



Sinapse Graphic International - Simulators & Software for the Graphic Arts

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Graphic Packaging International, Inc. Double Installation SHOTS Simulator Saves Downtime

Graphic Packaging International, Inc. is one of the country's largest producers of cereal boxes and other food packaging, and with 24/7 operation and millions of feet of carton running through the plants each month, there is no room for downtime. This has become a real challenge in today's hiring environment in which new employees have little or no experience and are often trained on press.

For this reason, Graphic Packaging International, Inc.'s Gordonsville, TN, and Kalamazoo, MI, plants have invested in SHOTS press training simulators from Sinapse Graphic International. The Gordonsville plant has been running its simulator since Fall 2006 and the Kalamazoo plant is about to begin its initial training sessions.

The two installations come on the heels of a highly successful 2004 SHOTS installation at Graphic Packaging International, Inc.'s Ft. Smith, AK, operation.

Experience Without Downtime

For the Gordonsville, TN, the ability to give trainees production experience without downtime on the press has been invaluable. "Before SHOTS, new hires went through a safety orientation, then straight to the press," says Dave Zeman, training coordinator of the plant, which has more than 120 employees. "They are paired with more experienced operators, but in our business, accuracy of reproduction is critical. The cartons have to look perfect. When they start making errors, it's costly."

Add to this the challenge of accurately representing brand colors. Both Gordonsville and Kalamazoo produce four-color packaging, plus two (but potentially up to four) spot colors.

For Richard Self, technical trainer and promotions manager for the Kalamazoo plant, training issues focus on ink and water balance. "Not a lot of people understand the concept of litho—how it works and the principles behind it," Self says. "It takes a long time to learn, and if you start throwing away pallets of product, those costs don't take long to add up."

High Level of Realism

The Gordonsville plant has been training on the simulator since October, 2006. Zeman currently has two training programs in place—one for new hires and a continuous improvement program for existing employees. The SHOTS simulator runs 30 exercises produced by its trainer to match its workflow. This gives new hires "a feel of what will happen in the pressroom, what can happen, and why it happens." It also includes exercises at the medium and advanced levels.

Zeman is very enthusiastic about the realism of the simulator. "We can show operators a register mark, for example, and say, if you move this, it moves that, and reproduce what actually happens on the press. They can experience, in real time, what happens when you move the register to the right, left, or back."

Sinapse Graphic International –

Bat. Epicure, Parc des Algorithmes – Route de l'Orme aux Merisiers
91194 St Aubin Cedex - FRANCE

Tél. : +33 (0)1.69.35 54 00 - Fax : +33 (0)1.69 35 07 15 - e-mail info@sinapsegraphic.com

One of Zeman's favorite exercises relates to packing size and how it can impact the quality of print. "This is something that is very non-intuitive, so it's only something operators learn through hands-on training," he says.

Are the exercises challenging for experienced operators, as well? Zeman says that even he has been stumped by the **realism of the simulator**. In one training session, one of his trainers "turned off" the air conditioning in the building. "It really messed me up," says Zeman. "I couldn't figure out what it was. I had no idea the simulator could change the temperature of the pressroom!"

Training Out of the Gate

New hires start on the simulator two to three hours their first night in the door. After that, both new and experienced operators rotate in an as-needed basis. Zeman felt the training was so important that he hired temps to open up training time.

How does he determine where additional training is needed? "From the downtime reporting system," says Zeman. "I load the downtime reports and find out which one is the killer."

SHOTS training has been particularly helpful for the plant's third shift, where press operators have only been running a press for two years or less. Zeman has seen a **noticeable improvement in their confidence and skill levels**, especially among new hires.

Making this training particularly sweet is that Zeman was able to obtain funding for SHOTS from state of the Tennessee, through the Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency.

For the Kalamazoo plant, it was a matter of simple payback. "Management realized that, once you start throwing away pallets of product, you can burn up the cost of the simulator in a few hours," says Self. "They recognized that [with the reduction in waste and downtime] the **training pays itself back**."



Gary Wix trainer at Graphic Packaging Gordonsville (left) and Victor Sadler (right) working with the Simulator

SHOTS is one of the training simulators for offset, flexo and gravure produced by Sinapse Graphic. With over 1000 simulators installed around the world, Sinapse is recognized as the leader in print training technology.

For more information on the SHOTS (Sheetfed Offset Training Simulator) product, contact info@sinapsegraphic.com or check www.sinapsegraphic.com for additional case studies, product documentation and a list of distributors near you.