

From wine press to printing press

CX1200e DIGITAL COLOR LABEL PRESS AND FX1200e DIGITAL FINISHING SYSTEM

An interview with Francis Comberton • Founder of Speed Etiq



It's because no one could produce a spiral label in a small quantity that Francis Comberton created Speed Etiq.

You have just set up your new company Speed Etiq and you have invested in a "state-of-the-art" roll-to-roll digital press to print wine labels. Do you have a background in the printing business or maybe have you had a technical training in that field?

No background, no training! When it comes to print technology - as like the wine business, for that matter - I'm a self-taught man. I would never have dared to go into the printing business if I had not seen and appreciated the simplicity of the latest generation of digital presses. I can now speak from experience about Primera's CX1200e digital label press and about the brand new FX1200e finishing system that Primera has just launched in Europe.

Six months ago, few people outside the world of the Bordeaux wine business knew Francis Comberton, who owns a modest 17 hectares vineyard close to the village of Galgon. Apart from wine, design and artistic creation fascinate him. Having conceived an original form of wine label, he tried - in vain - to find in his region a printer able to print small quantities at a reasonable price. This obstacle led him into an entirely new business!

But surely you didn't start printing and converting labels just like that, without any preparation ...

Of course I studied the market and that convinced me that there was an unsatisfied demand in my region of France; on the technical side, the two days of training offered by LPS, Primera's exclusive distributor for France, were quite sufficient to learn the ins and outs of both machines. It was good to know that Pascal Lambert, the founder of LPS has 15 years of experience in the traditional label business.

You have a lot of competitors, especially in the Bordeaux region. What is that "little extra" you can offer customers?

I can deliver short runs, and I am very, very proactive. You can't imagine the number of wine growers and bottlers who need very low quantities of labels for test marketing, for restaurants or for export markets. For example one of our customers exports samples of his wine to many countries and even to China - and his bottles are sent out with our labels!

Most label converters begin with a flexo, letterpress or offset machine, and often with second-hand equipment. But you

chose to go digital right from the start. Why did you make this courageous choice?

Nothing courageous about it. It's simply because I am not a printer. Digital printing is so different that it may even be an advantage never to have known traditional print technologies.

On the other hand you are well integrated into the world of Bordeaux wine and that must have helped you, especially at the start of your activity.

True, and word-of-mouth recommendations carry a lot of weight. I did not do any large-scale marketing, but my telephone doesn't stop ringing and every day I'm getting calls from new customers. They are principally wine growers, but I also print labels for car parts and even for cosmetics!



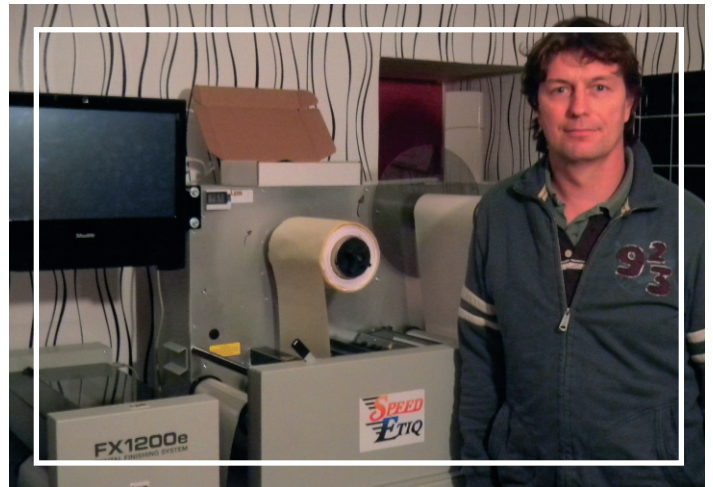
That's all good news, but you are surely restricted to short runs. As soon as your customer moves up to quantities of 10,000 or 100,000 labels, you lose the business. Right?

For 10,000 labels, no. The CX1200e runs at 5 m/minutes with a maximum resolution of 2400 dpi. With the maximum web width of 216mm I can produce 10,000 wine labels in just half an hour. For longer runs, sure, traditional printing is less expensive. That's why I keep insisting that I am complementing traditional label converters, not competing with them.

Tell us the story of your "Spiral" label that you exhibited at Emballage and at the wine exhibition Vinitech.

To explain that I must first of all tell you about the converting of a label. I told you that I am fascinated by design: but I couldn't find anyone to make these labels, with their highly original shape. When I saw the die-

cutting unit of the FX1200e I immediately saw the possibilities. Instead of a classic die-cutting tool the FX1200e uses a completely digital device that cuts any shape you want - spirals, circles... and even several rows at a time! The register is automatic and there is a laminating unit for use where necessary. The only thing that this machine lacks for me is the ability to print foil, but LPS is in the process of launching a foiling unit with 210mm web width, so soon everything will be possible! Since the very first day I have had a well-filled order book.



Francis Comberton uses the FX1200e Digital Finishing System by Primera to cut his famous "Spiral" label for his 2005 Bordeaux.

Thanks to the CX1200e Digital Color Label Press and the FX1200e Digital Finishing System I can satisfy a market niche that most of my customers were unaware of.



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