



Die-cutting technology and toolmaking belong together

Alliance for High Performance

The partnership between Bobst Group SA and CITO-SYSTEM GmbH has now been officially signed and sealed for around eight weeks. Time for us to take a closer look at our joint strategies and future plans.

Back in 2016 it was decided in Lausanne to start a tooling project. The objective of this project was and is to develop optimum tools for modern, high-tech die-cutting machines. It was already generally known years ago that the Swiss can develop outstanding machine technology. It is not for nothing that BOBST has the reputation of being a world market leader in the packing industry machine sector. So while this machine technology developed over recent decades, it became clear that development of the corresponding tools could not keep in step. While machine speeds developed rapidly, with flatbed machines improved from 6,000 to the present day 12,000 sheets running speed per hour, tool technology was unable to keep up. At BOBST, it was recognised that they would have

to work with strong and innovative partners in order to speed up progress in this area.

The first step it took was to acquire a majority holding in the German company BOXPLAN GmbH & Co. KG. The intention was to work together to develop a uniform standard for stripping technology. The pin setters developed by BOXPLAN enable a worldwide standard to be created, to achieve constant performance regardless of the machine's location. The standardisation was naturally to continue in the areas of the die-cutting form and counter form and in blank separation stations.

Another German company now came into play. With the acquisition of the majority shareholding in CITO-SYSTEM GmbH, the Swiss managed to bring another world market leader in die-cutting technology and tool technology on board. Examined more closely, a completely logical step. The Franconian company CITO in Schwaig near Nuremberg has for decades been the company that set the benchmarks in creasing technology.



The packaging industry achieves its success through maximum efficiency in the production of packaging.

In the past 10 years, CITO is recognised as also having developed into the leading supplier for die-cutter toolmaking. More than 80 % of CITO's products are developed and produced in-house. One of the focal areas of the development work is ejection materials. Here, CITO concentrates on producing complete systems for the different requirements: Boxboard flatbed, corrugated flatbed and rotary die cutters. The aim is to develop standards to enable constant productivity even at high speeds. CITO products are produced in their own factories in three European locations. Apart from the parent company in Germany, it has further production sites in the Czech Republic and in the Netherlands. Through the respective technical know-how, very special materials can be developed exactly for use in the packaging industry. CITO opts for very high production depth. This is particularly clear looking at the example of ejection materials, because CITO does not limit itself to buying and selling existing raw materials on the market. In its in-house chemical laboratory, the company develops their own materials, whose physical properties precisely match the requirements in the die-cutting process. The performance is founded in the chemical composition. This is a worldwide unique selling point and is not only limited to elastomers.

Another result of the material science is the high-performance CITO ULTIMATE creasing system, a further modular component for more productivity. The idea of the partnership between BOBST and CITO is to

harmonise tooling technology and machine technology. Modernisation of the machinery set-up and increases in production performance are far more useful, if corresponding tools can be provided at the same time. Here, the BOBST tooling team and CITO's product developers are working hand in hand. This enables further development of the tools to be started in parallel, at a very early phase of the machine development. This development partnership will be expanded gradually to include other tooling components. Thus, in the coming months, an increasing number of CITO materials that result from this joint concept, will be launched on the market.



In the chemical laboratory, materials are developed whose physical properties precisely match the requirements in the die-cutting process.

Within the CITO GROUP, there is also an in-house toolmaking division. In the future, this will be increasingly expanded into a further development centre. Toolmaking is an important element because new developments can be used immediately in real tool production. The experience acquired flows directly back into the development department. At the same time, the new tools can be easily tested on BOBST machines. Corresponding feedback from here is also sent to the CITO R&D team.

CITO toolmaking is naturally certified by BOBST. This was done due to the awareness that if you do not set yourself the highest standards, you cannot expect to be the partner for success of other tool producers. This is the overall standard gained from practical experience, for use in practice. CITO fully backs the BOBST certification programme and does not see itself as a die competitor. We want to be the partner of our co-workers and work together to achieve higher appreciation for the value of die-cutting tools.

Large packaging industry companies are present-day global players; this requires a greater degree of standardisation of the tools. This is because it is no longer acceptable for die-cutting tools to vary, not only from country to country but also from factory to

factory. The benchmark must always be production performance. Why should a technology that functions perfectly in one factory not be productive in a factory 200 km away? The answer is clearly standardisation. This attitude was embraced by most other industries many years ago. It is time for this awareness to also gain acceptance in packaging production. The undisputed idiom "all roads lead to Rome" still applies. Yet, if we do not clearly opt for one way, there is a risk of becoming lost. The converting industry still does not concern itself enough with tooling technology.

One often feels that tools are considered merely to be an inconvenient cost factor. Much time is wasted in negotiating tool costs. The production performance goes by the board. Especially in times of crisis, and – without doubt - we are in one at present, clever decisions are indispensable. Anyone who is not able to consider the full consequence of costs will lose the race. The packaging industry does not earn its success through cheap tools, but instead through maximum efficiency of the production of the product, which means the added value, of the packaging. One fact is completely clear for all to see: "Tooling matters".

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