimag started manufacturing offset presses in 1999, and they represent around 100 of the company's total worldwide press sales of 250. Thirty percent of the company's sales are into its local French market, while Spain, Italy and Germany are also important areas.

'There is a trend towards offset at the moment – many multi-national brands are asking for it,' says Panel. 'The wine market in France has moved from wet-glue to self-adhesive labels in recent years, and we have various offset machines with embossing and hot stamping equipment working for the Champagne business.'

Sales outside Europe include North and South America, Russia and Eastern Europe. Codimag has three presses in each of Brazil and Canada, while its second sale into South Africa was made this year. Panel also reports that the traditionally flexo-dominated US market has been 'opening up towards offset in the last three to four years'.

'Offset is the first printing technology – it is very simple,' says Panel. 'There is no need to make complicated file



L-r: Pierre Panel, Codimag; Antonio Mayordomo, Imprima; Antonio Lappi and Santiago Cuberes, Grupo Lappi

changes. Plate preparation time is less than 10 minutes; flexo plates are much more expensive. This press starts where digital finishes: it typically prints runs of between 5,000 and 50,000 labels.'

'The Spanish market is regional,' says Antonio Mayordomo of Imprima, which has been Codimag's distributor in Spain and Portugal for the last 10 years. 'Waterless offset is more popular in the region around the Pyrenees. The wine market in Spain is very much focused on waterless offset.'

'In the last few years, flexo has replaced letterpress as the main print process,' he continues. 'But recently the market has been overflowing with flexo machines, so offset and combination printing are becoming more popular.'

Antonio Lappi is a firm believer in the advantages of combination printing: 'It is the future of printing – mixing flexo, offset and screen,' he says. ■