

Improvement in Indian machines to global standards

SP Ultraflex's ROBOSLIT impresses Constantia Parikh

Vienna-based Constantia is one of the largest flexible packaging manufacturers globally. It now has several plants in India based on its acquisitions of Parikh Packaging and Creative Polypack. It also set up a Greenfield plant for its recyclable PE-based flexible packaging plant called Constantia Ecoflex in Ahmedabad, inaugurated in 2019. We are producing an edited version of an interview of Ahmedabad-based Pragnesh Shah, plant head of the Constantia Parikh Packaging sub-cluster below.

■ Please tell us a bit about the inception of Constantia Parikh Packaging and its area of focus within the flexible packaging segment.

Pragnesh Shah – Constantia Parikh Packaging was formed in 2013, when the Parikh family, promoters of Parikh Packaging, welcomed the Constantia Flexibles group as partners. Regular investments in infrastructure, systems, and plant and machinery enabled the company to grow 3x, and the monthly output now stands at 1800 MT. In 2017, we decided to venture into 100% recyclable laminates and set up our new state of art plant 'Ecoflex' in 2019. We launched 'Ecolam,' a 100% PE-based laminate to replace aluminum foil from the new unit. By 2025, we plan for 100% of all consumer and pharma packaging to be recyclable, reflecting our commitment to society for environmental friendliness.

■ Can you help us with an overview of the plant and machinery in your company?

Pragnesh Shah – We started with indigenous machines but were let down in terms of performance. As a result, we shifted to European and Korean



The Constantia Parikh Packaging production and maintenance team during the installation of the SP Ultraflex Roboslit OHP slitter rewinder

technology. We are happy to share that after seeing improvements in Indian machines over the years, we have come full circle today. Most of the recent additions to our plant are from reputed Indian manufacturers.

■ Being one of the oldest and most reputed converters in the region, we would like to know how important the role of slitting rewinding machines in the overall process of converting is?

Pragnesh Shah – Slitting is usually the last process before the final product is delivered to our customer. Most of our customers are from the food industry and cannot afford stoppages in their packing lines due to slitting defects. In addition, slitting defects can undo all the efforts made in the printing and lamination processes. Therefore, we feel it is essential to invest in the best technology for slitter rewinders, mainly because their cost is a small fraction of the total investment.

■ Which performance parameters are critical and which features are ‘must haves’ on a good slitter rewinder?

Pragnesh Shah – First and foremost, the ITM (Intelligent tension management), is an absolute must to reduce dependency on operator expertise. Here, the PLC computes and maintains the tension levels suitable to the job. I see the next level of automation in the area of the job setup. The hygiene factor is also very important for food and pharma customers, and a close study of the layout from this perspective is most essential while finalizing the machine. Lastly, I would stress the static management system, which will soon be the need of the hour as more and more customers switch to high-speed packing machines that are most intolerant to residual static.

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■ **After installing multiple dual turret slitter machines worldwide, how has your experience with this technology been so far?**

Pragnesh Shah – Slitter rewinders with dual turret rewinds are the order of the day in these competitive times where the focus is to increase efficiency. Unlike duplex slitters, these machines run virtually non-stop, offering higher productivity, improved efficiency of man and machine, and optimal use of floor space. Consistency in performance is also higher as compared to duplex machines. Opting for dual turret slitters would also reduce the total number of slitters required to support a given plant capacity over a period of time.

■ **You installed a ROBOSLIT machine from SP Ultraflex a few months back. How was your experience?**

Pragnesh Shah – The OHP version of the Roboslit was installed at our plant in February 2021, and we have found its performance to be at par with the best in the world. The team at SP Ultraflex puts in a lot of effort in learning, researching, and understanding the customer's pain areas and channelizes their inputs to their design department, leading to continuous improvements and innovations. They are also very supportive, understanding the significance of our queries, and give clear and meaningful answers.

■ **In general, most converters prefer compact, rear-loading slitter rewinders. But you have purchased the overhead model of the Roboslit series, the Roboslit OHP. What made you go for that model?**

Pragnesh Shah – The most admirable quality in the OHP version is the overhead web movement. Substrates running between idle rollers at high speed tend to develop static charge and attract dust. This is not acceptable, especially when it comes to food and pharma customers. The substrate is always at a good distance from the floor level in the OHP layout, leaving no scope for the dust to contaminate its surface. Other advantages of the overhead path include easy access to the cutting section and better visibility of the running substrate. Last but not least, this layout improves the safety quotient of the machine – something that is non-negotiable within the Constantia Flexibles group.

■ **To what extent did SP Ultraflex meet the expectations of Constantia Flexibles in terms of output, quality, operator friendliness, and safety standards?**

Pragnesh Shah – To start with, safety and user-friendliness are of utmost importance to Constantia Flexibles, and both these aspects are well taken care of in the machine. Coming to the output, I have already spoken about the increased productivity of this machine by virtue of its dual turret rewind. I want to share another important dimension, which affects productivity – the ratio of rework. We have seen a drastic reduction in the percentage of narrow width coils that need to be edge corrected on doctoring machines, thanks to the better quality of finished reels produced on this machine.

■ **How, in your opinion, does the SP machine compare with the European make machines in your plant?**

Pragnesh Shah – It is a good indigenous technology at par with global standards, with certain additional features and a good team.

■ **What is the future focus for Constantia Parikh Packaging in terms of capital equipment technology?**

Pragnesh Shah – As mentioned earlier, we are looking for indigenous machines which will fulfill our requirements and expectations. We have a robust technical evaluation team that defines the 'what' and 'why.' If all such conditions and expectations are fulfilled, we would prefer Indian make machines, thereby supporting the Make in India movement. ■