

Print Push Pays for GSB

A push on printing markets has enabled GSB Chemicals to increase sales in the industry from 30 to 50 per cent of its business in 12 months. Chemical and technical manager Mladen Dugec, who joined the company after service with DS Chemport and Sicpa, says the focus has moved from UV products to press maintenance.

The company, which claims to be Australia's largest manufacturer of paint-stripper, introduced its own range of printing chemistry in the 1980s, and concentrates on products such as ink roller and blanket cleaners. "Service remains a key factor because no two presses are alike," he says.

"They run different blankets, different paper stocks and have different operators, even though the press models may be the same. Our success has been tailor-making products to meet individual requirements. Printing is still not an exact science, so some people might want a solvent which was a little faster or slower, less odour or less flammable. There are quite a number of parameters.

"There are six or eight press chemical manufacturers in Australia and are 28 or 30 distributors and suppliers of pressroom chemistry, with a lot of rebranding and relabelling. It can get pretty confusing."

Despite interest in environmental considerations, Dugec says health and safety will always top the list of priorities. "Australia follows European and US trends, and while the Americans are very conscious of environmental safety and VOCs, the European emphasis remains on safety for the operators themselves," he says. "It's strange that in America they might use materials which are quite toxic but low VOC.

"Cost still is the ruler hence the proliferation still of cheap solvents such as mineral turps. Until there is an environmentally-acceptable alternative that is cheap and works, that is likely to remain the case."

GSB is using its established share of the sheet-fed, continuous and label markets as a platform on which to base growth into newspaper and heatset markets. It also supplies screen printing products and packaging consumables, manufacturing products such as private label screen blockouts for marketing by other major vendors.

"We manufacture several hundred products for a number of different companies, and have only recently begun to take a higher profile in the market, becoming a PANPA associate member and taking part in the conference," says Dugec. "There's a lot of getting out and meeting people, and we're pretty happy with the progress so far."

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