

FLEXIBLE INSIGHTS

Clemson: Building a Bright Flexible Packaging Future

I recently had the opportunity – along with a group of Institute of Packaging Professional (IOPP) members – to visit the Clemson University campus in Clemson, S.C. The visit was focused around Clemson’s packaging laboratory and new Center for Flexible Packaging (CEFPACK). Our tour was conducted by Dr. W. Scott Whiteside who is the program’s associate director



Calamusa

Besides creating a wonderful educational environment for Clemson’s undergraduate and graduate students, the CEFPACK program has also been designed to perform research projects and packaging evaluations for industry including consumer product companies and packaging suppliers.

Corporate Support Bodes Well for Students

A variety of high profile companies already have signed up to support the program and it’s goals through the donation of funds, equipment, and resources. Consumer product companies have also been very supportive of the university’s program through the assignment of projects to both challenge the students and gain valuable insight into implementing a new material type, package structure improvement or package format change. Many of these same companies have further supported a

high percentage of graduates with career opportunities.

One area of particular interest was the center’s retort pouch packaging and retort pouch processing department. This pilot plant setup is a perfect venue for producing filled retort pouch packages and performing the critical initial product formulation, as well as the establishment of the initial setup parameters that are key prior to full-blown production. As reported, many North American companies are intrigued with the concept of retort pouch packaging, however many may not have the immediate core competency, necessary equipment, or time for evaluation and testing, which is so critical in initiating implementation.

Clemson is to be applauded for its keen awareness of “what’s happening” in the packaging marketplace and in the packaging industry. The staff is responding to new industry trends by creating a program and an environment whereby students can be better prepared to meet the latest challenges and opportunities in the field of packaging, particularly in *flexible packaging*. Clemson’s obvious move in support of flexible packaging will hopefully have a ripple effect that may influence other universities and academia to continue to move forward in support of the changing dynamics of packaging today.

Changes and Innovations

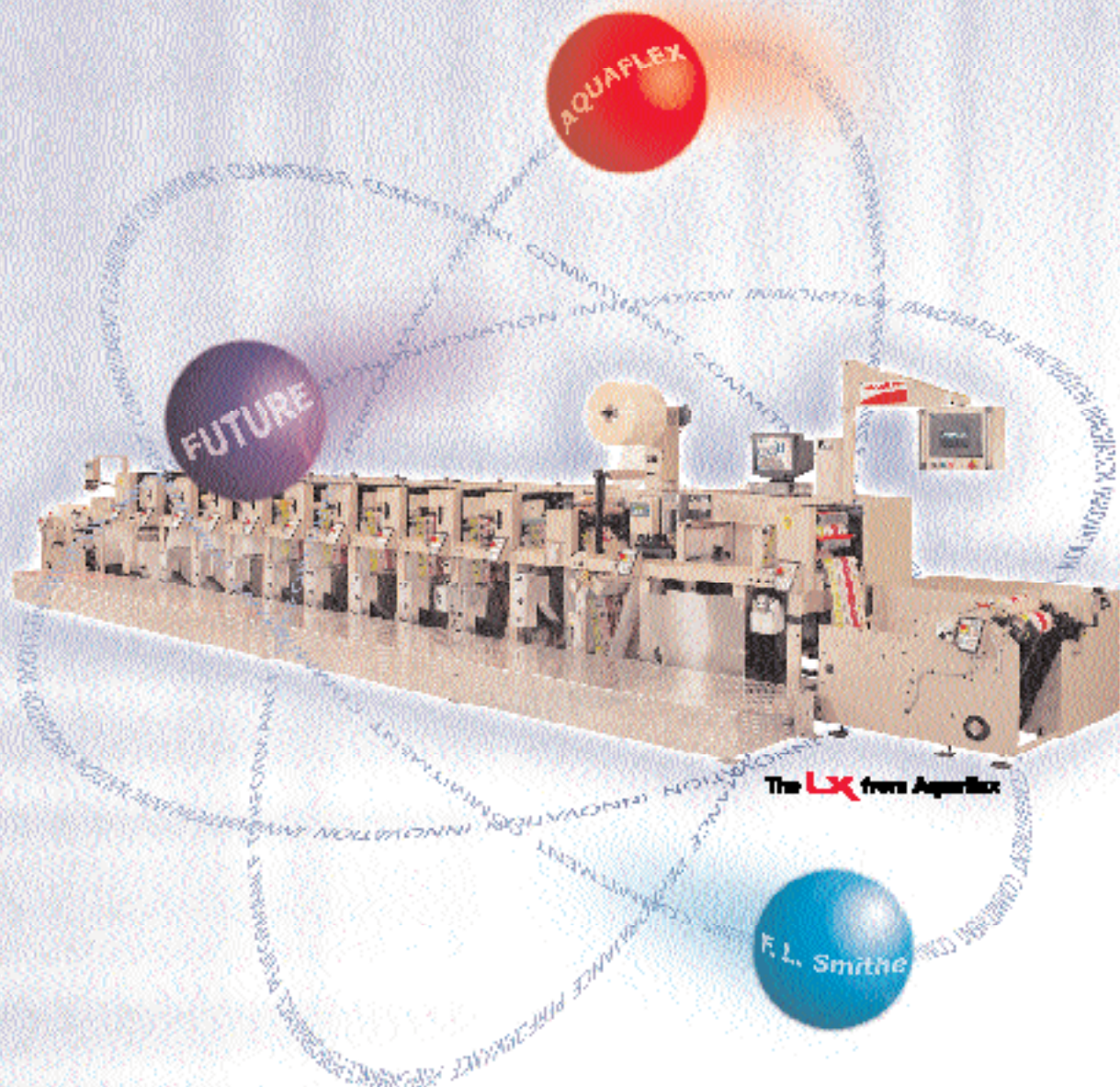
As we know from our own activities in the field of packaging, change is a challenge for all involved in the evolution of packaging. The better we can prepare the young men and women who enter our industry as new packaging engineers, the better they will be prepared for meeting the changing market, and in implementing new packaging technology opportunities on the horizon.

After the tour, I had the opportunity and the privilege to speak on the topic of *Flexible Pouch Packaging Innovation* to some of the faculty, students and my fellow IOPP colleagues. We shared a wonderful dialog on flexible packaging innovations and trends that are occurring both within our market and on a global basis, as well as what other possibilities the future of packaging may hold.

If you or your company would like to learn more about the Clemson University Center for Flexible Packaging (CEFPACK), visit www.clemson.edu/packaging or call W.Scott Whiteside, Ph.D at (864) 656-6246 or email wwhtsd@clemson.edu. ■

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