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Brian Mooki – Sales Executive (International)
Email: brian.mooki@montgomerygroup.com
Cell: +27 (0) 82 214 6326 | Tel: +27 (0) 835 1565

Mercy Moka, Sales Manager (West Africa)
Email: Mercy.moka@montgomerygroup.com
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PRINT & ALLIED EXHIBITIONS FOR 2027

S/N	EXHIBITION	LOCATION	DATE	SHOW LOGO
1	**ASI SHOW ORLANDO 2027** https://www.asishow.com/trade-shows/orlando	Orange County Convention Centre, Orlando – Florida, United States of America.	05 – 07 January 2027	
2	**GULF PRINT & PACK 2027** https://www.gulfprintpack.com	Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai - United Arab Emirates.	12 – 14 January 2027	
3	**PSI 2027** https://www.psi-messe.com	Koelnmesse, Exhibition Centre Cologne, Germany.	12 – 14 January 2027	
4	**C!PRINT MADRID 2027** https://www.salon-cprint.es/en/	IFEMA Madrid (Parque Ferial Juan Carlos I), Madrid, Spain.	12 – 14 January 2027	
5	**PRINTPACK 2027** https://www.printpackipama.com	India Expo Centre, Greater Noida, NCR-Delhi, India.	January 30 – 03 February 2027	
6	**SIGN/ LED CHINA – SPRING 2027** https://www.signchina-sz.com	Shenzhen Exhibition & Convention Centre, Futian District, Shenzhen, China	21 – 23 February 2027	
7	**HUNKELER INNOVATION DAYS 2027** https://www.innovationdays.com	Messe Luzern Exhibition & Trade Centre, Lucerne, Switzerland.	22 – 25 February 2027	
8	**PROPAK EAST AFRICA 2027** https://www.propakeastafrica.com	Sarit Expo Centre, Nairobi – Kenya.	02 – 04 March 2027	
9	**NIGERIA AGROFOOD 2027** https://www.agrofood-nigeria.com	Landmark Centre, Lagos – Nigeria.	16 – 18 March 2027	
10	**ISA INTERNATIONAL SIGN EXPO 2027** https://signexpo.org	Mandela Bay Convention Centre, Las Vegas, Nevada - United States of America.	31 March – 02 April 2027	
11	**FESPA 2027** https://europe.fespa.com/global-print-expo	Messe Munich, Exhibition Centre Munich, Germany.	06 – 09 April 2027	
12	**PACK EXPO SOUTHEAST 2027** https://www.packexpoeast.com	Georgia World Congress Centre, Atlanta, Georgia - United States of America.	12 – 14 April 2027	
13	**FESPA MIDDLE EAST 2027** https://www.fespamiddleeast.com	Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai - United Arab Emirates.	27 – 29 April 2027	
14	**PRINT4ALL 2027** https://www.print4all.it/en/	Fiera Milano Exhibition Centre, Rho, Milan, Italy.	25 – 28 May 2027	
15	**GLOBAL PRINTING & PACKAGING EXPO AND LABEL & CARTON BOX EXPO 2027** https://globalprintpackexpo.com	Nusantara International Convention Centre (NICE), PIK2, Indonesia.	02 – 05 June 2027	
16	**SPE – SURABAYA PRINTING EXPO 2027** https://surabayaprintingexpo.com	Grand City, Surabaya – Indonesia.	07 – 10 July 2027	
17	**PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2027** https://www.propakwestafrica.com	Landmark Centre, Lagos – Nigeria.	07 – 09 September 2027	
18	**FESPA/ AFRICA PRINT 2027** https://www.fespaafrica.com	Gallagher Convention Centre, Johannesburg - South Africa.	07 – 09 September 2027	
19	**PRINTINGUNITED 2026** https://www.printingunited.com	Las Vegas International Centre, Vegas, Nevada - United States of America.	14 – 16 September 2027	
20	**THE PRINT/ SIGN SHOW UK 2027** https://www.theprintshow.co.uk	NEC, Birmingham - United Kingdom.	21 – 23 September 2027	
21	**SIGN/ LED CHINA – AUTUMN 2027** https://www.signchinashow.com	Shanghai New International Expo Centre, Pudong District, Shanghai, China.	22 – 24 September 2027	
22	**PACK EXPO LAS VEGAS 2027** https://www.packexpolasvegas.com	Las Vegas Convention Centre, Vegas, Nevada - United States of America.	27 – 29 September 2027	
23	**LOUPE EUROPE 2027** https://www.loupe-europe.com	Fira Barcelona Gran Via, Barcelona, Spain.	05 – 08 October 2027	
24	**PROPAPER DUBAI 2027** https://www.propaperdubai.com	Festival Arena, Dubai Festival City, Dubai - United Arab Emirates.	12 – 14 October 2027	
25	**ALLPRINT EXPO 2027** https://allprint.co.id	Jakarta International Expo (JIExpo) Kemayoran, Jakarta, Indonesia.	20 – 23 October 2027	
26	**PAPEREX INDIA 2027** https://southindia.paperex.in	The Yashobhoomi International Convention & Expo Centre, New Delhi, India.	01 – 04 December 2027	

NOTE:

- The above enumerated **EVENTS** are carefully and strategically selected, hence meet ALL these stringent criteria: regional acknowledgement/ recognition, exhibitors' numbers (not less than 100 exhibitors), visitors' numbers (not less than 2,500 attendees), and total numbers of country participation (not less than 10 nations).
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PROPAK CAPE2026 27-29 October 2026 Cape Town International Convention Centre Cape Town, South Africa 9am - 5pm daily

PACKAGING BUSINESSES UNDER PRESSURE TURN TO TECHNOLOGY AT PROPAK CAPE 2026

...SEMINAR PROGRAMME BRINGS PACKAGING INDUSTRY INSIGHTS



© Over 7,500 visitors attended PROPAK Cape 2023, exploring the latest innovations, products and services.

*At the heart of **PROPAK Cape** is the opportunity to experience cutting-edge technology first-hand through immersive **live machinery demonstrations.** Elevating this experience, the event features **insightful, expert-led technical sessions** during live conferences to deliver deep, value-driven industry knowledge. This powerful combination allows visitors to compare solutions side-by-side and engage directly with technical specialists, gaining the precise insights needed to elevate their packaging operations. Read on in this **WHERE To Print** feature to discover how these advancements can optimize your production efficiency.*

PROPAK Cape returns to Cape Town, South Africa from **27-29 October 2026,** bringing together more than **200 exhibitors** showcasing the latest developments across packaging, plastics, printing, labelling and food processing.

The 2026 edition has grown from 190 exhibitors at the previous PROPAK Cape in 2023, giving visitors an even broader opportunity to discover technologies and solutions for an industry facing increasing pressure to improve efficiency, manage costs, maintain consistency and respond to evolving customer, market and sustainability requirements.

At the heart of PROPAK Cape is the opportunity to experience technology first-hand. Live demonstrations will enable visitors to see machinery and solutions in operation, compare technologies and engage directly with suppliers, technical specialists and industry experts.



Automation and end-of-line solutions, marking and coding, packaging efficiency, food and beverage applications, and developments in sustainable and recyclable packaging will be among the key areas of focus.

Among the technologies being presented in 2026, **SloniTec** will showcase its Aseptic Bag in Box Filler, designed to extend product shelf life at ambient temperatures, while **Progetto** will demonstrate an automated carton packing solution for integration into automated production lines.

Goldpack will showcase its partnership with **GroupMosca,** with a particular focus on applications for South Africa's citrus industry and solutions across strapping, wrapping and end-of-line packaging. **REA South Africa** will take visitors through marking and coding applications across different stages of production, from label creation through to end-of-line.

Sustainability will remain an important focus, with developments in recyclability, lightweighting, mono-material packaging and more efficient packaging formats on display.

Tetra Pak will showcase its Tetra Recart carton packaging for shelf-stable tuna, brought to market in collaboration with Spanish seafood producer **Jealsa.** Visitors will also be able to see the 750ml Eco-Flat Wine Bottle developed for the South African wine market by **Polyoak Packaging** in partnership with **Packamama, Safripol** and **Stellenbosch Vineyards.** Its lightweight and space-efficient format demonstrates how packaging design can contribute to more efficient transportation and supply chains.

PROPAK Cape 2026 seminar programme brings packaging industry insights to Cape Town

Visitors to PROPAK Cape 2026 in Cape Town will also have the opportunity to hear directly from leading packaging industry specialists when the **Institute of Packaging South Africa** hosts a programme of free-to-attend seminars alongside the exhibition later this month.

Covering sustainability, recyclability, the circular economy, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), packaging design, food safety, recycling, plastics and more, the programme provides a fast-moving look at some of the issues shaping the packaging industry – and what they mean for businesses operating in South Africa.

From packaging design to a circular economy

The programme gets underway with National Secretary for the Institute of Packaging South Africa, **Bill Marshall,** sharing highlights of the latest packaging design trends emerging from the **2026 Gold Pack Awards** and the **Student Gold Pack Awards.** The new trends reveal evolving standards, innovations and thinking in future packaging design.

Sustainability and recyclability feature strongly, with **Edwin Botha,** Recyclability

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Our e-mail address is: **enquiry@wheretoprintmagazine.com** and P. O. Box 17871, General Post Office, Ikeja Lagos Nigeria 2341. Letters should include the writers full name, address and direct telephone numbers and may be edited for purpose of clarity and space. All submissions become the property of NUMBERS CMYK LIMITED. Please do not hesitate to also call us on **Tel (Nigeria Mobile): +234(0)803 862 9114.**

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To Readers

By Joju Adekanbi | publisher@wheretoprintmagazine.com | 0803 862 9114

FROM LAGOS TO LAS VEGAS: HOW FOUR SEPTEMBER MEGA EXPOS RESHAPED THE FUTURE OF PRINT



September 2026 will go down in history as the most definitive month for the global print, packaging, and sign industries—and **WHERE To Print magazine** was on the front lines to capture every groundbreaking moment. In this landmark **104th edition,** we bring you an exclusive, globe-trotting review of the four blockbuster mega expos that completely rewrote the industry playbook.

From the buzzing manufacturing hubs of West Africa to the dazzling tech stages of America and Europe, our team crossed borders to deliver first-hand intelligence. Most notably, this edition features an exclusive insider look at the **3rd Annual PRINTING United Expo Media Day** in Las Vegas, personally covered by yours faithfully for the third time, granting our readers unparalleled access to the strategic innovations transforming our craft. First, check out the exclusive **1:1 Media Day Interviews** conducted on pages 30, 31, and 36. Then, here are the major highlights from our comprehensive, sequential coverage of September's blockbuster expos, alongside critical imperatives for our regional market:

1. PROPAK West Africa 2026: Elevating Regional Manufacturing

We kick off our global tour right here on home soil. The **SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE** is aptly titled: **PROPAK WEST AFRICA DELIVERS STRONG INDUSTRY RESPONSE AS 90% OF EXHIBITORS REBOOK FOR 2027,** and it's on pages 14, 15, and 16, where **PROPAK West Africa 2026** reconfirmed its status as the region's premier packaging, plastics, and print exhibition. This year, the focus squarely landed on supply chain localization, smart packaging solutions, and cross-border West African trade partnerships. Our coverage highlights how local manufacturers are deploying next-generation machinery to meet strict international standards, driving economic resilience across the continent.

- **The Takeaway for Africa PSPs:** We strongly enjoin African Print Service Providers (PSPs) to deeply engage with our localized recommendations in this article. Capitalizing on cross-border ECOWAS trade requires immediate investments in automated packaging and compliance-ready finishing equipment to secure lucrative local manufacturing contracts.

2. LOUPE Americas 2026: The Creative & Tech Convergence

Crossing the Atlantic, we immersed ourselves in **LOUPE Americas 2026.** The **SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE** (on pages 20 and 21) is captioned: **LOUPE AMERICAS 2026 SETS NEW BENCHMARK FOR THE LABEL AND PACKAGE PRINTING INDUSTRY.** Known for its avant-garde approach, this expo beautifully bridged the gap between raw creative design and technical print, labeling, and packaging execution using generative AI in prepress workflows, ultra-customization in high-end packaging, and the stunning developments in sensory and tactile print effects that are redefining consumer engagement.

- **The Takeaway for Africa PSPs:** Do not treat AI as a distant future technology. African PSPs must actively digest the workflow takeaways detailed in this segment to drastically cut prepress times and offer high-margin, ultra-customized embellishments that local corporate clients are currently sourcing abroad.

3. PRINTING United Expo 2026: The Ultimate Global Powerhouse

Next stop: Las Vegas. **PRINTING United Expo 2026** was nothing short of breathtaking, dominating the global conversation. **PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026 CONCLUDES IN LAS VEGAS WITH STRONG GLOBAL ATTENDANCE AND INDUSTRY-WIDE MOMENTUM** is the caption of the **SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE** (on pages 32,33 and 34) with an exclusive, insider look at the industry's most highly anticipated, embargoed product launches. From massive industrial wide-format inkjet presses to autonomous robotic finishing lines, our coverage gives you the strategic intelligence needed to scale your business in a post-digital era.

- **The Takeaway for Africa PSPs:** Scale requires calculated technological updates. We urge regional print leaders to review our exclusive interviews from the Vegas floor to avoid stories that touch the heart, ensuring every dollar spent aligns with global efficiency benchmarks.

4. The Print Show & The Sign Show UK 2026: Unleashing Visual Impact

We conclude our global tour in the United Kingdom, where **The Print Show** and **The Sign Show UK 2026** co-located to deliver a masterclass in visual communication. Flip open to pages 40 and 41 to immerse yourself in the **SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE titled: THE PRINT**

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SHOW & THE SIGN SHOW 2026: ATTENDEES EXCEED 5,500 AS MACHINERY SALES SURPASS £1M. This dual-show review explores the booming world of vehicle wrapping, sustainable textile printing, and eco-friendly signage substrates. With European regulations tightening around carbon footprints, our UK coverage provides critical takeaways on how print shops are successfully balancing profitability with environmental compliance.

- **The Takeaway for Africa PSPs:** Sustainable sign-making is no longer optional; it is a major competitive advantage. Engage with the exclusive interviews featured in this issue to pivot your digital, large-format, signage, and packaging offerings toward eco-friendly substrates before corporate mandates leave your business behind.

Other Key Highlights in this Landmark Edition:

- **Print Impact Nigeria (PIN) | Page 10:** Stay ahead of the curve with our definitive breakdown of local news impacting print businesses across Nigeria, nay Africa in the last 2 months.
- **Print Impact World (PIW) | Pages 12 & 28:** Our dedicated global news informs and educates, thus focusing on our industry's sustainable growth and development.
- **COVER STORY | Pages 26 & 27:** The crown jewel of this edition, captioned: **FROM BARCODE TO BACKBONE: HOW TAGS AND LABELS ARE REWIRING THE PACKAGING VALUE CHAIN.** This explosive, two-page deep article by **MarketsandMarkets** helps you discover how your business can secure its place at the centre of this new packaging value chain and capture the next wave of high-margin volume.
- Other carefully compiled **SPECIAL FEATURE INTERVIEWS** and **ARTICLES** include: **FOTEDAR WEST AFRICA PIONEERS HIGH-EFFICIENCY SOLUTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL PACKAGING BOOM AT PROPAK 2026** (on page 16), **AYO PRINTTECH SOLUTIONS DELIVERS WORLD-CLASS PRINTING, BINDING, AND PACKAGING ENGINEERING TO WEST AFRICA** (on page 17), **NILPETER: SHOWCASING CORE VALUES AND CUTTING-EDGE INNOVATIONS AT PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026** (on page 17), **THE FUTURE IS APPLICATION-SPECIFIC ENGINEERING** (on page 18), **LOCAL PRECISION TAKES CENTRE STAGE AS PRINTBOX REDEFINES REGIONAL PACKAGING STANDARDS** (on page 18), **SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER: ROTOCON CELEBRATES 11 HISTORIC SALES AT LOUPE AMERICAS 2026, WELCOMING KENYA'S EXPRESS LABELS TO THE RFP 340 LED FAMILY** (on page 24), **NBG PRINTOGRAPHIC DEBUTS AT LOUPE AMERICAS 2026 TO TRANSFORM PACKAGING AND FLEXO ACROSS GLOBAL REGIONS** (on page 25), **LOCALIZING GLOBAL STANDARDS: HOW INKCUPS IS SECURING THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN MERCHANDISE PRINTING** (on page 37), **CHARTING THE FUTURE OF PRINT AT DRUPA 2028: THE OCTOPUS EFFECT** (on page 38), **BRINGING INNOVATION HOME: HOW XEROX'S NEWEST DIGITAL PRESSES WILL DRIVE GROWTH FOR AFRICAN PRINTERS** (on page 38), **VIBRANT THREADS AND PRECISION TECH: HOW KONICA MINOLTA WOVE SUCCESS STORIES AT PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026** (on page 39), **MAKING WAVES: FUJIFILM'S HISTORIC PRESS DEBUT STEALS THE SHOW!** (on page 42), and **UNLOCKING THE NEXT FRONTIER: HOW MINUTEMAN PRESS AND WHERE TO PRINT ARE BLUEPRINTING A FRANCHISE REVOLUTION TO HELP WEST AFRICAN PRINTERS SCALE UP** (on page 43) to inform you of some of the latest trends and developments in the print and allied industries both in Nigeria and around the world.

The world of print is moving faster than ever, and the 104th edition of WHERE To Print magazine is your definitive roadmap to navigating it.
This landmark issue delivers exclusive coverage, deep-market insights, and the latest technological trends actively transforming the African print landscape. But insights only matter if you use them. As you dive into our expert coverage and absorb our actionable recommendations, we challenge you to **turn your findings into decisive action starting now.** Modernise your workflows, embrace new efficiencies, and lead your business into the future.

Until the next edition, keep doing good, making a positive difference, and shaping the future of African print together!

WHERE TO PRINT BY-LINE

Publisher/ Editorial: Joju Adekanbi
Publisher/ Sales: Shola Adekanbi
Accountant: Olatunji Olusola (MAPWELL)
Marketing / Media Executive: Precious Ajuonuma
PA to Publisher/CEO: Folarin Olaniyi
Admin/Operations: Peculiar Usang
Video Production Executive: Moses Ufoma
Proof Reader: Ayomikun Adekanbi
Design: Ayodele Ayodeji (WHERE To Print Studio/ FULL-ON Creatives Services)
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To place advert/ supplement: adverts@wheretoprintmagazine.com

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Email: enquiry@wheretoprintmagazine.com

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NUMBERS CMYK GHANA LIMITED (CS024612020)
Central Link Road, LEKMA, Accra.
Location Code : GZ-121-5376
P.O SR 324 Spintex Road, Tema
Email: enquiry@wheretoprintmagazine.com
www.wheretoprintmagazine.com

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Print impact around Nigeria

Stories by Precious Ajuonuma & Joju Adekanbi

UNLOCKING FORTY YEARS OF GLOBAL TRADE: WHY PRINT AND PACKAGING PROFESSIONALS MUST VISIT THE 40TH LITF

The stage is set, the blueprint is drawn, and the countdown has officially begun. On **Thursday, September 24, 2026,** the **Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI)** hosted a high-octane press conference at the Commerce House in Victoria Island, completely redefining what to expect from West Africa's premier commercial expo - the **Lagos International Trade Fair (LITF).**

Led by **Princess 'Layo Bakare-Okeowo,** Vice President of LCCI and Chairperson of the Trade Promotion Board, the briefing brought together industrial heavyweights, international trade delegates, and corporate giants—including representatives from **Zenith Bank** and the **Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).** Their collective mission? To unveil the massive structural transformations arriving with the landmark 40th anniversary of the Lagos International Trade Fair (LITF). Centred around the highly strategic theme **"LITF: 40 Years of Trade Growth and Global Connection,"** the 2026 edition is not just a celebration of corporate longevity. It is a massive, multi-billion-naira trade engine specifically engineered to fuel cross-border partnerships and industrial growth.

Scale, Synergy, and Serious Numbers
Addressing the media, Princess Bakare-Okeowo revealed staggering projections for this milestone anniversary. The 10-day extravaganza is scaled to attract **over 1,000 corporate exhibitors** and a projected influx of **1 million visitors.** Spanning an expansive 20,000 square meters of exhibition space at the traditional Tafawa Balewa Square (TBS), the fair will feature pavilions from at least 20 countries.



© LCCI Vice President and Chairperson of the Trade Promotion Board, Princess Layo Bakare-Okeowo

A game-changing addition to this year's fair is the rollout of dedicated Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Government (B2G) arenas. These specialized hubs are meticulously designed to strip away traditional bureaucracy, putting visitors, corporate buyers, and local business owners in direct contact with international trade delegations, global suppliers, and regulatory bodies looking for high-volume partnerships.

The Ultimate Print and Packaging Hunting Ground
For print buyers, packaging product managers, publishers, and graphics professionals, visiting the 40th LITF is an absolute necessity. With massive global participation—including major strategic trade alignments like China's Hunan Hongxiang International Trade Co. and the JETRO pavilion—the fairgrounds will be the single largest showcase of cutting-edge technology and product manufacturing in West Africa.

If you are looking to source high-volume packaging materials, discover advanced eco-friendly substrates, procure high-speed printing machinery, or find international raw material suppliers, this fair puts them all under one roof. Walking through the specialized Africa Hall and the Innovation Tech Hub will give you immediate access to global supply chains that would otherwise take months of international travel to negotiate.

Secure Transactions and Secure Entry
To support visitors looking to close major trade deals on the spot, **Zenith Bank Plc** has stepped up as the **Official Banker for the 2026 Fair,** guaranteeing flawless on-site financial transactions and providing specialized banking services directly on the field. Crucially, the LCCI leadership used the briefing to issue an urgent public safety disclaimer regarding fraudulent syndicates. The Chamber explicitly dissociated itself from fake documents and unofficial ticketing channels circulating across Nigeria and China. To protect your access and ensure a seamless entry, visitors and corporate delegates are strongly advised to process their attendance through verified channels.

Call to Action: Plan Your Visit Today!
Opportunities of this magnitude only come around once a year. With the fair scheduled to run from **November 6 to 15, 2026,** the window to plan your itinerary and secure your visitor passes is open right now. Whether you are an entrepreneur looking to upgrade your production line or a corporate print buyer looking for better manufacturing margins, your next big business breakthrough is waiting at TBS.

Do not stay on the sidelines while your competitors network directly with global manufacturers. Head over to the Official LITF Portal right now: **https://portal.lagosinternationaltradefair.com,** register as a professional visitor, and secure your B2B access pass today. Source global innovations, meet international suppliers, and transform your business at West Africa's biggest market!

*© Pictures courtesy of the **Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry***



L-R: Managing Director, Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Mr Takashi Oku; Executive Directore, Retail and Partnership, Dangote, Kikelomo Fischer; Member, Trade Promotion Board, Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCC), Dr, Niyi Osamiluyi; Vice President and Chairperson of Trade Promotion Board, Princess Layo Bakare-Okeowo; Director, International and Public Sector Relations, LCCI, Mrs Temitope Akintunde; BM, DCS Integrated Services, Mrs. Norah Nkiruka Okpara and Group Head, Corporate Communications Zanith Bank, Dr. Zephaniah Chinedu during the 2026 Lagos International Trade Fair (LITF) Press Conference.

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and Life Cycle Assessment Officer for **Fibre Circle,** discussing Bridging the Gap between Sustainability and Recyclability in Packaging Design, exploring the disconnect between sustainability and recycling and the challenges faced in supporting circular-economy objectives.

Head of Sustainability for Sub-Saharan Africa at **Tetra Pak Southern Africa, Masale Manoko,** will discuss How to Grow South Africa's Carton Collection and Recycling Economy to Turn Waste into Valuable Raw Materials, looking at how collaboration, technology, infrastructure investment, community empowerment and consumer education can work together to create a functioning circular recycling economy.

New developments supporting recycling are also on the agenda. **Bobst's Manuel Cortizo** will discuss the company's One Barrier programme, providing industrially viable, recycle-ready, mono-material alternatives to complex multi-material flexible packaging, while Senior Sales Director for **Reifenhäuser Blown Film GmbH, Sascha Skora,** will discuss EVO GEN3 Packaging Films for a Circular Economy.

EPR, regulation and what comes next
Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is another key theme, with a strong line-up exploring how EPR is evolving and what it means for the packaging industry.

CEO of **MetPac-SA, Dr Kishan Singh,** will discuss The Paradox of Progress: The Stewardship of Modern Packaging, examining how EPR can help society evolve from a society of consumers to one that accepts responsibility for stewarding materials through generations of use. CEO for **The Sustainable Seas Trust, Janine Osborne,** will speak on Making EPR Work on the Ground, discussing the gap between EPR as a compliance and reporting exercise and EPR as coordinated, place-based delivery.

Looking to the future, CEO and Founder of **eWASA, Keith Anderson,** will present Packaging in a Circular Economy, exploring how South Africa can move beyond EPR compliance into real projects turning recovered material into value, with a roadmap to 2030.

What EPR Means for the Future of South Africa's Packaging Industry will be explored by **PRO Alliance** Executive Director, **Makgabo van Niekerk,** while **Petco** CEO, **Telly Chauke,** will discuss The Impact of Global Packaging Regulatory Shifts on the Domestic EPR Landscape and Local Producers and What South Africa Needs for EPR 2.0.

Practical insights for packaging professionals
The programme also gets into the practical issues affecting packaging businesses, from food safety and fresh produce to recycling and production efficiency.



Technical Officer for Safety and Quality at the **Foundation FSSC, Antoinette Maake,** will outline Safe Food Packaging: Packaging Design Principles and Key FSSC 22000 Version 7 Updates. General Manager for **RYPEN, Lianne Jones,** will discuss Ethylene Management in Fresh Produce: Developing Active Packaging for Real Supply Chains, sharing what has been learnt from ethylene deployment across South Africa and export supply chains.

Visitors can also hear from the CEO of **The Glass Recycling Company, Shabeer Jhetam,** on Glass Recycling in South Africa, and the Executive for Technical Operations at **Plastics SA, Annabe Pretorius,** on the State of the Plastics Industry.

Other sessions will focus on practical solutions to industry challenges, including the importance of static control on packaging production lines and how new and innovative technologies can be used to protect profit margins and accelerate growth.

Mark Anderson, PROPAK Cape Portfolio Director, **Montgomery Group Africa**, says PROPAK Cape's value lies in connecting industry challenges with practical technologies and expertise. "Packaging and processing businesses are balancing demands for greater efficiency and productivity with changing market and sustainability requirements. PROPAK Cape gives visitors the opportunity to see how technology is responding to those challenges, experience solutions in action and have meaningful conversations with the people behind them."

Beyond the exhibition floor, the free-to-attend seminar programme organised by the Institute of Packaging South Africa (IPSA) will add another dimension to the visitor experience, with industry experts sharing insights into technologies, case studies, industry best practice and legislative developments.

With more than 20 years of experience, PROPAK Cape continues to provide a meeting place for packaging and processing professionals to discover solutions, explore emerging technologies, strengthen industry connections and identify opportunities to improve their operations.



PROPAK Cape 2026 incorporates **Pro-Plas Expo, FoodPro, Print Expo** and **Pro-Label Expo** and is supported by **IPSA, Packaging SA, Plastics SA** and **Printing SA.**

PROPAK Cape 2026 takes place from **27-29 October 2026** at the **Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC).**

For free visitor registration, go to **www.propakcape.co.za**

Picture credit: Montgomery Group Africa

Print Impact Around the World

PANTONE ADDS 224 NEW VIBRANT AND EXPRESSIVE COLOURS

PANTONE®

...EXPANDED LIBRARY PUSHES AFRICAN PRINT AND GRAPHICS SECTORS TO UPGRADE



© The brand-new 224 colours are available across the Pantone Formula Guide, Colour Bridge, and Solid Chips Set

A massive expansion of the global design vocabulary is forcing Africa's commercial print, graphic design, and communications industries to rapidly modernise to capture a booming international market. The shift comes as **Pantone** adds **224 new** market-driven spot colours and five eco-friendly base inks to its **Pantone Matching System** (PMS)—a technical flashpoint arriving just as international brands pivot away from muted corporate neutrals toward highly saturated, expressive packaging.

This global evolution gives African print houses and designers a rare creative advantage, as the update formalizes the vibrant, storytelling-dense colour palettes deeply rooted in African visual culture and brings local design heritage straight into alignment with global commercial demands.

For graphic designers and communications agencies across the continent, the expanded palette fills critical gaps in the existing PMS colour gamut—introducing highly requested warm greys, deep neutrals, and intense oranges. These additions allow creators to achieve precise, uncompromised colour matching across digital platforms, eliminating the traditional friction of selecting a tone that is "close enough" but lacks impact. With the integration of Pantone Connect into Adobe Creative Cloud, digital agencies in creative hubs like Johannesburg, Lagos, and Nairobi can now pitch flawlessly to global clients, knowing their files will render perfectly in final production.



© The brand-new Pantone Colour Bridge set with 224 additional colours



© The brand-new Pantone Formula Guide set with 224 additional colours

However, the major burden of this expansion falls directly on local commercial printers, converters, and ink manufacturers. To keep up with these 224 new shades, local pressrooms must upgrade their physical layouts with the latest Pantone Formula Guides and Solid Chips sets on both coated and uncoated stocks. More critically, ink labs must reformulate their chemical mixing systems to accommodate Pantone's new soy- and vegetable-oil-based base inks.

For independent African print shops, staying globally certified under tight margins is a challenge, but tech-driven hybrid workflows and digital colour apps are turning that hurdle into an opportunity. By embracing these tools and Pantone's new expansion, local commercial printers are minimizing material waste, matching exact global spectral data, and proving they can compete on international shelves. This shift is quietly transforming the African print ecosystem from a localized sector into a sophisticated, globally compliant powerhouse capable of sharing high-impact visual narratives with the world.

RICOH TO BUILD NEW JAPAN SITE TO ACCELERATE INKJET GROWTH

RICOH
imagine. change.



© Koji Miyao, President, Ricoh Graphic Communications and Senior Corporate Officer, Ricoh Company, LTD., said, "This new facility is a strategic investment in the future of Ricoh's inkjet business and in our ability to meet the evolving needs of customers worldwide. By combining the expertise and craftsmanship cultivated by our people with AI and digital technologies, we are creating a next-generation factory where people and AI work together, further enhancing our manufacturing competitiveness and accelerating the growth of our inkjet business. We also plan to share the technologies and expertise developed at this facility across the Ricoh Group, carrying forward and further advancing our ultra-precision manufacturing capabilities for the future."

Ricoh Company, LTD. has announced plans to build a major new manufacturing facility at its **Atsugi Plant** in **Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan,** to massively expand its industrial inkjet printhead production. This move is poised to directly address the surging demand for high-speed digital commercial printing solutions across Africa's rapidly modernising economic sectors.

The electronics and imaging giant will construct a four-story building spanning approximately 39,000 square meters (420,000 square feet) of gross floor area. Construction is scheduled to begin in November 2026, with the plant expected to be fully operational by the first half of fiscal year 2028. Designed to fully integrate AI and advanced robotics for ultra-precision manufacturing, the state-of-the-art facility will more than double Ricoh's current production capacity upon its completion in the first half of fiscal year 2028.

Once fully optimized, the strategic investment will more than double Ricoh's current production capacity for advanced inkjet heads. This expansion targets a rapidly growing global market for digital printing, where demand is surging beyond traditional office paperwork into industrial manufacturing.

The new Atsugi hub will support a wide range of applications, including:

- **Industrial Printing:** High-speed printing for commercial packaging, labels, textiles, and large-format signage.
- **Functional Printing:** Next-generation manufacturing techniques, such as utilizing inkjet technology to precisely print electronics, bioprinting materials, and advanced batteries.

This colossal capacity boost aligns with a pivotal tech transition across the African continent, where local print service providers are aggressively shifting away from traditional offset printing toward versatile, data-driven digital solutions. The impact of Ricoh's advanced printhead technology is already visible in the region; notably, South Africa's **InsideData Group** recently became the first on the continent to invest in the flagship **RICOH Pro VC80000 high-speed inkjet press**. By doubling global production lines, Ricoh will ensure African commercial printers, quick-print shops, and transactional mail houses benefit from more reliable, next-generation equipment pipelines, shorter turnaround times, and sharper output resolution.

Beyond standard documents, the scaled-up plant will catalyse growth in Africa's burgeoning industrial and functional printing sectors. As regional trade blocks expand, local demand is soaring for flexible packaging, commercial labeling, textiles, and large-format outdoor signage. Furthermore, Ricoh's parallel focus on utilizing inkjet tech for printing advanced electronics and batteries provides a strong foundation for African technology manufacturing hubs. Bolstered by strategic partnerships—such as its alliance with the **MFI Group** to supply production hardware across West and Sub-Saharan Africa—Ricoh is cementing a robust infrastructure to deliver eco-friendly, carbon-balanced print tech to a highly dynamic, evolving continental market

A SELF-MADE BRITISH INVENTOR'S MEMOIR OFFERS GLOBAL LESSONS FOR AFRICA'S RESILIENT ENTREPRENEURS

Graham Harris, the acclaimed founder of print finishing giant **Tech-ni-Fold,** has officially released his second book, Off-Script & Unstoppable: From Factory Floor to Global Fortress on Amazon.

While written from his perspective on the UK manufacturing floor, the raw business memoir is quickly gaining traction within global entrepreneurial networks, drawing strong parallels to the grit and resourcefulness defining Africa's micro-enterprise boom.



© PrintWeek - Graham Harris with a copy of Off-Script & Unstoppable

From Tragedy to Global Scale

The book chronicles Harris's extraordinary journey, beginning with a near-fatal accident at age 19 that altered his life path. Refusing to be constrained by his circumstances, Harris transitioned from a factory floor worker into a prolific inventor. He ultimately scaled Tech-ni-Fold into an international powerhouse, solving mechanical print issues that multi-million-dollar corporations could not fix.

Off-Script & Unstoppable is intentionally structured as a raw, unfiltered blueprint for individual business owners. Harris strips away standard corporate jargon to expose the genuine psychological and financial hurdles of building a business from scratch.

Why the Message Echoes in African Startup Hubs

Though not explicitly targeted at African markets, Harris's core philosophies hit a powerful chord with the continent's self-starting business sector:

- **The Power of Bootstrapping:** Harris's journey from a lone inventor to a global distributor mirrors the journey of many African tech and manufacturing founders who navigate limited formal funding by relying entirely on resourcefulness and immediate cash flow.
- **Overcoming Structural Adversity:** The memoir's heavy emphasis on resilience, mental fortitude, and adapting when plans go "off-script" provides universal reassurance to entrepreneurs operating in volatile macroeconomic environments.

For African business owners, inventors, and start-up disruptors looking to scale past localized boundaries, Harris's manufacturing memoir offers a masterclass in turning systemic limitations into a global competitive advantage. To order, log on to: **www.offscriptandunstoppable.com**

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Model: 304 P HOB
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Year of manufacture: 2000
Serial No.: 28764 B
Imps.(mio.): 121 Mio
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SHS-CAS Graphische Maschinen GmbH
Oststraße 87, 22844 Norderstedt Germany
Tel.: +49 (0) 40 52 10 20 60
+234 901 239 9805
Email: africa@shsgm.com
Website: www.shsgm.com

PROPAK WEST AFRICA DELIVERS STRONG INDUSTRY RESPONSE AS 90% OF EXHIBITORS REBOOK FOR 2027



© This snapshot captures just a fraction of the high-energy buzz, crowded aisles, and groundbreaking innovations taking over the exhibition halls this year. From cutting-edge packaging tech to live machinery demonstrations, the industry is connecting, collaborating, and shaping the future of West African manufacturing right here, right now.

*When nine out of ten industry leaders look at the horizon and immediately stake their claim, it is no longer just a trade show—it is a mandate. It's a collective vote of confidence in West Africa's industrial resilience. The overwhelming **90% rebooking rate** for **PROPAK West Africa 2027** sends a definitive message across the continent: West Africa's manufacturing, packaging, and print sectors are not just recovering; they are aggressively expanding. Following a landmark 2026 edition at the Landmark Centre in Lagos—which drew over **3,900 attendees** and **200+ global exhibitors**—the momentum has officially outgrown its boundaries. With space already vanishing for the next edition, the question isn't whether the market is ready for growth. The question is: will your brand be in the room shaping the industry, or watching from the sidelines? Discover the key takeaways, major wins, and future trends in our exclusive **WHERE To Print** post-show report—adapted straight from the official **Montgomery Group Africa** press release. Read the full breakdown below.*

PROPAK West Africa has closed on a strong note, with **more than 3,900 attendees** visiting the three-day exhibition at Landmark Centre in Lagos to explore the latest developments in packaging, plastics, print, labelling and food processing.

The response from exhibitors was equally positive, with **90% already pre-booking** for the 2027 edition. Covering **2,690 sqm,** the exhibition brought together **more than 200 exhibitors** – including **67 local exhibitors** and more than **115 international companies,** with **21+ countries** represented at the event.

Driven by an unprecedented surge in exhibitor rebookings, PROPAK West Africa is expanding its footprint for 2027. To meet the overwhelming demand for additional exhibition space, organizers have announced the addition of a brand-new hall, bringing the event to a total of **five exhibition halls** for the upcoming edition on **7–9 September 2027.** This massive expansion does more than just physically grow the show floor—it signals a profound wave of confidence in West African supply chains. By opening up more space, PROPAK West Africa continues to champion sustainable automation and foster a dynamic ecosystem across West Africa where local manufacturers and global tech pioneers don't just connect; they actively build the future of the industry together.

For visitors, the focus was firmly on finding practical solutions to real operational challenges. The exhibition provided an opportunity to compare machinery, materials, equipment and technologies, discuss specific requirements directly with suppliers and technical specialists, and see new products and technologies in operation.

From automation and production efficiency to sustainability, packaging innovation and digital developments, the show provided insight into the trends shaping the future of manufacturing and processing in West Africa. The international mix of exhibitors also gave visitors access to technologies and expertise from across global markets, while creating opportunities to build new business relationships.

The **PROPAK West Africa Summit** was another standout feature, with sessions attracting such strong interest that the conference hall reached capacity and additional non-booked delegates could not be accommodated. The programme brought together industry experts and professionals to share practical knowledge and perspectives on the issues, technologies and trends influencing the sector.

While **DAY 1** of **PROPAK West Africa 2026** highlighted scale, technology, and regional food import gaps, **DAY 2** pivoted to sustainability and industrial survival. At the **KPMG Sustainability Breakfast Meeting,** experts translated these high-level industry numbers into actionable insights for day-to-day operations.

Bringing together an elite cohort of senior manufacturing executives, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) professionals, policymakers, and financial investors, the summit targeted a critical regional dilemma: How can West African industries transform sustainability from a costly corporate regulatory burden into a highly bankable engine for industrial growth?

Circularity as a Margin Lifeline

Under the overarching theme, **"Unlocking Industrial Value through Circularity and Resource Optimisation,"** the morning panel session pierced through traditional ESG rhetoric. With manufacturing margins tightly squeezed by energy deficits and fluctuating raw material costs across the subcontinent, KPMG Nigeria experts and panelists framed the circular economy not merely as an environmental choice, but as an immediate financial lifeline.

Key discussions centered on actionable methods to optimize resources, reduce shop-floor waste, and scale up reliable alternative energy architectures. Executives shared live case studies proving that localized recycling loops and smart materials reduce reliance on volatile import supply chains—safeguarding manufacturing ecosystems against foreign exchange volatility.

Making Eco-Investments Bankable

A core highlight of the summit was unlocking the gridlock around sustainable financing. While many West African Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) and packaging providers express ambition for green technologies, securing scalable capital remains a hurdle. The KPMG summit







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SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026 POST-SHOW REPORT



bridged this gap by detailing how local operations can restructure their infrastructure projects to make circular manufacturing investments both scalable and highly attractive to international green funds and local financiers. The message was clear: **West Africa's manufacturing future belongs to those who view waste as an unmonetized asset.**

Breaking the Machinery Mold

The 2026 edition also saw the participation of **Girls Who Print Africa,** reflecting the industry's growing focus on inclusion, skills development and the advancement of women across the print and packaging sectors.

The conference hall fell into a concentrated, inspired silence as the maiden **Women In Print & Packaging Forum** took centre





***© Mark Anderson**—Portfolio Director at **Montgomery Group Africa** and organiser of **PROPAK West Africa**—opened the exclusive, invite-only **KPMG Sustainability Breakfast Meeting,** delivering a pivotal keynote address that set the strategic agenda for the day.*







THINK BIG IDEAS

Do You want a **MENTOR** dedicated to help **GROW** your **DREAM?**



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PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026
8 - 10 SEPTEMBER
LANDMARK CENTRE | LAGOS | NIGERIA

stage at the **PROPAK West Africa Summit.** In a sector historically dominated by heavy machinery and male leadership, the atmosphere shifted to one of profound transformation. Co-organized alongside **Girls Who Print Africa (GWPA),** the regional arm of the global network for female graphics professionals, **Girls Who Print,** the session titled **The Future is Female: Building & Inspiring the Next Generation of Women in Print & Packaging** served as a rallying cry for structural change across West Africa's manufacturing ecosystem.

Moderated by **Mrs. Ayanfeoluwa Ibitoye,** Regional Director of **Girls Who Print Africa** and Founder of **Print Street NG,** the panel attacked the industry's most pressing challenges head-on: the skills gap, corporate inclusion, and the structural barriers preventing women from scaling up to executive roles.

"This is not just about representation; it is about economic growth and industrial optimization," Ibitoye remarked during her opening address. "Behind every modern machine, consumer brand, and industrial success in West Africa is an untold story of female ingenuity. We are here to put those stories in the spotlight."

Panellists, including **Mrs. Nnorom Chidiebere** (Chief Operating Officer, **Ebees Green), Mrs. Adeyinka Opasanya** (Founder, **Print Heroes**), and **Princess 'Layo Bakare-Okeowo** (Manufacturing Giant/ Founder, **FAE Limited**), shared tactical business frameworks. To an already energized audience, they shared blueprints for conquering the capital-intensive manufacturing world. By focusing on peer-to-peer mentorship and collaborative resource pools, they showed how the industry can uplift technical graduates into print and allied production roles.



PROPAK West Africa & Girls Who Print Africa: A Strategic Alliance for Growth

The partnership marks a historic evolution for PROPAK West Africa. As the exhibition increasingly centres on industrial automation, global knowledge transfer, and circular economy solutions, integrating GWPA's network addresses the critical human-resource element required to drive West Africa's industrialization.

By blending technical skills development with aggressive industry exposure, the collaboration ensures that as West Africa's packaging and printing infrastructure expands, its workforce expands equitably.

SIP, UNWIND, REPEAT: THANK YOU!

With **DAY 1** and **DAY 2** officially in the books, **Montgomery Group Africa** invited exhibitors, partners, and friends to an exclusive **"Sip & Unwind" Evening.** The rule for the night? No pitches and no presentations. Just great drinks, delicious bites, smooth music, and real conversations.



To the organiser: 'Managing an event of this magnitude—as West Africa's premier packaging, plastics, food processing, and printing exhibition—takes immense effort. This cocktail function was our way of easing the stress, cooling down, and saying a massive thank you to our exhibitors for their unwavering confidence in us.'

While reflecting on a successful week, the evening also looked to the future. Conversations quickly turned to **PROPAK West Africa 2027,** with exhibitors already mapping out strategies for next year's show, locked in for **7–9 September 2027.**

"PROPAK West Africa 2026 demonstrated the value of bringing the manufacturing and packaging community together in one place – with strong visitor engagement, an international exhibitor base and a conference programme that attracted exceptional interest," says **Mark Anderson,** Portfolio Director at **Montgomery Group Africa,** organisers of the show. "The fact that 90% of exhibitors have already committed to 2027, together with the demand for additional exhibition space, is a clear indication of the momentum behind the show. We look forward to building on this success and creating an even bigger platform for industry connections, technology and practical solutions in 2027."

For information on **PROPAK West Africa 2027,** scheduled to take place from **7th to 9th September** at the same Landmark Event Centre, visit **www.propakwestafrica.com**

© Pictures courtesy of **www.propakwestafrica.com**



SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE - FOTEDAR WEST AFRICA (STAND NO: 2G06)

FOTEDAR WEST AFRICA PIONEERS HIGH-EFFICIENCY SOLUTIONS FOR THE REGIONAL PACKAGING BOOM AT PROPAK 2026

The bustling exhibition floor at the Landmark Centre highlights a West African manufacturing sector on the cusp of a major technological evolution. Driven by rapid urbanisation and a surge in local consumer demand, regional brands are searching for packaging solutions that offer world-class quality without compromising operational efficiency. ***PROPAK West Africa DAILY*** *reports:*



Fotedar Engineering Services CEO, Mr. Vikram Fotedar

Stepping into this pivotal moment is **Fotedar West Africa** (exhibiting at **Stand 2G06**), a company that has built its reputation on bridging the gap between global machinery innovation and local market realities. Under the leadership of CEO **Vikram Fotedar,** the company is utilizing **PROPAk West Africa 2026** to showcase advanced machinery designed to redefine flexible packaging and converting standards across the region. "The West African market, with Nigeria at its economic core, is experiencing an immense drive toward greater productivity, local production, and efficiency," says **Mr. Fotedar.** "Our objective has always been to close the gap between global technology leadership and local operational realities. We want to show regional printers and converters that they don't have to compromise on speed or quality to remain sustainable."

Revolutionising the Pressroom

At the heart of Fotedar's showcase is the **Uteco OnyxGO,** a Central Impression (CI) flexo press specifically engineered to solve a long-standing pain point for regional printers: managing short print runs profitably. In an era where brands demand quick product turnarounds and frequent design iterations, traditional press setups can lead to excessive downtime and material loss. The OnyxGO tackles this head-on with rapid job changeover capabilities and automatic registration features. Capable of hitting speeds up to 400 meters per minute, it allows local converters to scale up their output while keeping a tight handle on running costs.

Eliminating Waste, Ensuring Quality

In tandem with high-speed printing, Fotedar is addressing industrial efficiency through its partnership with German technology firm Erhardt+Leimer. The booth features live demonstrations of the **ELSCAN web monitoring system,** an advanced tool that acts as an extra set of high-definition eyes for press operators. By capturing stabilized, ultra-clear digital images of the printed web while machines operate at full capacity, ELSCAN enables immediate corrections to colour or alignment. "Waste is both an environmental issue and a massive cost burden for manufacturers," Fotedar notes. "ELSCAN enables operators to catch colour deviations or print defects instantly—not after thousands of meters of film have already been ruined. It bridges the gap between high-speed production and flawless quality control."

End-to-End Converting Mastery

Fotedar's presence at PROPAK West Africa goes beyond individual machinery; the company is promoting a holistic approach to post-press manufacturing through its **Comprehensive Converting Solutions.** This specialized portfolio covers everything from gravure printing and advanced slitting to solvent-based and solventless lamination.

Crucially, the company emphasizes that its commitment to the region extends far beyond equipment delivery. By investing heavily in localized engineer training and spare parts logistics, Fotedar aims to secure long-term operational uptime for its West African partners.

As PROPAK West Africa 2026 continues to connect the industry's brightest minds, Fotedar West Africa's display stands out as a clear roadmap for local manufacturers looking to elevate their production capabilities and compete on a global stage.

Editor's Note: This exclusive feature interview was curated by PROPAK West Africa DAILY, the official publication created by WHERE To Print magazine's sister team to enhance the visitor experience at PROPAK West Africa. The publication provides comprehensive insights and coverage designed to elevate the overall exhibition experience for attendees. For more details and a free online download, visit the archive section at www.wheretoprintmagazine.com

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SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – NILPETER (STAND NO: 3A17)

NILPETER: SHOWCASING CORE VALUES AND CUTTING-EDGE INNOVATIONS AT PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026

*Printing industry giant **Nilpeter** is making a major impression at **PROPAK West Africa 2026,** showcasing its latest printing technology designed to meet the evolving demands of the African market. Speaking directly with the **PROPAK West Africa DAILY Team** at the show, Area Manager **Thomas Andersen** and Regional Business Manager **Manu Muraleekrishnan** highlighted the company's core values of quality, adaptability, and robust customer support.*

Two Paths to Excellence: FA-Line vs. FB-Line Pro

At the forefront of their exhibition, the Nilpeter team outlined how their two distinct equipment lines serve different segments of the market while maintaining the brand's signature reliability.

- **The FA-Line (Premium Flagship):** Built for top-tier performance, the Nilpeter FA-Line is a masterclass in automation, precision, and flexibility. It features advanced register control systems and lightweight, sleeve-based tooling to significantly minimize setup times and material waste. This highly modular press allows converters to easily scale up with value-adding inline solutions—such as UV-lamination, die-cutting, screen printing, and hot/cold foiling—making it the ultimate versatile option for both high-end short and long-run flexible packaging and labels.

- **The FB-Line Pro (High-Efficiency Workhorse):** Positioned as an accessible, mid-level entry machine, the newly revamped FB-Line Pro is engineered to be a pocket-friendly option tailored to the local market's budget requirements. Despite its affordability, it brings powerful features directly from the flagship series, utilizing the **Nilpeter PowerLink** platform to deliver increased automation, dual-servo print heads, and intuitive pre-register functionality. It is a versatile workhorse capable of efficiently handling substrates ranging from self-adhesive labels and flexible packaging to laminates and cigarette cartons.

Unlocking Local Operational Security

Understanding that maximizing uptime is critical for West African converters, the Nilpeter team has a comprehensive local support network whenever and wherever required. Specifically, to guarantee minimal downtime, the company leverages a robust, interconnected system of local engineers and spare parts logistics across Africa and the Middle East.

When regional open-market support or technical servicing is required, Nilpeter dispatches highly skilled engineers from its hubs in Dubai, South Africa, and North Africa. This regional network is fully backed by direct service support and spare parts pipelines from Nilpeter's global headquarters in Denmark, ensuring that West African print operations run smoothly and efficiently.



© L-R: **Nilpeter** Regional Business Manager Manu **Muraleekrishnan** and Area Manager Thomas **Andersen** at their stand during **PROPAK West Africa 2026.**

SPECIAL FEATURE INTERVIEW – AYO PRINTTECH SOLUTIONS (STAND NO: 1K22)

AYO PRINTTECH SOLUTIONS DELIVERS WORLD-CLASS PRINTING, BINDING, AND PACKAGING ENGINEERING TO WEST AFRICA

*"We bridge the gap between heavy-duty industrial productivity and regional precision manufacturing," says **Ayush Rai,** Regional Sales Manager of **AYO Printtech Solutions LTD.,** showcasing the company's extensive machinery portfolio at **PROPAK West Africa 2026.** In an exclusive interview with the **PROPAK West Africa Crew** at the ongoing West Africa's largest packaging, processing, printing, and plastics exhibition, discover more of what his company offers the entire region:*

As West Africa's printing, publishing, and packaging sectors experience rapid technological modernization, the demand for high-efficiency, climate-resilient machinery has never been greater. Leading the charge at this year's exhibition is **AYO Printtech Solutions LTD** (AYO Printtech for short), the authorized regional dealer for global engineering giants including **Manugraph, Bindwel, TruTech, Condot,** and **ETERNA** (a **Bobst Group** company).

According to **Ayush Rai,** Regional Sales Manager for AYO Printtech, the company is heavily focused on offering complete, localized production lines. "Our technical team provides full sales, installation, and after-sales support," Rai notes. "We also supply a wide range of other binding, printing, and packaging machinery—meaning clients can ask us to spec a complete line tailored directly to their specific factory floor plan."

Built for Extreme Conditions, Engineered for Precision

A standout advantage of the AYO Printtech portfolio is its engineering focus on regional operational realities. "Our machines are eco-friendly, and there is no effect of humidity on our machines," states Rai. "They are designed specifically for extreme weather conditions. Because our machines are finely tuned for paper and printing, operators experience fewer smudging issues, very little wastage, and exceptionally high printing accuracy."

For commercial book production and high-security printing, AYO Printtech offers Manugraph machines optimized for short, medium, and long runs. "Manugraph systems feature variable data numbering, barcoding, and QR coding," Rai explains. "This makes them highly reliable for high-stakes projects like ballot papers, examination answer sheets, and various security printing needs."

High-Speed Publishing and Bookbinding Lines

To address the intense volume demands of the educational publishing sector, AYO Printtech showcases highly integrated solutions from India and Europe:

- **Cityline Express & Ecoline:** "The Cityline Express is a high-speed web press with an integrated bookline folder and higher register accuracy, built for demanding book and commercial print runs," says Rai. For newspaper applications, the Ecoline four-page offset press delivers a maximum output of 25,000 copies per hour across up to six webs using a robust, PLC-driven shafted drive.
- **Freedom SK & Freedom Bindline:** For seamless finishing, the Freedom SK is a 12-clamp perfect binding line that gathers, binds, and trims inline at up to 5,000 books per hour for a complete finishing solution. This matches perfectly with the Freedom Bindline, which can handle variable spine thicknesses from 3 to 50 mm using high-performance Trimit 30C inline trimmers.
- **BW@2500 EPIC:** A 6-clamp perfect binder processing 2,500 cycles per hour, equipped with built-in intelligent MIS production data tracking and a massive 8 kg glue pot.
- **Turbo SBM 104:** "We are proud to be associated with our partner, TruTech, for exercise notebook-making machines from India," Rai shares. This high-speed automatic school book machine offers a total reel-to-book solution (ruling, flexo printing, folding, and binding) running at web speeds up to 500 meters per minute.



© **AYO Printtech Solutions LTD** Regional Sales Manager, Mr. Ayush **Rai**

Advanced Packaging and Security Coding

For the packaging sector, AYO Printtech provides tier-one technology designed for mono-carton production, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics. "Regarding packaging solutions, we have ETERNA—a Bobst Group company that specializes in carton production—for mono cartons," Rai notes. "We offer advanced die cutters and folder gluers suitable for all industries like Pharma, Cosmetics, and more. Our Bindwell solutions also give highly accurate and top-class binding so that students and consumers can use books and packaging without any structural issues."

Featured hardware in this category includes:

- **ETERNA ECUT1060 E:** An automatic die-cutter and stripper running at mechanical speeds up to 7,500 sheets per hour with a massive 300-ton cutting pressure.
- **EFOLD Elite Series:** An automatic folder-gluer series (650 / 900 / 1100) handling straight-line, crash-lock, and 4/6 corner boxes at belt speeds up to 320 meters per minute.
- **CSPL34CE Variable Data System:** A Piezo inkjet system delivering up to 1200 DPI resolution at speeds up to 350 meters per minute for barcodes, QR codes, and security serialization.

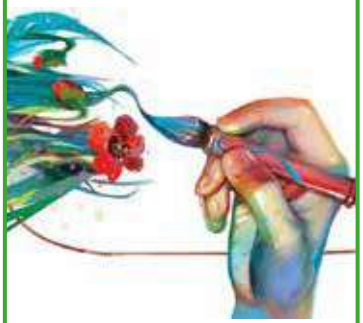
Full Lifecycle Support in Nigeria

Beyond machinery supply, **AYO Printtech Solutions** ensures that West African businesses never face downtime alone. From their operational hub in Lagos, they manage the entire lifecycle of the equipment from floor planning to spare parts. To discuss your machinery requirements or to request a customized production line blueprint, visit the **AYO Printtech Solutions Team** at their Ilupeju office, contact them via phone at **+234 904 524 7780 / +234 912 696 1997,** or email **ayoprinttechsolution@outlook.com**

Editor's Note:** This exclusive feature interview was curated by **PROPAK West Africa DAILY,** the official publication created by **WHERE To Print magazine's** sister team to enhance the visitor experience at **PROPAK West Africa.** The publication provides comprehensive insights and coverage designed to elevate the overall exhibition experience for attendees. For more details and a free online download, visit the archive section at **www.wheretoprintmagazine.com



Do You need an holistic **GUIDE** through your **GRAPHIC CAREER?**



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SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – PRINTBOX NIGERIA LTD (STAND NO: 1A10)

PRINT BOX NIGERIA LTD

PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026 8 - 10 SEPTEMBER

LOCAL PRECISION TAKES CENTRE STAGE AS PRINTBOX REDEFINES REGIONAL PACKAGING STANDARDS

As manufacturers across West Africa face mounting pressure to optimize operational costs and enhance productivity, local supply chain strength has become a key focus at this year's exhibition. Standing out in ***Hall 1*** *at* ***Stand 1A10, Printbox Nigeria Limited*** *is drawing significant crowds by demonstrating that world-class industrial packaging is fully operational right here in Lagos, the commercial nerve centre of Nigeria.*

The ISO-certified company is showcasing its advanced 360-degree solutions, including high-precision mono cartons, custom labels, and premium shrink sleeves. Equipped with cutting-edge European machinery from German and Italian manufacturers, the company—backed by the thirty-year manufacturing legacy of the **Vista Group**—is proving its ability to meet the strict quality and colour-accuracy requirements of major fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), pharmaceutical, and beverage brands across the region.

Speaking from the energetic floor of the Landmark Centre, **Mr. Prasada Shetty,** the General Manager for **Printbox Nigeria LTD,** emphasized the shifting paradigm in West African manufacturing. "Regional manufacturers no longer need to look across oceans for world-class precision," Mr. Shetty stated. "Our local infrastructure is built to provide secure, sustainable, and highly efficient packaging options. By eliminating long import lead times, we empower domestic brands to scale rapidly and maintain absolute consistency in their presentation."

For attendees at **PROPAK West Africa 2026,** the presence of high-output local factories like Printbox underscores a broader trend: West Africa is quickly transforming into a self-sustaining hub for packaging innovation. By blending technical craftsmanship with state-of-the-art automation, the company offers a blueprint for how regional businesses can insulate themselves from global supply chain disruptions while elevating their on-shelf presence.



© **Printbox Nigeria LTD** *General Manager, Mr. Prasada* **Shetty**

SPECIAL FEATURE INTERVIEW – RANDOMSOFT (STAND NO: 3A05)

THE FUTURE IS APPLICATION-SPECIFIC ENGINEERING

Randomsoft Limited*—the* ***tesa®*** *Authorised Dealer in Nigeria, along with other world-renowned original equipment manufacturers (OEMs)—is live at* ***PROPAK West Africa 2026!*** *Partnering directly with tesa®, they are showcasing next-generation adhesive tape technologies and advanced flexographic printing solutions designed to help manufacturers and converters maximize efficiency, quality, and long-term value.* ***PROPAK West Africa DAILY*** *caught up with Randomsoft's Technical Director,* ***Mr. Olakunle Ogunjobi,*** *at* ***Stand 3A05*** *to discover how sector players can leverage their expertise to elevate packaging profitability, now and in the future.*

Randomsoft

PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026 8 - 10 SEPTEMBER



Randomsoft LTD *Technical Director, Mr. Olakunle* ***Ogunjobi***

WHAT IS THE SINGLE MOST GROUNDBREAKING TECHNOLOGY OR MATERIAL YOU ARE DEBUTING AT PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026?
For us, the key innovation we are bringing to PROPAK West Africa is not simply a machine; it is the **integration of high-performance process technology into the complete flexographic production workflow.** A major focus at our stand is **tesa® Softprint,** tesa's advanced range of flexographic plate-mounting tapes. The technology addresses a critical but sometimes underestimated part of flexographic printing: the interface between the printing plate, mounting tape, sleeve or cylinder, and the press. The right plate-mounting solution can influence print quality, registration stability, plate handling, press performance, and waste. tesa's Softprint range offers different foam characteristics and adhesive technologies so that the tape can be matched to the application rather than treating every printing job in the same way.

HOW DOES YOUR TECHNOLOGY SOLVE THE UNIQUE OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY WEST AFRICAN PRINTERS AND PACKAGERS?
The biggest advantage is **local technical understanding combined with international technology.** West African Printers operate in an environment where humidity, temperature, power reliability, substrate variation, imported consumables, and maintenance response times can all affect production. Our approach at Randomsoft is therefore not simply to sell a product and leave the customer to figure it out. We look at the production process, identify the technical problem, and recommend the appropriate technology and operating procedure. For example, tesa's Softprint product matrix includes solutions designed for different bonding requirements, including products offering very good resistance to plate edge lifting under warm and high-humidity conditions.

IN ONE SENTENCE, HOW DOES YOUR PRODUCT HELP BRANDS REDUCE WASTE?
Our objective is to help Printers reduce production waste by improving process stability, reducing setup losses, extending usable production runs, and getting the right result right the first time. Sustainability in printing should not only be measured by the material used; it should also be measured by how much material, ink, energy, and production time are lost through avoidable errors.

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE CHANGEOVER/MAKEREADY TIME FOR THIS EQUIPMENT WHEN SWITCHING JOBS?
This depends heavily on the press, job complexity, plate configuration, and operator workflow, so we would not quote one universal figure. However, one of the objectives of a properly selected plate-mounting tape is to make plate mounting more predictable, faster, and repeatable. **tesa's Softprint** portfolio includes products designed for reliable mounting, repositioning, and easier demounting, while maintaining consistent foam recovery during production. Our message to Printers is simple: **makeready should be treated as a measurable production cost, not simply as preparation time.**

WHAT MAJOR TREND DO YOU PREDICT WILL DOMINATE THE WEST AFRICAN PRINT AND PACKAGING LANDSCAPE OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS?
I believe the dominant trend will be **productivity through automation and process optimisation.** The industry is moving away from simply asking, "How much does this machine cost?" and increasingly asking, "How much does this machine cost me to produce each sellable unit?" We will see more investment in automation, digital workflow, colour management, inspection, waste reduction, predictive maintenance, higher-performance consumables and technologies that reduce make-ready time. At the same time, sustainability pressures will continue to push printers and converters towards thinner substrates, improved material utilisation, recyclable structures and more efficient production processes.

WHAT SPECIFIC POTENTIAL DID YOU RECOGNIZE IN THE WEST AFRICAN MARKET THAT MADE EXHIBITING AT PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026 A PRIORITY?
West Africa has one of the most interesting long-term opportunities for printing and packaging in Africa. The region has a growing consumer market, increasing demand for packaged food and consumer products, pharmaceutical packaging, labels, flexible packaging, and branded products. But there is another important opportunity: **the industry is increasingly willing to invest in technology that improves profitability.** That is where Randomsoft sees its role. We want to help move the conversation from simply purchasing printing equipment to **building efficient, sustainable, and technically competent production operations.**

PROPAK gives us an opportunity to have those conversations directly with printers, converters, brand owners, and other stakeholders across the value chain.

INVESTING IN TECHNOLOGY IS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE. HOW IS YOUR COMPANY STRUCTURING ITS LOCAL TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND SUPPLY CHAIN?
This is fundamental to our business strategy. Randomsoft was established around a simple principle: **technology is only valuable when the customer can keep it running and obtain the support required to use it effectively.** We therefore combine equipment supply with technical support, installation, maintenance, troubleshooting, training, and consumables. Our international partnerships give us access to global expertise, while our Nigerian presence gives customers a local point of contact. Our partnership with tesa is particularly important because plate-mounting and process tapes may look like small consumables, but they can have a significant effect on flexographic print quality and productivity. Tesa itself emphasises reliable global supply and technical support as part of its flexographic plate-mounting proposition.

DO YOU HAVE LOCAL ENGINEERS BASED IN NIGERIA OR WEST AFRICA?
Yes. **Randomsoft Limited operates from Nigeria** and **maintains local technical capability to support printing and packaging customers.** Our technical model covers equipment installation, commissioning, preventive maintenance, troubleshooting, technical consultation, and operator support. Our objective is to ensure that customers do not have to wait for an international technician for every technical issue that can be diagnosed and resolved locally.

DO YOU PROVIDE OPERATOR TRAINING AND INSTALLATION SUPPORT?
Yes. Training and technical knowledge transfer are important parts of our customer proposition. For equipment projects, support can include installation, commissioning, operator training, technical training, and preventive-maintenance guidance. For consumable technologies such as tesa Softprint, the emphasis is on helping the customer select the correct product for the plate, sleeve/cylinder, print process, and production requirements. tesa's own product-selection approach recognises that the appropriate plate-mounting tape depends on the specific process parameters and application.

HOW DOES YOUR MATERIAL OR TECHNOLOGY REDUCE WASTE OR CARBON FOOTPRINT?
We believe sustainability must be approached from the entire production process. A Printer can reduce environmental impact by reducing:

- Makeready waste
- Substrate waste
- Rejected prints
- Production downtime
- Unnecessary plate replacement
- Inefficient production runs
- Material consumption caused by process instability

High-quality plate-mounting technology contributes to this objective by helping maintain consistent printing performance over production runs. For example, tesa describes Softprint foam tapes as having long-lasting recovery characteristics and low thickness tolerances, supporting print quality and process efficiency.

WHAT IS RANDOMSOFT'S BIGGEST MESSAGE COMING OUT OF PROPAK WEST AFRICA 2026?
The biggest message is that **West African Printers should stop looking at technology as an expense and start looking at it as a productivity investment.** A modern printing operation must consider the complete cost of production – equipment, consumables, waste, downtime, labour, energy, maintenance and technical competence.

At Randomsoft, our ambition is to bridge the gap between **global technology and local execution.** Our partnership with tesa is a good example. A relatively small component such as a plate-mounting tape can have a significant effect on print quality, waste, productivity and profitability. The right technology, correctly selected and correctly applied, can make a measurable difference. That is the type of value Randomsoft wants to bring to the Nigerian and wider West African printing and packaging industry.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
Thank you too for speaking with us.

Editor's Note: ***This exclusive feature interview was curated by PROPAK West Africa DAILY, the official publication created by WHERE To Print magazine's sister team to enhance the visitor experience at PROPAK West Africa. The publication provides comprehensive insights and coverage designed to elevate the overall exhibition experience for attendees. For more details and a free online download, visit the archive section at www.wheretoprintmagazine.com***

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AFRICA AT THE CORE: HOW MANUEL CORTIZO IS DRIVING BOBST'S WEST AFRICAN CONSOLIDATION TO POWER A SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING ERA

*Navigating a massive industrial footprint across 74 countries is a complex task, but for technology giant **BOBST**, the true engine of growth and transformation is shifting decisively toward the African continent. In a region defined by structural volatility, diverse economic landscapes, and a fast-evolving regulatory climate, the global packaging leader is turning potential roadblocks into a masterclass in localized engineering and creative innovation.*



Joju Adekanbi, Publisher and CEO of **WHERE To Print magazine** and **PROPAK West Africa DAILY,** alongside **Manuel Cortizo,** General Manager and Sales & Marketing Director for Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, and the Caucasus at **BOBST.**

Speaking in an exclusive interview with **Joju Adekanbi** (Publisher/CEO of **WHERE To Print magazine** and **PROPAK West Africa DAILY**), **Manuel Cortizo,** BOBST's General Manager and Sales & Marketing Director for Africa, the Middle East, Turkey, and the Caucasus, revealed a bold restructuring plan. The announcement took place at the **BOBST Exclusive Packaging, Printing & Innovation Forum,** held at the **Holiday Inn** during the first day of **PROPAK West Africa 2026.** Backed by nearly three decades of local experience, BOBST is shifting gears to build a highly responsive, digital, and sustainable printing and packaging ecosystem built by Africa, for Africa.

"Our strategy hinges on a simple truth: to truly serve a market, you must adapt to its specific local context," Cortizo explained. "Rather than viewing regional challenges as roadblocks, we are leveraging these local hurdles to drive creative engineering. Africa is full of talent and opportunity, and we want our solutions to reflect the unique dynamics of this continent."

This philosophy is coming to life through a massive legal and operational consolidation designed to move BOBST away from remote management and place it right on the doorstep of West African converters and brand owners. While the wider regional restructuring touches hubs like Tunisia, Algeria, Dubai, and Istanbul, the development of the West African market remains a critical point of emphasis.

> ***West Africa—and Nigeria specifically—is now the strategic core of BOBST's regional future***

According to Cortizo, this consolidation is about much more than shifting corporate structures on paper; it is about embedding processes and placing expert problem solvers directly where local industries need them. By deploying local teams to lead solution sales and digital offerings, BOBST is actively guiding West African businesses through their own digital transformation journeys, ensuring they are competitive on a global scale.

Nowhere is this hyper-local approach more vital than in the rapidly evolving realm of sustainability. As global brand owners push for eco-friendly compliance and eye the strict deadlines of the UN 2030 Agenda, implementing sustainable packaging across Africa presents a highly complex puzzle. Material substrates, infrastructure capabilities, and environmental regulations vary drastically from country to country.

"We have an obligation to provide sustainable, highly competitive solutions, but we must do so by engaging local stakeholders," Cortizo noted. "We are actively coordinating with regional vendors and material providers to engineer future-proof, compliant packaging solutions that respect the distinct material substrates and structural realities of the African market."



The ultimate proof of this continent-first strategy is unfolding right here in West Africa. Recognizing the immense, untapped potential of the Nigerian market, BOBST is aggressively developing and expanding its existing corporate hub in Lagos. The immediate focus is entirely on consolidating delivery, streamlining order processes, and eliminating supply chain friction for West African clients.



Crucially, BOBST is backing this operational push with a significant injection of human capital. By heavily increasing local engineering and technical personnel on the ground in Nigeria, the Lagos hub is being transformed into a rapid-response command center fully equipped to provide hands-on coordination for key accounts. "When industrial machine issues arise, downtime is the ultimate enemy of a printing or packaging business," Cortizo emphasized. "By deliberately increasing our local engineering personnel in Nigeria, we ensure we can address machine issues promptly. This strengthens our operational foundation and builds a level of trust, proximity, and mutual growth with our West African partners that no remote competitor can ever replicate."





BOBST Regional Marketing & Communications Manager, **Mohamed Hassairi, Joju Adekanbi,** and **Manuel Cortizo.**

By fusing decades of institutional expertise with a sharp focus on West African talent, digitalization, and local material compliance, BOBST is doing far more than just expanding its market footprint under Cortizo's leadership. It is anchoring its global future in Africa's industrial rise, transforming local complexities into a unified, sustainable competitive advantage for the region's packaging industry.

Editor's Note:** This exclusive feature interview was curated by **PROPAK West Africa DAILY,** the official publication created by **WHERE To Print magazine's** sister team to enhance the visitor experience at **PROPAK West Africa.** The publication provides comprehensive insights and coverage designed to elevate the overall exhibition experience for attendees. For more details and a free online download, visit the archive section at **www.wheretoprintmagazine.com



where to print MAGAZINE

MENTORSHIP PARTICIPANTS' BENEFITS

1. Academy - free & highly subsidized print & allied training.
2. Tool - free access to resource Material online.
3. 24/7 access to mentor subject to mentors - subject to availability.
4. Industry events - free entry to industry exhibitions, workshops, seminars etcs
5. Participation in Business, Setup, Design etc competion with funding.
6. Evening Dinner with Investor/Mentor.
8. Booth Camp/ Boat Cruise exclusivity .

MENTORS'/ INVESTORS' BENEFITS

1. Pool of talents to choose from/employ.
2. Great companies to invest in.
3. Free - Reseach/ feasibility studies/ statistices of industry to aid print business purchase decisions.

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LOUPE AMERICAS 2026 SETS NEW BENCHMARK FOR THE LABEL AND PACKAGE PRINTING INDUSTRY



© LOUPE Americas 2026 welcomed about 12,000 passionate attendees from 82 countries.

A new era for the label and package printing industry has officially arrived. ***LOUPE Americas 2026,*** *formerly known as Labelexpo Americas, successfully concluded its inaugural event under its fresh new banner from* ***September 15–17, 2026,*** *at the* ***Donald E. Stephens Convention Centre*** *in Rosemont, Illinois. Adapting the official post-show press release from the organizers,* ***WHERE To Print magazine****—which covered every moment of the event live on the show floor—brings you the incredible highlights from this milestone gathering.*

More than just a trade show, the event marked the spectacular global debut of the LOUPE brand identity, signaling a vibrant new era of connection, clarity, and industrial innovation. It felt like a homecoming for an industry navigating rapid technological shifts. And it wasn't just highly attended; it was incredibly impactful. An impressive **86% of those in attendance held direct purchasing authority,** turning the bustling exhibition floor into a dynamic hub of real-world business partnerships, live equipment handshakes, and major investments.

There was a palpable sense of shared energy and community as **LOUPE Americas 2026** welcomed **nearly 12,000 passionate attendees traveling from 82 countries, an increase of 14%** from the previous iteration in 2024. It was a powerful reminder of how deeply connected this global community truly is, bringing together diverse minds to solve modern manufacturing challenges.

The top ten attending countries were the United States, Mexico, Canada, Colombia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Brazil, China, Ecuador, and Germany. Notably, there was a **12% increase in attendance** from Colombia, while Costa Rica and Panama saw three times more attendees compared to the 2024 edition.



© LIVE demos of cutting-edge tech were a constant occurrence at LOUPE Americas 2026.

Covering **185,000 sqft** of floor space, **425 exhibitors** took part in this year's edition. Across the show floor, diversification into adjacent packaging formats to labels was on full display, with flexible packaging more fully integrated into exhibitor offerings and folding cartons starting to make an impact.

Technology highlights

Flexography made a strong showing. **Rotocon** launched a 'non-stop' 8-colour press with turret rewind, while **Nilpeter** partnered with **Kurz** to demonstrate registered foil technologies on an FA-17 press. **Canon** launched in the US the Edale LabelLine FL4p flexo press as part of a wider suite of package printing technologies. **Digital** also saw notable firsts, including **Konica Minolta**'s global launch of the AccurioLabel 231. **Durst** launched its Tau G3 Peak UV inkjet press. **Hybrid** technology was well represented by manufacturers including **Bobst,** which launched its Digital Master 340 All-in-One press in the Americas. Hybrid systems were also demonstrated by **Domino, Mark Andy** and **Durst.**

AI moved to commercial reality across the show floor. **Brotech** launched in the US its FFX530 flexo press, controlled by an AI model, while **Dantex** marked the global launch of its AI-driven Pico Adaptive Logic (PAL) natural language technology. **Mark Andy** and **AVT** announced an AI-powered QC system linking an on-press camera to the rewinder. **CERM** demonstrated its Lexis AI agent automatically extracting order information from unstructured emails.

Flexible packaging was well represented. **HP Indigo** demonstrated its 200K Digital Press printing flexible packaging, laminated on a new 30in Gonderflex machine incorporating JetFX digital embellishment. **ABG** showed a digital embellishment unit inline on a Galaxy pouch making line. **Mark Andy** showed a Performance P9 press with double extended driers for water-based coating of flexpack materials. Other areas of the show floor demonstrated a huge range of technologies, from sustainable materials and coatings to RFID labels and production systems, new curing technologies and automated finishing systems.

A group of suppliers including **Flint Group** Digital **Xeikon, Kurz, Scribos, Avery Dennison, CERM, Esko, GM** and **CarbonQuota** demonstrated a complete label workflow showcasing sustainability and brand security in the Label Trail.

Education highlights

Education was a major strength of LOUPE Americas 2026. Keynote presentations provided a strong foundation for the two-day programme, while sessions spanned a range of topics, including artificial intelligence, the labour market, mergers and acquisitions, and RFID technology.

An AI Workshop and Women's Workshop were other standout highlights, creating a forum for discussion, networking, and exchanging ideas. The educational offerings extended beyond the main conference program. The Spotlight Stage on the show floor provided free programming throughout the event, giving attendees another opportunity to hear from industry experts and explore emerging trends.

Uliam Hoxha, General Manager at **OMET Americas Inc.**, said: "LOUPE Americas 2026 gave us the opportunity to meet face to face, in one place, with converters from across North and South America. The conversations were focused and productive, and we came away with strong interest in our latest solutions. Our OMET team had valuable discussions with both existing customers and new prospects, and we're already following up on several promising opportunities."

Martin Teilberg, Global Marketing Manager, **Nilpeter,** commented: "LOUPE Americas 2026 was a new setup for us, and it worked extremely well. The partnership with KURZ brought something different to the show floor and proved what can be achieved when strong technologies come together. We're already looking forward to coming back in 2028 – even stronger."

Dale Coates, CEO and President of **TLMI**, said: "TLMI was thrilled to support the first edition of the newly rebranded LOUPE Americas. The show highlighted the strength, innovation, and collaboration that define our industry. It was inspiring to see so many leaders, partners, and future-focused companies come together to share ideas, build connections, and advance the print industry's collective success. I personally heard stories of machines purchased and new relationships formed with a promise of business opportunities to come. On behalf of TLMI, I want to thank everyone who exhibited and attended."

Tasha Ventimiglia, Group Director, **LOUPE Americas**, concluded: "LOUPE Americas 2026 has been a huge success. As the first official event under the LOUPE banner, this edition sets a benchmark for a new era of innovation in labels and package printing. We saw a stronger turnout from Latin American countries and clear momentum in mid-web and narrow web flexible packaging, hybrid integration, and AI-enabled workflows. The quality of conversations showed that buyers are investing in technology that delivers measurable performance, sustainability, and brand value. We look forward to seeing labels continue to converge with wider packaging formats in future editions."

Continued on page 21 >>

From page 20 >>

SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – LOUPE AMERICAS 2026 POST-SHOW REPORT

THROUGH THE NEW LENS OF WHERE TO PRINT: INSIDE THE DEBUT OF LOUPE AMERICAS 2026



Joju ADEKANBI, reporting LIVE at **LOUPE Americas 2026!**

*Excited to be at the first **LOUPE Americas** event under the new name! Following the global series' rebrand announcement from Labelexpo to LOUPE, it's amazing to see the official transition come to life here in Rosemont! Incredibly grateful for the opportunity to bring you this story. I'm **Joju ADEKANBI,** keeping you informed on the ground:*

Stepping onto the bustling show floor for the very first **LOUPE Americas** feels historic. Following the blockbuster rebrand announcement from the Labelexpo Global Series back at Labelexpo Europe 2025, the transition to LOUPE Americas is officially official. LOUPE–standing proudly for **"Labels & Outer Packaging Embellishment"**–isn't just a cosmetic swap. It's a bold reflection of how our world has evolved past simple labels into flexible packaging, folding cartons, and end-to-end converting. The energy on the expansive 181,000 net-square-foot show floor was palpable. Housing 430 exhibitors–including 112 first-time fresh faces–the venue was a masterclass in modern print momentum.

Hitting the Ground Running: Press Kickoff

My **DAY 1** began at the Press Office, warmly welcomed by **Sandra Porto,** Informa Markets' Director of PR and Social Media. Suitably briefed, I headed straight into the opening press conference led by LOUPE Americas Group Director **Tasha Ventimiglia** and Strategic Director **Andy Thomas-Emans.**

The core takeaways dominating the conversation?

- **Automation & Digital Integration:** Speed and hands-off efficiency rule the floor.
- **ECG (Extended Colour Gamut) in Flexo:** Achieving exact brand colours without constant wash-ups.
- **AI Integration:** Innovators like **Brotech, AVT, Dantex Group,** and **CERM** are weaving artificial intelligence right into the operator workflow.
- **The Label Trail:** Sustainability isn't just a buzzword here; it's a living, breathing demonstration tracking a complete flexo workflow from raw start to pristine finish.

DAY 1 Product Drops & Floor Highlights

Press conferences came fast and furious. **Durst Image Technology U.S.** Director of Product Management **Martin Leitner** commanded attention with the North American debut of the **Tau G3 Peak** and the high-performance **KJet Hybrid Solution.** Meanwhile, **AB Graphic International (ABG)** staked out its largest exhibition footprint ever across Booths 3226 and 3410. Marketing Manager **Claire Fenton**–backed by **Josh Sommers** and **Matty Woodcock**–walked media through a staggering 14-machine lineup. Standouts included the ABG FlexPack launch, the Galaxy GS20 Plus with PouchJet, and the high-speed **DigiLase Duo** making its North American precision laser-converting debut.

Over at **Konica Minolta (KM),** VP of Product Marketing **Jason Dizzine** set the stage for the unveiling of the **AccurioLabel 231**. Breaking industry convention during a major reveal, expert **Artie Williams** did what most OEMs avoid: he dropped the exact price tag right on the floor at an accessible entry-level **$179k**. KM also kept crowds buzzing with live runs of the high-end toner-based **AccurioLabel 400** and the **JetVarnish 3D Web 400** for stunning digital spot UV and hot foil effects.

One-on-Ones and Global Connections

Taking a breather from the heavy machinery, I sat down for an exclusive one-on-one with **Taruna Garg**, head of **NBG Printographic**, to talk about their booth's star attraction: **STARFLEX.** This modular, affordable flexo press handles everything from films to foils and paper to light cartons with smooth inline finishing. (Read the full, deep-dive, and insightful interview on page 25!)

Over at **Dantex Group, Sara Cappiello** and **Camille Martin** walked me through their powerhouse Pico digital inkjet press lineup. Leading the charge were the **PicoJet 1200** and **PicoColour 254,** featuring fresh software upgrades and a sneak preview of **PAL,** Dantex's new AI-driven operator support system.

It was fantastic to connect and reconnect with old friends and international colleagues alike–including **Jade Grace** (LOUPE Global MD), **Tasha Ventimiglia** (LOUPE Americas Director), **Cooper Ludwig** (Rotocon USA), **Dax Huang** (Guangzhou Super Color Ink), **Wayne Beckett** (Printing Connect Online), **Hafizah Osman** (Printer Media Group), **Linda Casey** (FTA/FLEXO Editor), **Rama Yepuri** (Samni Systems), **Jan Majnik**, and **James Quirk** (James Quirk Media).

Looking Ahead

With 25 years of heritage behind it, this rebranded powerhouse event proves that narrow- and mid-web converting has a brilliant, multidimensional future. Next is what **WHERE To Print magazine** tracked at the vibrant show!



... warmly welcomed by **Sandra Porto,** Informa Markets' Director of PR and Social Media at the Press Office.



...with Hafizah Osman (Printer Media Group)



Konica Minolta (KM) VP of Product Marketing **Jason Dizzine** led others like expert **Artie Williams** to unveil KM cutting-edge tech such as the **AccurioLabel 231**

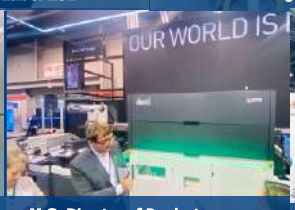


After an exclusive one-on-one with **Taruna Garg,** head of **NBG Printographic.**



Dantex Group, Sara Cappiello and **Camille Martin** walked me through their powerhouse **Pico digital inkjet press** lineup.





Durst Image Technology U.S. Director of Product Management **Martin Leitner** during press conference.



Canon USA turned heads by unveiling its highly anticipated collaboration with Edale Ltd, signaling a powerful stride forward in high-performance, automated line production



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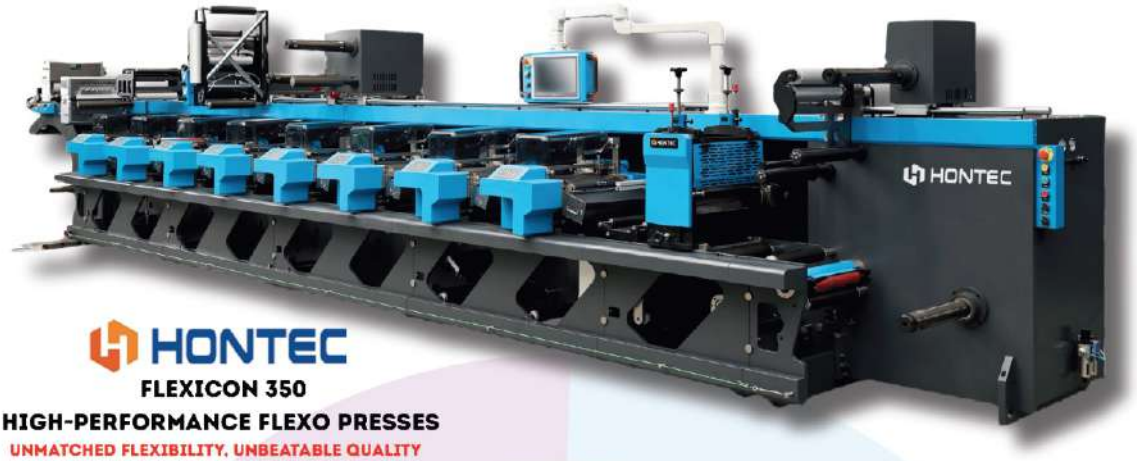
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SHAPING THE FUTURE TOGETHER: ROTOCON CELEBRATES 11 HISTORIC SALES AT LOUPE AMERICAS 2026, WELCOMING KENYA'S EXPRESS LABELS TO THE RFP 340 LED FAMILY

*The international label and packaging community witnessed a monumental shift in market dynamics at the recently concluded **LOUPE Americas 2026** (formerly Labelexpo Americas), held from **September 15–17** at the **Donald E. Stephens Convention Centre** in Chicago. Emerging as the premier "flexo challenger" in the North American market, global printing and converting technology powerhouse **ROTOCON** staged an unforgettable exhibition debut, walking away with a staggering **11 machine orders sold directly during the show. WHERE To Print** reports the impact of **Supreme Express Labels LTD's** acquisition of a ROTOCON RFP 340 8-colour, full-LED flexo press in the East African region.*



The Champion, **Esther Wahome** (CEO, **Supreme Express Labels LTD**), flanked by **ROTOCON Directors: Michael, Patrick, Pascal, Cooper and Marco.**

Among this elite group of 11 landmark transactions celebrated at **Booth 719,** none reverberated louder across the African continent than a major acquisition by **Supreme Express Labels LTD** (operating commercially as **Express Labels**). The fast-growing Kenyan converter officially finalized the purchase of a top-tier **ROTOCON RFP 340 8-colour, full-LED flexographic press** right on the show floor, a move set to radically transform narrow-web packaging capabilities in East Africa.

The Chicago Conquest: ROTOCON Debuts with a Bang

Marking the official grand launch of **ROTOCON USA,** the brand came out swinging with an integrated live production line that quickly became the talk of the exhibition floor. Operating three high-octane live demonstrations daily, the centerpiece featured a non-stop unwind system with a butt splicer flawlessly feeding a flagship **RFP C-Series 17-inch, 8-colour flexographic press,** finishing inline on a dual-spindle non-stop turret rewinder.

The jaw-dropping performance, characterized by rapid job changeovers, precise registration accuracy, and a remarkably low-waste short web path, drove immense interest from converters seeking an optimal balance of premium automation and reachable return on investment (ROI).

By the closing bell, the 11 on-the-spot machine sales at the show vaulted ROTOCON USA's total regional footprint to 20 machines, cementing the company's status as a disruptive global force.

"LOUPE Americas was an important milestone for ROTOCON as we expand our presence in North America," stated the **ROTOCON Board of Directors** (comprising **Michael, Patrick, Pascal**, and **Marco Aengenvoort**). "The interest from converters and industry partners confirmed the demand for high-performance, high-value flexographic and converting technology, supported by a strong local team."

The event marks an important milestone for ROTOCON and its partnership with ROTOCON USA. By combining German engineering and quality control with premium global components and local support, ROTOCON helps converters improve productivity, quality, uptime, and long-term confidence in their equipment.



The **ROTOCON Booth 719** at **LOUPE Americas**

"What we experienced in Chicago was more than a successful product launch," said **Cooper Ludwig,** Vice President of **ROTOCON USA** and **Q360 Group.** "It validated what we believed from the beginning: the North American market is ready for a new challenger. We're not simply introducing another press manufacturer. We're building a complete North American infrastructure around ROTOCON, bringing together advanced technology, local expertise, parts, service, and a dedicated demonstration and training centre. The momentum coming out of LOUPE Americas has been tremendous, and we're just getting started."

From Kenya to Chicago: Express Labels Steps into Full-LED Flexo

While North American buyers kept the sales team busy, East Africa claimed a vital piece of the action. **Esther Wahome**, representing **Express Labels**, made the journey from Nairobi, Kenya, to Chicago specifically to sign the order at the ROTOCON booth.

Standing as one of the definitive highlights of the 11-machine sales streak, the asset acquired by Express Labels is an absolute powerhouse: a custom-configured **ROTOCON RFP 340** multi-servo, cylinder-based flexo press. Tailored for high-end embellishments and multifaceted jobs, the press features:

- **8 vibrant printing units** driven by full-LED UV curing lamps for instant drying, massive power savings, and eco-friendly operations.
- An integrated **peel-and-read unit** to capture the booming multi-layer instructional and promotional label market.
- A high-precision **cold foil unit** for stunning metallic luxury finishes.
- An inline **sheeter and conveyor unit,** allowing the converter to seamlessly pivot between roll-fed labels and sheeted final products in a single pass.

Regional Impact: Shifting the East African Packaging Landscape

The introduction of a full-LED multi-servo press of this caliber introduces several disruptive advantages to the East African print landscape: **Technical & Operational AdvantageMarket Impact for East AfricaFull-LED UV Curing** Bypasses local power grid instability with a highly energy-efficient footprint while avoiding the heat generation of traditional mercury lamps, opening the door for thin, heat-sensitive filmic substrates. **Advanced Multi-Servo Automation** Reduces make-ready waste and ensures lightning-fast setup times. This empowers Express Labels to dominate the short-to-medium run sector, which has traditionally burdened regional printers running older mechanical machinery. **Inline Embellishments (Peel-and-Read / Cold Foil)**Elevates local production to match or exceed the strict packaging standards of international FMCG, pharmaceutical, and agrochemical brands, drastically reducing the region's historical reliance on imported labels.With this investment, **Express Labels** firmly positions itself as a technological pioneer in East Africa, giving regional brand owners access to international-grade label architecture with shorter lead times and superior cost efficiencies, with ample multiplier effects across the region's manufacturing sector.

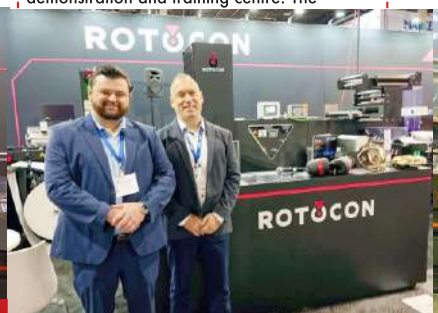
A Legacy of Excellence Continues

The dual success of conquering the American market and equipping African converters highlights why ROTOCON was recently named the **2026 African Excellence Award winner for Best Label Printing & Converting Equipment Partner** by MEA Markets—marking their fifth consecutive year receiving the honour.

As the newly acquired RFP 340 prepares to make its way to Kenya, the message from LOUPE Americas 2026 is clear: whether in Chicago or Nairobi, ROTOCON's philosophy of heavy-duty engineering, modular flexibility, and unyielding local support is redefining the future of narrow-web printing.



The **ROTOCON** Board of Directors: **Michael, Patrick, Pascal,** and **Marco Aengenvoort.**



Cooper Ludwig and **Jeff Haddad** of **ROTOCON USA**



Esther Wahome (middle), **Pascal Aengenvoort** and **Joju ADEKANBI.**

NBG PRINTOGRAPHIC DEBUTS AT LOUPE AMERICAS 2026 TO TRANSFORM PACKAGING AND FLEXO ACROSS GLOBAL REGIONS

*In the bustling exhibition halls of the **Donald E. Stephens Convention Centre** in Rosemont, Chicago, ISO 9001:2015-certified manufacturing powerhouse originating from India, **NBG Printographic Machinery Co. PVT. LTD (NBG)** marked its historic first-ever appearance at **Booth 6425** to showcase, among others, its advanced modular narrow-to-mid web flexo and converting technologies at **LOUPE Americas 2026** (formerly Labelexpo Americas). The company highlighted its full-servo and double-servo machinery for labels, flexible packaging, and paper packaging applications. **WHERE To Print** Publisher and CEO, **Joju ADEKANBI,** caught up with **Taruna Garg,** the Chief Operating Officer of **NBG.** The focal point of their discussion? Check this out in this exclusive interview that focuses on high-performance and modular inline platforms engineered specifically to bridge the gap between high volume and rapid job changeovers, especially for a region like Africa.*



© **NBG Printographic Machinery Co. PVT. LTD,** Chief Operating Officer Taruna **Garg**

Taruna, welcome to Chicago and congratulations on NBG's historic debut at LOUPE Americas 2026. Your presence here signals an aggressive global expansion. What is the primary technology anchoring your showcase for the Americas and global markets like Africa?
Thank you, Joju. It is an absolute pleasure to speak with WHERE To Print magazine. Our primary mission at LOUPE Americas is to address real-world production challenges. The absolute high point of our machinery portfolio is our highly advanced, modular 6- and 8-**colour single servo flexo press.** This platform is built for severe flexibility, natively supporting both **UV and LED printing systems.** As market demands shift, energy efficiency, faster ink curing, and reduced heat impact on thin substrates have become mandatory. By delivering a single servo platform that effortlessly integrates UV or LED configurations, we are empowering converters to step away from traditional mechanical drive constraints and step into high-precision, automated manufacturing.

You wanted to dive deeper into the internal drive mechanics of the 6- and 8-colour platforms. How does the double servo setup alter performance for the printer?
Yes, Joju, it is vital to be precise here. This is actually a highly sophisticated **double servo press.** By dedicating dual servo drives per printing station—separating the web pacing from the plate cylinder manipulation—we achieve absolute control over register stability without over-engineering the machine. Depending heavily on the client's chosen configuration, this approach makes the asset **far more affordable** than heavy, multi-servo alternatives that price out mid-sized converters. We have intentionally optimized the electronic architecture so that African and American print shops can access elite, automated tension controls without paying an unsustainable premium.

Automation can sometimes intimidate press operators who are used to traditional mechanical levers. How does NBG bridge the gap in daily shop floor operations?
Our entire design philosophy revolves around making the system intensely **operator-friendly.** The HMI interfaces are intuitive, and the **quick setup time** is built to take the stress out of changeovers. A press should assist the operator, not complicate their day. When it comes to how this translates to long-term industry performance, I always prefer to step back and let the hardware speak for itself. **Printers are the best to comment on its performance,** because they see the daily stability, the ease of the quick setup, and the final output quality in real time. Their feedback in commercial pressrooms is our ultimate validation.

In today's printing world, brands are demanding shorter runs, a higher variety of stock keeping units (SKUs), and immediate turnaround times. How does this new press handle the classic tradeoff between setup times and high print volumes without dropping quality?
You hit the nail on the head. Today's market is entirely SKU-driven. Our inline flexo platforms are engineered precisely to deliver maximum agility. We have engineered automated job recall systems and quick-changeover mechanisms directly into the servo architecture. The **setup time** is drastically minimized because the press retains precise job parameters digitally. When an operator shifts to a new job, the cylinders and ink settings adjust rapidly, eliminating material waste. Regarding **print volume against quality**, the single servo controls maintain impeccable web tension and registry alignment, whether the machine is running a short artisanal run or churning out millions of impressions at high speeds. You get stable dot reproduction, vivid colour consistency, and zero registration drift.

Many converters in emerging markets feel constrained by purchasing single-purpose machinery. Can this press comfortably switch between flexible materials and rigid packaging?
Absolutely. This machine is a true hybrid in application. It handles thin, unsupported films, shrink sleeves, and flexible packaging laminates just as easily as it converts heavy label stock and folding cartons. Because NBG controls the entire manufacturing pipeline at our state-of-the-art facility in Faridabad—utilizing high-precision CNC coordinate measuring machines—every component is optimized for dual-tensile stress requirements. A converter can run flexible pouches in the morning and switch over to self-adhesive labels or light packaging board in the afternoon on the same press.

Let's talk about long-term reliability. Printers in developing economic regions often worry about machine downtime, technical support, and the accessibility of replacement parts. What is NBG's framework for this?
We understand that a press is only as good as its uptime. NBG has built an established global footprint stretching across more than 15 countries. Our expanding international presence means our technical and sales engineers don't just sell a machine; they deploy customized, end-to-end after-sales support networks. We back our machinery with robust remote diagnostics and centralized **spare parts availability.** We standardize essential mechanical and electronic components across our modular platforms, so replacements are easy to access and dispatched quickly. Our industry performance footprint proves our stability; we have evolved from traditional web offset manufacturing over 35 years ago to becoming automated market leaders in flexo and converting solutions today.

Markets like West Africa are experiencing massive commercial rebounds in regional packaging. How does the Return on Investment (ROI) of NBG stack up for an African printer?
The African market is one of the most exciting growth frontiers for print and packaging right now. However, we recognize that converters there must balance high capital expenditure against fluctuating localized operational costs. This is where NBG offers an unrivaled **Return on Investment (ROI).** Because we manage design, engineering, and final delivery completely in-house, we eliminate the heavy premium costs associated with Western-built machinery. Yet, we match—and often exceed—their automation, accuracy, and operational longevity. For an African converter, this means a significantly lower initial capital expenditure, lower energy costs via LED configuration options, drastically reduced substrate wastage during setups, and the freedom to tap into multiple revenue streams (labels, pouches, cartons) on one asset. The payback period is shortened substantially, making it a highly profitable business model in rapidly growing economies like Nigeria or Ghana.



© **WHERE To Print** Publisher and CEO, Joju **ADEKANBI,** with **NBG Printographic Machinery Co. PVT. LTD,** Chief Operating Officer Taruna **Garg**

Taruna, thank you for sharing these powerful insights with us at this monumental first showcase in Chicago.
Thank you, Joju. We look forward to partnering more deeply with African converters to bring these agile, automated solutions to their pressrooms!



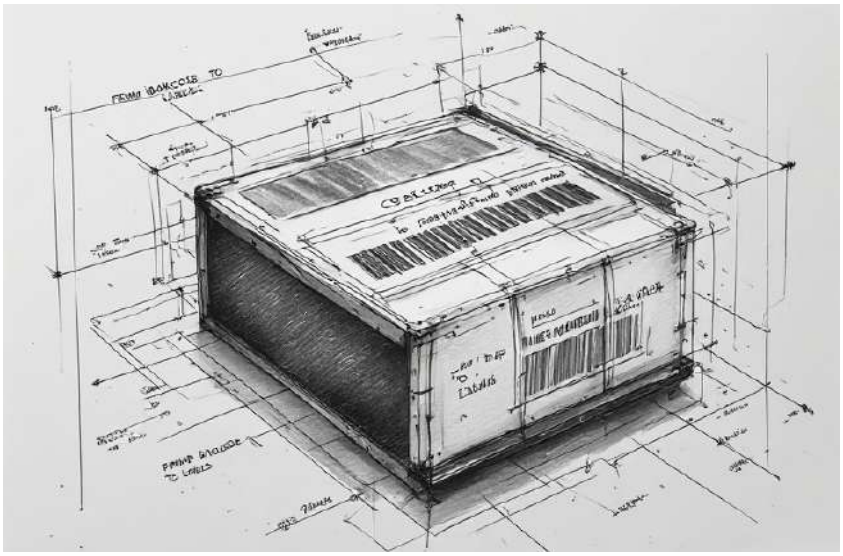
© NBG's **STARFLEX** Double-Servo Flexo Press is offered in 450 mm and 550 mm widths and equipped with Automatic Register Control (ARC) and precise dual-servo drives for strict tension and image alignment. It also supports LED UV curing, an optional inline gravure unit, and cold foil embellishments mounted on a convenient track system.

FROM BARCODE TO BACKBONE: HOW TAGS AND LABELS ARE REWIRING THE PACKAGING VALUE CHAIN



Smart packaging is undergoing a massive evolutionary leap, shifting from simple, static identifiers to active, real-time data carriers that will underpin the future of the circular economy. While high-volume infrastructure like dynamic QR codes, invisible watermarking, and product registries still face uphill battles regarding mass-market production costs, the trajectory for converters and printers is unmistakable. As regulators, global brands, and standards bodies hammer out governance rules on where this data lives, the print industry must prepare for a profound, behind-the-scenes infrastructure overhaul—one that transforms the humble label from a decorative asset into a highly consequential digital gateway for sustainability. Read on for the full ***COVER STORY*** *article by* ***MarketsandMarkets*** *to discover how your business can secure its place at the centre of this new packaging value chain and capture the next wave of high-margin volume.*

For decades, a label's job was simple: identify a product, price it, and get it through checkout. That era is ending. As regulators, brands, and recyclers push for a genuinely circular economy, the humble tag or label is being asked to do something far more ambitious – carry the data that lets a piece of packaging be tracked, sorted, verified, and accounted for across its entire life, from production line to recycling bin and back again.



The Regulatory Trigger

The clearest catalyst is Europe's Eco-design for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), which underpins the EU's Digital Product Passport (DPP) initiative. The regulation requires that a data carrier – typically a QR code – be physically present on a product or its packaging, use open and interoperable formats rather than proprietary lock-in, and be scannable with a standard phone camera rather than a dedicated app. Crucially, the code must resolve to a destination that can be kept current, since a static code baked into a printed label can't accommodate a changed supplier, an updated certification, or new compliance data without a full reprint.

That single requirement – updatability – is quietly forcing packaging teams to rethink labeling as live infrastructure rather than a one-time print job. The EU's Central DPP Registry became operational in mid-2026, and while packaging itself isn't yet a mandatory DPP category, batteries, textiles, and other sectors are already working through phased deadlines that stretch out through 2030. Brands that wait for packaging to become mandatory risk building compliance systems under deadline pressure rather than as a considered strategy.

Gs1 Digital Link: A Common Language for Physical Goods

Much of this is converging on a single global standard: GS1 Digital Link, a QR code format that carries a product's identifying data through a URL structure rather than a flat, unreadable string. The appeal is that one code can serve multiple audiences at once – a shopper's phone resolves it to a product page or sustainability information, while a warehouse scanner or recycling facility reads the same code as a structured data key. Industry guidance increasingly treats Digital Link, built on ISO/IEC 15459 identification standards, as the practical foundation for passport-style data carriers, precisely because it avoids the vendor lock-in that a proprietary QR format would create.

The shift from conventional retail barcodes to GS1-compliant QR codes is also being framed by industry figures as more than a compliance exercise – brands are exploring how the same code can support supply-chain optimization and direct consumer engagement simultaneously, turning a cost center into a two-way channel.

Making Recycling Visible: The Rise of Invisible Tagging

Perhaps the most striking innovation isn't visible at all. UV-tagging technology – an invisible marker embedded in or printed onto packaging and read by detection units installed at material recovery facilities – is being used to answer a question

Continued on page 27 >>

FROM BARCODE TO BACKBONE: HOW TAGS AND LABELS ARE REWIRING THE PACKAGING VALUE CHAIN



the recycling industry has struggled with for years: what happens to a package after it leaves the shelf?

UK supermarket chain Aldi and dairy cooperative Arla have expanded a pilot with recycling-data platform Polytag that uses UV tags to follow milk bottles through the recycling stream, aiming to gain deeper insight into the lifecycle of packaging materials and support decisions about future packaging design. Kraft Heinz has joined a similar program built around UV tag data on single-use plastic packaging, and Polytag has extended the approach into in-mold labeling through a partnership with MCC Global — meaning packaging formats that couldn't previously carry a durable printed code, such as frozen food containers, can now be tagged too. According to the companies involved, the goal is to extend traceability capabilities to a broader range of applications, including products where conventional labels aren't durable enough to survive their use case.

The value of this data flows in two directions. Recovery facilities gain the ability to identify material composition and recycled content at the point of sorting — information that plain images or optical scanning alone can't reliably determine. Brands, in turn, get verified evidence of what recycling actually happens to their packaging, rather than relying on modeled or self-reported estimates — a distinction that matters increasingly under extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes, where funding and reporting obligations are starting to hinge on demonstrable, rather than assumed, recycling outcomes.

Why Standards, Not Just Sensors, Are the Real Story

It would be easy to read all of this as a story about clever hardware — invisible inks, RFID chips, and NFC tags. But the people building these systems tend to emphasize something less flashy: interoperability. Proprietary tagging systems that only one brand or one recycler can read don't scale, and a circular economy that depends on materials moving between many different companies, countries, and recovery facilities can't function on closed formats. That's why much of the industry conversation keeps returning to open, global standards as a prerequisite for circularity at scale, rather than a nice-to-have.

This also explains why traceability keeps surfacing as a barrier to sustainable material adoption, not just a nice add-on. A brand considering new recycled or bio-based material often can't get comfortable with the switch until it has confidence that the material's end-of-life outcome can be tracked and verified — which means the tagging and data infrastructure sometimes has to arrive before the material innovation can follow.

What Does This Mean Across the Value Chain?

Put together, the shift plays out differently at each stage of the packaging lifecycle:

Manufacturing and filling: Tags shift from being added at the end of the line to being engineered into the packaging format itself, whether through in-mold labeling or embedded markers, so that traceability data survives handling, refrigeration, or freezing.

Distribution and retail: A single GS1 Digital Link code increasingly replaces separate barcodes, promotional QR codes, and compliance labels, reducing packaging complexity while expanding the data available at point of sale.

Consumer use: Shoppers scanning the same code brands once used only for pricing can now access origin, material composition, and recyclability information — turning packaging into a transparency tool rather than just a marketing surface.

Recovery and recycling: Detection technology at material recovery facilities reads tags that images alone can't interpret, improving sorting accuracy and giving recyclers — and the brands funding EPR schemes — verified data instead of estimates.

The Road Ahead

None of this is fully settled. Dynamic QR infrastructure, invisible tagging, and passport registries all still need to prove they can operate at the scale and cost that mass-market packaging demands, and standards bodies, regulators, and brands are still negotiating exactly what data must travel with a product versus what can live in a central registry. But the direction is clear: **tags and labels** are moving from static identifiers to active data carriers, and that shift is becoming one of the more consequential if least visible infrastructure behind the push for a genuinely circular packaging economy.

MARKETSANDMARKETS™

About **MarketsandMarkets™**

MarketsandMarkets™ was founded in 2009 with a simple, yet powerful, idea - every disruption is inherently the source of game-changing business opportunities. At that time, everybody was talking about disruptive trends such as AI, IoT, 3D printing, nanotech, robotics, etc., but nobody was certain about the business opportunities associated with them. Upon sensing this significant white space, MarketsandMarkets™ started exploring these emerging and fast-growing opportunities and soon realized that it was part of a much bigger game. Recognizing an impending shift in the B2B economy—expected to unlock **$25 trillion** in new revenue by 2030—the company positioned itself to help businesses capture and monetize this emerging value.

During the past 16 years, MarketsandMarkets™ has worked with more than **10,000 companies** and created **$140+ billion** of revenue impact for them. Consequently, it also evolved from being a market research publisher to a growth-enabling firm, moulding its entire corporate culture around "GIVE growth" to promote a growth mindset among **1500+ people** in its workforce. Earlier this year, MarketsandMarkets™ made a formal transformation into one of America's best management consulting firms, as per a survey conducted by Forbes, evidently as the only India-origin startup in the list of **200 firms**. Even among these 200 peers, MarketsandMarkets™ stands apart as a blue-ocean alternative because of its unique intellectual property called Knowledge Store – a primary research-driven AI-enabled market intelligence platform meant for growth-minded executives.

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Print Impact Around the World

GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE TWO SIDES APPOINTS JOSH BIRCH AS MANAGING DIRECTOR

Global sustainability initiative **Two Sides Europe** has announced the appointment of **Josh Birch** as Managing Director, effective **1 January 2027.**



© Two Sides new MD, Josh Birch

Birch, who has served as the organisation's Marketing Manager for over six years, succeeds Jonathan Tame following a transformative 12-year tenure leading the global campaign.

While Birch's immediate administrative focus will centre on expanding activity across European markets, the strategic roadmap for his tenure carries significant global implications, directly impacting regional affiliates including **Two Sides South Africa.** Key impacts of Birch's appointment for the African print industry include:

1. AI-Driven Anti-Greenwashing Toolkits

Under Birch's leadership, Two Sides plans to launch an **AI-enabled, multilingual communications platform.** For the African print and paper packaging industry, this technological deployment will streamline access to metrics-driven anti-greenwashing collateral. Local commercial printers can leverage these automated toolkits to quickly counter misleading corporate claims regarding digital-only switches.

2. Enhanced Commercial Advocacy Campaigns

Having directly managed the high-visibility Love Paper campaigns, Birch intends to scale up research and consumer advocacy programmes. Regional packaging manufacturers, envelope producers, and print media groups across Africa will gain access to broader global research datasets. This shared data helps demonstrate the circular economic value of physical print over digital footprints to local corporate consumers.

3. Standardisation for Export Markets

The appointment signals an aggressive expansion of market coverage and unified European digital tools. As African paper and pulp exporters face stricter international environmental mandates, alignment with Two Sides' updated renewable-fiber tracking and global sustainability reporting will be vital to preserving a competitive edge in European trade corridors.

"Our industry has an extremely positive story to tell," Birch stated regarding his appointment, highlighting a commitment to building on the global foundation established since 2014. According to Two Sides Chairman **Martyn Eustace,** the upcoming phase will actively merge enhanced digital deployment with a wider membership offer, establishing standard frameworks that local operations worldwide can deploy against anti-print biases.

EXCELITAS LAUNCHES OMNICURE AC SERIES UV-LED CURING SYSTEMS

Excelitas, the leading provider of advanced, life-enriching technologies that make a difference, serving global market leaders in the MedTech, Life Sciences, Advanced Industrial, next-generation Semiconductor, and Avionics end markets, has announced the launch of its enhanced **OmniCure AC Series UV-LED curing platform,** delivering higher irradiance, improved uniformity, advanced process control, and expanded wavelength options to support a broad range of industrial curing applications.



The enhanced AC Series includes the AC8 , AC9 , and AC8 HD systems and is designed to help manufacturers increase throughput, improve product quality, and reduce operating costs. The OmniCure AC Series provides high-performance UV LED curing solutions for adhesives, coatings, and inks in demanding manufacturing environments. Featuring advanced optics, patented LED control technology, and a compact air-cooled design, the systems deliver precise, repeatable curing performance while simplifying integration into both new and existing production lines. Multiple UV LED heads can be combined to create larger curing areas while maintaining exceptional output uniformity across the entire cure width.

"Our enhanced OmniCure AC Series reflects Excelitas' continued commitment to innovation in UV LED curing technology," said **Peter Cop,** Director of Product Management at Excelitas, "Manufacturers are seeking curing solutions that deliver greater productivity, lower operating costs, and long-term reliability while supporting evolving sustainability and regulatory requirements. The new AC Series addresses these needs with industry-leading performance, intelligent process control, and flexible integration capabilities."

The enhanced AC Series delivers increased curing power across the portfolio. The AC8 platform provides irradiance of 10 W/cm², while the AC9 platform delivers 14 W/cm² for higher throughput applications. For manufacturers requiring maximum UV energy and dose output, the AC8 HD system provides 15 W/cm² peak irradiance to support faster production speeds and demanding cure requirements. New 365 nm wavelength options are now available on the AC9 and AC8 HD systems, further expanding application versatility. Key benefits of the enhanced OmniCure AC Series include:

- **High-performance UV LED curing** for faster, more reliable production.
- **Improved optical uniformity** that enables consistent curing results and reduced process variability.
- **Up to 60% lower energy consumption** compared to conventional curing technologies.
- **Scalable modular architecture** that allows multiple UV LED heads to be integrated for larger curing widths.
- **Advanced monitoring and process control** for repeatable, high-quality results.
- **Flexible system integration** through a compact footprint and versatile mounting options.
- **Industrial-grade reliability** supported by high-efficiency VOC air-intake filters and long LED operating life.

A key differentiator of the AC Series is Excelitas' innovative LED module-level control technology, which enables real-time uniformity optimization during operation without taking the system offline. Manufacturers can maintain better than ±5% uniformity across the curing area, simplify balancing in multi-head installations, and tailor UV output to changing process requirements. This technology also supports optimization of curing performance on irregular substrate contours and varying process widths.

As environmental regulations continue to evolve worldwide, UV LED curing is increasingly being adopted as a sustainable alternative to conventional mercury-based curing technologies. The OmniCure AC Series helps manufacturers reduce energy consumption, eliminate mercury-containing lamps, avoid ozone generation, and support corporate sustainability initiatives while maintaining high production performance.

BAMBU LAB EYES AFRICAN TECH AND MANUFACTURING SECTORS WITH NOVEMBER 2026 LAUNCH OF FIRST 3D SCANNER

Desktop manufacturing leader **Bambu Lab** has officially announced its entry into the 3D scanning market, a move set to shake up engineering, reverse engineering, and spare parts fabrication across the African continent. The company's first-ever scanning device, the **Bambu Lab S1,** is scheduled for an international release in **November 2026.**


© Bambu Lab S1

As small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and digital fabrication hubs expand rapidly across African tech corridors—from South Africa to Kenya and Nigeria—the introduction of an accessible, professional-grade scanner is expected to lower the barrier to localized manufacturing and rapid prototyping.

Bridging the Gap in Localized Manufacturing

For engineering firms, automotive repairers, and industrial designers across the continent, sourcing obscure or legacy replacement parts has historically been plagued by high import costs and long shipping delays. Bambu Lab's entry into scanning aims to streamline this process.

By using the S1 to digitise physical objects directly, local creators can reverse-engineer components and output them immediately to existing 3D printer fleets. This ecosystem approach serves Bambu Lab's broader strategy of establishing an all-in-one personal manufacturing hub.

What We Know So Far

Official technical parameters remain closely guarded by the manufacturer, but teasers and regulatory filings reveal key details about the upcoming hardware:

- **Ergonomic Handheld Form Factor:** Promoted under the slogan "Easy in Hand. Pro in Every Scan", the S1 features a black, pistol-grip design equipped with a multi-camera array to capture dense point clouds.
- **Ecosystem Integration:** The scanner will natively plug into the brand's existing software suite, allowing a seamless pipeline between a physical scan and slicing software like Bambu Studio.
- **Power and Connectivity:** Standard United States FCC filings indicate that the device operates with a 60W power rating (20V, 3A) and includes 5 GHz Wi-Fi support for fast data transfer.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** The device is being developed following a consumer-grade framework agreement signed earlier this year with metrology specialist SCANTECH.

Market Availability and Pricing

Bambu Lab has not yet confirmed the final retail pricing or specific regional allocation timelines for African users or broader African distributors. Historically, the brand's hardware has reached the African market via authorized local third-party desktop manufacturing suppliers shortly after global launch windows.

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INNOVATION UNLEASHED: STANDOUT HIGHLIGHTS FROM LOUPE AMERICAS 2026



...joyous faces of ROTOCON and Supreme Express Labels LTD after confirmation of a ROTOCON RFP 340 8-colour, full-LED flexo press.

The newly rebranded **LOUPE Americas 2026 Expo** also featured Sustainable Innovations at its BEST! The following standout highlights defined the true spirit of innovation at this year's expo:

The Canon Edale Launch: A Refreshed, Tiered Portfolio

Canon USA turned heads by unveiling its highly anticipated collaboration with **Edale LTD,** signaling a powerful stride forward in high-performance, automated line production.

- **The US Debut:** The centre of attention was the U.S. debut of the **Edale LabelLine FL4p** press.
- **Modern Aesthetic:** Following Canon's acquisition of Edale, the companies rolled out a unified lineup and industrial design that perfectly matches Canon's modern look.
- **Clear Performance Tiers:** The refreshed naming structure simplifies production needs into two distinct categories:

1. **Essential (e):** Built for day-to-day production agility (e.g., **LabelLine FL4e**).
2. **Precision (p)**: Designed for high volumes, advanced automation, and premium jobs (e.g., **LabelLine FL4p, CartonLine FL6p, and CartonLine FI7p**).

The Nilpeter and KURZ Collaboration: Creative Concept to Shelf

Attendees witnessed a true masterclass in collaborative label production between **Nilpeter** and **KURZ USA.** Nilpeter's press engineering integrated seamlessly with KURZ's advanced embellishment technologies, creating visually stunning, high-embossed labels in real time.

- **The Anchor Equipment:** Nilpeter's stable, precise **FA-17 flexo press platform** served as the foundational anchor, uniting printing, tooling, and adhesives into a single workflow alongside KURZ's embellishment expertise.
- **The Power Team:** This live, collaborative workflow demonstrated the full cycle from the first creative concept straight to the finished product on the shelf. Other industry heavy hitters joined the booth, including **Pantec Group, UPM, H+M (Hinderer + Mühlich), ACTEGA, Maxcess - RotoMetrics, Avery Dennison,** and **Wilson Manufacturing**, showing converters how combining modular press tech with advanced digital embellishment boosts quality, speed, and overall value.
- **Strategic Networking Booth:** While Nilpeter maintained a dedicated booth at the event, they did not showcase physical equipment on the floor. Instead, the space served entirely as a strategic platform to connect deeper with existing clients, network with new partners, and discuss custom production solutions.

- **The Innovation Centre:** According to **Martin Fjordlund Teilberg**, Head of Marketing at **Nilpeter,** the company chooses to focus its heavy-equipment demonstrations within its massive US showroom and **Technology Centre facility in Cincinnati, Ohio**. This permanent facility houses more than five Nilpeter presses, allowing industry players to experience full machine capabilities (from flexo, digital, foil, and gravure to auxiliaries like de-/relamination, turnbars, and stretch modules) through private, on-demand visits or regularly scheduled open house events.

Next is the legendary **Mark Andy Digital Series HD HighSpeed 1200.** According to Print Instructor **Artur Urbanek,** who took me through the industrial UV inkjet hybrid label press built to be one of the fastest and most productive digital label presses on the market, the Digital Series HD HighSpeed 1200 is engineered for label converters who refuse to compromise between quality, speed, and profitability.

The **Mark Andy Digital Series HD HighSpeed 1200** completely redefines high-volume label production by shattering the speed limits of digital hybrid printing. Operating at a blistering **480 feet per minute (146 m/min),** this press doubles the throughput of previous generations while maintaining a stunning **1200 dpi** visible print resolution. By eliminating the traditional bottleneck between digital flexibility and mechanical speed, the HighSpeed 1200 dramatically shifts your job crossover point by **up to 60%**. This means you can comfortably and profitably run massive, complex jobs on digital that previously required setup-heavy flexo runs. By combining the quick-turnaround advantages of digital with the finishing power of standard web flexo, it maximizes pressroom efficiency, minimizes material waste, and delivers an incredibly fast return on investment. Check out its other key capabilities:

- **True Inline Hybrid Power:** Move seamlessly from high-speed UV inkjet printing to inline flexo stations, cold foiling, metallics, and die-cutting in a single, continuous pass.
- **Heavyweight White Opacity:** Achieve an ultra-premium, **82%+ opaque white ink** coverage that holds its rich density even when the press is running at maximum velocity.
- **Extended Colour Gamut:** Expand your colour matching capabilities with high-pigment CMYK + **Orange, Violet, and Green (CMYKOV/G)** ink sets for vivid, brand-accurate packaging.
- **Industrial Durability:** Built using heavy-duty, dual-head stainless steel print engines instead of fragile silicon components, ensuring maximum uptime and fewer head replacements.
- **Unified Ecosystem:** Experience flawless automation with an all-Mark-Andy build, driven by the **ProWORX Digital Front End** for seamless variable data printing (VDP) and real-time press communication.

Epson's Micro-SME Solution: Accessible, High-End Tech

Bringing high-end technology down to a smaller scale, **Seiko Epson Corporation**—partnering through **Graphic Controls USA**—introduced a series of game-changing tabletop **ColorWorks** printers. These systems are designed specifically to empower micro-SMEs with professional and affordable labeling.

- **The Lineup:** According to **Talia Fuld** and **Woody Bryson** of **Graphic Controls**, these accessible solutions for emerging businesses include the **Epson ColorWorks D3800, C4000, and C6000A** colour label printers.
- **Industry Compliance:** These printers are specifically engineered to support accurate identification, tracking, and compliance across a wide range of industries.
- **Genuine Support:** Known for delivering dependable packaging and labeling products, Graphic Controls also promises a steady supply of genuine label stock, consumables, and replacement parts.

ROTOCON's Breakthrough Debut: Built in Africa for the World!

The loudest buzz on the show floor belonged to a brand-new entrant from across the Atlantic. South Africa–born equipment manufacturer **ROTOCON,** making its highly anticipated North American debut alongside the newly established **Rotocon USA,** became the breakout success story of the event by selling a series of high-performance machines directly from the exhibition floor. (Read the full report on page 24!)

Truly, these industry titans are redefining automation, speed, and cross-border collaboration.



Connected with LOUPE's **Jade Grace** (LOUPE Global MD) and **Tasha Ventimiglia** (LOUPE Americas Director).



...also connected with **Cooper Ludwig** (Rotocon USA).



...with **Dax Huang** (Guangzhou Super Color Ink).



...with **Wayne Beckett** (Printing Connect Online).



...with **Linda Casey** (FTA/FLEXO Editor).



...with **Jan Majnik** and **James Quirk** (James Quirk Media).



...with **Rama Yepuri** (Samni Systems).



Canon USA turned heads with the US debut of the **Edale LabelLine FL4p** press.



AB Graphic International (ABG) Marketing Manager **Claire Fenton**—backed by **Josh Sommers** and **Matty Woodcock**—walked media through a staggering 14-machine lineup.



...with **Martin Fjordlund Teilberg,** Head of Marketing at **Nilpeter.**



...with **Mark Andy** Print Instructor **Artur Urbanek.**



...with **Talia Fuld** and **Woody Bryson** of **Graphic Controls.** label printers.



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ANDY PAPAROZZI ON AFRICA'S HIGH-GROWTH PRINT FRONTIERS

*In an exclusive **1:1 Media** Day session ahead of the **PRINTING United Expo 2026, Joju ADEKANBI,** Publisher of **WHERE To Print magazine,** sat down with **Andy Paparozzi,** Chief Economist at the **PRINTING United Alliance Insights.** While their broad-ranging dialogue dissected critical global performance indicators, the core of the discussion centred on a major paradigm shift: how flexible packaging and **digital textile printing** are completely redefining the economic trajectory of the printing industry. During the conversation, Paparozzi issued a stark warning for print service providers (PSPs) worldwide, noting that market consolidation has left businesses with just two options: **either get better or get left behind.***



Andy Paparozzi, Chief Economist at **PRINTING United Alliance Insights.**

In the course of our conversation, Paparozzi presented data from the latest research showing exactly how the market is pivoting toward on-demand customization: **72.7% of print service providers expect Print-on-Demand (POD) sales to increase, while an overwhelming 84.5% expect Direct-to-Film (DTF) adoption to keep growing.** Compounding these stats, companies that successfully pivoted into diversified revenue streams have seen those segments grow by a staggering **96%.**

The New Dawn: Print's Fourth Industrial Revolution

At the heart of Paparozzi's analysis was a profound acknowledgment of global technological transformation. "The Fourth Industrial Revolution is spreading across the printing industry, redefining what's possible and who will lead," Paparozzi emphasized. This revolution—powered by cyber-physical systems, deep automation, and connected ecosystems—means that the printing press is no longer just a mechanical device; it is a data-driven node in a digital supply chain. For African print providers, this structural shift marks the definitive baseline that separates future industrial giants from legacy operations.

The Ultimate Ultimatum: Get Better or Get Left Behind

Paparozzi made it clear that the current global and regional economic climate leaves no room for mediocrity or coasting on past successes. "The middle ground in the printing industry is completely disappearing," Paparozzi warned. "Market forces, technological disruptions, and economic volatility mean that print shop owners are facing a binary choice. You will either commit to getting better every single day through strategic evolution, or your business will get left behind. Staying the same is an absolute guarantee of obsolescence."

Who Will Lead the Future? The 6 Traits of Tomorrow's Print Leaders

To clarify what it actually means to "get better" rather than get left behind in this new industrial era, Paparozzi defined the exact profile of market champions. According to the Chief Economist, the printing industry leaders of the future will be defined by six specific characteristics:

1. "Ruthlessly Efficient"
In an environment where raw material costs are volatile and margins are constantly under pressure, operational waste is fatal. Future leaders must look at every step of their workflow—from pre-press to final delivery—and systematically eliminate bottlenecks. Being **"ruthlessly efficient"** means automating repetitive tasks, minimizing substrate spoilage, and maximizing press uptime.

2. Creators of Profitable Growth
True leaders do not just chase high revenues or vanity volume metrics. They focus strictly on **creating profitable growth.** This means prioritizing high-margin print jobs, like customized flexible packaging and functional textile designs, rather than engaging in low-margin, commoditized price wars.

3. Agile, Innovative, and Receptive to Change
The market is shifting too fast for rigid business models. The successful print companies of tomorrow will be **agile, innovative, and deeply receptive to change.** They eagerly adapt to shifting consumer patterns, adopt on-demand production techniques, and pivot away from stagnant segments into rising economic sectors.

4. AI Empowered
Artificial Intelligence is no longer a futuristic concept; it is an immediate operational tool. The printing leaders of the future will be **AI-empowered.** They will actively integrate AI into automated layout generation, dynamic job estimating, predictive machine maintenance, and smart pre-press troubleshooting to scale small-team execution to unprecedented heights.

5. Superior Managers of Risk and Uncertainty
Operating in modern print markets, especially across Africa, requires navigating intense external pressures like currency volatility and infrastructure gaps. Future industry titans will separate themselves by becoming **superior managers of risk and uncertainty,** designing robust financial buffers and diversified product lines to withstand macro-level shocks.

6. Willing to Move Ahead Even During Periods of Extreme Uncertainty
While the natural instinct during an economic downturn or supply chain crisis is to freeze capital and hunker down, the most successful print executives do the opposite. Survival and long-term dominance belong to those who are **willing to move ahead even during periods of extreme uncertainty.** They use challenging times to capture market share from timid competitors, re-engineer their businesses, and make bold, calculated investments that position them for dominance when the market rebounds.

Paparozzi made it clear that the current global and regional economic climate leaves no room for mediocrity or coasting on past successes. "The middle ground in the printing industry is completely disappearing," Paparozzi warned. "Market forces, technological disruptions, and economic volatility mean that print shop owners are facing a binary choice. You will either commit to getting better every single day through strategic evolution, or your business will get left behind. Staying the same is an absolute guarantee of obsolescence."

The Chief Economist's Final Verdict

Concluding this exclusive WHERE To Print session, Paparozzi offered a final roadmap for African print executives looking to secure their market share in this evolving landscape.
"Africa's print future is being written in flexible films and textiles, but technology alone will not save you," Paparozzi concluded. "The commercial offset market is overcrowded, and the macro-economy is volatile. To build true operational resilience, African printers must implement these six core disciplines. That is how you get better. That is how you ensure your business is never left behind."

***Editor's Note:** The exclusive feature interview took place during the high-energy **1:1 Speed Meetings** at the third annual **PRINTING United Expo Media Day. Held on Tuesday, September 22, 2026,** in **Room N115, N116** of the **Las Vegas Convention Centre,** this special media-only event kicked off just 24 hours before the exhibition doors officially opened to the global print community. **Media Day** is thoughtfully crafted to give journalists and industry publishers a rare gift: **direct, uninterrupted access to top-tier exhibitors and their most disruptive new technologies** in a relaxed, intimate setting. By allowing the media to gather first-hand product launches, breaking news, and strategic insights ahead of the rush, they are fully freed up for the next three days to do what they do best—hit the vibrant show floor to bring you live demonstrations, immersive booth tours, and real-time press coverage.*

30% LESS ODOUR, 100% KID-SAFE: INSIDE MIMAKI'S BIG 1:1 MEDIA DAY REVEAL WITH JOSH HOPE

***WHERE To Print magazine's Joju ADEKANBI** also sat down for an exclusive interview with Key Event Sponsor & Partner, **Mimaki's** Director of Marketing, **Josh Hope**, during an intimate **1:1 Media Day** session ahead of the **PRINTING United Expo 2026.** The closed-door briefing gave the magazine an early, deep-dive look into exactly what Mimaki's latest technological announcements mean for African print service providers seeking high market differentiation, faster returns, and uncompromised operator safety. Below is an excerpt of the interview:*



Josh Hope, Director of Marketing at **Mimaki USA, Inc.**

At the heart of this strategic discussion was the world debut of the **Mimaki JFX220-2515 large-format UV-LED flatbed printer,** alongside the roll-out of the eco-shattering **ELH-100 (hard) and ELS-120/170 (flexible) European Standard UV inks.** Together, these technologies outline a bold vision for the future: pushing print boundaries while setting the gold standard for workplace safety and regulatory compliance.

The JFX220-2515: Unlocking Next-Level Throughput and Aggressive ROI

For commercial print shops looking at the bottom line, the successor to the highly popular JFX200 EX series—the new **JFX220-2515**—is engineered purely to reduce downtime and accelerate profitability. During the media session, Adekanbi queried how the machine translates capital expenditure into immediate financial returns, especially in competitive emerging markets.

- **Eliminating Setup Bottlenecks:** The standout innovation on the 2,500 x 1,500 mm flatbed is Mimaki's new, intelligent **Anchor Technology Vacuum System.** Historically, operators spent critical minutes taping down edges and masking open areas of a vacuum bed to secure media. Anchor Technology completely automates this by activating suction only where the substrate is placed. Combined with single-touch in-table edge alignment pop-up pins, media preparation time is slashed by up to 50% between jobs.
- **Doubled Staggered Speeds:** Featuring a newly configured 4-head staggered layout, the printer delivers dual CMYK production speeds up to 51 m^2/h. More sheets through the bed per hour means print houses can capture higher job volumes within the same shift.
- **High-Value Application Premium:** Moving beyond flat signage yields higher profit margins. The JFX220-2515 accommodates rigid materials (acrylic, wood, metal, glass) up to **4 inches (101.6 mm) thick.** Furthermore, its LD4 print mode lets operators print onto uneven or stepped surfaces with a head-gap drop of up to 20mm.

"We aren't just selling speed; we are selling usable, profitable time," Josh Hope emphasized during the briefing. "With the new Anchor Technology vacuum

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system and advanced texture printing options, we've systematically removed the manual bottlenecks. Print service providers can transition from a standard signage job to a high-margin premium application in a fraction of the time it used to take."

Safety First: Operator-Centric Engineering

As African print businesses scale up production, operator welfare remains a critical topic. Adekanbi highlighted that massive production outputs should not come at the cost of the health of the floor team. Josh Hope explained that Mimaki has addressed this directly by building multiple physical and mechanical safety contingencies into the JFX220-2515 chassis. Dual Media Jam Sensors are deployed on both the left and right flanks of the carriage. If a warped rigid sheet or misaligned material threatens to strike the carriage, the machine halts instantly. This doesn't just save tens of thousands of dollars in printhead damage; it ensures the physical safety of operators working in proximity to high-speed machinery. "A machine is only as productive as it is reliable and safe," Hope noted. "By putting dual jam sensors right on the carriage flanks, we protect both the owner's investment in printhead technology and—more importantly—the wellbeing of the people running the press every single day."

ELH & ELS Next-Gen Inks: 30% Odour Reduction & Safe for Children's Toys

The most significant environmental breakthrough discussed during the 1:1 Media Day was the global introduction of the **ELH (hard) and ELS (flexible) UV-curable inks.** Formulated to meet increasingly stringent global environmental mandates, including Europe's REACH regulations, these inks represent a massive paradigm shift.

- **The World's First SVHC- and CMR-Free UV Inks:** Mimaki is the first digital print manufacturer to offer a completely sustainable UV ink formulation that is entirely free **from Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) and Carcinogenic, Mutagenic, or Reprotoxic (CMR) compounds.**
- **A Breath of Fresh Air:** Standard UV curing environments often battle aggressive, chemical odours that require heavy ventilation installations. The new ELH and ELS lines boast an **approximate 30% reduction in emitted odour** compared to conventional UV inks. This makes it perfectly optimized for urban print shops, creating a substantially more comfortable and safe breathing environment for operators.
- **Designed for Kids' Toys:** Because the cured ink film contains no toxic or hazardous compounds, it opens up a massive, previously restricted sector: localized manufacturing of personalized kids' toys, nursery decor, and infant-safe packaging. Backed by their rigorous **GREENGUARD Gold Certification** for ultra-low indoor chemical emissions, these inks prove that industrial strength doesn't have to mean ecological harm.

"The environmental breakthrough with the ELH and ELS ink series cannot be overstated," Hope stated proudly. "Achieving a 30% reduction in odour while completely eliminating SVHC and CMR compounds changes the game. Print houses are no longer restricted by traditional UV ventilation worries. They can boldly step into highly regulated, lucrative markets like kids' toys and indoor nursery graphics with absolute compliance and total confidence."

Seamless Integration for Existing Users

A reassuring takeaway shared by Hope during the interview is that current Mimaki operators do not need to buy entirely new hardware to benefit from these sustainable fluids. The ELH-100 and ELS-120/170 inks are engineered as a **direct replacement path** for the previous generation of LH-100 and LUS-120 inks. They retain identical colour gamuts, 5H scratch resistance for rigid plates (ELH), and up to 170% flexibility for substrates requiring stretching or bending (ELS).

The WHERE To Print **Verdict**

Mimaki's focused presentation at the 1:1 Media Day makes one thing clear: the future of print lies at the intersection of extreme operational efficiency and corporate responsibility. The JFX220-2515 solves the real-world headache of media preparation time, while the ELH and ELS inks remove the regulatory and health barriers associated with traditional UV printing. For forward-thinking African print service providers looking to invest in equipment that guarantees high returns today and bulletproof compliance tomorrow, Mimaki's lineup is an undeniable masterclass.

***Editor's Note:** The exclusive feature interview took place during the high-energy **1:1 Speed Meetings** at the third annual **PRINTING United Expo Media Day.** Held on **Tuesday, September 22, 2026,** in **Room N115, N116** of the **Las Vegas Convention Centre,** this special media-only event kicked off just 24 hours before the exhibition doors officially opened to the global print community. **Media Day** is thoughtfully crafted to give journalists and industry publishers a rare gift: **direct, uninterrupted access to top-tier exhibitors and their most disruptive new technologies** in a relaxed, intimate setting. By allowing the media to gather first-hand product launches, breaking news, and strategic insights ahead of the rush, they are fully freed up for the next three days to do what they do best—hit the vibrant show floor to bring you live demonstrations, immersive booth tours, and real-time press coverage.*

ADOBE AT PRINTING UNITED: ACCELERATING THE WEB-TO-PRINT REVOLUTION

*Online print jobs are experiencing an unprecedented global explosion, driving a massive shift in how print service providers process, prepare, and execute files. At the recent **PRINTING United Expo Media Day 1:1 Session, WHERE To Print magazine** Publisher, **Joju ADEKANBI** sat down for an exclusive interview with **Adobe's** print powerhouses: **Mike Scrutton,** Director of Print Evangelism & Customer Liaison, and Arnav Sinha, Principal Product Marketing Manager. The duo revealed how Adobe is actively powering its Raster Image Processor (RIP) systems to democratize file preparation, streamline digital embellishments, and leverage GPU technology to transform production efficiency—with a profound, positive impact on emerging print markets like Africa.*



Mike Scrutton, Director of Print Evangelism & Customer Liaison, and **Arnav Sinha,** Principal Product Marketing Manager, Print & Scan, **Adobe**

The Explosion of Online Print and Massive Democratization

The rapid growth of e-commerce and web-to-print platforms has flooded print shops with an unprecedented volume of individual, smaller print orders. Managing this influx requires a drastic rethink of traditional workflows. When asked how Adobe is managing the explosion in online print jobs while web-to-print is no longer a luxury but the main pipeline, given the influx of diverse, unvetted files coming from everyday users, Mike Scrutton says: "It comes down to what we call the **massive democratization** of the print-ready file. Historically, you needed a prepress expert to ensure a PDF wouldn't break the RIP. Today, Adobe is embedding its core PDF technologies directly into the browser and creative apps. We are making it so that when an everyday user hits 'submit' on a web-to-print portal, the system automatically handles the preflighting and outputs a pristine, compliant file. We are protecting the creator's intent from the screen straight to the press."

While agreeing with Mike, Arnav Sinha further said, "The architecture of the **Adobe PDF Print Engine (APPE)** has evolved specifically for this high-volume reality. In our latest iterations, APPE handles complex variable data printing (VDP) at lightning speeds. But the biggest paradigm shift is that Adobe is now fully **GPU-ready.** By offloading heavy computational rendering from the CPU to the Graphics Processing Unit, we are seeing exponential leaps in processing times. When you have thousands of unique online orders hitting the queue, that GPU acceleration keeps the digital presses running at rated speed without stalling." But at what price to users?

Mike Scrutton: "Regarding pricing, it is important to understand that Adobe provides the foundational technology to original equipment manufacturers. Therefore, pricing ultimately depends on our specific press and software partners, who integrate APPE into their front-ends and deliver it to the end-users based on their unique configurations."

Adobe is indeed driving a **massive democratization** of the tools people use to handle files. Scrutton and Sinha highlighted that the modern print ecosystem relies on making file opening, preflighting, and generating "print-ready" files accessible to everyone, not just highly trained prepress specialists. By embedding Adobe's robust PDF technologies directly into creative applications and web-to-print portals, the creator's intent is preserved seamlessly from screen to press. This reduces file errors, eliminates costly bottlenecks, and ensures that even uninitiated users can submit perfectly optimized, print-ready files.

A Universal System: The Impact on Printing in Africa

The conversation took a deeply localized turn as Adekanbi asked about the specific implications of these innovations for regions like Africa, where the print industry is expanding rapidly but still faces unique infrastructural and economic dynamics. The duo was quick to clarify a fundamental point: the technological breakthroughs inside Adobe are universal and not restricted to any single region. A printer in Lagos or Nairobi gets the exact same state-of-the-art software capabilities as a printer in Chicago or Tokyo. Scrutton and Sinha emphasized that Adobe's latest advancements are uniquely suited to empower African printers by:

- **Overcoming Infrastructural Hurdles:** In regions where power stability or high-end hardware costs can present challenges, GPU-ready processing means printers can get significantly more throughput out of their existing hardware investments, maximizing efficiency without requiring massive capital expenditure.
- **Bridging the Skills Gap:** The democratization of "print-ready" tools means that small and medium-sized African printing enterprises (SMEs) can accept files from local clients with confidence, minimizing the specialized prepress intervention previously required to fix broken PDFs.
- **Unlocking Premium Markets:** With Adobe's simplified digital embellishment workflows, African commercial printers can easily diversify into high-value packaging, luxury publishing, and premium marketing collateral, allowing them to compete effectively on a global scale.

Data and Privacy: The Adobe Promise

With the exponential rise of web-to-print portals, vast amounts of proprietary customer data, intellectual property, and print files flow through digital networks daily. This has naturally brought data security and confidentiality to the forefront of industry concerns. When pressed on how Adobe safeguards sensitive customer information in this heavily connected web-to-print pipeline, both experts highlighted Adobe's strict compliance and data protection frameworks. **On critical privacy issues, users can always depend on Adobe's promise.** The company enforces world-class cloud security standards and strict data governance protocols across its technologies, ensuring that client designs, proprietary assets, and transactional metadata remain secure, private, and shielded from unauthorized exposure.

A Future Built on Speed and Accessibility

As the WHERE To Print 1:1 session concluded, the overarching message from Adobe was clear: the print industry is no longer just about applying ink to a substrate; it is about data efficiency, speed, and automation. By putting powerful, GPU-accelerated RIP technology and intuitive file-creation tools into the hands of global creators and printers, Adobe is ensuring that the global explosion of online print jobs becomes an accessible, highly profitable reality for businesses from Las Vegas to Lagos

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PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026 CONCLUDES IN LAS VEGAS WITH STRONG GLOBAL ATTENDANCE AND INDUSTRY-WIDE MOMENTUM



© PRINTING United Expo 2026 Crowds.

PRINTING United Expo 2026, *produced annually by* ***PRINTING United Alliance,*** *the most comprehensive member-based printing and graphic arts association in North America, concluded following three dynamic days at the* ***Las Vegas Convention Centre.*** *Preliminary results point to another highly successful gathering of the global printing community with* ***27,000 registered attendees*** *from* ***100 countries*** *and* ***850+ exhibitors*** *spanning approximately* ***one million square feet of show floor space.*** *Indeed, the Expo has truly become the definitive gathering for our industry—bringing a global audience together for live equipment demos, groundbreaking product launches, and deeply meaningful connections across every single segment of printing. In this* ***SPECIAL FEATURE POST-SHOW REPORT,*** *adapted from the event's official press release,* ***WHERE To Print*** *brings you an exclusive look at the highlights, innovations, and stories that defined this year's landmark Expo, which returns to Las Vegas from* ***September 14–16, 2027.***

It was a thrilling week of discovery as attendees connected with the defining technologies and trends shaping the future of print. The event showcased the full spectrum of modern print capabilities, featuring game-changing ideas and equipment across commercial, apparel, wide-format, packaging, mailing, industrial sectors, and beyond.

"The energy throughout **PRINTING United Expo 2026** was extraordinary," said **Ford Bowers,** President & CEO, **PRINTING United Alliance.** "What we saw in Las Vegas was an industry moving forward with confidence, investing in new technology, entering new markets, building stronger businesses, and finding new ways to grow. The size and scope of this event are impressive, but its true impact comes from bringing the entire printing community together to exchange ideas, create opportunities, and shape what comes next."

PRINTING United Expo 2026: Preliminary Results

With the doors now officially closed, initial reports reflect strong attendance, significant technology on the show floor, meaningful business connections, and robust engagement throughout the event.

Preliminary highlights include:

- **27,000 registered attendees**
- **100 countries represented**
- **850+ exhibiting companies** spanning every major segment of the printing industry
- **Approximately one million square feet** of exhibit space
- **4.9 million pounds of equipment and technology**, an increase of more than half a million pounds compared to last year's event
- **Hundreds of product introductions,** including numerous North American and global debuts
- **Over 200+ paid education sessions, panels, demonstrations, and show activations**
- **50+ global Expo media and association partnerships**
- **140 global media professionals in attendance**
- **174 students and educators registered**
- **More than two-thirds of 2027 exhibit space already reserved** at the close of the event.

**All figures are preliminary and subject to final verification.*



© PRINTING United Alliance Membership Area on the show floor.

Innovation and Opportunity Across the Show Floor

The 2026 Expo reflected the continued convergence of print markets and the rapid evolution of technology across the industry. Artificial intelligence (AI), automation, workflow optimization, workforce development, embellishment, personalization, and production efficiency were among the defining themes across the show floor.

The return of an even more expansive **PRINTING AI Pavilion** gave attendees a dedicated destination for exploring practical AI applications already changing how printing companies sell, produce, analyze, and grow. The new **Spill the Ink District** created an energetic hub for conversation and community, while the debut of the **ASI Pavilion** connected print service providers with opportunities in promotional products.

Additional programming included the **Apparel Zone, Women in Print Alliance** events, live installer demonstrations and **PDAA programming, Print Mastermind x Spill the Ink** roundtable discussions, **All-Stars** and **Student Lounges, Print Technology Tours** powered by **Taktiful,** specialized education, and hands-on exhibitor demonstrations throughout the halls.

"This year's Expo delivered exactly what the industry needs right now: access to innovation, direct conversations with experts, and real opportunities to turn ideas into action," said **Josh Carruth,** EVP,



© PRINTING United Expo 2026 AI Specialist - Amy speaking.

Expositions, PRINTING United Alliance. "The engagement we witnessed, from the opening moments of Media Day and the G7+ Exchange, through the final afternoon of the Expo, was remarkable. Attendees came ready to learn and invest, and exhibitors responded with technology, expertise, and solutions designed to help businesses compete and grow."

Connecting the Industry's Present with Its Future

The Expo's expanded **Student Day** programming, in partnership with **The Foundation for Graphic Communication Education** (The FGCE), welcomed students and educators for curated show-floor tours, live demonstrations, career conversations, networking, and direct access to industry professionals. Students explored the breadth of career paths available throughout printing and graphic communications while meeting employers, technology providers,



© PU Alliance President Ford speaking at Students Day 2026.



© Students Day 2026 Group Shot.

industry All-Stars, and other leaders helping to shape the future workforce.

"Introducing students to the scale, technology, creativity, and career potential of this industry is one of the most meaningful things we can do," said **Christine Cachuela,** VP Membership Operations, PRINTING United Alliance. "They did not simply hear about opportunities in print; they saw the technology operating, met the people behind it, and experienced the industry firsthand. That kind of exposure can change the direction of a young person's future."

Looking Ahead to PRINTING United Expo 2027

Building on the momentum generated in Las Vegas, **PRINTING United Expo** will return **September 14-16** at the **Las Vegas Convention Centre** in 2027. With two-thirds of the 2027 show floor already reserved, exhibitors and sponsors are encouraged to begin planning now. Additional information is available at **printingunited.com.**

"Every Expo gives us an opportunity to listen, learn, and raise the bar for the industry," added Bowers. "We leave Las Vegas proud of what this community accomplished together and energized by where the industry is headed next. The Expo serves the industry on multiple levels, as a marketplace for innovation, a catalyst for growth, and an economic engine that helps fuel the essential services, resources, and programs the Alliance provides year-round."

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FROM PREVIEW TO PARTNERSHIP: Global Innovations and Key Connections at PRINTING United Expo 2026

By Joju ADEKANBI | Publisher & CEO, WHERE To Print magazine

Innovation is undeniably exciting, but in our fast-evolving industry, connection is truly everything. *As I reflect on my recent experience attending the* ***3rd Annual PRINTING United Expo 2026 Media Day*** *in the United States, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude.*

What began as an exclusive look behind the curtain during **Media Day** swiftly transitioned into the vibrant, high-octane energy of the live showcase floor. For anyone passionate about the future of graphic arts, print, and packaging, it was an awe-inspiring sight to behold.

Representing WHERE To Print magazine on this global stage is always a profound privilege, but this year felt uniquely impactful. Witnessing the absolute scale of global print innovation firsthand—from next-generation digital presses to groundbreaking sustainable packaging solutions—was deeply humbling. It serves as a powerful reminder of how resilient and dynamic our industry remains.

Yet, as impressive as the machinery and technology were, the true heartbeat of the Expo lay in its people. More than the equipment on display, what I am taking away most from my time there is a deep appreciation for the conversations had, the insights shared, and the strategic professional relationships forged on the exhibition floor.

It is an absolute honour to serve our print community, and I return energized and inspired. In the upcoming pages of this edition, we are proud to channel these global perspectives, trends, and new connections directly to you—our readers and stakeholders—as we continue to drive the growth of print and packaging across West Africa and beyond.

Looking Ahead: Will I See You in Vegas for 2027?

The momentum does not stop here. The future is being written rapidly, and to stay ahead, we must continue to show up where the world's print leaders converge.

The dates are already official: **PRINTING United Expo 2027 will return to the Las Vegas Convention Centre from September 14–16, 2027.**

I challenge our industry colleagues, dynamic entrepreneurs, and stakeholders across West Africa to make the commitment now to join us next year. Let us scale our businesses globally, experience the technology firsthand, and build the international partnerships that redefine our local market. Sign up for official updates via the **PRINTING United Notification Portal: https://www.printingunited.com/notify-me/** to know exactly when registration opens.

Thank you to the visionaries, manufacturers, and fellow professionals who made this year's event so remarkable. The future of print is exceptionally bright, and WHERE To Print magazine is thrilled to navigate it alongside you. See you back in Vegas!

NB: I was deeply honoured to collaborate with dedicated international colleagues who pour their passion into this field daily, specifically:



Ford Bowers, President & CEO, PRINTING United Alliance opening the floor at the 3rd Annual PRINTING United Expo 2026 Media Day.



© The dedication to our industry is paramount! This picture is courtesy of Printing Impressions (a PRINTING United Alliance Media Brand) in its story, Uncertainty, Inflation, and AI: The Forces Reshaping Print. Check it out at www.piworld.com



L-R: ...with the **PRINTING United Expo Media Team, Carly O'Neill, Carys Evans, Karis Copp,** and **Amanda Kliegl.**



...with **Maria Clavijo** & **Dan Barefoot** (World Imaging News).



...with **Nicola Penhallow** (Specialist, Printing Worldwide).



...with **Paulette Dakuras** & **Salome Fonseca** (SOS Classified News).



...with **Colin Sinclair McDermott** (The Online Print Coach).



...with **Ashley Roberts** (Printing Impressions) and **David Ricardo Muñoz Lozano** (El Empaque+Conversión Axoma).

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...with **Carly O'Neill, Allee Bruce & Kalie Vandewater** (PRINTING United Alliance).



Special thanks to **Amanda Kliegl** (PRINTING United Alliance) for making the journey seamless for some of our African delegation, **Shreeman Narayan** and **Rohit Kumar** (Jay Kay Industries & Investments LTD).



It was also wonderful connecting with **Shyam Sunder Marri**, former staff of PROPAK East Africa DAILY, supporting printer in Nairobi, Kenya, **Ramco Printing** (now a Master's student at the **Rochester Institute of Technology**).



I connected with **Deborah Corn** (Girls Who Print Global) on behalf of **Ayanfeoluwa Ibitoye** (short for Ayanfe, Girls Who Print Africa) to discuss expanding regional exhibition collaborations, building on PROPAK West Africa toward PROPAK East Africa 2027. Souvenir gifts from Ayanfe were handed over to **Deborah**.



...with **Jeff Veith** (MBO America/ Komori).



...with **Haley Weiss** & **Jeaneviv Siao** (BELLA+CANVAS).



...with **Dan Uress, Kevin Kesselring,** & **Mark DeSandre** (X-Rite/ Pantone).



...with **Jenee Liao** (Sign China)



....with **Wayne Beckett** (Inkish/ Printing Connect Online), **Shreeman Narayan** and **Rohit Kumar** (Jay Kay Industries & Investments LTD).



...with **Kwasi Opoku-Amankwa** (Dotles Group LTD)



...with **Spring G** (Kunshan Renjie Advertising Co.) and **Lei Ma** (Nanyang Xingguang Digital Material Co.).



...with **Kelly Morris** (digitalprinter).



...with **Ford Bowers** (President, PRINTING United Alliance).



...with **Sarah Unruh** (Executive Director, Advertising Specialty Institute, ASI)

BEE Printing Mechanical Company



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EMPOWERING NEW OWNERS: MÜLLER MARTINI'S SEPARO PRO DELIVERS 1-TO-2 YEAR ROI AND UNCOMPROMISED OPERATOR SAFETY

*As a long-time gold sponsor and pillars of innovation at the annual **PRINTINGUnited Expo, Müller Martini** once again captivated the print industry in **Las Vegas** by hosting the world premiere of their highly anticipated innovation: the **SEPARO PRO** destacker. Designed specifically to eliminate post-press bottlenecks in short-run and book-of-one production, this system represents a massive leap forward for automated digital book manufacturing. For new owners and those looking to modernise their operations, **WHERE To Print magazine** sat down with **Jonathan Conant,** Regional Sales Manager at Müller Martini, for an exclusive interview exploring the availability, exceptional return on investment (ROI), and operator safety features of the newly launched system.*



Jonathan Conant, Regional Sales Manager at **Müller Martini.**

Immediate Commercial Availability & Seamless Integration

Unlike many conceptual showcases, the **SEPARO PRO** is a fully realised solution that is **commercially available now.** Printers can integrate this compact destacking device directly into a variety of high-efficiency production lines. At the expo, the system was demonstrated operating live and inline with the **Vareo PRO perfect binder.** However, Conant emphasizes that the technology is highly versatile; it is engineered for seamless pairing ahead of the **Antaro Digital perfect binder** as well as the **Diamant MC hardcover book lines.** For operations requiring manual or staging configurations, the SEPARO PRO also fully supports manual loading and includes a dedicated bypass function to route pre-separated blocks or stacks of single sheets directly through the system without interruption.

Maximising ROI: A 1 to 2 Year Payback Window

For commercial binderies and digital book manufacturers navigating the complexities of variable data, the financial rationale for the SEPARO PRO is immediate. Manual feeding of book blocks with varying thicknesses and formats often chokes finishing speeds. The SEPARO PRO eliminates these labour-intensive chokepoints. Initial field experiences and live trials demonstrate that automated block separation yields **up to a 30% increase in productivity** compared to traditional manual feeding. Operating at standard speeds of **up to 2,000 cycles per hour—**and capable of scaling up to **4,000 book blocks per hour** under defined production conditions–the system translates directly to higher throughput and lower per-unit costs.

When discussing the financial timeline for new owners, Conant clarified that the true timeline for a full return on investment is remarkably swift. "It depends on the specific job profiles and the overall volumes running through the machine, but typically, owners can expect a full ROI within just 1 to 2 years," Conant noted. Furthermore, the system operates on a strict **First-In, First-Out (FIFO) principle.** Book blocks leave the machine in the precise sequence they entered, securing absolute process reliability for highly complex, personalised "book-of-one" workflows. This prevents costly downstream sequencing errors, maximizing material yield and protecting shop floor profit margins.

Operator Safety and Ergonomics

Beyond sheer throughput, Conant noted during our interview that Müller Martini designed the SEPARO PRO with a heavy emphasis on operator wellbeing and machine safety. Handling physical book blocks continuously throughout a shift poses significant ergonomic strains and fatigue risks for pressroom staff. By automating the repetitive, heavy handling of destacking book blocks from heavy piles, the SEPARO PRO significantly reduces physical operator workload. An integrated buffer storage system creates a lighter, controlled material flow, giving operators a stress-free environment. Rather than being tied down by manual material handling, operators are liberated to focus purely on quality control, monitoring, and higher-value oversight tasks across the ongoing production run.

To eliminate mechanical pinch hazards during this automated separation process, the machine features specialized, heavy-duty physical **finger guards** engineered directly into the feed mechanism. Highlighting the brand's core engineering principles, Conant remarked: "We are very much about safety. The SEPARO PRO is a game-changer for new owners looking to future-proof their bindery operations. By eliminating the manual bottlenecks of book block separation, we are giving print houses the ability to run at peak net productivity while drastically reducing the physical strain on their operators. It bridges the gap between high-speed digital printing and efficient, safe post-press finishing, proving that you don't have to sacrifice operator well-being to achieve a massive return on investment."

The Verdict for New Owners

For companies looking to scale their digital book output down to a single copy without sacrificing margin, the SEPARO PRO delivers on all fronts. Backed by Müller Martini's global engineering support, this new release offers print shops a reliable path to fast ROI, robust physical workspace protection, and industry-leading performance.

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GLOBAL STANDARD, UNIVERSAL ACCESS: AGFA TRIO UNVEILS STATE-OF-THE-ART PRESS ROADMAP AT PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026

*Also at the highly anticipated **PRINTING United Expo 2026 Media Day, WHERE To Print magazine** publisher **Joju ADEKANBI** met for an exclusive, face-to-face interview with another Key Event Sponsor & Partner, **Agfa's** trio: **Philip Van der Auwera** (Marketing Manager Sign & Display), **Kristof Bogaert** (Sales Manager Inkjet), and **Dieter Jancart** (Segment Manager Packaging & Business Development). The hard-hitting discussion focused on the official release dates, worldwide availability, strict safety engineering, and Agfa's localized strategy for emerging markets, particularly Africa.*

The headline revelation of the session was Agfa's multi-tiered product strategy, highlighting major advancements across their three flagship printer families with a strong spotlight on the robust **Anapurna H3200** hybrid and the ultra-high-volume **Jeti Tauro H3300** series. The heavy-duty **Jeti Tauro H3300** leads the high-volume industrial segment with enhanced automated board-feeding mechanics, while the versatile **Anapurna H3200** has been re-engineered for higher throughput and superior multi-layer ink adhesion. The executives outlined precise release schedules, noting that manufacturing pipelines are fully operational to support simultaneous global deployment, eliminating traditional regional lag times for print service providers.

With official regional shipments scheduled for **Q2 2026** for the Anapurna H3200 and **Q3 2026** for the Jeti Tauro H3300, the leadership team explicitly rejected the concept of tiered technology distribution, promising that African print shops will receive the exact same cutting-edge hardware specifications as their Western counterparts. To ensure maximum operational uptime, Agfa is proactively backing these regional machine placements with reinforced local technical support channels, specialized parts distribution, and extensive engineering training programmes. "Our deployment timeline for these state-of-the-art presses is aggressive but highly structured," noted Philip Van der Auwera. "We understand that commercial printers worldwide need to upgrade their capabilities simultaneously to stay competitive. Production schedules are already locked in, and global availability is being rolled out systematically across major hubs starting this quarter."

Uncompromising Safety and Compliance

Addressing critical operational questions from Adekanbi, the Agfa trio provided absolute assurance regarding the safety and build quality of these high-speed industrial presses. They emphasized that market velocity will never come at the expense of operator security or environmental compliance. As a premier global player, Agfa guarantees that every machine leaving its production floor conforms fully to all **European standards, New Legislative Framework (NLF) directives, and rigid US safety certifications,** safeguarding both the print shop workforce and the brand's global reputation. "Agfa is a major global player, and our reputation is our most valuable asset. We build peace of mind directly into the engineering of our hardware," Dieter Jancart stated firmly.

Empowering the African Print Sector

A major highlight of the exclusive interview was Agfa's explicit commitment to regions like Africa, where logistics, technical support, and operating environments require specialized attention. The trio dispelled any notions that emerging markets would receive secondary treatment. "Africa is a vital, rapidly expanding territory for industrial print innovation,"



Agfa Trio: **Philip Van der Auwera, Kristof Bogaert,** and **Dieter Jancart.**

Kristof Bogaert explained. "Agfa machines destined for regions like Africa are backed by the exact same stringent safety certifications and robust build quality as those heading to Europe or North America. We are heavily investing in local supply lines, training, and certified distribution partners to ensure African print shops experience maximum uptime and identical global standards."

Concluding the exclusive media session, the executives reiterated that the new Anapurna, Jeti, and Tauro portfolios represent a holistic commitment to sustainable, high-fidelity print production worldwide. For WHERE To Print readers across expanding industrial hubs, this landmark roadmap marks a definitive shift toward universal technology access and uncompromising safety compliance.

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SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – INKCUPS @ PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026

LOCALIZING GLOBAL STANDARDS: HOW INKCUPS IS SECURING THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN MERCHANDISE PRINTING

*At the **PRINTING United Expo 2026,** global pioneer and manufacturer of industrial direct-to-object printing equipment and compliance-certified supplies, **Inkcups** showcased its direct-to-object technologies with particular emphasis on the upgraded Helix ONE benchtop cylindrical printer. Inkcups experts Riley Mann and Alfred Hill demonstrated the upgraded **Helix ONE benchtop cylindrical printer** featuring new Auto File barcode automation and expanded small-diameter capabilities. Additional showcases included the award-winning **Helix High Throw UV cylindrical printer and the Cobalt Pro+ CO2 laser machine,** expanding direct-to-object decorating possibilities for intricate patterns, localizing global standards for African manufacturers, thereby securing the future of African merchandise printing. **WHERE To Print** reports:*



© Joju ADEKANBI with Alfred Hill and Riley Mann

The African Print Revolution on 3D Canvas: How Inkcups Digitizes Heritage at PRINTING United Expo 2026

For African manufacturers, the ultimate competitive edge lies in delivering international-quality, error-proof, short-run production tailored to the regional souvenir and promotional sectors. However, translating intricate designs and vibrant cultural motifs onto everyday, three-dimensional objects has historically created a bottleneck for regional print houses. Traditional methods like screen or legacy pad printing inherently struggle with the multi-coloured, seamless colour graduations required by authentic African designs—especially when applied to tapered or cylindrical surfaces. **Inkcups** (from a 2001 startup to a global industry leader) eliminates these manufacturing limits by digitizing the process, turning complex artwork into effortless, high-margin production.

A Live Masterclass in Heritage Customization

The convergence of creative heritage and cutting-edge industrial automation took centre stage at the Inkcups Booth C1215. WHERE To Print magazine was treated to an exclusive, live demonstration tailored specifically to the needs of the African market.

Guided by Inkcups experts **Riley Mann** and **Alfred Hill**, the live session transformed a standard souvenir cup into a high-end artifact. The canvas? A stunning inbuilt design customised with the WHERE TO PRINT name. The engine? The newly upgraded **Inkcups Helix ONE®** benchtop cylindrical printer.



To make the demonstration truly historic, Mann and Hill integrated WHERE TO PRINT name into the workflow. Utilizing the machine's revolutionary **Auto File barcode automation,** the team also integrated the information supplied and, instantly, the system synchronized the print queues and initiated a flawless, continuous 360-degree print. Within moments, a customized souvenir cup—blending the corporate identity of WHERE To Print—was produced, completely error-free.

Breaking the Flat-Surface Barrier for African Print Houses

For decades, African print shops have been restricted by flat-surface workflows. When clients demanded customized drinkware, tech gadgets, or cosmetics packaging, production teams were forced to rely on decals or flat labels, which frequently peel and fail to convey a premium feel. The industrial solutions showcased by Inkcups at the Expo effectively eliminate these limitations:

- **The Helix ONE® (Benchtop Cylindrical Printer):** Now boasting expanded capabilities for handling narrow and small-diameter items, this compact powerhouse brings industrial-grade digital cylinder printing directly to mid-sized African print shops. Its ability to print seamless, high-resolution graphics makes it ideal for local premium drinkware and cosmetic brands.
- **The Helix® High Throw UV Printer:** For irregular, tapered, or heavily contoured promotional items common in the African souvenir space, this award-winning machine maintains pristine print quality across varying surface distances, ensuring complex motifs don't distort.
- **The Cobalt Pro+ CO2 Laser Machine:** Offering high-speed, precise platemaking and direct engraving, this system gives print houses the agility to switch between jobs instantly—a vital feature for the fast-paced African event and political campaign market.

The Strategic Takeaway: Efficiency for Short-Run Souvenirs

As the demand for personalized luxury increases across major African commercial hubs—from Lagos and Accra to Nairobi and Johannesburg—the ability to produce **efficient, error-proof short runs** is no longer a luxury; it is a competitive necessity.

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SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – DRUPA @ PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF PRINT AT DRUPA 2028: THE OCTOPUS EFFECT

*The global print industry stands on the precipice of a profound technological shift, driven by unprecedented waves of automation, artificial intelligence, and ecological responsibility. Amidst this evolving landscape, **WHERE To Print magazine** Publisher and CEO **Joju ADEKANBI** recently met with **Sabine Geldermann,** the Director of **drupa**, at drupa **Booth N6857** during the recently concluded **PRINTING United Expo 2026** in Las Vegas. Their conversation explored how innovations like AI, robotics, the thinking factory, circular economy, and end-to-end solutions will impact the evolving and emerging print & allied markets like Africa.*

As the world's number one premier trade fair for printing solutions, the forthcoming **drupa 2028** is structurally pivoting toward complete, end-to-end solutions; the dialogue highlighted how modern print service providers can no longer afford to view hardware, software, and data management as isolated silos. By advancing frameworks that unify prepress, production, and post-press finishing into singular, continuous workflows, the upcoming event in Düsseldorf, Germany aims to offer commercial printers and packaging converters a tangible roadmap to eliminate operational bottlenecks and maximize bottom-line efficiency.

A central pillar of this strategic vision is the aggressive deployment of robotics, AI, and advanced automation across the production floor. The conversation explored how machine learning and artificial intelligence can optimize ink management, predict necessary machinery maintenance before breakdowns occur, and dynamically manage complex logistics schedules. Hand in hand with AI, robotic material handling and automated guided vehicles (AGVs) are set to redefine physical workflows, drastically reducing human error and manual labour strains while maximizing output consistency.

This seamless integration of hardware, data, and predictive software culminates in the revolutionary concept of the "thinking factory". The two discussed how drupa 2028 will act as a living lab for these self-optimizing ecosystems. In a thinking factory setting, intelligent press infrastructure continuously communicates with cloud-based management systems, adjusting machine configurations autonomously in real time to accommodate varying paper stocks, print runs, and custom finishing parameters without requiring manual reconfiguration.

Crucially, these technological leaps are balanced by a strict commitment to the circular economy. The discussions also emphasized that future-proofing the graphic arts and packaging sectors requires a drastic rethink of resource life cycles. By promoting sustainable substrates, bio-based inks, and automated waste reduction systems, the roadmap for the exhibition ensures that high-speed industrial productivity remains deeply aligned with global carbon reduction targets, offering regional print markets a clear blueprint for sustainable, long-term scaling.

Driving Regional Impact in Emerging Hubs

The dialogue underscored a pivotal truth: the success of global frameworks depends heavily on how seamlessly they scale down to regional print hubs, such as West Africa. For markets navigating specific economic hurdles—like fluctuating power grids or supply chain disruptions—the introduction of the thinking factory and AI-driven automation represents a monumental leap forward rather than just a luxury. Predictive maintenance, for example, can protect multimillion-dollar press infrastructure from sudden power variations, allowing local operators to secure their investments and optimize production consistency.

Furthermore, adapting the circular economy framework is critical for regional growth. As international print buyers place strict sustainability requirements on global supply chains, West African print service providers must adopt eco-friendly technologies to remain competitive. By highlighting automated waste reduction and bio-based consumables, drupa 2028 offers regional operators a direct template to minimize physical raw-material waste, combat high overhead costs, and build inherently resilient, future-proof businesses.

The Octopus Symbol of Transformation

To truly capture the essence of this next era, Sabine disclosed that drupa 2028's brand identity prominently features an octopus as its central key visual, representing networking, intelligence, agility, and resilience. The mascot mirrors a modern technological landscape where hardware, software, and automated workflows are interconnected like the arms of an octopus. She emphasized the strategic importance of this new mascot, stating: "The octopus is a fun image, but it also gets the point across: print has become much more connected, flexible, and multi-layered than many people outside the industry realize." She further noted that the fair's new slogan, "dive into the unseen," sums up drupa's core mission of providing "vision, knowledge transfer, and orientation in an increasingly complex technological landscape."



© Joju ADEKANBI with Sabine Geldermann at drupa Booth N6857

For WHERE To Print, the metaphorical power of the octopus directly aligns with the pressing demands facing the African print market today:

- **Agility in Volatile Markets:** Just as an octopus adapts seamlessly to shifting deep-sea environments, African print service providers can leverage modular, interconnected machinery to pivot between commercial printing, regional textile production, and localized packaging.
- **Decentralized Intelligence:** The mascot highlights decentralized, multi-layered systems. In regions with logistical or infrastructural bottlenecks, software systems that communicate autonomously with off-site cloud platforms ensure operations remain unbroken despite localized supply chain constraints.
- **Resilience and Regeneration:** Mirroring the mascot's biological capacity to regrow and withstand high external pressures, regional print hubs are incentivized to transition into the "circular economy." Implementing automated waste-reduction frameworks protects local operators from soaring material import costs, driving sustainable, long-term market growth.

Impact on the Global and African Print Sectors

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SPECIAL FEATURE ARTICLE – XEROX @ PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026

BRINGING INNOVATION HOME: HOW XEROX'S NEWEST DIGITAL PRESSES WILL DRIVE GROWTH FOR AFRICAN PRINTERS

*The energy inside the convention halls at **PRINTING United Expo 2026** was nothing short of electric. For African print service providers navigating fluctuating raw material costs, unstable energy supply, and hyper-competitive margins, the massive product drops from **Xerox** felt like a lifeline. Immediately following a packed global press conference detailing a historic expansion into production inkjet and advanced "Beyond CMYK" technology, **WHERE To Print magazine's** Publisher/CEO, **Joju ADEKANBI,** secured an exclusive sit-down with **Lisa Graham,** Xerox's Head of Print Solutions and Partner Communications. In a candid, deep-dive dialogue, Graham pulled back the curtain on the "engineering trust" driving their latest machine lineup—the **Proficio Jet CS1100, Proficio Jet CF1200, Proficio PX700 FLX, Proficio PX300**, and **Proficio PX500**. More importantly, she laid out an empathetic, rock-solid roadmap for how Xerox plans to partner with African printers to convert these cutting-edge investments into local market leadership.*



Engineering Trust: Built for Unforgiving Environments

Adekanbi opened the conversation by addressing the elephant in the room: African printers operate in some of the most challenging environments in the world. Power grid instability, high humidity, and the high cost of technician call-outs mean that a machine cannot just be fast—it must be indestructible.

"We didn't design these presses in an isolated vacuum," Graham emphasized, matching Adekanbi's serious tone with reassuring certainty. "Engineering trust means building technology that accounts for real-world friction. When we look at the African print community, we see brilliant creative businesses that are often bottlenecked by operational infrastructure. That's why uptime, heavy-duty build quality, and self-contained maintenance are the structural pillars of this entire 2026 portfolio."

Graham broke down how this engineering trust manifests across the newly released fleet:

- **The Proficio Jet CS1100 (B3 Cut-Sheet Inkjet):** "With a staggering capability of 300 images per minute, this machine is a powerhouse. But the true engineering trust lies in its robust paper path and advanced climate compensation mechanics. It handles varying stock weights seamlessly, ensuring that high-volume direct mail and commercial jobs keep moving, even if local environmental conditions fluctuate."
- **The Proficio Jet CF1200 (Continuous-Feed Inkjet):** "This continuous-feed giant is engineered to easily handle 30 million impressions a month. It gives African print houses industrial-scale production capabilities within a highly compact footprint. We engineered it to eliminate wastage, drastically lowering the cost per page so printers can confidently underbid the competition while maintaining healthy margins."
- **The Proficio PX700 FLX (6-Colour Flagship):** "African markets thrive on vibrant, sensory-rich print—from stunning event programs to luxury packaging. The PX700 FLX features integrated inline Fluorescent Green and Pink toners. The engineering trust here is in the flawless colour consistency. Printers can run complex specialty embellishments on the first pass without fearing misregistration or costly manual re-runs."
- **The Proficio PX300 & PX500 (Automated Digital Colour):** "These presses introduce heavy-duty, AI-assisted automation alongside Ultra HD resolution. If a print house loses an experienced operator, the press itself bridges the skill gap. Automated predictive maintenance alerts and automated colour calibration mean the press actively prevents mistakes before they happen."

The Xerox Blueprint: Partnering for African Market Leadership

Acquiring world-class machinery is only half the battle; sustaining it is where true promotional trust is earned. Adekanbi pushed for specifics on how Xerox plans to back these heavy investments on the African continent. Graham's response was immediate and strategic, shifting from technological specs to a deep partnership framework.

1. Decentralizing Technical Self-Reliance

"True partnership means ensuring you don't have to wait for an overseas technician to fix a problem," Graham stated. Xerox is pairing the launch of the Proficio series with an aggressive expansion of AI-driven remote diagnostics and local parts availability. The built-in predictive maintenance algorithms in the **Proficio PX500** and **PX300** allow local partners to anticipate part replacements weeks in advance, ensuring that supply chains stay well ahead of machine wear-and-tear.

2. Transitioning from Cost-Centre to Profit-Centre

Graham explained that Xerox's regional go-to-market strategy isn't focused on selling boxes, but on transforming business models. By introducing the **Proficio Jet CS1100** and **CF1200,** Xerox enables African commercial printers to actively migrate low-margin offset jobs onto high-margin digital inkjet setups. "We want to help our African partners capture the print that currently gets outsourced internationally. With the speed of the CS1100 and the embellishments of the PX700 FLX, local print shops can deliver international-grade quality right at home, with faster turnaround times."

3. Empowering Local Ecosystems

"The African print community possesses a rare level of entrepreneurial resilience and creative vigor," Graham noted warmly. "Our goal at Xerox is to act as the wind beneath those wings. Through WHERE To Print magazine's far-reaching platform, we want to reassure the market that these machines are investments in local leadership. We are establishing tailored training tracks and flexible service level agreements (SLAs) through our local African distributors to ensure every print provider can scale safely, sustainably, and profitably."

A Shared Vision for Growth

As the interview concluded, the takeaway was clear: Xerox's showcase at PRINTING United Expo 2026 wasn't just a display of corporate strength; it was an open invitation to the African continent to co-author the next chapter of digital print innovation.

By merging the rigorous engineering of the **Proficio Jet** and **Proficio PX** series with a localized, empathetic approach to customer support, Xerox is laying down a foundation of trust. For African print entrepreneurs ready to step up, the future isn't just bright—it's highly automated, incredibly profitable, and vividly colourful.

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VIBRANT THREADS AND PRECISION TECH: HOW KONICA MINOLTA WOVE SUCCESS STORIES AT PRINTING UNITED EXPO 2026



*© L-R: Adobe's **Mike Scrutton**, bigDAWGS' **Eddie Davin**, KM's **Frank Mallozzi** and **Jason Dizzine**, Kennickell Group's Al Kennickell, and Cyberchrome's **Michael Anderson**.*

*The energy on the floor of the **PRINTING United Expo 2026** was nothing short of electric, pulsing with the same rhythm and excitement you feel when stepping into a bustling textile market in Accra or Lagos. Among the sea of innovation, the **Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A., Inc. Press Briefing** stood out as a masterclass in modern storytelling. Led by Konica Minolta's **Frank Mallozzi** and **Jason Dizzine,** the briefing didn't just showcase machines; it unveiled a vibrant tapestry of real-world success, woven together by forward-thinking creators and printers. **WHERE To Print** Publisher, **Joju ADEKANBI** reports:*

Just like an intricate Ankara pattern—where bold geometric shapes meet precise lines to form a beautiful cultural narrative—Konica Minolta's latest tech is allowing print businesses to map out their own unique, complex blueprints for growth.



© KM's real-world customers, Cyberchrome, Kennickell Group and bigDAWGS testifying.

The Visionaries at the Loom

Frank Mallozzi and Jason Dizzine took the stage not just as executives, but as master weavers. They shared incredible insights into how digital print technology is evolving from a mere production tool into a medium for pure creative and commercial expression. Their focus was clear: empowering the customer to push boundaries. By providing the digital equivalent of premium dyes and high-speed looms, they are giving businesses the power to scale without losing an ounce of their bespoke artistry.

The Master Artisans: Real-World Triumphs

To truly understand the impact of this technology, one only had to look at the powerful customer testimonials spotlighted during the event. These aren't just businesses; they are modern, successful, forward-thinking creators and artisanal printers cutting from a different but highly inspirational cloth:

- **Michael Anderson (Cyberchrome):** Operating exclusively in the label business, Anderson highlighted Konica Minolta's true "approach to partnership—a focus on success for them and us too, providing complete solutions for us." Cyberchrome's growth narrative reads like a master weaver upgrading their tools: they started their journey with an ordinary press, and today, they have scaled up to the formidable **AccurioLabel 230,** unlocking incredible precision and speed with high-impact solutions.
- **Al Kennickell (The Kennickell Group):** This dynamic duo demonstrated the power of premium complexity. Their arsenal features a potent combination of the **AccurioJet KM-1e**and **two MGI digital embellishment presses.** This high-end tech stack allows them to overlay striking, tactile foil and varnish textures onto sheetfed output, giving them the unique ability "to do what others can't do." The Group is humbled by the opportunity to drive sustainable progress that creates lasting value for generations to come.
- **Eddie Davin (bigDAWGS):** Bringing the ultimate fire to the discussion, Davin made it clear that bigDAWGS competes entirely on value, not price. He is deeply passionate about value addition, leveraging Konica Minolta's ecosystem to incorporate sophisticated, built-in security directly into their prints, ensuring their bold designs are as protected as they are visually stunning. By focusing on customers' success, bigDAWGS is able to help customers unlock new avenues for growth and truly maximize the value they receive.

Expanding the Fabric: Driving Growth in the African Print Market with the American Examples

As highlighted in the dialogue, African enterprenuers can also aggressively scale up to capture a booming regional demand for high-quality commercial print, bespoke publishing, and localized packaging. WHERE To Print believes Konica Minolta's scalable ecosystem can provide the exact toolkit needed to weave this new economic narrative:

- **The Scalable Powerhouses (AccurioPress C5080 & AccurioPress 231):** For mid-sized print houses looking to transition from small-batch artisanal work to high-volume commercial production, these presses act as the perfect entry point. The **AccurioPress C5080** offers the agility to produce brilliant, short-run marketing materials with rich, heavy ink coverage that perfectly mimics the density of physical African wax prints, while the **AccurioPress 231** provides reliable, high-speed monochrome and spot-color versatility for educational and corporate publishing.
- **The Heavyweight Weaver (AccurioJet 30000):** As regional packaging demands explode for home-grown African cosmetics, fashion, and agro-processing brands, the B2-size **AccurioJet 30000** is proving to be a game-changer. Its massive format allows printers to lay down bold, complex geometric patterns onto heavy packaging stocks without sacrificing speed or colour consistency.
- **The Identity Builders (AccurioLabel Series & AccurioJet KM-1e):** Modern African brands demand localized, authentic storytelling on their shelves. Much like Cyberchrome's evolution, the **AccurioLabel** series empowers boutique businesses—from premium Ghanaian shea butter makers to Kenyan coffee roasters—to print stunning, high-definition labels with quick turnaround times. Combined with the legendary versatility of the **AccurioJet KM-1e** UV inkjet platform, printers can handle a vast array of uncoated, textured, and heavy substrates, bridging the gap between digital efficiency and tactile luxury.

Bold Patterns for a Bright Future

What we witnessed at the Konica Minolta briefing was a celebration of what happens when high-tech engineering meets high-octane human creativity. The takeaway for the global print community—and especially for creators looking to infuse rich, culturally dense visuals into commercial spaces—is clear. The right tools have caught up to our imaginations.

Thanks to the insights shared by the Master Artisans at KM's Press Briefing, print professionals around the world (especially from the rapidly expanding print hubs of Johannesburg, Nairobi, and Lagos) now have the perfect palette to go out and weave their own extraordinary stories.



*…with **Eddie Davin** (bigDAWGS).*



*…with **Al Kennickell** & **Kacey Kennickell** Ray (The Kennickell Group).*

THE PRINT SHOW & THE SIGN SHOW 2026: ATTENDEES EXCEED 5,500 AS MACHINERY SALES SURPASS £1M



*The UK print and signage industry took centre stage at **Hall 1** of Birmingham's **NEC** from **September 29th to October 1st,** celebrating a historic, record-breaking milestone for co-located trade shows. Marking its landmark tenth anniversary, **The Print Show** joined forces with the second edition of **The Sign Show** to deliver an electrifying three-day exhibition managed by **Link Exhibitions LTD.** This powerhouse collaboration drew a phenomenal **5,567 attendees** and generated **over £1 million** in live on-stand machinery sales, underscoring the vibrant momentum of the sector. Dive into the comprehensive post-show report below, adapted from the official press release, to explore the insights and innovations that shaped this monumental event.*

Organisers of **The Print Show** and **The Sign Show** announced a phenomenal year-on-year increase in attendance for this year's co-located events, drawing a final figure of **5,567 industry professionals.** The overall attendance figure represents a **4% increase** on last year's total of 5,336. However, organisers highlighted that the 2025 show included around 350 visitors from the PPMA Show, driven by a partnership between the two events. After excluding "crossover" visitors, attendance was **12% higher year-on-year.**

"We are delighted with the response to both The Print Show and The Sign Show this year," said **Chris Davies,** Event Director of the two events. "More people were in the hall across the three days, and that is a reflection on the quality of the events we put on. It was the best line-up of exhibitors we've ever had, with some of the biggest names in print in attendance."

HP, Epson, Roland DG, Agfa, Hybrid Services (Mimaki), swissQprint, Konica Minolta, Vivid Laminating Technologies, CMYUK, Plockmatic Group and **Soyang Group** were just some of the companies exhibiting this year across the two events. CMYUK took the largest stand in the show's history, allowing it to showcase a range of leading kit, including the exciting EFI VUTEk M3h 3.2m wide UV LED hybrid printer.

Strong Demand for New Technology

Alongside an increase in attendance numbers, organisers have also confirmed that a whole host of technology sales were completed in the hall across the three days. Early indications show that more than £1m worth of business was conducted at the two events.

Among the exhibitors that finalised sales at the show was Plockmatic Group, which counts Morgana and Intec among its brands. **Ed Hudson,** General Manager of UK sales and service, said that with just over an hour before the end of the show, the company had completed £527,000 worth of sales. "That is for orders genuinely taken on the stand during the show," Hudson said. "To say that I am thrilled would be an understatement. While we've had interest across the board, I would say our NovaBind 300 perfect binder and the Uchida AeroDieCut have been particularly popular with visitors this year."

CMYUK also had a successful few days on its record-breaking stand with several deals. These included the sale of a new EFI VUTEk M3h 3.2m to Banner Box Print Solutions. In addition, Vivid Laminating Technologies sold several pieces of machinery, including a new 3.2m Veloblade Nexus to Global Experience Specialists on the final day of the show.

"Of course, attendance is the first thing people ask about at the end of the show, but to us as an organiser, to see so many technology sales being completed at the event is just as important," Davies said. "This goes to show that The Print Show and The Sign Show are crucial platforms for manufacturers and suppliers to not only display technology but also conduct business."

Feature Fantastic

In addition to the main attraction of new technology, visitors were treated to a series of special features across the two events. These included the returning **Knowledge Zone** speaker area and the all-new **Print Mastermind Live** with the Online Print Coach, **Colin Sinclair McDermott,** and the **Print Show Podcast Booth.**

As for The Sign Show, the returning **Traditional Sign-Making Masterclass** with **David Mearns** of **Signmode** was once again a success, as was the new **PPF Knowledge Hub,** where those in attendance saw live paint protection film demos on a Mercedes CLA and Aston Martin DBS, and the **BSGA Route** in collaboration with the **British Sign & Graphics Association.**





"We are all about added value and ensuring visitors get the very most out of their day with us," Davies said. "We appreciate they are taking time out of the working day to visit the shows, so the more we can offer to them in terms of content, guidance and advice, the better."

High Hopes for 2027

Although the dust may have only just settled after The Print Show and The Sign Show 2026, thoughts are already turning towards next year, with organisers looking at ways to improve the two events and deliver an even better experience for exhibitors and visitors alike. "We've had some excellent feedback from exhibitors, some of which have already begun the process of booking their stands for 2027, and we'll be making announcements on that in due course," Davies said.

"We're taking some time to recover and regroup before the planning really starts for 2027. That said, we have already had conversations with several leading companies, which have not exhibited before, about being at the show next year. On this point, it's crucial that we continue to evolve the two shows year-on-year with new exhibitors, fresh technologies and exciting features. Watch this space!"





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BEYOND THE MACHINERY: EDUCATION AND INTERACTION

...strategic takeaways for African Print Service Providers

The Print Show 2026 offered African Print Service Providers critical strategic insights on high-margin diversification, technical advancements, and sustainability. The 2026 event delivered a masterclass in strategic growth under the guiding theme of "Print Without Barriers". For African print service providers looking to scale, the definitive takeaways from the NEC floor centred on **high-margin diversification, automated workflows, and eco-conscious production.**

The heavy presence of cutting-edge technology—such as **Fujifilm's Revoria PC2120** making its UK debut (read more on this exclusive on page 42) and Epson's high-production roll-to-roll Direct-to-Film (DTF) systems—highlighted pathways for African businesses to expand beyond traditional commercial paper printing into textiles, high-value packaging, and industrial signage.

Global Connections & Pictorial Insights

Playing an active role as a key media bridge, **Joju ADEKANBI**, Publisher of **WHERE To Print magazine,** was live on the exhibition floor. He humbly connected with a stellar lineup of global leaders, innovators, and industry greats.

Among these valuable exchanges, Adekanbi strategized with **Josh Birch** (former Campaign Manager at Two Sides, who was just promoted to MD. Read the story in PIW pages 12 and 28) to deepen African print media's commitment to global environmental sustainability initiatives. He also caught up with notable industry veterans like **Jean Lloyd** (expert on Inkjet & Hybrid Printing) and **Phil Walsh** of Print Island.

Flip through to see **the complete, exclusive pictorials capturing these vital connections** with the minds shaping the future of global graphics manufacturing. Following the success of these high-level engagements, **WHERE To Print magazine** aims to build on this momentum, looking forward to returning to the NEC for another productive convergence at **The Print Show 2027!**



Welcome to The Print Show and The Sign Show 2026.



...with **Josh Birch** (former Campaign Manager at Two Sides, who was just promoted to MD).



...with industry veterans, **Jean Lloyd** and **Phil Walsh.**



...with **Andy Kent** (GM, Graphic Communication Division).



...with Agfa's **Graham Clark,** who took me on the legendary and versatile hybrid printer, **Anapurna Clervo H3200.**



...with Plockmatic Group's **Andy Withall,** who introduced the group's brand-new **ColorCut LCF840Di** finisher.



Met with **Edward Corbett** of Zerographic (Premier Partner for Riso and Xerox), **Paul Stead** (Partner at Connect Print & co-founder of Young People In Print & Packaging - YPIPP).



Caught up with **Aimee Parsons** and **Daniel Porter** at AD Communications UK (representing FESPA Middle East).



...with **Jonathan Pert** and **David Osgar** of Print Monthly/SignLink.



...with **Tom Weaver** and **Robert Blackaby** of Digital Sign Services UK.



Connected with **Colin Sinclair McDermott** (The Online Print Coach) and **Jean Lloyd** (Africa Print Network).



...with **Tanisha Bernard** and **Reegan Mathew** of PrintCafe, Birmingham.



Had an excellent chat with **Rod Fletcher** (Marketing Manager of **The Print Show UK**). He has promised a dedicated media room for 2027 and plans to adapt Amanda Kliegl's award-winning **Media Day Initiative** for an interactive, pre-show exhibitors' briefing!



...with **Sue Hewick** and **Lawrence Green** of **The BSGA.**



...with **Sue Hewick** and **Jide.**



...receiving gifts from **Clinton Walker** of **The PRINT LOVER.**



...with **Ian Sayers** of CorelDRAW.



...with **Chris Davies,** Event Director of The Print Show and The Sign Show 2026.

MAKING WAVES: FUJIFILM'S HISTORIC PRESS DEBUT STEALS THE SHOW!



*Very few stands generated as much buzz as **Fujifilm UK & Ireland** at the 10th-anniversary edition of **The Print Show UK 2026**, making a highly anticipated exhibition debut with their cutting-edge "Make More" showcase. **WHERE To Print magazine's** Publisher and CEO, **Joju ADEKANBI,** caught up live at the NEC with industry veteran **Andy Kent,** General Manager of the Graphic Communication Division at **Fujifilm UK LTD.** In an exclusive, comprehensive tour of their massive **Stand P600,** Andy unboxed how the brand's powerhouse digital press lineup is breathing life into their defiant message: "This Changes Everything" to redefine production standards.*

The "Super Colour" Revolution: Hands-on with the Revoria PC2120

Taking absolute centre stage on the stand was the much-talked-about UK debut of the **Revoria PC2120.** Building on the massive success of its predecessor, the PC1120, this brand-new, AI-driven digital press is an absolute game-changer.

As Andy guided through the machine's live demonstrations, he highlighted its unparalleled **six-colour engine.** Running standard CMYK alongside an industry-first combination of **Green and Pink SUPER COLOUR toners,** the PC2120 easily reproduces over **93% of Pantone spot colours,** allowing print service providers to deliver high-value embellishments in a single pass. Andy also pointed out two game-changing features that set this series apart:

- **Heavyweight Stock Handling:** The press seamlessly handles media weights up to 400gsm, opening up massive opportunities for luxury packaging, heavy covers, and premium card production.
- **Inline Spectrophotometer & AI Integration:** The machine features an **inline spectrophotometer** paired with advanced **built-in Artificial Intelligence.** This system automatically calibrates, manages, and integrates complex colours in real-time, ensuring flawless colour consistency across long runs without manual operator intervention.

"This technology takes the hard work out of production print, enabling print service providers to handle complex RGB files like never before," Andy explained as we examined the vibrant, electrifying sample outputs on the floor. "It gives printers a real opportunity to capture high-margin creative work and stand out in a fierce market."

Automation Meets Affordability

Beyond the flagship PC2120, Andy also showed that Fujifilm's 2026 strategy is equally anchored on accessibility and end-to-end efficiency. We toured the highly versatile and affordable **Revoria EC2100S** and **SC285S** product lines, alongside the entry-level **ApeosPro C810** production press. A standout in this category was the **Press C285SC.** Engineered specifically to bring affordable excellence to the market, this press allows smaller and mid-sized commercial printers to venture into the lucrative world of **special colour** printing. It delivers Fujifilm's signature sharp quality and reliability in a streamlined, cost-effective footprint.

What binds these systems together is the sheer muscle of Fujifilm's **XMF PressReady workflow software.** In an era where commercial print hubs globally—including our active print corridors across Nigeria and West Africa—face severe margin pressures and labour shortages, Fujifilm's heavy emphasis on hands-off automation provides a clear roadmap to sustainable business growth.

Deep-Dive into Wide Format: AQUAFUZE Technology

The tour culminated at the wide-format display, where the **Acuity Triton** printer was running live. The machine utilizes Fujifilm's revolutionary, water-based, UV-curable **AQUAFUZE ink technology.** It perfectly bridges the gap between premium, high-opacity graphic durability and eco-conscious compliance, proving that commercial sustainability no longer requires a sacrifice in print speed or quality.



© The All-new Revoria 2120 digital press

Shaping the Future of Print

For WHERE To Print, this tour represented more than just a tech demonstration—it underscored the vital importance of technology-driven diversification. High-margin special toners, heavy stock versatility, and AI-driven automation are precisely the tools today's print business owners need to scale up their profitability.

Perspective on the African Market

In a market that is undergoing an aggressive shift toward shorter runs, premium packaging, and hyper-customization, African print service providers can leverage these breakthroughs to dominate local markets. For African printers, Fujifilm's new lineup offers a dual-pathway to global competitiveness.

First, the **Revoria 2120 series** solves a critical local pain point: consistent, high-end embellishment. By using inline gold, silver, and white toners on stocks up to **400gsm,** African print houses can immediately cut out the slow, expensive, and often unreliable multi-stage post-press processes. Luxury wedding stationery, premium cosmetic packaging, and high-end corporate collateral can now be produced entirely in-house, on-demand, and with absolute colour precision driven by AI.

Second, the **Press C285SC** democratises special colour printing. Many print shops across West Africa want to scale up, but capital expenditure barriers stop them. The C285SC bridges this gap. It allows mid-tier printers to pitch for high-margin, branded corporate accounts requiring special colours without choking their cash flow.

To African print entrepreneurs: do not look at this as just European tech. Look at it as the tool to reclaim high-value jobs that are currently being outsourced to overseas printers. By investing in AI-driven colour integration and heavy-stock versatility, local press houses can drastically reduce waste, beat tight deadlines, and command premium pricing.

For WHERE To Print, this tour represented more than just a tech demonstration—it underscored the vital importance of technology-driven diversification. High-margin special toners, heavy stock versatility, and AI-driven automation are precisely the tools today's print business owners need to scale up their profitability.


© Revoria Press C285SC

UNLOCKING THE NEXT FRONTIER: HOW MINUTEMAN PRESS AND WHERE TO PRINT ARE BLUEPRINTING A FRANCHISE REVOLUTION TO HELP WEST AFRICAN PRINTERS SCALE UP

*The vibrant, machinery-lined floor of **The Print Show UK** provided a fittingly industrial backdrop for a landmark conversation. Rather than meeting in a quiet boardroom, **Joju ADEKANBI,** the Publisher and CEO of West Africa's premier print-centric publication, WHERE To Print magazine, engaged in a candid conversation with **Mark Jones,** the Regional Vice President for **Minuteman Press International Inc.** The cornerstone of their dialogue was an ambitious vision: leveraging Minuteman Press's over **50 years of industry-leading experience** to introduce world-class franchising and buy-out printing services to the **West African region.***

Surrounded by live demonstrations of cutting-edge digital printers, vibrant signage, and promotional product displays, the setting itself became a live showcase of the very business model they were discussing. The focus of their high-level discussion was momentous: exploring strategies to bring Minuteman Press's globally renowned B2B printing franchise model into West Africa, leveraging over **50 years of franchising experience** to help regional print and allied concerns scale up.

Over 50 Years of Franchising Heritage

WHERE To Print magazine Publisher and CEO **Joju Adekanbi** and **Minuteman Press International Inc.** Regional Vice President **Mark Jones** reflected on Minuteman Press's **50-plus years of franchising excellence.** Since its founding in New York in 1973, the company has grown into a global network of nearly **1,000 franchises.**

The conversation between Adekanbi and Jones highlighted Minuteman Press's formidable track record. As the world's leading printing franchise, Minuteman Press has successfully scaled its business model across multiple continents. A prime template for this discussion was their highly successful footprint in **South Africa,** where established franchisors and local B2B print centres have long flourished under the brand.

During the exclusive meeting, the two visioners explored how this time-tested model can be adapted to match the economic dynamics of West Africa.

- **Franchising Opportunities:** Jones outlined how Minuteman Press's turnkey business model—encompassing digital print, design, and marketing solutions—can empower local West African entrepreneurs. This setup provides them with proven operational systems, corporate training, and volume-buying power.
- **Strategic Buy-Outs:** The discussion also delved into potential buy-out options, offering an exit strategy or expansion mechanism for existing independent print shops looking to convert into globally backed franchises.
- **Industry Sustainability:** Adekanbi lauded Minuteman Press for ensuring the long-term sustainability of physical printing presses through continuous adaptation into multi-channel marketing, promotional products, and high-opacity digital tech.

Jones pointed out that the brand's long-term global stability relies heavily on an entrepreneur-first philosophy. He specifically highlighted their unique **capped royalty structure** (where royalties stop after a certain sales volume) and their proprietary **FLEX management software.** This software seamlessly handles pricing, workflow, and customer relationship management—tools that Jones emphasized would give West African business owners an immediate competitive edge.

Leveraging the South African Success Story

A central pillar of the discussion on the stand was Minuteman Press's highly successful expansion model in **South Africa.** Over the decades, the brand has established a powerful network of franchisors and individual owners across South African cities, proving that its corporate business-to-business model translates perfectly into diverse African economic climates.

Jones explained that the South African franchises succeeded because they didn't just sell "ink on paper." Instead, they positioned themselves as essential marketing partners for local small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs). He noted that the exact same blueprint—combining graphic design, corporate apparel, promotional products, and signage—could easily be replicated to empower a new wave of independent franchisors in West Africa.

The Scale-Up Hurdle in West Africa

Adekanbi, drawing on decades of industry oversight in the region, painted a clear picture of the current mindset in hubs like Lagos, Abuja, and Accra. "Right now, print and allied concerns in West Africa are highly desirous of the Minuteman experience," Adekanbi stated. He explained that the region is packed with exceptionally skilled, passionate printers who have built businesses from the ground up, but many have hit a hard operational ceiling. Adekanbi detailed how local concerns are actively looking to leverage proven global systems to solve major structural pain points such as:

- **The Trap of Fragmented Operations:** Many West African print shops operate in silos, suffering from erratic pricing structures, unoptimized workflows, and a lack of CRM data. This makes scaling beyond a single location highly risky.
- **Economic Pressures and Waste Reduction:** With fluctuating exchange rates affecting equipment and consumable costs, local printers can no longer afford operational waste. They need the absolute precision that comes with a standardized system.
- **Diversification as a Survival Strategy:** Traditional commercial printers in the region are desperate to transition away from low-margin, seasonal printing into consistent, high-margin corporate B2B services.

How the Minuteman Ecosystem Matches the Need

Jones listened intently, gesturing to the **proprietary FLEX software** running on a terminal at the stand. He explained how Minuteman's model is explicitly designed to handle exactly these kinds of scaling challenges. "When we talk about bringing over 50 years of experience to West Africa, we aren't just talking about selling equipment," Jones emphasized. "We are talking about deploying a completely integrated management system that turns a chaotic workshop into a predictable, scalable business."



© L-R: Joju Adekanbi (WHERE To Print magazine), Jean Lloyd (African Print Network) and Mark Jones (Minuteman Press International Inc.)

Thereafter, Jones and Adekanbi outlined the specific elements of the Minuteman model that West African printers are hungry to leverage:

1. **Management Automation (FLEX Software):** Jones demonstrated how the software completely eliminates guesswork by handling everything from fast, precise job costing to automated customer follow-ups and workflow tracking. For a West African print business owner, this means being able to step away from daily micro-management to focus on strategic regional expansion.
2. **Capped Royalties for Real Growth:** Adekanbi strongly praised Minuteman's unique **capped royalty structure.** In an emerging market where business owners are highly protective of their hard-earned revenues, knowing that their royalty payments stop after reaching a specific monthly sales milestone acts as a massive incentive for local allied businesses to scale aggressively.
3. **Turn-Key Marketing Partnerships:** Jones explained how the franchise framework teaches owners how to stop pitching themselves as "cheap printers" and start operating as **allied marketing consultants** for local corporations, schools, and SMEs. By bundling graphic design, corporate apparel, promotional products, and digital signage, businesses can immediately generate multiple, steady streams of revenue.

A Mutual Exchange of Shared Vision for Local Empowerment

For Adekanbi, whose core focus at WHERE To Print magazine has always been responsibly highlighting "the human side of print," the collaboration is about more than just machinery. It is about building sustainable ecosystems, creating jobs, and raising the technical benchmarks for print production in West Africa. As the discussion wrapped up on the busy stand, Adekanbi emphasized that West African print leaders aren't just looking for software—they are also looking for the **mentorship, continuous training, and supply-chain leverage** that Minuteman Press has successfully established through its franchisorship network around the world. By marrying WHERE To Print's deep, trusted industry connections with Minuteman's legendary operational framework, both executives agreed that the ground is perfectly laid to help West Africa's printing sector confidently scale up, professionalize, and match international standards.

Looking Ahead

The dialogue concluded on a highly optimistic note, with both executives agreeing that a collaboration between WHERE To Print's deep regional market intelligence and Minuteman Press's time-tested franchise model could unlock unprecedented opportunities. For West Africa, this movement could herald a new era of entrepreneurial wealth creation and structured industrial growth within the graphics communications sector.

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Mercy Moka, Sales Manager, West Africa
Email: Mercy.moka@montgomerygroup.com
Tel: +234 (0) 812 172 2353

Byron Vorster, International Sales Executive
Email: Byron.vorster@montgomerygroup.com
Tel: +27 (0) 72 173 0834

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