



Integrated converting

Robert Bosch in Hungary is labeling its power-tools using an integrated line from Eltex which prints, cuts and laminates barcode and ID labels in one pass. **Sandra Boga** reports

Eltex has used its experience in adhesive technology and surface protection to develop a system which integrates thermal transfer printing, cutting and laminating into one line. The Eltex 7500 is designed primarily to convert barcode and product identification labels.

'High-quality and resistant self-adhesive barcode labels or type plates for industrial use are created in the interplay of adhesive, foil and laminate, and the right thermal transfer ribbon for the thermal transfer printer,' comments Wolfgang Leihe, Eltex managing director and developer of the system.

The Eltex 7500 is now in use for this type of application at power tool manufacturer Robert Bosch's Hungarian plant, where it is outputting half a million labels a week.

Peter Katona, production manager at Bosch's Miskolc plant, has been working with the Eltex system for seven months. Along with the production of sand-blasters, he and his team are responsible for labeling the whole range of Bosch tools, from hammer drills through cutters and saws to cordless rechargeable screwdrivers. Because at least three labels are required for every tool – a type label, one with production data and an adhesive

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label for the packing – things soon mount up.

The volume of 500,000 labels each week means that Bosch Hungary has to print, cut and laminate round the clock, according to Peter Katona: 'We use the Eltex 7500 on work days in several shifts, 24 hours per day, and on Saturdays we work an 8-hour shift as well.'

The sheer quantity of labels is not the only challenge. The crunch is the batch sizes for the labels. Bosch has to label large quantities of different power tools in small batches for different



The Eltex 7500 is in action at Bosch labeling power tools

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markets. For example, along with batches of several thousand, sometimes batches of just a few hundred are required.

It is here that the Eltex system, with its short set-up time, has proved most valuable, according to Peter Katona: 'The Eltex 7500 is able to cut and laminate small batches without complications and just as economically as large ones. We have to react quickly and be able to change both the label size and the batch size at short notice in order not to endanger compliance with the production process. The fact that changing the settings for the Eltex 7500 takes less than ten minutes is a great help to us. Flexibility is everything today.'

The need for flexibility is one of the reasons why Bosch Hungary will not consider ready-to-use screen printed labels. 'Screen printing is too expensive for our purposes,' points out Peter Katona. 'We would always be dependent on the printers, and we simply couldn't integrate this into our production process.'

Katona says that traditional printing technologies cannot be used economically with smaller runs because of long set-up times, extensive set-up material and additional costs for the masters and the printing plates. Katona is looking for the Eltex 7500 to pay for itself in the first year.

Surface protection of the labels was another important reason for Bosch to choose the Eltex system – Eltex has several patented processes for making surface-protected labels as well

as considerable expertise in adhesive technology.

'The color fastness of a label is an enormously important aspect,' Katona points out. 'Bosch attaches considerable importance to compliance with its corporate design, and the company colors are quite simply part of this design's material components.'

Katona says that the Eltex is an easy system to maintain. 'System maintenance is not complicated. When we started working with the Eltex 7500, someone from the company was here for two days to provide us with a detailed introduction to the system. This is why we can solve most problems ourselves, on the spot. And this is absolutely vital, because a rapid reaction is essential in view of the important position of labeling in the overall production process. If we have any really complicated problems someone from Eltex is here within 48 hours.' ■

