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Large German printer goes ‚Plate to Press‘ with NELA

At Druckhaus Ulm-Oberschwaben, NELA controls the entire plate production and delivers plates directly to the print units

Lahr, Germany – August 2011 – Delivery of print-ready plates directly to the correct print unit, no more manual sorting of plates, storage capacity for several print jobs – for Druckhaus Ulm-Oberschwaben (DUO) in southern Germany, this will become reality in January, 2012. A fully automatic NELA plate sorting system with PlateFlow software will enable DUO to store printing plates for a number of print jobs in so-called “plate stations”, which are located directly at the levels of the new manroland press.

Fully automatic delivery of printing plates as closely to the press as possible has become a standard in today’s Newspaper environment. A number of factors such as quick changes, many different editions, as well as the fact that the production of the printing plates has been delayed further and further towards the start of print, require that more and more printing plates must be provided within a very short period of time. This trend represents a growing challenge for pre-press technology and plate logistics.

For DUO, who are printing a number of dailies, weeklies, and special editions, one of the most important requirements, according to General Manager Ernst Jackwert, is to realize “a very ambitious timeframe” for the print production. Since the new *manroland* presses are equipped with APL systems and are planned to run at full speed, Jackwert says it is essential that all imaged plates and blank plates are delivered directly to the correct press unit and are pre-sorted according to location on the cylinders. “This is the only way to make certain that plates are always provided in time for loading into the APL cassettes.”

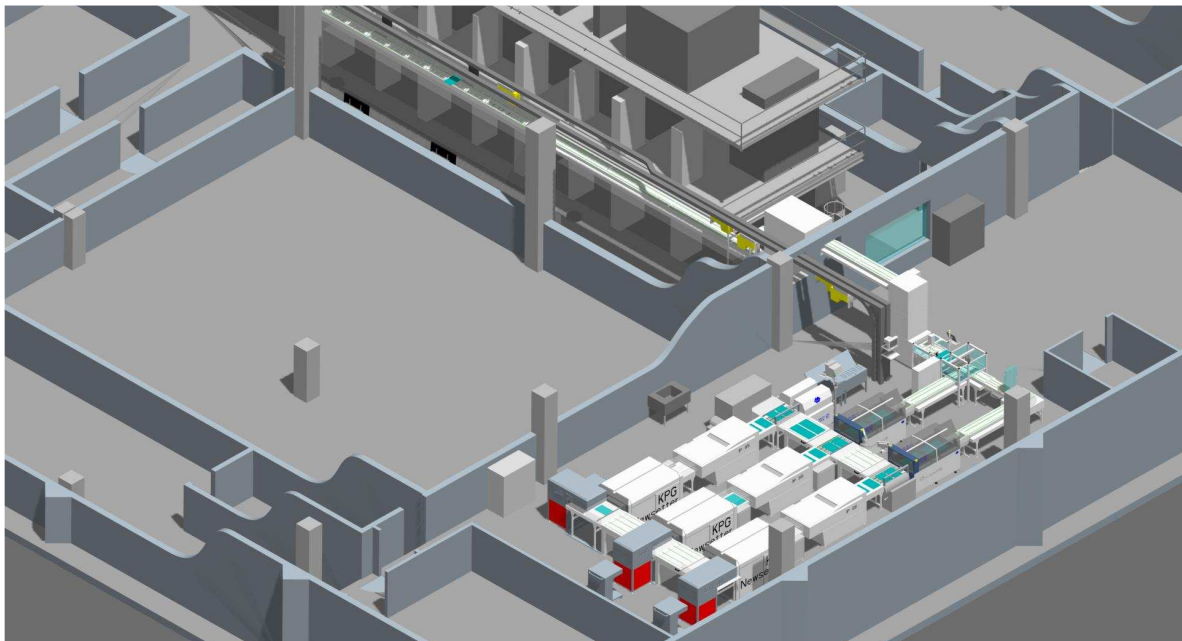
Accepting the challenge, NELA will first install new and faster pre-press equipment. In a first phase, two new high-speed VCPevolution HS 800 punch-benders will be installed, each of them producing 360 pph for the new *manroland* Colorman autoprint press. In phase two, these VCPs will be connected with transport conveyors to NELA plate sorters, which will be installed directly at the press. Twenty-six plate stacker bins will be mounted each at the lower and upper press levels. The centre-piece of the system is an almost 4m-high NELA PlateReorganizer, a storage unit with a capacity of loading and discharging up to 720 pph. With the PlateReorganizer, print-ready plates can be sorted in exactly the right sequence as needed on press. Blank plates can also be inserted as needed.

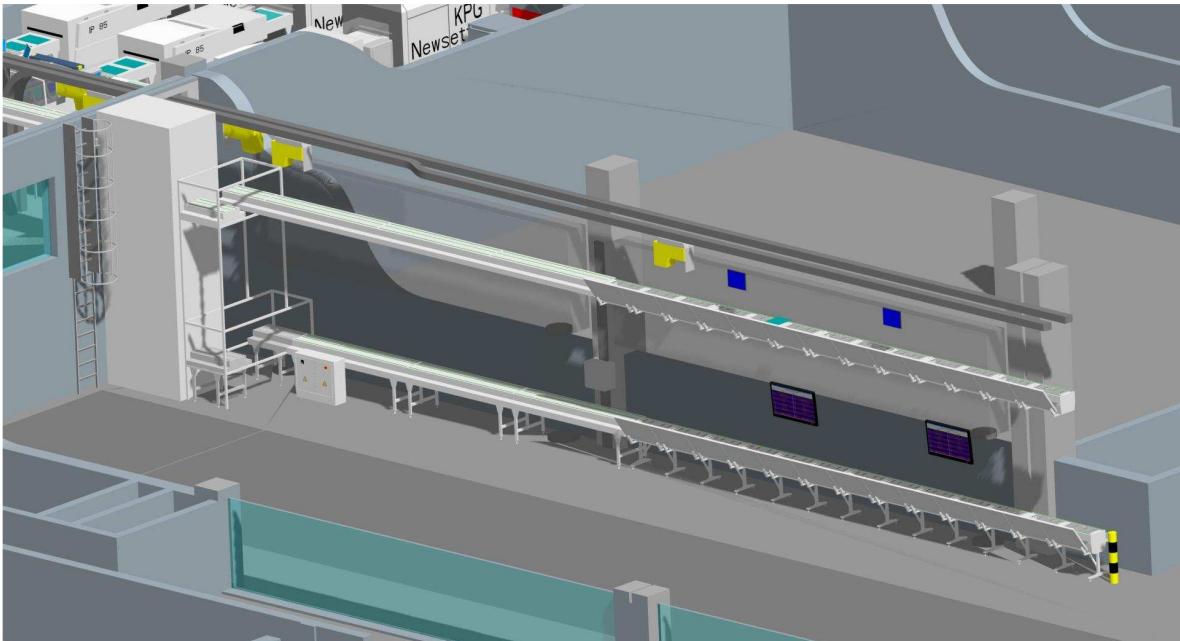
In the NELA plate stacker – directly at the press – all plates needed for one press cylinder are placed into one bin. A group of stacker bins, just as many as are needed for one print job, form a “plate station”. In Ulm there will be three such stations with stacker bins at upper and lower press levels, so that plates for three complete press changes can be held at any time.

The „heart“ of this impressive system, however, is invisible: The NELA PlateFlow software. This software has been developed by NELA as an interface to modern production planning programmes. In DUO's case, NELA PlateFlow constantly checks and retrieves data from the PECOM software, such as the imposition layout or the order of the print jobs. The NELA system therefore knows at any time which printing plates is needed when and where on the press and can deliver it to the correct plate station.

A special sensor system controls bin occupancy, and the current status of production is constantly shown on several monitors. The system also sees when bins are emptied, and free bins are immediately combined to a new plate station which is then again assigned to the next print job. The NELA system has control over the entire plate flow as it also emits the signal triggering the next job for the plate imagers.

A project of this size naturally requires a lot of know-how and expertise. Confirms General Manager Ernst Jackwert: “We see NELA as our partner who will help us reaching our targets over the next months and who enable us to deliver the entire newspaper and external production within the requested time frames. (...) From the beginning of the planning phase up to the realization of the entire project, NELA has been a very professional and competent partner.”





About NELA: NELA forms the largest register control and plate automation company in the printing industry. The 3rd generation, family-owned company employs more than 200 employees worldwide with manufacturing facilities in Germany and USA plus sales offices in Singapore and Taiwan. With more than 1,700 Vision PunchBender systems installed worldwide, NELA is the leading technologist in the world and a state-of-the-art manufacturer in plate automation and register systems.

For more information, please contact:

NELA Brüder Neumeister GmbH
Guido Eckenwalder
Director Sales & Marketing
Gottlieb Daimler Str. 15, D-77933 Lahr
+49-7821-5808-145
www.nela.de
sales@nela.de