

Save a Bundle



USA:
Despite the Internet,
the print media
industry thrives.



GMA

MEMBER OF THE MULLER MARTINI GROUP

The USA is the land of bargains and coupons. Slogans such as “This is a 210 dollar value!” regularly appear in Sunday papers and refer to the abundance of coupons and bonuses which Americans love in order to shop inexpensively. The promotional market is prospering, guaranteeing the survival of countless regional newspapers. This means that the demand for machines which are used to fill these newspapers with advertisement circulars is constantly increasing. GMA, a member of the worldwide Muller Martini Group, fulfills the wishes of American newspaper printers by emphasizing greater efficiency and lower costs. GMA owes its continuous growth to constantly improving technologies and close cooperation with the newspaper, printing, and print media industries.

At the crossroads of print media and cyberspace, you may ask yourself whether the easy access to the World Wide Web and the high availability of information online would lead to a decline in newspaper sales. In reality, this is not the case. The fact that people still prefer to read a printed version

proves that conventional print media is secure from being edged out or replaced by cyberspace. For this reason, there is still an active demand for innovative solutions for the newspaper and printing industries.

“Our customers are looking for total integrated systems for insertion, bundling and storage through delivery,” says Darrell Pav, Director of Technology of Graphic Management Associates (GMA), a leading manufacturer of newspaper mailroom processing equipment based in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania. “Such industry trends are driving GMA’s product and system development. Customers like USA Today, The New York Times, and The Washington Post are constantly challenging us to improve our products to guarantee high productivity and efficiency. The demand for space-efficient machinery, smaller zones with more packages, and reduced production lead-times drive the need for a more highly automated mail room.”

To face these demands, GMA decided to introduce an innovative bundling machine to the market. Known under the name The Bundler, this machine combines four different steps: stacking,

wrapping, labeling, and strapping. Savings are then passed on to GMA's customers. By replacing traditional bundling equipment, The Bundler saves valuable space, eliminates one or several machines, increases personnel efficiency, and speeds up the entire process. Engineers from B&R USA, working closely with the design team from GMA, were able to develop The Bundler in less than four months. The machine itself consists of two stacking forks, two compression forks, and an infeed drum controlled by ACOPOS servo drives which communicate with a B&R System 2003 via a CAN bus. In addition, The Bundler features a B&R IPC 2001 with a custom 6-inch color touch display where Interact software is running for alarm functions and for setting application parameters.

In this unique process, newspapers are fed from the line conveyor into The Bundler where they are accumulated to a predetermined bundle size with an accuracy of 99.9%. Its remarkable degree of accuracy reduces both waste and overproduction. The complete newspaper stack is then compressed, strapped, and wrapped. A current development of an optional Power Wrap machine will wrap the bundled newspapers with transparent plastic foil before the conveyor belt takes the finished bundle to the next station. The Bundler can also be equipped with a cover page applicator to provide each bundle with distribution information such as truck, address, and shipping information. GMA's bundler is presently able to output 25 bundles per minute. Simply put, in just 36 minutes this ACOPOS-driven machine produces enough bundles that when stacked on top of each other, would be higher than the Empire State Building.

The Bundler can be operated in Local Mode, Service Mode, or Remote Mode. If several bundlers are taking part in the same process, the software determines which bundler takes over which newspapers. The possibility of controlling remotely not only increases productivity, it also reduces waste. In addition, this integrated system increases the customer's efficiency while reducing the need for service and maintenance personnel at the same time.

GMA's decision to make B&R their automation hardware supplier is based on

several factors. According to Darrell Pav, GMA was looking for a "total integrated solution" for their bundler applications. In addition to their excellent worldwide



GMA's bundler is presently able to output 1,500 bundles per hour.

service and application support, B&R also offered "very scalable hardware solutions." This gives GMA a high degree of flexibility to migrate their engineering investment to multiple machines more rapidly. B&R Automation Studio also provided a uniform software solution for controllers (PLC, IPC), motion control, and visualization. "This single development tool allowed for maximum flexibility and greatly compressed the engineering cycle. This in turn reduced costs and accelerated the machine's "time-to-market," added Pav.

Thanks to the compact size of ACOPOS servo drives, B&R was able to meet the demands of small machines which need a total space of less than 50 square feet. The B&R solution for The Bundler allows application parameters to be modified "on the fly". This makes setting up the machine much faster than ever before. B&R integrated controller platforms also play a role in reducing costs. In the end, the main reason for GMA's decision to work with B&R came down to their "high degree of technology, flexibility, and overall value."

To date, GMA's customers have ordered nearly 100 machines. About one half of The Bundlers have already been installed

and are running very efficiently at customer locations all across the USA. And the market continues to grow – the advertising industry always has new demands and shifts budget funds from inserts to supplements. Up to now, earnings were gained by newspaper circulation. Nowadays, the advertising-driven economy is interested in being able to understand target precision and the exact quantities needed to avoid excess and media overflow which emerged when inserts were being overly circulated. Most advertisers have already switched to inserts and supplements which will sustain the need for bundling. Using a PC, addressing individual bundles makes it easy to manage the logistics of sending bundles to different areas with the appropriate content.

"In the end," says Darrell Pav, "the key to success for any organization is to be ready to quickly change and adapt to current market requirements. Our customers need to be cost-efficient. OEMs constantly have to look for innovative new applications in order to stay competitive and certainly to help the customers 'save a bundle.'" 