

Blog Post

Can Flexo Displace Gravure?

UK-based TCL Packaging Limited thinks so. “We’re all about replacement of gravure here at TCL,” says Dean Langford, TCL Production Manager. The company produces films for all types of food and non-food applications, and partners with Daventry-based Creation Reprographics for plate production.

Whilst flexography has always been a more efficient and cost effective printing process, the challenge has been to close the quality gap between offset and gravure printing. More recently, another factor has come into play – the environmental impact of the product itself. A low carbon footprint not only helps boost a company’s image and supports its corporate social responsibility programme, but it also reduces energy consumption and associated operating costs.

The challenge for plate manufacturers, however, has been to create a more environmentally friendly plate without losing the benefits and advantages of quality and efficiency.

Meeting that challenge, Asahi Photoproducts introduced the Asahi Water Washable Plate (AWP) – a development in photopolymer technology, which delivered a new environmentally compliant plate process and one that exceeded the print quality of other technologies available on the market. The results are outstanding, according to Langford.

In flexographic printing, highlights can usually cause two potential problems. The first is the highlight ‘breaking point’ which prevents a vignette from printing smoothly to zero. Photopolymer flexo plates usually start printing highlights at 5% to 8% due to dot gain, in the best cases. This means that gradations in vignettes suddenly break at that level, producing a visual contrast with the substrate; a visible breaking point or line well recognised as a print fault in the industry.

This breaking point is virtually eliminated using the AWP technology due to its smaller dot size, low dot gain and high dot stability, especially when used in combination with the latest generation of screening technologies. Extensive AWP plate trials and live production jobs have proven the AWP plate’s ability to print down to 2%-3% using classical round dot screening. With the latest screening technologies, the plate is able to reproduce a vignette fade to zero. Due to this quality performance leap, customers like TCL Packaging have already been able to successfully transfer production from offset or gravure to flexographic printing.

Langford explains, “Working with our repro team, Creation Reprographics took two eight-colour gravure jobs, did extensive colour management and fingerprinting work and delivered them in five colours on our new Uteco line investment, with outstanding performance according to our customer.”

- *By Dieter Niederstadt*



Please contact Monika Dürr (monika.d@duomedia.com) to request the case study and read the full story.

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About Asahi Photoproducts

Asahi Photoproducts is a subsidiary of the Asahi Kasei Corporation, which was founded in 1971 holding its European Headquarters in Belgium, Asahi Photoproducts is one of the leading pioneers of flexographic photopolymer plate development. By creating high quality flexographic solutions and through continued innovation, the company aims at driving print forward in balance with the environment.

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