

When the Alegro Has 20 Job Changeovers a Day . . .

There are days when an average softcover production run at Bloco Gráfico in Portugal's second-largest city of Porto lasts barely 45 minutes. The short job changeover times of Muller Martini's new Alegro perfect binder ensure that little time is lost between jobs.

► Since Bloco Gráfico commissioned a Muller Martini Alegro perfect binder to replace a Trendbinder from the same manufacturer a year ago, its figures in softcover production have improved dramatically, with the company recording an overall volume increase by 23 percent and a rise in net production per hour by 30 percent.

The total volume has increased since Bloco Gráfico can now bind all products itself, rather than having to outsource production. That enables the company to keep the entire value chain in house and also increase the efficiency of its logistics. The net production increased so markedly because "with the new perfect binder, our setup times are far shorter than with the predecessor model" explains Production Manager Eduardo Viana.

90 Percent Softcover

An optimal production flow in perfect binding is of particular importance at Bloco Gráfico, which was established in 1944 and employs 100 people in production, since over 90 percent of the products printed using ten sheet-fed offset printing presses are softcover products. Four-fifths of those are school textbooks for Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and East Timor, while novels, art books, catalogs and (business) brochures account for the remaining 20 percent.

Bloco Gráfico produces all those products exclusively for eight different publishing companies from its own company group, which employs a total of 1,200 people. "That doesn't make any difference to us," says Viana. "Our internal customers have just the same requirements as external customers. And, in addition, the same

business criteria apply to us as to a contract bookbindery in the free market."

Frequent Changeovers

That applies, for example, to net production. Since the Trendbinder was still running reliably, but had significantly longer make-ready times, the long-standing Muller Martini partner opted for a new Alegro with an 18-station 3694 gathering machine, a book block feeder, a Solit three-knife trimmer and a Frontero front trimmer for the efficient processing of brochures with flaps in a single pass and a CB 18 book stacker.

"The print runs of the school textbooks are between 1,000 and 20,000 copies per title, with the average being 5,000 copies. The figures are on the decline owing to lower pupil numbers and more reprints," says Viana. "The run sizes are lower for novels – between 1,000 and 3,000 – and are also on the decrease. You can imagine how often we need to change over the perfect binder."

PUR Now Used Almost Exclusively

Bloco Gráfico produces 20 different titles in Porto on a peak day. That means an average production time of just under 45 minutes per job. "That's an impressive performance," says Viana enthusiastically. He describes the Alegro as the "most advanced perfect binder in the market". The Production Manager is thrilled not only with the short job changeover times, but also with the consistently high production speed and the excellent quality of the end products.

Ninety-five percent of those are now bound using the Alegro with the PUR technique by means of a VPN book spine noz-

zle, which results in significantly greater durability of textbooks and other books in the company's warm African export destinations, in particular. "However, the Solit three-knife trimmer also contributes greatly to the high quality," stresses Viana. "Stops are very rare, and it has an impressively high ejection speed."

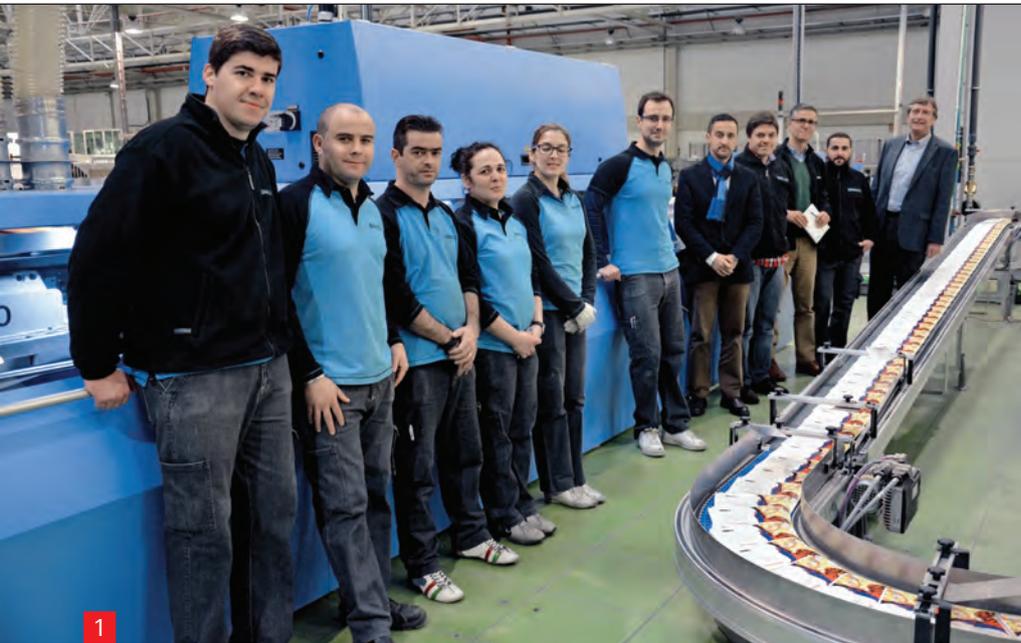
Optimistic About the Future

Viana is just as optimistic about the future as he is delighted with his latest invest-



ment. "Of course the economic situation in Portugal is difficult, but we have a long tradition in the school textbook market. Despite decreasing pupil numbers that market is relatively stable, and our export business is very strong. I'm also convinced that school textbooks will hold their ground against electronic devices since children tend to be more focused when using printed media." ◀

www.blocografico.pt



1 The whole perfect binding team at Bloco Gráfico is proud of the new *Alegro*. Third from right: Production Manager Eduardo Viana. Far right: Miguel Bos, Managing Director of Muller Martini Ibérica.

2 Using the new *Alegro*, Bloco Gráfico produces 23 percent more softcover products than before with a 30-percent increase in net output.

3 Bloco Gráfico relies on a Muller Martini *Bravo T* for saddle stitching...

4 ...and on two Muller Martini *Ventura* machines for thread sewing.

Increase Quality and Cut Costs with AMS

Just under a year after commissioning the *Alegro*, Bloco Gráfico, which has relied on a Muller Martini *Bravo T* for saddle stitching since 2001 and on two Muller Martini *Ventura* machines for thread sewing since 2007, will equip the perfect binder with Muller Martini's new adhesive monitoring system. AMS minimizes glue consumption and production waste in perfect binding. That allows Bloco Gráfico to cut costs, without having to make any quality concessions.

AMS uses a laser near the gluing unit to monitor glue application continuously, even for differing glue patterns, by means of heat measurement (see "Panorama" 2/14). That enables the quantity of glue applied to be identified and adjusted during the production of softcover books. AMS also reliably detects any gluing errors such as accumulations, gaps or dirt in the adhesive-free zone, allowing the machine operator to react to errors individually.

AMS transfers the data to a monitor, where the glue profile is displayed using a color-coded diagram. Fine-tuning to optimize the glue quantity can be performed right there on the monitor. The detailed diagram displays everything that needs to be viewed during production and is easy for the operator to understand. "The new control system provides us with 100% reliability," says the Bloco Gráfico Production Manager.

AMS can be used in Muller Martini's *Bolero* and *Corona* perfect binders, as well as most *Alegro* assemblies. It can also be retrofitted on existing perfect binding lines depending on the machine configuration. The AMS monitoring system can be used for gluing using a glue pot or for VPN book spine nozzles depending on the configuration – with either PUR or hotmelt gluing.



The AMS system displays the glue thickness in a clear diagram on the screen and allows the glue quantity to be fine-tuned manually.