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**S**ince the turn of the century, the folding carton industry has seen a substantial decline in the number of manufacturing facilities in North America. According to the US Census Bureau, from 2000 to 2007 the United States saw nearly 28 percent of its folding carton facilities disappear.

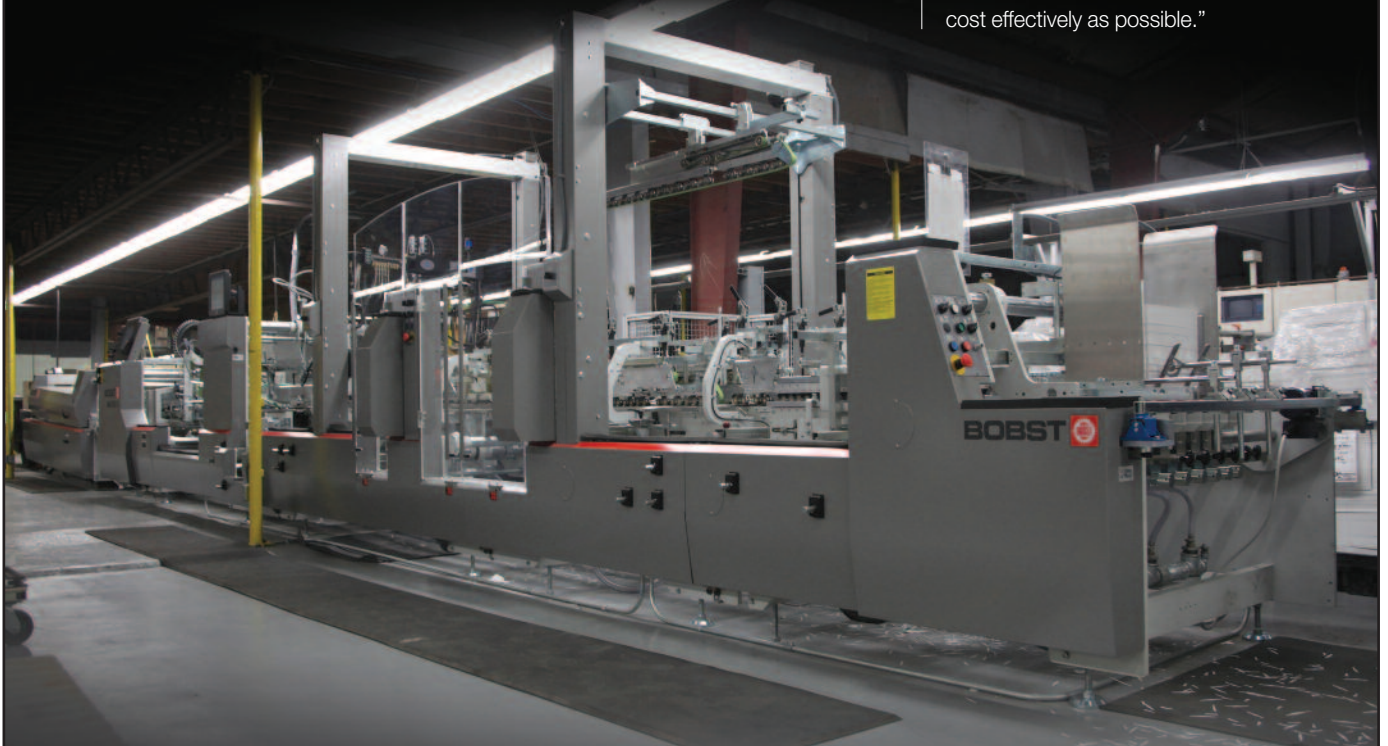
From 2000 to the present, consolidation, economic pressures and in some cases the sheer frustration of trying to compete in a market that continues to drive prices and margins down has led to more than 200 folding carton plants either closing their doors or retooling to manufacture alternative products.

It's no secret that the 'same old way of doing business' isn't exactly a formula for success in today's market. Yet many operations continue to reduce margins in order to sell on price instead of value.

### **Long-term Value**

At a time when many companies have approached growth and investing in new equipment with caution, Frankston Packaging Co. of Frankston, Texas, has taken the bull by the horns and invested in automation and modifying processes to create greater value for its customers and reinforce the sustainability of its business.

"We plan on serving our customers for a long time," says Frankston Packaging President Kyle Eldred. "In the past 10 years our business has grown over 400 percent and we plan to keep growing and expanding to offer our customers more options and greater value." Eldred credits much of this growth to having an organization that is customer-centric from the ground up and focuses on efficiency. "Our goal is to provide packaging solutions that drive consumers to choose our customers' products during those critical decision making seconds. Our task is to do this as quickly, efficiently and cost effectively as possible."



# STEPPING UP TO GREATER EFFICIENCY

"The faster we can go from concept to consumer, the greater the value we create for our customer," says Norm Bullock, Vice President of Frankston. "We're continually reviewing our processes and working to decrease the time from the first sales call to having a product on the shelf. We do that by making everyone at the plant a part of this process review. As a result, we've made some very substantial steps to resolve the bottlenecks we've found in our operation."

Some of these steps include the installation of an 18,000 sheet per hour six-color KBA Rapida 105 in 2008, the installation of a Bobst Expertcut 106-LER in January 2010 and more recently the purchase of two new Bobst folder-glueers, a Masterfold 110-A4 and Expertfold 110-A2 that were installed in December, as well as a Maxson MDH sheeter that was also installed in December. "The combination of this equipment gives us world class production speeds and capabilities, enabling us to be cost competitive across a wider spectrum," says Bullock.

"Efficiency is very important to the growth and sustainability of our business as well as that of our customers," says Eldred. "We want to be the most cost effective provider in our region and we've invested in the equipment and automation to do just that."

Frankston's Expertcut replaced two older diecutters and allowed the company to take advantage of the latest diecutting technology. "Maximizing the efficiency of our operation played a big part in our decision to purchase a new diecutter," says Bullock. "The new Bobst has allowed us to more than double the net speed of our diecutting line, which in turn increases our throughput capabilities. Make-ready is also much faster than it was with the older machines, which, of course, reduces downtime. Again, that contributes to reducing the turnaround time and enhances our overall efficiency."

Bullock adds that installing the new diecutter wasn't all about efficiency. "Many

of the jobs we run, especially the more sophisticated pieces, require very tight cut-to-print registration. The register and transport systems on the new diecutter have given us the ability to maintain precise registration and cut consistency, and enhanced diecut quality even when we're running wide open at 9,000 sheets per hour."

The addition of the Masterfold and Expertfold folder-glueers is a giant leap

the need to fold faster, move materials and finished product faster and so on. The machines we are replacing are older technology. They're slower to set up, they run slower, they require more attention to operate and maintain. The new folder-glueers will give us shorter setups and faster operating speeds.

"Also we have some top of the line automated quality control systems on these glueers," he continues. "We chose Leary glue



**Above:** Kyle Eldred and Norm Bullock in front of the Bobst Expertcut 106-LER, which was installed in January 2010.

systems for both machines, so we'll have the capability to monitor and control gluing defects as well as color variances. But what really makes this work is the combination of the Leary system and the Bobst high-speed Flipper-Ejector which allows us to automatically eject non-conforming cartons so there is no chance that they are mixed with good cartons via human error. Our goal is to make sure only cartons that meet customers' specs are being shipped. This is important to everyone, but especially those with automated packaging lines."

The two new folder-glueers replaced four of Frankston's five existing folder-glueers. These changes had a significant impact on the workflow of the facility. As a result, the company is restructuring the layout of the plant.

"Total efficiency of an operation is more than just having machines that run faster and produce higher quality products," says Bullock. "The most direct path is usually the

forward for Frankston's folding department. Equipped with the latest folding and quality control technology, the new folder-glueers will give Frankston the capability to do more, faster and with enhanced quality control.

"Often when you fix one bottleneck, it exposes, or magnifies others," says Bullock. "When you can print faster, you have to be able to diecut faster. That's often followed by



most efficient path. We performed our 5S projects. We have a very successful Lean program in place and through all this we've identified what we believe will be the most efficient workflow for our facility. We're currently in the process of rearranging our operation to take full advantage of the efficiency of our latest investments."

## Ready to Respond

At a time when most manufacturers have worked to reduce inventories, Frankston has been expanding both its material and finished product inventories. "Often the customers or CPGs want to meet with us today, see a new design tomorrow and be in

production a day or two later," says Eldred. "Waiting for material to arrive doesn't fit into that schedule."

"The same often holds true for finished materials. Many of our customers are required by retailers to have the capability to replenish products at a 'minute's notice' which is one of the reasons we've expanded our warehousing capabilities. It's a benefit that provides an additional value for our customers."

The efficiency and convenience of being a 'total solution' provider is another benefit Frankston brings to its customers. By having the capability to produce a wide range of packaging types all under one roof, including folding cartons, tray formed cartons, rigid/setup and vinyl boxes, litho-lam displays and transparency films not only can they react quickly, but their creativity is not restricted by lack of choices.

"Having access to this wide range of materials and processes provides almost limitless creative choices for our design department," says Eldred. "We're very proud of our team. We had a customer with an established product, but it wasn't moving from the shelf to the shopping cart like they had hoped. Our sales and design team met with the customer and came back a couple days later with a new design, which was quickly approved by the customer, put into production and delivered to the retailers. The first year the new packaging was on the shelf, the sales of that product grew by one million units which brought in an additional \$5 million. Total cost of the new packaging was under \$200,000. I'd say that's a pretty good return-on-investment."

## Building Loyalty

"Customers come to us because we promise to combine cost-effective production with eye popping creativity, superior quality and minimum turnaround time to create a value proposition that gives them an edge over their competition," says Eldred. "They stay with us because we live up to the promises we make. And that's what it's really all about, isn't it?"

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### FOLDING CARTON DIES

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- Food & beverage products
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#### Key Advantages:

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- Complete range of solutions, including: Crush Cut  
Rotary Pressure  
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- Rotary converting offers faster speed than conventional processes

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