

By Jackie Schultz
Editor

One might question the mental state of anyone wanting to start up a new company in these uncertain economic times, especially when other businesses in the same market were closing. But not even the current financial turmoil could stop Michael Drummond, President of Packrite LLC, from moving ahead with his dream — to own his own company.

After researching the market, securing a location for the plant and installing new equipment, including an Asitrade laminator, Drummond opened his High Point, N.C., trade finishing company on October 1.

Packrite specializes in microflute and folding cartons, serving the Southeastern market. Products and services include microflute packaging or sheets, paperboard and rigid boxes, diecutting, and gluing.

"We're a unique crossover company set up to do microflute and also handle paperboard," Drummond says. "The microflute is set up primarily for high end work. It's top sheet laminate and that's our marketplace."

Packrite does not do any printing. "There is so much local capacity, I can buy it cheaper than I can do it myself," Drummond explains. "Also, to

FILLING A NEED IN THE SOUTHEAST

A large, rectangular sign for Packrite LLC is mounted on a brick wall. The sign is white with a brown border and features the company logo, which consists of a stylized 'P' shape. The text on the sign reads "PACKRITE LLC" in a serif font, followed by "A New Generation in Packaging" in a smaller font, and "1650 Eastway Ct." at the bottom. The sign is flanked by two glass blocks. The background shows a brick wall and some greenery.

WITH THE INSTALLATION OF AN ASITRADE LAMINATOR AND THE 'NEXT GENERATION' DIECUTTER AND FOLDER-GLUER, THIS NORTH CAROLINA TRADE FINISHER IS READY TO SERVE THE MICROFLUTE AND FOLDING CARTON MARKETS.

Photos by Nick Griffin,
Griffin Communications

Packrite

Packrite executives, from left, Joe Davis, Michael Drummond, J.P. Mitchell, Hubie Beck, and Lynn Nicks.

run a printing press you need two shifts. I didn't have two shifts of work. And I didn't need to tie up \$4 or \$5 million in that type of work.

"Really what you need is a 65-inch laminator to supply finished sheets to some of the local corrugated companies," he continues. "An Asitrade is capable of running a 65- x 65-inch sheet."

While Packrite does sell boxes directly to end-user customers, Drummond insists that as a trade finisher, it is not his intent to compete with existing or potential carton or corrugated plant customers.

"My rule of thumb is if somebody is in there we don't call them," Drummond says. "If someone comes to me and says, 'We want you to quote,' and I'm already running that same work for somebody else, I don't quote. That's the only way I know to be straightforward with everybody."

Packrite's differentiation is its ability to offer something that until now, few companies in the Southeast were able to provide. With 20 years of folding carton industry experience, Drummond says he was able to determine what was missing in the Southeast.

"People in the corrugated industry were calling and asking, 'Can you glue this for us?' or 'The customer wants more than paperboard but we can't give them the graphics that they need,' or 'Litho labels aren't working, they're too complicated and they're shattering,'" he says.

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fluted product, which Drummond sees as a growing market. "I anticipate that we're going to be heavily into flute."

Right from the start, the company began running fluted jobs. Drummond helped a corrugated manufacturer that could not glue a rotary diecut B-flute automatic bottom box.

"We started with that job. There's more of that type of work out there than you can imagine. I've done that, salvaging people's jobs for years."

Diecutting and Gluing

Packrite is located in a 65,000-sq-ft facility that used to be a furniture warehouse. The company operates one shift. There are 22 employees, with the intent to eventually have 30 people.

The startup investment was about \$10 million, \$8 million of which was spent on state-of-the-art equipment. Investors included Drummond and his wife, Mary, Hubie Beck, who heads up manufacturing, J.P. Mitchell, who works in sales, and a few outside investors. The

Drummonds own about 75% of the company.

On the production floor are three key pieces of equipment: a 64-inch Asitrade litho laminator, a Bobst Expertcut 145 platen diecutter, and a Bobst Masterfold 130 folder-gluer.

The company also has a Mimaki sample table, which can cut microflute as well as paperboard. Drummond says he eventually plans to add a windowing machine. Advantzware from Advanced Software is the plant's operating and reporting system.

The Expertcut is the first installed in the U.S., and the 130 Masterfold is the first installed in the world.

"The speed of the new diecutter

Currently, about 75% of Packrite's orders is fluted product, which Drummond sees as a growing market.

is so fast and the makereadies are so short that one shift has the capacity of two shifts on older equipment," Drummond says. The Expertcut can run 7500 sheets per hour. It can handle sheets from 22⁷/₈- x 17³/₄-inch by 57- x 41-³/₈ inch, and 60 pt board up to B-flute.

Dummond says the main reason he wanted this particular diecutter is because it can cut to print on both sides of the sheet. "Because we're cutting B-flute we need that ability. We can guarantee less than a 64th of an inch print to cut registration no matter which side you need to cut from. Nobody in all of North America can do that," he says.

The Masterfold is Bobst's newest folder-gluer, introduced last spring. It can handle cartonboard from 4 to 60 pt as well as N-, F-, E-, and B-flute. Minimum and maximum box size is 4⁷/₈- x 2³/₄-inch up to 51⁷/₈ x 43 ³/₈-inch. Its operating speed is adjustable from 65 to 500 fpm (up to 100,000 boxes per hour).



The Expertcut diecutter has cut to print registration on both sides of the sheet, the only machine on the market with that capability.



The Masterfold 130 is Bobst's newest folder-gluer, introduced last year at Drupa. Packrite has the first one installed in the world.

Packrite

Packrite's Masterfold is equipped with a glue system from W H Leary. Machine features include an ejection device for alignment; a monitoring device for the bottom glue flap; and an inline bar code reader that reads the codes in six different positions, automatically ejecting a box if the barcode is wrong.

These machines place Packrite in the enviable position of having one of a kind capabilities. "Once the paper is converted into flute, a lot of companies don't want to handle it. Most folding carton jobs are run on 40-inch equipment, and the most you can diecut is F-flute. They can't do E- and B-, the grippers don't open up enough."

"What I needed was something different than what anybody else had in the marketplace," Drummond says. "Everybody can glue a 44-inch blank. We've set ourselves up to handle large

format paperboard (52-inch blank). That is the key. It has opened doors like I've never seen."

A High Quality Sheet

Drummond says the Asitrade also gives Packrite exclusive capabilities. The 200-ft long laminator is capable of producing singleface microflute with an inline lamination process. It combines a litho-printed top sheet with either B-, E-, or F-flute. Drummond plans to add N-flute. The minimum sheet is 23 inches and the maximum is 65 inches.

The machine has inline splicers, allowing it to run continuously, even at 10,000 sheets an hour. It also has an overhead crane system to handle rolls more efficiently.

Drummond points out several controls that add to the quality of the fluted sheet.

For example, a steam shower adjusts the amount of moisture applied to the sheet as it's being made into corrugated. Oversized heating rolls on the medium and backliner reduce the likelihood of warp.

Special spray heads mist the sheet as it goes through the machine. "We can adjust any type of moisture problem with the paper or even the top sheet while we're running," he says.

The Asitrade features Gappro IV, the next generation PVA applicator system. Contrary to conventional systems, the metering roll rotates in the same direction as the applicator roll. The system can precisely set the glue gap down to 0.0002-inch. This results in a significant reduction in the application rate of the PVA, in many cases by more than 25-30%.

"It's fantastic," Drummond says. "We recently ran 2.4 lbs per 1000 sq ft. That's unheard of. Most people can only do 3.5 lbs."

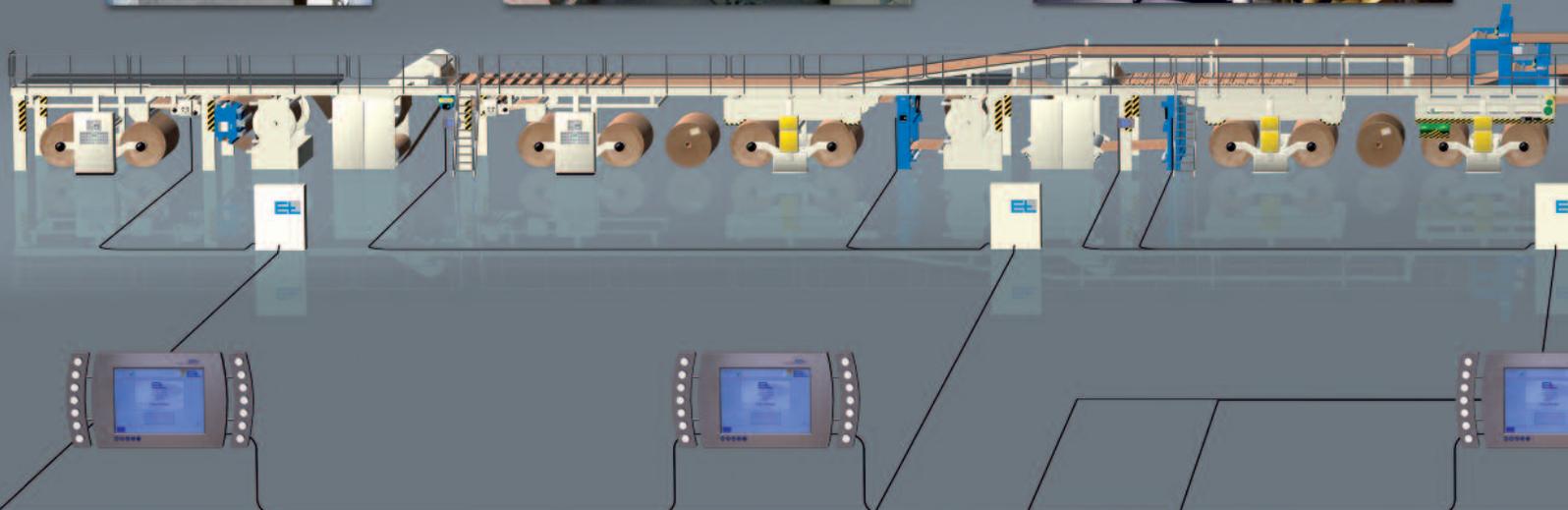
Complete Medium and Liner Alignment



Complete Tension Equalization



Complete Bridge Guide and Tension Control



In a weird twist of fate, Drummond believes the downturn in the economy actually provided an opportunity. There is only one other Asitrade in the Southeast (at Alliance in Winston-Salem, N.C.), serving a smaller format market.

"We wanted to capture the market and set it on fire before anyone else could get started," he says. "If we were the first in the market during a slowdown then we were going to secure the market."

A Family Tradition

As its logo states, Packrite is "A new generation in Packaging." Drummond and Beck are second generation, both having worked for their fathers at different folding carton companies.

Previously, Drummond worked for Preferred Packaging, Inc. The assets of that company were acquired by Hamilton

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Paperbox, which was acquired by Rosmar Litho Inc. of Quebec, Canada. Drummond's father, Bill, who is now retired, started Preferred.

Beck worked with his father, Leonard, also retired, at Cheapeake (the former Green Printing). "Hubie's passion was gluing and then he got into diecutting and now he's running my plant," Drummond says. "He is doing a fantastic job."

Although Packrite is still getting established in the market, Drummond says business has been good. "We're in a unique situation. The folding carton shops love us because they get to print some more. Corrugated shops love us because we're not after their brown box business. So everybody is friends, including Alliance."

Packrite will be hosting an open house on January 29 to introduce the new company to the marketplace.

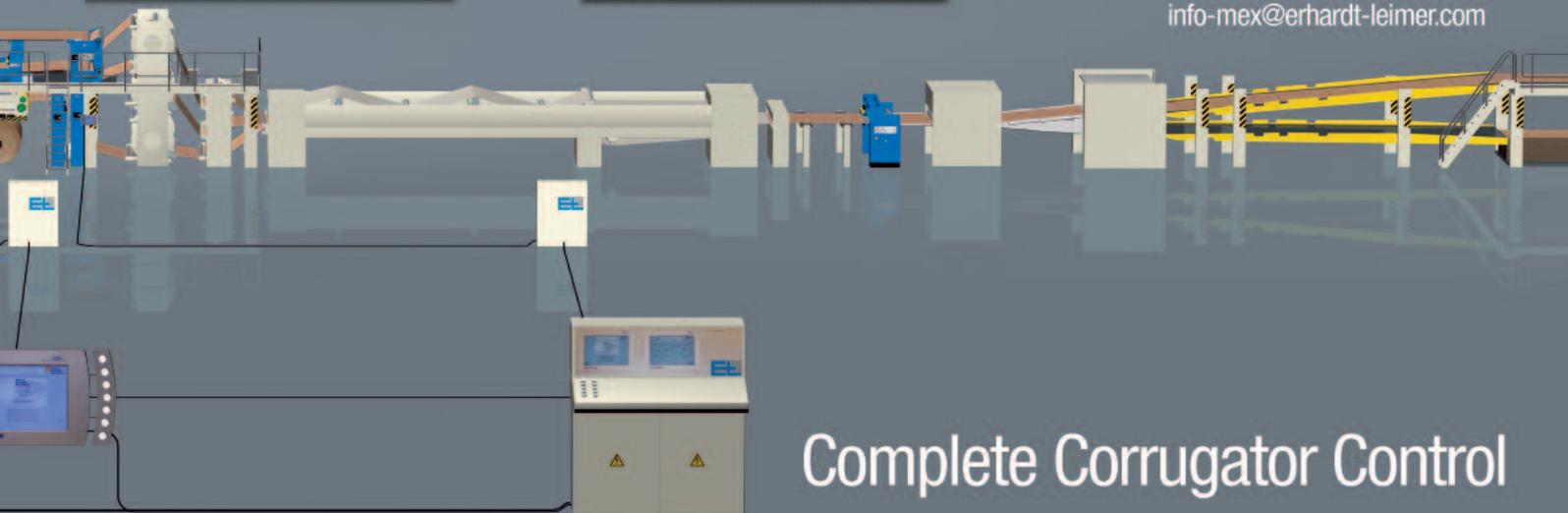
Complete Slitter
Scorer Control



Complete Tape
Application and Control



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