



World beats a path to Cheshire for Anilox service excellence

'It's not complicated,' according to Paul Smith, managing director of buoyant anilox roller specialist, Cheshire Anilox Technology. 'Supply a quality product, provide a quality service, and the world will beat a path to your door.'

Complicated or not, Cheshire Anilox has evidently succeeded on both counts, with the company's impressive sales footprint now encompassing some 80 countries around the world.

'Our strength isn't just our product – although that is excellent,' said Mr Smith. 'It's the service wrap we put alongside it for customers. Wherever they are in the world, whatever they need, against whatever pressures they need it, we have the people, the culture and the infrastructure to make it happen.'

Exporting customer service

As the dust settles on the EU referendum, and businesses regroup to consider the ramifications of the result for overseas sales as well as sourcing, Cheshire Anilox looks to its global network of 43 distributors, and its order book of anilox rolls for export to China, South America, the Far East and Australia with justifiable confidence.

The company's enviable strength in mainland and Eastern Europe, too, should not be forgotten when weighing up its success.

'Initially the company never went out to 'sell' around the world,' said Mr Smith. 'Our ethos has always been to concentrate on the technology, processes and innovation that have made us a byword for excellence in laser engraved rollers and sleeves. So long as we get these things right, sales seem to take care of themselves, whether that's from a few miles down the road, or from the other side of the world.'

Complete manufacturing capabilities

In addition to its UK business, it frequently is from the other side of the world, that Cheshire Anilox, headquartered in an ample, modern plant at Tameside in Greater Manchester, draws its customers. With representation in North, Central and South America, across Western and Eastern Europe, through the Middle East, Africa and India and onto the Far East and Australasia, the ubiquity of Cheshire's roller technology pays eloquent testimony to the regard in which its products are held.

Established in 1992, Cheshire Anilox has huge experience in supplying solutions for the most challenging printing conditions including, UV, HD flexo and specialist applications.

The company employs the most advanced laser technology, with state of the art equipment that provides unparalleled control, for high line screen engravings with consistent cell geometry and improved ink release properties.

Its powerful 500 watt fibre lasers come with custom



pulse which can produce unlimited cell designs allowing it to develop new engravings for exceptional print quality, improved consistency and higher line screen definition.

Winning business with MaxFlo+

One of Cheshire's recent triumphs has been the establishment of its brand in South America's largest flexo market, Colombia, with the help of their distributor Serviflex Arco.

'We came first to Cheshire because their MaxFlo+ engraving technology meant they could offer a solution to some of the problems faced by our customers,' said Alberto Acevedoarango CEO of Serviflex Arco. 'Their delivery times were also excellent compared to those offered by other companies in the market. Now we work closely together all the time. Cheshire provide absolute consistency in the product, they have great technical expertise and nothing ever seems too much trouble for them. Their innovative technology and excellent service has opened the doors of many of the largest printing companies in Colombia which are delighted with the printing advantages brought by MaxFlo+.'

MaxFlo+ is a channel engraving that radically improves the ink flow within the anilox engraved structure. There are no individual closed-up cells, but a continuous cell structure which has 50% less land area than 60° conventional engravings.

This offers a more efficient and finer ink distribution to the plate, with transfer shown in controlled tests to be as much as 30% greater than that achieved by 60° hexagonal engraving.

Technology for the future

When Mr Smith talks about Cheshire's excellent product, he does so from a position of strength. The company's trademarked SealTec sealant, applied to the roller after the ceramic coating process, reducing porosity to extraordinarily low levels and affording the

maximum protection against corrosion, is just one example of its game changing innovation.

Cheshire is investing heavily in research and development in order to further refine the anilox roll alongside other advancements in the flexo process. The company is continuously assessing new materials and developing new screen specifications to improve specific areas of flexo printing and coating.

As a part of this backdrop of investment and innovation, Cheshire Anilox is currently waiting to take delivery of its sixth laser, due to come on line at the beginning of 2017, as well as having recently invested in new finishing equipment.

'Being better is never a matter of simply having the best technology,' according to Sonia Arcos, Cheshire's technical sales director. 'Technology can always be matched or surpassed. Being better in this industry, for us at least, has always been about innovating and investing in people with the engineering capability, and the passion for flexo printing technology, to be able to go to the next stage, time after time.'

While this may sound like rhetoric, Cheshire was the first anilox supplier in the UK to produce in-house manufactured roller bases in the mid-nineties. It was also the first company to develop channelled anilox rolls. Cheshire, too, were the pioneers of roll audits and on-site inspection of anilox rolls. The company is also about to introduce a monthly training school

to educate customers on all aspects of the anilox roll.

Making a difference now

'The past is the past', according to Ms Arcos, 'It's what we're doing now that impacts our customers' businesses and the quality of the work they are able to deliver to their customers. Investment and innovation drive quality: quality is what we are all about.'

To this end, Cheshire have acquired the very latest interferometry inspection equipment and put in place a newly appointed quality manager with a remit to oversee all aspects of the company's manufacturing to ensure consistency of output.

Alongside this, new maintenance engineers have been brought in to spearhead a planned preventative maintenance programme designed to help avoid breakdowns and ensure continuity of production.

'We are Anilox engineers,' said Ms Arcos, 'but our success has been achieved by making ourselves into an indomitable supply chain partner. We employ engineers, sales executives, account handlers and support staff who understand and buy into our vision of a consummate supply partner. People who are always there for our customers and who will go to any lengths to help them achieve their goals. All our people know that our edge is provided by what we do for our customers as individuals, rather than by what our technology does. 'It's a strategy paying handsome dividends.



Innovation rewarded with Gold by EFIA

Cheshire recently received the coveted Gold Award for Innovation from the EFIA. Despite their assertion that the company's service and customer care provide its edge, for a manufacturer running two shifts daily on its Triplex Pro plasma coating system, adding further fire power to its existing battery of advanced ALE fibre laser engravers and boasting impressive new, precision grinding equipment, such industry recognition of its bullish approach to the market cannot fail to impress. It is the endorsement of their robust client base that means the most to Cheshire, however.

'We were having great difficulty with our supplier of anilox rollers,' explained Andrey Zorikov, of Russian flexographic printing equipment reseller, BG UV Service. 'This was in 2011. Cheshire Anilox Technology were recommended to us by other suppliers. We have worked together now five years. We have an excellent relationship in working and Cheshire shows itself very flexible to meet our requirements.'

The key to this particular relationship, however, may lie in a surprising asset within the Cheshire team. A native Russian sales manager, able to conduct the relationship with BG UV Service on a native language basis. Across the Cheshire team, similar commercial communication is available in six further languages.

'We want to do business with the world, and we don't expect the world to necessarily show up speaking English,' said Ms Arcos. 'Rollers are a global demand with no preferred language. We encourage and finance members of our team to learn additional languages. And if those languages require different character sets to communicate in, we don't mind buying keyboards!'

Paul Smith smiles, looking out across the formidable array of cutting edge technology on the factory floor. 'It's strange,' he muses. 'We're investing huge sums in cutting edge technology. Yet in a way, the few pounds invested in Russian keyboards says all you need to know about the lengths we'll go to for our customers.' ■