

One on One with Michael B. King



Michael B. King is the president, CEO, and chief design engineer of Ocean, New Jersey-based Eagle Systems, Inc. Michael has over 42 years' expertise working exclusively with foil machinery.

The company brings over 25 years' experience in designing and manufacturing standard and customized foil stamping and print enhancement equipment with their Eagle Systems™ brand.

Why foil? What drew you to this specialized market of both hot and cold foil technology?

At the early age of 15, I started working in my father's company as a machinist and assembler of mechanical foil machines. By age 19, I had developed electronic foil machinery and invented the first electronic hot foil indexing machine.

More recently, nine years ago in fact, John Cote, Vice President of Innovation and Technology for Multi Packaging Solutions (MPS), the "godfather" of cold foil in the U.S., asked me to service a cold foiler that he had purchased from a company in the UK. Although I had no experience with cold foil, I repaired that equipment, but knew I could make a much better machine and truly embraced the challenge. That MPS machine was soon replaced with an Eagle Systems cold foiler, and we now have more than 30 cold foil units installed worldwide.

What are the benefits of developing in-house expertise, rather than outsourcing any part of the job?

When outsourcing your foiling work, you risk losing other work as well. Your customers know you don't do it, so most times they will go to a vendor that can handle it all—their regular printing, die cutting and other finishing work—just because you don't offer it.

Eagle Systems has built a reputation of delivering what it promises—a well-built machine that does exactly what we say it can do. To accomplish this, we have a dedicated team of design engineers to ensure a fully functioning design before any metal is cut, and we produce in-house all of the control systems and software for both standard and customized machines. We also follow up with extensive training and 24/7 customer support to ensure that our customers' needs are met. We have always offered this service—Eagle Care—free of charge to our customers for the lifetime of their Eagle Systems equipment, which could be a long time, given that they are built to last "forever."

To what do you attribute Eagle Systems' strong international presence, including offices in Poland and the UK and successful installations across the world, in particular, China, Japan and Argentina?

Thirty-five years ago connecting with remote customers at home and abroad meant developing a service that worked via modem and phone line; then high-speed Internet came along, permitting real time connections and service. Nowadays technology allows 24/7 machine support, with the added benefit that the world has become much more accessible to us. Especially for those of us who are constantly on the road.

Our expansion internationally has been gradual, yet consistent, since 1997 seeking out the best markets for our products. In April 2013, we retrofitted an eight-color press in Tokyo, Japan with an Eco-Eagle cold foil system. In Argentina in 2014, we completed a cold foil installation at one of the country's leading paperboard manufacturers. We followed this with the

installation of a system for the largest commercial and package printers in China. With the increasing demand for hot and cold foil installations worldwide, in February 2015 we opened our Warsaw, Poland office in the heart of Europe, providing easy access to most neighboring European countries. Additionally, through a strategic alliance with Kluge International signed in early 2014, we established a UK office to handle the UK and Ireland. In 2015 this same alliance launched an office in India.

As print evolves, and substrates and technologies continually advance, how has the market changed since you started your company over 25 years ago and where do you see it heading?

I truly believe history repeats itself and, as we emerge from a recent bad economy, companies look for added value to differentiate themselves from the competition. One of the differentiators today in the print world is cold foil innovation and it's growing rapidly. Not only have equipment, foil, adhesive and blankets improved, but now it is easier to cold foil—it is mathematical, not an art like hot foil. Basically, if you can print you can cold foil. Above all, there is still plenty of opportunity out there. Just as in the 1990's hot foil was the added value and grew in leaps and bounds!

What can you share about any new products, developments that you will be featuring at GRAPH EXPO 15?

Eagle Systems will be featuring a large format Eco-Eagle CFM145 at the show. This will be the world's largest cold foiler. Its capacity will be announced at show time and it will be equipped with all the latest features. ■