



Sign & Seal Labels has invested in a Konica Minolta bizhub C71cf, its first digital press. Both management and staff are impressed by its performance. Seen here with Sign & Seal owner Henk Crous (left) and Konica Minolta South Africa's Leon Minnie and Dane Becker (third and fourth from left) are staff members, Ryan Knowlden, Enver Pillay, Perry Como, Alvego Matthyse and Clint Scheepers.

Sign & Seal goes digital

Three months ago, news from Sign & Seal Labels was an investment in additional UV flexo capacity. Now the company also boasts a newly-commissioned digital label press, a Konica Minolta bizhub C71cf, reports GILL LOUBSER.

FOLLOWING his recent purchase of a UV Ray curing system to boost UV flexo capacity of a Mark Andy press (PPM March 2018), and with customers – particularly in the wine and spirits sector – increasingly requesting bespoke label designs and ever-shorter runs, Henk Crous, owner of Sign & Seal Labels, has now taken another brave investment decision. He's now the proud owner of Cape Town's first Konica Minolta bizhub C71cf digital label press.

'To meet customers' demands for shorter label runs for specialised and customised labels, we had been outsourcing our digital printing requirements, but we decided it was time to invest in our own digital press,' Henk explains.

At the same time, his burgeoning business was bursting at the seams and in dire need of additional production space. To solve this problem, an additional unit has been acquired at Winelands Park (a neat industrial complex near Kuils River in the Western Cape) and is home to the new digital press with its related finishing equipment. In fact, the immediate

plan is to relocate all finishing operations to the new premises, freeing up much needed space in the existing print shop.

'With our ability to offer high-quality digital labels on-demand, we expect to attract many new customers,' says Henk. 'The fact that we can now meet requirements for short runs and fast turnaround times will surely pay dividends.'

The quality produced on the Konica Minolta bizhub Press C71cf is undeniably superb. It uses a dry toner electrophotographic imaging engine (incidentally, the same engine as used on Mark Andy's latest hybrid press), and prints roll-to-roll CMYK at almost 20m/min at a native resolution of 1 200 x 1 200dpi. Maximum unwind/rewind diameter is 500mm.

Another plus point that is pleasing Henk and his production team is that no pre-treatment of materials is required.

Not only is this press amazingly compact, it's also easy to run – as we witnessed during our visit. The operator simply pressed the start button!





The bizhub C71cf digital label press was first seen at Labelexpo Europe 2015. Since then, more than 100 units have been sold around the world. The first in South Africa has recently arrived at Sign & Seal, Cape Town, where it's proving a smart answer to the transformation process. It's easy to use and produces short- to medium-length runs on demand at a competitive price and in a quick turnaround time.

'We have been impressed by the colour gamut produced and the quality of the solids,' Henk confirms.

'The cost-to-quality ratio is also good, there's very little maintenance, and the fact that it can print on virtually any material is a huge advantage,' he adds.

Complementing the Konica Minolta press is a Valloy Duoblade digital label die-cutter/slitter-rewinder.

Henk describes this multi-blade unit (pictured below) as extremely user friendly and versatile, and is particularly pleased with its 5m/min die-cutting speed and 60m/min slitting speed.



Fresh opportunities in label printing

With this innovative label press, Konica Minolta South Africa (KMSA), a division of Bidvest Office, is creating new value and opportunities for customers in the label printing arena.

According to KMSA production print manager, Leon Minnie, consumer goods manufacturers have modified their approach towards labelling in the past few years, avoiding holding stocks of labels. Today, some 60% of converters' run lengths are under 10 000. 'The bizhub digital C71cf press is a smart answer to this transformation process because it's easy to use and produces short- to medium-length runs on demand

at competitive prices and in a quick turnaround time,' says Leon.

'The C71cf allows label converters to capitalise on the short-run market – a sector that has traditionally been difficult and expensive to enter with current label technologies,' he asserts. 'Although the digital C71cf press has all the quality characteristics of high-end machines, it offers the convenience of smaller systems, and is perfect for the versioning of variable data labels, label proofs, sampling, short runs on-the-fly, and custom designs,' Leon adds.

'It's a truly complementary system that can benefit existing label converters as well as giving new printers an opportunity to enter the market.'

In addition, KMSA is offering users an all-inclusive maintenance charge. This static, unwavering 'flat rate' cost is hugely beneficial to label printers as it allows them to prepare an accurate estimate for any job, eliminating the risk of potential loss through incorrect cost calculations.

As the bizhub digital C71cf press utilises a mature technology from KMSA's cut-sheet digital presses, trained technicians are well versed in this technology and on call to help printers.

In addition, KMSA's proprietary V-Care remote monitoring system forms part of each maintenance agreement. 'This system is beneficial in two ways,' Leon continues. 'Firstly, it communicates potential errors before the user is notified of the problem. Secondly, service technicians can use it to prepare for the service call by connecting to the machine to view an overall picture of its condition and determine whether replaceable parts may be required. This allows us to provide better machine maintenance, offer fewer service intervals, and schedule downtime in conjunction with the customer to avoid crucial production times.'

Summing up, the last word goes to Henk Crous: 'It's undeniably a very exciting time in the printing industry. Customers are exposed to the best global practices and require local suppliers to match or exceed these expectations. One of our core competencies at Sign and Seal Labels has always been short lead times and our latest technology acquisitions will enable us to continue to fulfil this promise.'

