

Ensuring the Supply Chain Can Support the Customer Base

Seeing growth ahead, packaging supplier Bell Inc. adds to its family of presses to ensure customer service

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By Editorial Staff

Sioux Falls, SD — April 25, 2008 — Sometimes the best way to server your customers is to stop accepting new customers until your supply chain can support additional capacity.

Case in point: Packaging provider Bell Incorporated.

"We actually turned down business this past fall," said Ben Graham, vice president of finance, sales and supply chain, explaining that Bell's executive team decided to ensure new customers were being served in accordance with company standards before taking on more business. "Still," said Graham, "it was a tough decision."

The Sioux Falls-based independent folding-carton manufacturer experienced significant growth in 2006 and 2007, adding new accounts such as Barilla Pasta and Wells' Dairy, and reached what the company considered full capacity.

Now Bell has added to its family of presses, bringing much-needed new capacity, flexibility, the potential to add up to 25 workers and readiness for the company's next growth spurt.

Stevens Flexo Press

The new press, a refurbished 32" Stevens Flexo Press, is being assembled now and is scheduled to be in full production at the end of April. Bell runs two other Stevens Flexo presses, "so we already have people who are experts in maintaining the machines, and we're more likely to have the right parts on hand for any situation," said Graham.

But the new arrival is different in two ways, according to Marianne Von Seggern, Bell's vice president of strategic development.

First, the new press has a flatbed, or "platen" die cutter, far less costly than rotary dies but just as functional for many types of jobs. Rotary die cutters are needed for more critical, high-volume cutting but can cost anywhere from 10 to 100 times more, and they take months rather than weeks from order to delivery. "That's overkill for some packaging requirements," said Von Seggern, "so the new press rounds out Bell's ability to put the right job on the right machine at the lowest cost."

Second, the reconditioned Stevens press boasts a newly developed "full scope" registration system, one of few like it for a press of this kind. This means two types of registration, commonly performed by separate systems,

are handled in one: registration of the various ink colors with each other, and registration of all of the finished printing with the way the final package is cut. This yields even more cost and time efficiency, according to Von Seggern.

Two new technician positions have been added and several additional press operators hired. The company expects to hire more people as the new press goes into full production.

The new press is being assembled and will reside at Bell Inc's Algonquin Street plant. Built in 2005 to handle Bell's rapidly growing food-packaging business, it is the company's second facility in Sioux Falls. Also at Bell's Algonquin Street facility is a variable sleeve offset press (VSOP), the first of its kind in North America, for handling high volume jobs with great speed and efficiency. Most of Bell's customers are large multi-national accounts with high volume needs, according to Graham, and the new press complements the VSOP's capabilities.

"We'll be able to serve an even greater range of customer demands quickly and efficiently," said Graham, "from short trial runs requiring speed and economy, to more options for private-label jobs requiring many different versions. We're ready to grow again."

