

# BCN

BOARD CONVERTING NEWS™

An N.V. Publication

## Supplier Finds:

# Product + Innovation = Sale To Menasha

by Jim Curley

A little more than a decade ago, Menasha Corporation's Neenah, Wisconsin corrugator plant purchased a converting machine from a company that was about to go out of business. It was not a satisfying experience. "We had a lot of growing pains with that, especially without the vendor support we had expected," recalls Todd Price, Regional Operations Manager.

Since then, the plant has purchased equipment with different goals in mind. "We've tried to partner ourselves with companies that are going to be around and provide us with the service and support," Price says. "It's not always the lowest price that's the best deal. And a partnership with a trusted vendor is doubly advantageous when the supplier is local."

That strategy worked well when Green Bay based Fosber installed a new dry end system for the plant's corrugator. "It was a good install and we've had a great relationship with Fosber since; we have an open-door policy for Fosber to bring customers into our plant when they want to show off the dry end," says Price.

Buying locally also worked with the plant's most recent purchase, two C170 flatbed die cutters from Baysek Machines Inc., located in Amherst, Wisconsin, about an hour away from Neenah.

### Seizing An Opportunity

The need to purchase flatbed die cutters came as a result of Menasha's opportunity to garner a significant piece of business from a large CPG manufacturer,"

remembers Price. "They had a unique product line that we would have struggled to produce on our traditional rotary die cutting equipment.

"Our Philadelphia plant (formerly Triangle Container) had purchased a reconditioned Baysek last



**Menasha's Regional Operations Manager Todd Price, right, and Plant Production Manager Brad Knoll counted on Baysek to do more than just provide a machine.**

year and had experienced great results converting corrugated stock in small die cuts," Price says. The Philadelphia plant previously had used a rotary die cutter for the job, but that had required hand stripping after die cutting. Switching to a flatbed with automatic stripping saved considerably on labor costs. "I went to the Philly plant, saw the machine in operation and thought it might work with this application," he notes.

"One concern we had was that the Baysek die cut-

ter would require the loads coming off the corrugators to be restacked onto a five-degree angle pre-load cart before they would be loaded into the machines,” Price adds. “We also explained to Baysek that we had limited floor space in which to place the machines.”

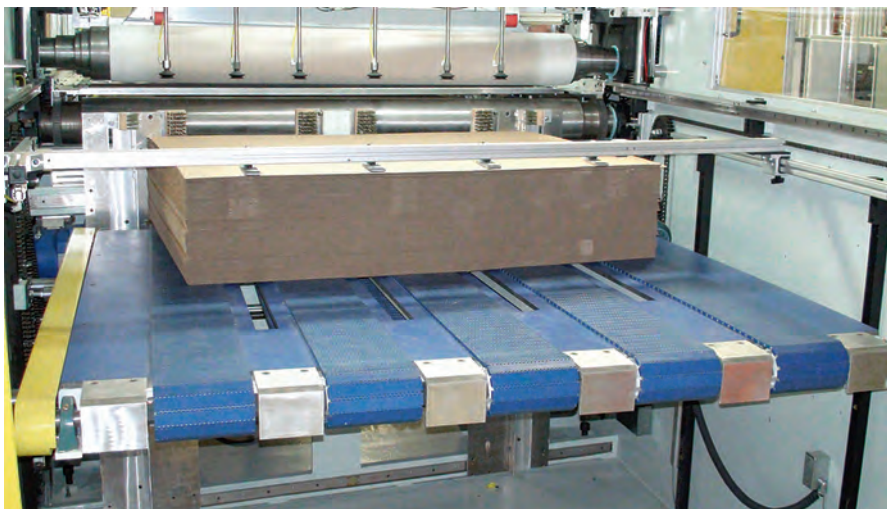
Baysek responded to the challenge by designing and developing a system that could take loads directly

already required, adjustable sheet-to-cut register, shear cutting action and low tooling costs. They are powered by servo drives. The machines can convert blanks from 20 inches by 20 inches up to 55 inches by 67 inches and can die cut up to 1,800 blanks an hour.

Both machines run only boxes from the CPG customer for which they were purchased. They run in a three-shift operation, 24 hours a day, five days a week, “sometimes stretching into Saturdays,” Price says. Though the top speed of the Baysek is 1,800 blanks an hour, output from the Baysek die cutters is impressive. “Because they can run multiple outs, the two machines can convert a combined 60,000 pieces an hour,” Price adds.



**Baysek’s innovative automatic infeed (below, in blue) allows sheets to move directly from the corrugator to the two die cutters without handling.**



from the corrugator and orientate a five degree angle of the full load inside the machine. The design reduced the required machine footprint area and provided for an additional eight feet of infeed storage conveyor.

“As a result of this innovation, we are able to run the Bayseks with only one employee on each machine,” Price explains. “In fact, we have plans to utilize the die cutters as continuous run machines by using one person to run both machines during break time.” The machines share a common discharge line that sends the converted die cut product downstream to a stretch wrapper and a unitizer.

At Neenah, the Baysek die cutters are placed side by side and feature quick die board change with no mak-

### **Inside The Plant**

Menasha Packaging’s Neenah plant is “one of our company’s largest full-line corrugator facilities,” Price notes. Besides the aforementioned Fosber dry end, the plant recently installed an “about 85 percent” new wet end from BHS.

Though the corrugator is currently a 98-inch machine, “we’re just a doublefacer short of it being a 110-inch machine,” Price says. The doublefacer is expected to be installed during the company’s current five-year capital investment plan.

Most of the converting machinery in the plant, including both rotary die cutters and flexos, is older equipment including a number of Ward and Langston machines. Extensive conveyerization within the plant expedites quick throughput and delivery to customers. About 90 percent of the machines in the plant are run in three shifts. The plant is served by Menasha’s regional sales force.

Price characterizes the plant as a brown-box facility, but some colorful boxes come from the facility since a large percentage of its mix is preprint. The preprint, manufactured at another Menasha facility in town, is shipped to the plant for converting.

### **Attentive Supplier**

For Price, Menasha’s experience with Baysek typifies what a customer-vendor relationship should be. “Baysek is very customer focused. They listened to what our needs were for this project, and they were able to fill those needs,” he says.

The innovation was a credit to the resourcefulness of Baysek’s manufacturing team, says Vern Engle of Equipment Sales, U.S. agent for Baysek. “The infeed

was designed, engineered and built within 90 days. The formal purchase order was received in early December 2009, and the first machine was installed in early February, with the second being installed in early March," Engle remembers.



**'We have plans to utilize the die cutters as continuous run machines by using one person to run both machines during break time.'**

**- Menasha's Todd Price**

The infeed innovation provided three major benefits to Menasha: it enhanced the plant's production, it allowed the operators to focus on the operation of the machine, rather than the feeding of blanks to the machine, and it retained valuable in-feed conveyor storage."

"Menasha might have purchased the machine without the automatic infeed, but Baysek's positive response to a customer need certainly sealed the deal," Engle says.

"Baysek Machine's business has been built on innovation with the attitude to respond to a customer need, stay with it until the need is satisfied, and above all be certain the process is operationally friendly," he adds.

"The installation was done by a local rigger," Brad Knoll, Menasha's Operations Manager - Neenah Plant, remembers, "After Baysek's tech people made all the connections, we attached the cyclone to the machines, and we were ready to go.

"It took only about two or three days," he recalls. "About as close to plug and play as we can get.

"The machines are easy to operate, with flat screen panels that walk you through everything," Knoll adds. "After one week, none of our operators were uncomfortable going it alone on the machine."

The customer is likewise delighted with the output coming from the Baysek machines, Price says. "The tolerances that are held on the Baysek are much, much better than those you get on a rotary die cutter; the



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**- Menasha's Brad Knoll**

cut is much cleaner, no dust or angel hair after the cut," he notes. Knoll adds, "The stacking of the completed die cuts is more consistent than it would be if the stacking were done by hand."

"There are number of pieces of equipment that would have answered our need, but we felt that the Baysek was the best fit," Price notes. "The upfront costs aren't excessive and the machines do high quality work in a limited footprint, with a limited staff. The Baysek fit us for a lot of reasons.

"I did have concerns that these machines, which have often been placed in one- or two-shift sheet plants, might not be up to a continuous-run operation such as we have here at Neenah," he adds. "But these Baysek die cutters have performed well."

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