

# Board Converting News

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## Accurate Box Expands To Meet New Demand

by Jim Curley

In recent years, Accurate Box has been on the move - both literally and figuratively. Business is flourishing - tripling in the last decade. So much that, pressed for space, the Paterson, New Jersey based manufacturer of litho-lam corrugated will be expanding its facility to nearly 400,000 square feet when the expansion is completed in 2017.

In late 2014, Accurate leased what company President Lisa Hirsh calls “swing-space” in nearby Totowa. As a result, work in progress is now printed, laminated, and die cut at Paterson, then “wrapped, strapped and shipped” less than five miles to the 150,000-square-foot plant in Totowa where the boxes are glued and then shipped to customers. The Totowa facility also contains significant finished goods space.

“We were certainly challenged by the space we had in Paterson,” Hirsh recalls. “In 2014, we took on new business that would grow our sales by 30 percent. So, even in the interim until our expansion would be completed, we needed more space.

“We looked at other factories in New Jersey and New York, and, while the option to move the entire

business was intriguing and these sites were more modern than our current plant and large enough to handle current and future needs, we decided that we wanted to stay with our workforce in Paterson,” Hirsh adds.



Three generations of Accurate Box's family members. From left, Charlie Hirsh, son of founder Henry Hirsh; Lisa Hirsh, Charlie's daughter; Samara Schlossman, daughter of Lisa and Mark Schlossman, right.

“But without some help, we could not have afforded the cost of renovating this building, parts of which are 120 years old, and stay in Paterson,” she explains. Help came in the form of a \$40 million tax grant from the State of New Jersey as part of the state's GrowNJ initiative. In return, the company committed to 50-plus additional jobs in Paterson and staying in the Silk City for another 15 years.

The existing building includes open courtyard space in the center of the structure. That area

will be enclosed as part of the expanded factory when the expansion is completed. The renovated building will also feature an improved workflow from incoming deliveries and roll stock inventory to litho printing to laminating to die cutting to gluing to finished goods inventory to outboard shipping of litho-lam packaging.

## A Phased Transfer

The renovation and expansion of the plant has already begun. “When we moved the gluers to Totowa last year, we gained valuable experience in moving equipment without disturbing production,” Hirsh says. Over the span of three weekends, Accurate Box moved seven gluers from Paterson to the swing-space in Totowa without missing a delivery date on box orders.



**Accurate’s 150,000-square-foot ‘swing-plant’ in Totowa, New Jersey, contains seven folder gluers and finished goods storage space**

“Each of those weeks, we took a couple of gluers down in Paterson on Friday, and they were back up and running in Totowa by the next Monday or Tuesday,” she recalls. “Most of our customers didn’t even know about the move until it was over.”

The renovation in Paterson is also happening in phases. As I toured the plant with Mark Schlossman, Executive Vice President of Sales, he showed me areas of the plant where new concrete floors were being laid - behind curtains that protected the machinery in the plant from any dust resulting from construction.

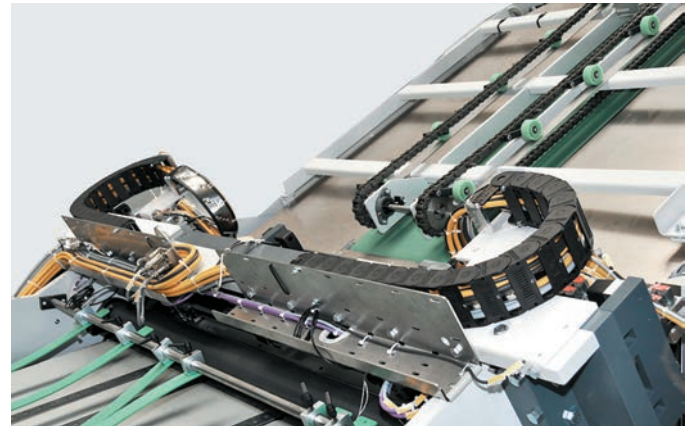
One newly rebuilt floor will support a new Asitrade, Accurate’s third litho laminator, slated to be installed this month. This unit, a MASTERFLUTE, the latest generation of in-line laminating from Bobst, runs at a maximum of 720 feet per minute and can produce 12,000 sheets per hour. (Accurate Box has two other Asitrade litho laminators, the oldest purchased in 2004. These machines, called EXPERTFLUTES, run at a maximum of 600 feet per minute and can produce 10,000 sheets per hour.)

The new MASTERFLUTE includes a progressive Power Aligner, a sheet alignment system that senses the sheet edges with optical sensors eliminating mechanical stops and risks of sheet damage. “Registration can be corrected without stopping the machine,” says Mike Schenone, Product Manager for Bobst’s Asitrade line. A totally new sheet feeder with a direct-driven bridge conveyor, combined with the Power Aligner sheet aligning system, is said to position sheets with great accuracy even at highest speeds.

The Power Aligner on the MASTERFLUTE works in tandem with the Power Register on Accurate’s two MASTERCUT 1.7 Autoplaten Die cutters purchased in 2012 and 2014 respectively. The MASTERCUT mirror units die cut at 18,700 feet per hour, and both machine centers include a Loader automatic feeder and a Breaker bundle separator.

Two thousand and twelve also saw the installation of a new Maxon sheeter, with dual cutting capabilities of SBS that double production off the machine. Sheets go to a climate-controlled printing room, where sit two KBA Rapida 64-inch seven-color plus coating presses. “These presses run at 12,000 sheets per hour,” says Schlossman. “Our in-house printing plate production has enabled us to compete favorably with preprint, thanks both to their high tooling costs and our ability to make the changes in copy and graphics that are so much a part of food and beverage packaging.

“It’s after the printing stage that our space had become an issue,” he adds. Thanks to the sharp increase in business, work-in-progress (WIP) space has tightened in the past year, though moving the folder gluers to Totowa late last year has eased this pressure.



**Accurate Box’s MASTERFLUTE includes a Power Aligner, which can align sheets for registration ‘on the fly.’**

Among the seven gluers now operating in Totowa are two VISIONFOLD 170 folder gluers from Bobst purchased within the last two years and a Bobst Domino 110. Schlossman estimated that 85 percent of Accurate’s production is glued, while the remainder is sent out as a flat pack. Also recently installed is a cyclone system to handle paper waste from the corrugator.

Another recent development at Paterson is an expanded lab for paper and box testing, box compression, ECT, and force opening testing. “We’ve also added a slide angle test that measures the coefficient of friction,” Schlossman explains. “Consistency in results is key to customer satisfaction, and this lab provides that.”



## Milestone Events

Two thousand and fourteen marked the 70th anniversary of the business started by Lisa's grandfather, Henry Hirsh, in Newark. In the 1960s, Charlie Hirsh took over the company, engineered Accurate's move to its Paterson facility and later transitioned the company to litho laminate corrugated production.



**With two KBA Rapida seven-color-plus-coating presses, Accurate Box has plenty of litho printing capacity.**

"My father has really been the major figure in our company," Lisa says. "Not only was he the major force behind our transformation from a folding carton company to a high graphics corrugated packaging company, but it was Charlie's vision and persistence that enabled us to grow and thrive in that business. Under his leadership, we learned to execute well and stay close to our customers, our suppliers, and our employees, the three most important aspects of our success.

"Although my Dad is not involved in the day-to-day running of the business anymore, we don't make any major decisions without his advice," she continues. "He has been a great influence and a wonderful mentor to all of us. He has really showed us how to run a successful business and how to conduct ourselves in life in general. His interest in the industry continues, and he stays involved with our membership in the ICG (Independent Carton Group) where we have been active for over 20 years."

Last year also saw the entrance of the fourth generation into the family business. Samara Schlossman, Lisa's and Mark's daughter, joined the company in 2014 and is busy learning the business working mainly in sales, customer service and marketing.

"There are a lot of young people of Samara's generation working for our customers and prospects and they are increasingly in positions of influence within these companies," Lisa says. "It's great to have someone with us that speaks their language. Millennials sometimes get a bad rap, but I've found they work hard and

are a lot more comfortable with computers and social media than other generations."

"Samara works well with her peers," adds her proud father. "They relate to her. She is the initial contact for prospective customers who use their search engines to find us. In the course of her first years, she has developed seven new customers from these contacts, while still learning the business. Of course, cold calling is an essential part of this business, and she will gain experience doing that as well."

Needless to say, Samara is the apple of the eye of the patriarch of the family. "It's actually in her job description that Samara has to give Charlie a hug every day the two of them are here at work," Lisa says with a smile. "And my father makes her live up to the commitment."

While fourth-generation management at Accurate is years in the future, a blueprint is readily available. "My father wrote the textbook on a smooth transition from one generation to the next," Lisa adds.

## Formulas For Success

Change has been the constant in Accurate's storied history. As the 21st century neared, Lisa Hirsh became Accurate's President. With their historic commitment to reinvesting in the business, management began to reassess its production processes - moving away from long production runs and warehousing what was not needed immediately by the customer to shorter "as-needed" runs that would reduce costs related to inventory.



**An expanded testing lab ensures the consistency of Accurate Box's final product.**

"With set-ups taking 20 minutes instead of three to four hours and hourly run rates escalating with each new machine, it made sense to go to shorter runs that would also meet the shorter marketing cycles of the products we packaged," Schlossman said. Today inventory turns of a week to a week and a half are not uncommon at Accurate.

With high-speed machines and a judicious production strategy, Accurate Box has been able to offer what Schlossman calls “very attractive pricing.” He adds, “We’ve got the goods here.”

Accurate’s success strategy with big customers is also instructive. “They start off giving us a small piece of their business, and when they see how capably we do the job, we get a larger piece of the business and go from there,” Hirsh explains.

“It used to be that being a one-location supplier was a detriment when marketing your services to larger customers,” adds Schlossman. “That’s changed. When they see how well we perform, and how quickly we respond to issues and questions, these customers see

an agile supplier as a positive for their company.” Hirsh notes, “With one major customer, we’ve gone from supplying one plant to supplying 14 – all in just a few years. It’s all because we execute well.”

Like other converters, Accurate Box is also looking at growth opportunities in Internet-related buying. “There might seem to be little need for graphics in packaging going directly to the consumer, but branding with graphics will always be important for both the manufacturer and the on-line retailer,” Hirsh says. “There’s certainly a role for a high-graphics corrugated company in that scenario.

“It’s all exciting and new,” she adds. “We’ve got great opportunities to grow.”

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