

Kobusch Germany

“A very good result”

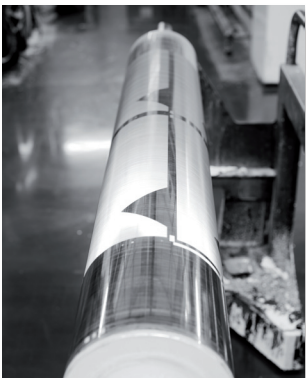


KOBUSCH[®]
SHAPING FUTURE PACKAGING

Higher speeds, shorter set-up times, more ink preparation quality, and six-figure savings per year. The packaging film specialist Kobusch Deutschland rated the work of the Siegwerk consultants as “completely positive”. In close co-operation with the local employees, the On-Site-Consulting-Team (OSC) of Siegwerk Druckfarben AG & Co. KGaA made significant contributions to process optimization at the Kobusch sites in Warburg and Halle.

Handling ink knowledgeably has always been a critical factor in the printing business, and “no process is so good that it cannot be improved further”. Udo Erath stems from the automotive industry, and he knows the potential that can be released by external process consultation. The Vice President Operations and Technology of packaging specialist Kobusch (“Shaping Future Packaging”) therefore did not delay very long when a chance came for the consulting experts at Siegwerk – their ink suppliers of many years – to take a detailed look at the processes running at Kobusch. “The decision was the correct one,” says Erath today, “Kobusch has profited from the analysis by the Siegwerk team.” Reinhard Steffens, Operations Manager for both Kobusch sites was particularly pleased that

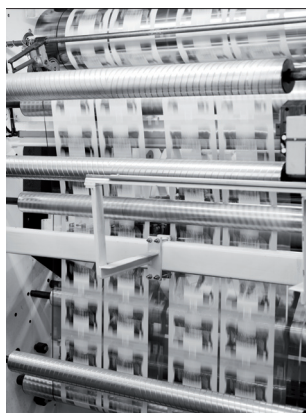
the Siegwerk consultants “are also at home in this sector and speak the same language as our own people.” Steffens: “They not only come from the chemical side of the business, they also know something about printing.” This meant that the consultants could expect a much higher level of acceptance from the company’s own employees – an aspect which made implementing the whole project much easier, says Steffens. Summing up, Udo Erath says that the joint project with Siegwerk was characterised by a “very good degree of co-operation”. And the monetary results of the project were also very convincing: proven six-figure savings per year, “which will have an impact on our accounts every year from now on,” says Udo Erath, with the sound knowledge that



Kobusch now also has optimal printing processes. The Kobusch managers also thank the Siegwirk project for establishing a change of attitude across the company: the external analysis of the processes, and the consequences of one's own actions on the other people involved in the process chain, have helped improve the team spirit amongst the Kobusch employees: they now look beyond their own particular area of responsibility and departments, and see themselves much more as "an overall printing team", says Reinhard Steffens.

Raising speed of printing

How was progress achieved at Kobusch? The aspect requiring the most attention at the Warburg site was raising the speed of the printing machine – the workflows involved in ink preparation have already been operating here at an exemplary level according to the OSC experts. Boosting the speed in Warburg by eight per cent was possible because the Siegwirk experts exploited their many years of experience in the flexible packaging sector in a targeted way. After analyzing Kobusch's orders, it became clear that it would be very easy to boost the speed. After the OSC team had provided additional orientation, new specifications were laid down for the set speed. Ever since, the employees have been increasingly motivated to rigorously undertake each printing order at the new printing speed, always with an eye on complying with the quality criteria.



Coaches, not so much consultants

The optimization was also undertaken in an exemplary way: new ideas and insights not only come directly from the external consultants, says Udo Erath,

they are also often already well known to the company employees. However, the external consultants helped to convince the project team that the measures they jointly developed would result in a successful outcome. Erath: "The Siegwirk experts are not so much consultants, as coaches, who set free the ideas and energy of our own people – and that is much better than simply implementing a new technique."

The set-up times in the set-up workshops in Warburg and in Halle could be reduced by 26 and 34 per cent in some typical examples.

Distances walked, the delegation of a team around the machine, the storage of anilox rollers, printing sleeves and printing cylinders – all of those little things which can be all too easily ignored when doing one's daily business, even though they need optimization – as Kobusch honestly admits. It is precisely when dealing with aspects such as these that it can be "very beneficial" to gain an external perspective. And things get even better when the measures can be sustainably implemented on the basis of a plan of action – as took place at both of these sites.

Improve color evaluation techniques

In addition to the speed and the set-up times, another aspect which was in need of optimization at the Halle site was ink preparation. Major improvements were achieved in this area. The measures which were implemented included sending the employees in the ink preparation department, and on the printing machines, to ink metrics training courses to improve their color evaluation techniques. This also gave them the know-how they needed to put what they had learned into practice when



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matching the color shades. The reintroduction of wet samples now also provides the printers in Halle with true-to-colour samples for mixing the inks, in addition to establishing ink shade controls for the recipes and preparation of spot colours. Moreover, standardized return inks were introduced at the Halle site as part of the OSC project; this almost halved the stocks of return inks and the costs of the liquid waste could be reduced by more than Euro 80,000. Operations Manager Reinhard Steffens sums up as follows: “The ink now reaches the machine with much higher quality in Halle – which has improved our products.”

Expanding human resources

The quality in Halle was also boosted by expanding the human resources. A detailed analysis at the start of the project at the gravure printing site revealed that the ink preparation department was understaffed. An additional employee in the ink preparation department now ensures that the right product, with a constant recipe quality, is made available at the right time, at the right place, in the right quantities. This slashes the costs of the overall process.

For Udo Erath, this is a good example of how process optimizations do not always go hand-in-hand with a downsizing of the workforce, but that recruiting new staff can also make sense to “optimize the workflows”. In addition to each of the measures implemented at the two sites, Steffen and Erath were also in agreement that the Siegwerk consultants also convinced Kobusch with their effective methods and procedures. Clearly structured kick-off meetings with all participants meant that all those involved were properly prepared for the projects. Whiteboards in the production area assisted

communication with the employees. Action plans provided the necessary level of documentation and transparency because everyone could see what was planned next, what had already been implemented, and what had not yet been realized and why not. The metrics reports optimized by the OSC team informed the project team and all employees punctually on a daily or weekly basis, providing regular updates on the status of the project. This means that the employees could not only see the status of the production metrics at a glance (average speed and set-up times) but also all of the savings that had been achieved as a result. This form of reporting was continued by Kobusch even after the end of the project.

“Very good financial results”

Group headquarters in Warburg is satisfied with the savings generated by the joint project. The financial results of the overall campaign are “very good”, and “landed right in the bull’s eye” in terms of the cost savings, says Erath. “These results will support us in the long term, and will have a clear influence on our product quality.” The results of the project have therefore now also spread to other areas at Kobusch: the OSC concept is now also to be implemented for the operation of the new ultra-modern ten-colour-flexoprint machine at the Warburg site. This proposal was initiated by the employees in Warburg themselves. Kobusch is now also weighing up whether to optimize other departments such as lamination using the Siegwerk OSC methods and with OSC assistance. And ultimately, the processes at the Kobusch production site in Egypt are also to be optimized and brought up to state-of-the-art levels – when political stability returns.



Kontakte:

Reinhard Steffens
 Operations Manager
 Kobusch-Sengewald GmbH
 Warburg site
 Anton-Böhlen-Straße 5
 34414 Warburg/Westfalen
 Tel: +49 (0) 5641 96-300
 rsteffens@kobusch.com
<http://www.kobusch.com>

Frank Dauth
 Head of On-Site Consulting
 Siegwerk Druckfarben AG & Co.KG&A
 Alfred-Keller-Str. 55
 53721 Siegburg / Germany
 Phone: +49 2241 304 927
frank.dauth@siegwerk.com
www.siegwerk.com