[INTRODUCTION]

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[EPISODE]

[0:00:54] DC: Bonjourno. From Labelexpo, it is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. I am here with Sebastiano Lonardi from Grafical in beautiful Verona, Italia. Bonjourno

[0:01:10] SL: Bonjourno. Hello to everybody.

[0:01:12] DC: Hello, everybody. First of all, when I looked at the photo of your enormous printing company, in the middle of a beautiful field, and meadows of Verona, Italy, I thought I was looking at a painting. It is one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen. You're very lucky to work there every day. But you're not so lucky, because you were born into this. Your father and his brothers started your company in 1984, you joined in 2010. Why don't you tell everybody some history about the business, please?

[0:01:54] SL: Yes. The company was founded by my father, and then my three uncles joined into the company later. The company started as a sheet-fed printing company. We were printing a lot of commercial prints. Then, of course, we start to printing labels, because we are in the

middle of a wine region. There is a lot of small company that needs labels for wine. So we start printing label in sheet-fed. So, wet and glue label.

Then, the business grew. I mean, the market changes. So a lot of customers change the machines, labeling machines to sell for the label. We change also our production, switching from wet and glue machine to a self-adhesive machine.

Then, this business really grew up in the last 20 years. Now, it is – I mean, 80% of our revenue comes from self-adhesive labels. We start printing with offset machines, then we put in the company also screen printing machines, and also, digital machines with HP. That was a really big changing in the way to print.

[0:03:10] DC: Excellent. Your website is almost as beautiful as the scenery around your printing plant. I loved it. Shout out to your sister, Anna, who makes that happen. On it, you describe the philosophy of your company, which is 360-degree printing. What do you mean by that?

[0:03:34] SL: We mean that we really have a lot of technologies, so we really can print any kind of label that the customer can ask for. So as I told you, we have offset machine, flexo machine, screen printing machine, then older machine are equipped with old foil printing, embossing. We can glue a label on another label, so do multi-level labels. With the digital printing, also, we can offer a huge amount of possibilities. The most important one is the variable data one that is only possible with digital printing. But with HP, we really can give a huge number of possibility like silver ink, invisible ink, and microtex ink. So we really can satisfy the needs of our customers.

[0:04:24] DC: Yes. I want to definitely talk more about that, but I still want to stay on your website for a moment because I loved it so much. Yes, on there. You mentioned you have a section for printing and finishing techniques. You mentioned for variable data printing and variable data and versioning, which I thought was a great way of positioning it for your customers. But I also learned stuff on your website, like I did not know what micro engraving was. That's so beautiful.

[0:04:56] SL: Yes. One of the finishes that we can propose. Of course, we need to create a tool that is dedicated for this finishing. With micro engraving, you can really do a lot of effects. You can simulate also holograms or you can do really fine details on the old stamping process.

[0:05:15] DC: You also do letterpress.

[0:05:14] SL: Yes, we have some old machines and we do letterpress mainly on a sheet-fed. We saw that now, some customer is asking us to letterpress using really thick material to have a really deboss effect on the material. They like it as well.

[0:05:36] DC: Yes. Do you have fun trying to do all these experiments? With everything you can do in your plant, it must be a lot of fun.

[0:05:45] SL: I think our business is one of the funnest business that we have.

[0:05:49] DC: Yes. I mean, it's like a giant arts and crafts workshop in your plant. You can make so many different things. You can try so many different things. You can use different technologies and marry them together. It's just incredible, incredible. I watched the video that is also on your website. I have never seen such a clean place in my life. I mean, the machines, the people, everything was gorgeous in there. You could tell it wasn't just cleaned for that day, because people were just doing their regular jobs there.

[0:06:24] SL: Yes, we also are BRC certified. Of course, our plant needs to be really clean because we are also printing for the food industry.

[0:06:35] DC: Okay, yes.

[0:06:37] SL: It is a must, of course, for us.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUES]

[0:07:27] DC: Okay. So it brings me to something else you highlighted on your site, which is your quality systems, or your quality checks, and the different organizations that you work with to ensure your quality system. Can you elaborate? Can you speak more on that?

[0:07:45] SL: Of course, we have different processes that we have to follow to ensure the quality. They are mainly on colors, because, of course, we are a printing company. So color is the first technical specification that we have to guarantee. But then, we have also some other checks on text, on the dimension, and so on. We have steps on all the processes. From the technical department to the prepress, to the print department, and also to the packaging department.

[0:08:18] DC: I also saw you had some logos, like FSC some other of those logos. Can you talk about those qualities?

[0:08:24] SL: Yes. I've seen certification for the possibility of the paper. Then, we have also the certification of a BRC for the food packaging. We are very proud about the second certification because it's not easy to reach it. As you saw, we really have to have a very clean facilities and so on. We're really proud of that.

[0:08:48] DC: Yes. Speaking of quality, in the video, I really appreciated that you spent some time showing that your press operators were in the light booth, and they were looking at color and people were looking at spectrometers and Pantone colors or whatever you have in Europe is very serious in the label business.

[0:09:11] SL: Yes. As I told you, the color is our main specification, the first thing that customers look at. So we have spectrophotometers on all the machines to check the color. We work a lot with Pantone colors, but we do work a lot with personalized colors for the customer. For the conventional printing, we have an ink lab. So we prepare the ink before printing, we test them on the right substrate. Then, we go on the presser to print them. On HP, we manage it with color engine from Esko. Even there, we test the color. We use some tools that HP gives to match the color. But then, at the end we measure it with our spectrophotometer to ensure the quality of it.

Then, of course, the spectrophotometer is really important because it is an objective measurement. But of course, we have a section. We have different kinds of lights. We also can check them with [inaudible 0:10:07] eyes, how the color change on different light. That is because when we work with different technologies, offset, screen printing, and so on, the ink can change. Even if on the D50 light, the color seems okay. Maybe you have a difference on the other light, because the ink is different, so it can react in a different manner. At the end, the visual control has to be done at any case.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUES]

[0:11:08] DC: I really appreciate that because I was an advertising agency print buyer for many, many years, and we used to get match prints. Do you even know what a match print is? Oh, you do. Okay. You might have been too young. We used to take it outside to see what it really looked like because you couldn't tell under the fluorescent lights. I really appreciate that you're saying that. Okay. Your family starts the business in 1984. They're obviously using traditional printing methods there. Then, at some point, someone says, "You know, this personalization

customization thing being able to do maybe smaller runs or look at your business in a different way. This might be good time to do that, and you obviously put your investment in HP. Yes?

[0:11:53] SL: Yes, yes. The main reason in the beginning, it was really to find a way to manage the short run because we are in a region with a lot of big company, but also a lot of small company that needs just 1000 label. So doing this on conventional printing was really difficult, and, of course, too much expensive for the customer. So the digital printing in the beginning was the solution to this need.

Then of course, this was the solution for this need, but digital printing with itself is not just for a short run, but also for personalization and variable data printing. So for example, sometimes the bottles has a unique number because there are just a few bottles of that kind of wine. So these are printings I've been asked to do this. In the beginning, this was done with typo printing, with the numbering changing.

[0:12:48] DC: Oh, wow.

[0:12:49] SL: Sometimes we are doing it again, because sometimes the customer like the feeling of the –

[0:12:55] DC: And the customer is always right, even though it's not the best way of doing it.

[0:12:59] SL: But of course, digital printing is really happening because you can also change fonts on something.

[0:13:04] DC: Yes. Amazing. Do your customers with larger print runs, do they consider not just for specialty moments, but are you having conversations with them about just thinking about what they do differently. Maybe a certain region of Italy gets a different picture than another one or a different name of the wine or something.

[0:13:27] SL: Yes. Mainly, we still are using digital printing to manage the short and long runs. There is also variable at the print, but it's mainly numbering, sometimes changing the color of a pattern, but it's not used so much as they can.

[0:13:45] DC: It's hard to get the traditional people to think like that because they have a process and it makes sense. But when they are ready, you are ready to help them, which is the most important thing. Okay. Let's talk about your relationship with Esko as well. Esko and HP are now partners. So if we're partners, they have been for a long time. How do those two technologies, the Indigos and the Eskos workflow working together? How has that changed your business?

[0:14:19] SL: For us, the Esko solution is really important, mostly because it is connected to our MIS (Print Management Information System). All the MIS information is available in Esko, and Esko can use this information to prepare the frames that we have to print. We're also doing stepper repeat, put marks, and ordering tools. So we order even the tools like cutting out tools to Esko, and everything is automatic. The relation with HP is really easy because Esko prepared everything in automatic mode, and then send all this file and information to HP. Like color strategy, so color to use, number of copies that we have to print, and so on.

The HP has automatic, all this information flow, I don't know what to call it. For the operator, it's really easy to print because everything is already done. The operator doesn't need to decide the gap putting the label, the bleeding, and so on. Esko is really making everything automatic, and HP just has to take this information and print. It is a really strong relationship between the softwares. I mean, between MIS, Esko, and HP, all free software. This strong relationship really helped to automate the workflow.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUES]

[0:16:24] DC: Now, usually, when people speak about automating workflows, there's some problems that it solves. Sometimes, it's humans, it's not enough humans to work. A software solution can automate some processes. The other thing is, if less humans touch it, you have more chance to have better profit in your print jobs. Have you noticed an ability to be more flexible now that your workflow is operating like a Ferrari?

[0:16:56] SL: Yes. We have everything that is automated. But at the beginning, the technical department is still making something with their head. I mean, they are thinking of what they want to do. This is still manual work. But at the end, when they decide which label they want to print, in which way, everything is going automatic. Because the information are there, Esko can use this information, HP can use this information. When you put the information inside the MIS, then they are available for the software, so automation will go.

[0:17:31] DC: I assume that makes everything go faster too.

[0:17:33] SL: Yes, of course. We really can do – I don't know how much, but 10 times the job that we can do without the software. Because now, if you ask to my prepress operator if they can come back and work without Esko, they say okay, but they need five people more in the office.

[0:17:54] DC: That's amazing. The last thing I want to mention is that you are a very humble gentleman sitting here, not having too much pride about your business, but I'm going to have pride for you. Because I love that you have a store where you actually sell things that you print. Some of your customers are lucky to get some of your items as gifts. Otherwise, people can go by the spectacular calendars that show off the amazing printing and finishing techniques. Also, you had tarot cards, which I showed you, which I want to order if you will send them to America for me. That is a very bold thing to put a store on and say, "Look, we're so proud of what we have. We're willing to sell it."

[0:18:41] SL: Yes. Then, everything [inaudible 0:18:43] because we use these products, calendar, and tarots, as marketing tools. But the problem was that a lot of people wanted it. So he became a really huge work to do. So we start also to put them on the store, so everybody that know us can also have it even if they are not our customer and so on.

[0:19:07] DC: It's beautiful. It has just been so nice chatting with you. Thank you so much for everything, for this conversation, for the beautiful website, for putting beautiful print out into the world, and for letting people see the value of it every time they pick up a beautiful bottle of Italian wine as well. Which you can send me one of those two if you don't mind, as long as my tarot cards are coming. Everything you need to –

[0:19:34] SL: We have also – if you want to personalize the card, because there is a game on the tarot, so you can do the game, and then personalize the card with the choice that you do with the game, related to the game.

[0:19:46] DC: Okay. I think I'm going to do that too. Everything you need to know, to connect with Sebastiano and Grafical, I'm going to put in the show notes of the podcast. Until next time, print long and prosper. How do you say that in Italian?

[0:20:02] SL: What? Sorry.

[0:20:03] DC: Print long and prosper. It doesn't translate? I tried in different languages. Okay, everybody, we'll just say it in English. Print long and prosper. Ciao.

[0:20:14] SL: Ciao.

[END OF EPISODE]

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[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

Sebastiano Lonardi: https://www.linkedin.com/in/sebastiano-lonardi-01741157/

Grafical: https://www.grafical.it

Esko: https://www.esko.com

HP: https://www.hp.com/

HP Indigo Digital Presses: https://www.hp.com/us-en/industrial-printers/indigo-digital-presses.html

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