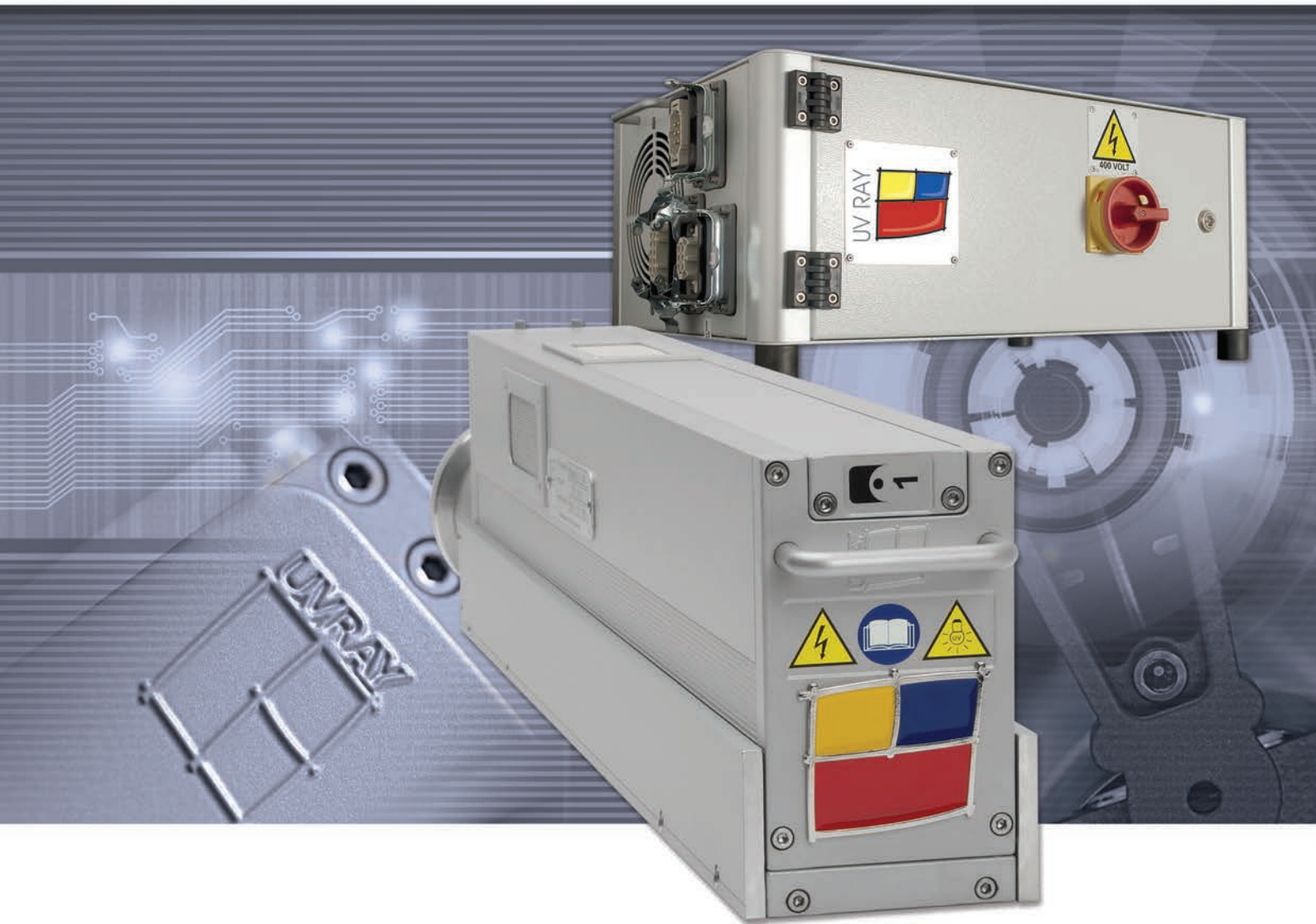


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Rotocon's Michael Aengenvoort and Sign & Seal owner, Henk Crous, with the UV ink curing system from Italy's UV Ray, recently retrofitted to an eight-colour Mark Andy 2200 press.

Sign & Seal raises UV flexo capacity

The history of capital expenditure at Sign & Seal Labels has been focused and steady since the company's inception in 2007, and has now been enhanced by additional UV flexo capacity, writes GILL LOUBSER.

THREE years have elapsed since Sign & Seal Labels' purchase of Cape Town's first Mark Andy Performance Series P3 press – indeed one of the first few installed in South Africa – placing the company firmly among frontrunners in the label printing stakes (PPM May 2015).

At that time, Sign & Seal's owner, Henk Crous, was determined to take his business to a fresh level – particularly citing a move away from highly-competitive commodity markets into the realm of sophisticated, added-value labels, notably for upmarket wine labels.

And now, he's pleased to confirm that the capital outlay has paid dividends, bringing renewed impetus to the business and an enormous shift to wine label production.

'Our wine label ratio has now reached 60:40,' he reveals. 'And in the last year alone we've seen a 35% volume growth in our business.'

However, to meet growing demand for increasingly sophisticated labels, yet another step was needed in

Henk's strategic investment programme – this time in the shape of a UV Ray curing system, retrofitted to an older Mark Andy 2200 eight-colour press.

'Last year, we started to run out of capacity and had to take fast action,' Henk explains. 'To meet demand, it was clear that we needed to improve our flexibility, especially in terms of additional UV capability,' he explains.

Having had a long association with the Rotocon team, especially for the supply of Sign & Seal's tooling requirements, Henk had no hesitation in turning to Michael and Pascal Aengenvoort for advice; the result was the recent addition of an Italian UV Ray curing system, bringing the older Mark Andy press bang up to date in terms of UV flexo capabilities.

According to Michael Aengenvoort, prime benefits of the UV Ray installation – only the second in this country (the first was at First Impression Labels in Durban) – are the ability to upgrade an older machine



with a competitively-priced UV curing system; an open design that enables technicians to work on power packs; and a reduction in electricity consumption and emissions. Additionally, low-friction water-cooled bases and patented flattening lenses ensure uniform output on the substrate.

Henk Crous agrees that this compact system is easy to use. 'A plug-in port on the side of each brick allows us to obtain an online breakdown of faults, plus diagnostics and maintenance plans from UV Ray's headquarters in Italy,' he reports.

'We're delighted with this investment,' he adds.

It's clear, however, that this bustling business – situated in two adjacent units in Winelands Park (a neat industrial complex near Kuils River in the Western Cape) – is bursting at the seams, and it's not surprising to hear that the operation is undergoing a space crisis!

'We're facing fresh challenges as we've run out of space and need more room to expand,' comments Henk, going on to share a further exciting development – within two months he'll be taking over adjacent premises to provide 30% additional floor space.

Move to digital printing

Coincidentally, Henk is intensely aware of the need to 'up his game' in a market where customisation and

specialisation are increasingly demanded by wine producers.

'We already have an excellent reputation and increasingly our customers are requesting more specialised label finishes, such as foiling and embossing. Now, however, we need to offer shorter runs and increased customisation. We have been outsourcing our digital printing requirements but have now decided to invest in our own digital press,' Henk reports.

As a result, Sign & Seal's new digital press will be installed and all finishing equipment relocated to the new premises (an event that will be covered more fully in a forthcoming issue of PPM).

Asked to name the underlying cause of this burgeoning business, Henk is quite clear. 'The growth of small businesses like ours is a direct result of the ongoing M&A activity and consolidation among larger label printers,' he contends. 'This is allowing us to obtain new business as we enjoy many fresh enquiries from potential customers. What buyers want is flexibility and fast decision making – that's the key to providing smaller operations with a competitive edge.'

What's the betting it won't be long before we learn of a further investment at Sign & Seal ... this time in a new press?

Outsourced sales

AN INTERESTING point of departure at Sign & Seal is the lack of a dedicated sales representative in the field! Amazing as this sounds, the policy is working well.

To handle sales of specialised wine labels, Henk Crouse has joined forces with a company called RR Wine Technologies (based in Strand, Western Cape) that offers a one-stop shop to wineries – selling everything from corks and aluminium screw caps to bottles and barrels – and has added labels from Sign & Seal Labels to the line-up of wine-packaging requirements.

'We chose RR Wine Technologies because the team subscribes to similar values and business principles. This has facilitated our alignment and integration,' Henk explains.

Winners in Rotocon's lucky draw

SOUTH African visitors to last year's Labelexpo Europe were able to enter into a draw by simply visiting each of Rotocon's ten principals exhibiting at the show.

By getting an attendance signature at each of these stands – AVT, Cheshire Anilox Technology, Erhardt+Leimer, Kocher+Beck, Matho, MPS, Pantec, RotoControl, Screen and Wink) – visitors' names were entered into a draw, held recently at a Constantia vineyard, and witnessed by Rotocon's Michael Aengenvoort and PPM's Banie Stafford, Gill Loubser and Glywnnis Wells.

The first prize, a Nespresso coffee-maker, went to Justine Bufe (First Impression Labels); second prize, a mini iPad, went to Theo Raubenheimer (Label Leaders); and third prize – a weekend stay at the Cape Village Lodge – was won by Ahmed Monia of JMB Labels.

Congratulations go to these three winners.



Pulling the lucky names out of a wine cooler on a perfect Cape Town autumn day was PPM's Glywnnis Wells.

