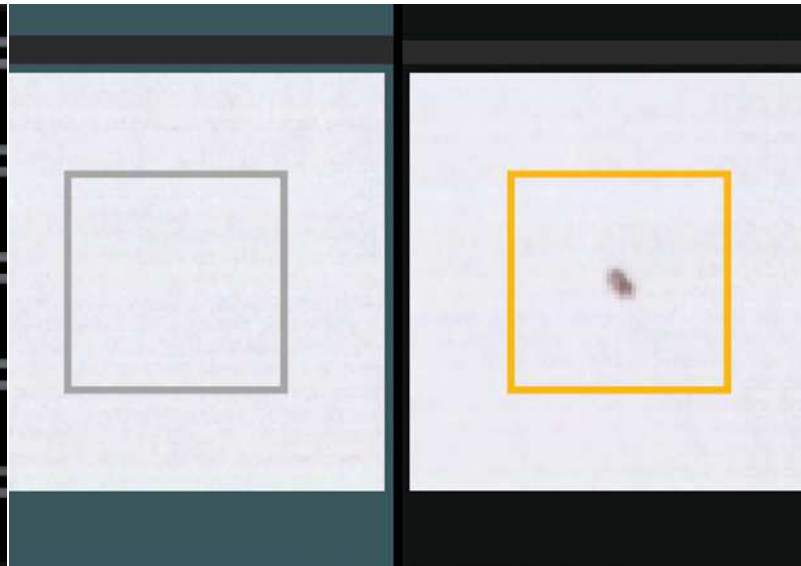


# Folding Carton

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## industry



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# LOOKING BACKWARDS TO MOVE FOLDING CARTON FORWARD

BY DANIEL VELEMA, MANAGING DIRECTOR, KOENIG & BAUER DURST



**T**hree months on from drupa, some key takeaways may help to give us a perspective where the packaging market – and folding carton in particular – is heading. Let me first present three key takeaways, then elaborate on the product roadmap implications, give an example of full production digitization and close off by presenting our new Customer Experience Center.

## What Will Continue to Drive the Future?

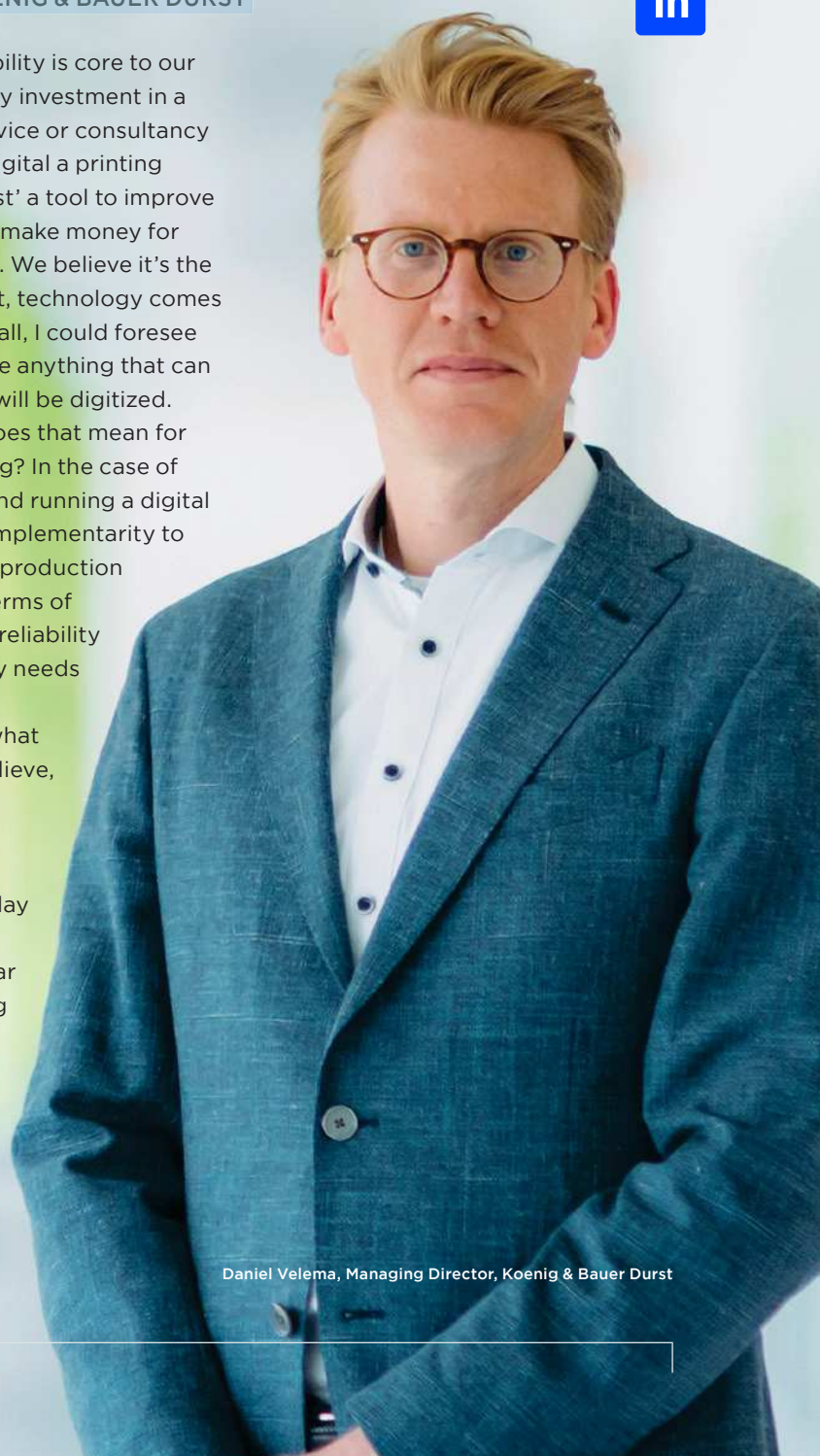
A first is there is much attention to overall plant efficiency and profitability gains with the help of (sometimes AI powered) software and digital production devices. It is no longer 'just' looking at running a single process step like printing, embellishment or die-cutting a little faster or a little more efficiently.

Various pieces of the puzzle hence start coming together to support fundamental improvements along the value chain. This positive development is much needed to address market trends like SKU proliferation, time to market agility, staff shortages, ongoing margin pressure, and increasing sustainability requirements.

This holistic view to drive plant efficiency, profitability

and sustainability is core to our approach. Any investment in a software, service or consultancy package or digital a printing solution is 'just' a tool to improve business and make money for the converter. We believe it's the customer first, technology comes second. Overall, I could foresee a future where anything that can be digitized, will be digitized.

So what does that mean for digital printing? In the case of investing in and running a digital press, the complementarity to conventional production methods in terms of productivity, reliability and versatility needs to be a given. Different to what some may believe, conventional production methods will continue to play an important role in the near future. Having the ability to tap into the resources and know-how of Koenig & Bauer when it comes



Daniel Velema, Managing Director, Koenig & Bauer Durst

to offset and flexo printing and converting, we bring a different perspective to the market.

We can support a customer with a fact-based analysis what is possible and not with digital printing. For example, we sometimes see that installing a digital solution initially doesn't seem to make much sense from a print volume vs. investment perspective. And don't forget, a conventional press is often a much easier business case discussion. However, a digital press can help to free up capacity on the existing conventional equipment and reduces overall waste. It also helps with various indirect costs such as printing tools, space, and working capital. Last but not least, we see many customers attract completely new jobs and be in a better recruitment position when it comes to new staff.

Our second key takeaway from drupa is a keen market interest in industrial, versatile digital printing presses that can address large volumes and a wide array of print job requirements. These industrial digital printing presses obviously need to be future proof. Here, you see many suppliers including ourselves go for water-based inks, primers & coatings. By the way, this is not just driven by sustainability but also with an eye on upcoming regulation and the cost development of key ingredients. We also keep a clear focus on the machine build quality to ensure a lifetime beyond our peers and possibilities for in-field upgrades.

A clear proposition on sustainability, our third key takeaway, is essential. You may have noticed various suppliers

These key take-aways don't point towards a single printing or post-print solution that covers it all. The market is simply too vast and too diverse for that. Having said that, drupa did reconfirm our key strategic assumptions and the validity of our B1 format VariJET 106 digital hybrid press.

offering tools to show their energy consumption or carbon footprint. We – for example – do this with the help of Visu Energy X, an energy management system for energy efficient printing and packaging production. We go for full compatibility with third party devices and software tools. Again, we deem it essential to go beyond our own products and take a holistic view.

### So What Does that Mean?

These key take-aways don't point towards a single printing or post-print solution that covers it all. The market is simply too vast and too diverse for that. Having said that, drupa did reconfirm our key strategic assumptions and the validity of our B1 format VariJET 106 digital hybrid press offering:

- B1 remains the go-to format for industrial production;
- Printing fully digital is great but having hybrid possibilities is even better. In our case, a hybrid (conventional and digital printing) approach can be used for embellishment applications – say gold, silver, pearl effects – but it could also be, for example, to print solids in offset and the high graphics in digital;

- Complementary to conventional printing from an application and cost of ownership perspective. In our case, we obviously see a great window with the short to medium runs but other opportunities abound;
- Water-based inks, primers and coatings that comply with regulatory requirements. Our inks are GMP/Nestlé compliant, EuPIA certified and SQTS – all suitable for primary food packaging;
- An open workflow suite – ranging from the Workflow to Analytics to Smart Shop facilities to full ERP solutions – where customers can pick and choose, and integrate with third party providers through standardised protocols;
- Value added service and consultancy. Having a successful installation can never be the final goal; it can only be a successful business case for the printer / converter. This also means offering flexibility: a couple of service level flavours no longer cut it. This also requires forthcoming advice when digital printing in general or our solution specifically may not fit.



Whiskey application – this shelf-ready packaging concept was devised and executed from start to finish in 24 hours at drupa.

### Production Digitization – Can the Future be Now?

We showed at drupa what is possible with full digital – digital printing, embellishment and finishing. The concept came from a short brainstorm between Scodix, Highcon and Koenig & Bauer Durst at drupa: how can we turn a nice digitally printed sheet into an exquisitely finished box within 24 hours?

We did so by printing a dark black whiskey box on the VariJET 106, leveraging its ability to print a deep, nicely even black. These prints were then embellished digitally on the Scodix Ultra 6500 SHD machine and finished digitally on Highcon's Beam 3 digital die-cutter.

Can this be done for each and every job? Obviously not. However, more and more jobs can and will be processed fully or partially digital going forward.

### So What Now?

We believe in working together with the customer to improve their business. To this end, we will have our new Customer Experience Center with a full VariJET 106 printing press up and running in Radebeul (Germany) from late September. This is next to Koenig & Bauer Sheetfed's Customer Experience Center and enables customers the possibility to see and test digital, offset and post-print in one go. ■

VariJET 106 at drupa – adapted to real-life 'market conditions' at drupa to print applications live.

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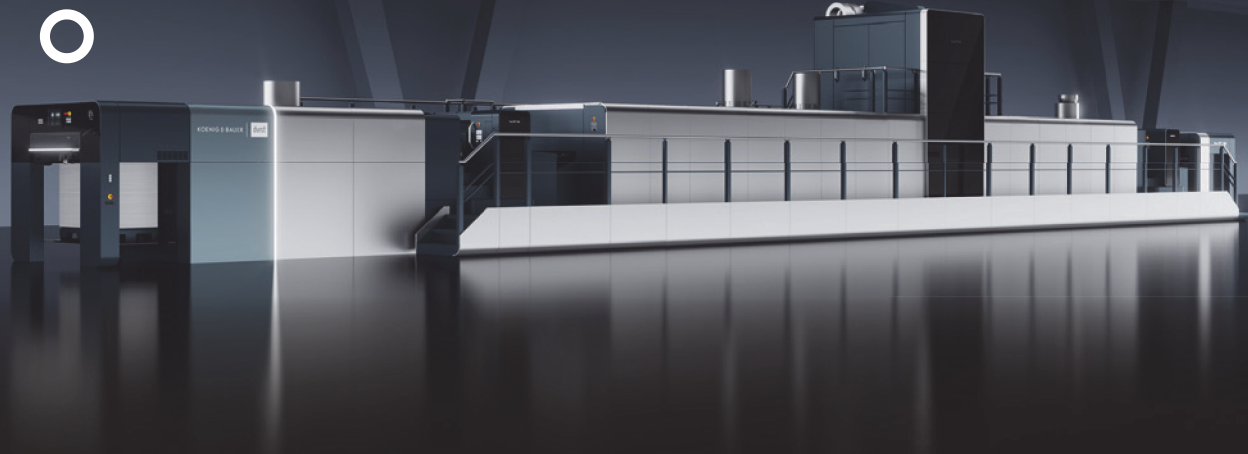
New Customer Experience Center with a full VariJET 106 printing press up and running in Radebeul (Germany)

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# Don't compromise.

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