



Rafael Salcedo with the Nilpeter FA-4*, the first press of its kind in Colombia

Globalflex outlines plan for ambitious growth

Globalflex, a self-adhesive label converting offshoot of Colombian offset printer Calidad Gráfica, has ambitious plans for growth after installing the country's first Nilpeter FA-4. James Quirk reports*

Globalflex, a young flexo label converter based in the port city of Barranquilla on Colombia's Caribbean coast, has made an ambitious leap forward in terms of quality and productivity with the installation of the country's first Nilpeter FA-4* press.

The company was started in 2015, the brainchild of siblings Rafael Salcedo and Ester Posada, as an offshoot of the offset printer Calidad Gráfica which they founded 18 years ago.

Printing is in their blood: in 1939, their grandfather, also named Rafael Salcedo, opened an editorial printer, Editorial Mejoras, and achieved local fame when he received an international patent for his invention of a mathematic formula for binding and numbering book pages. Their father and his seven siblings eventually took over the business.

Calidad Gráfica, which employs 110 people, uses equipment from Heidelberg, Manroland, and Polar to produce sheet-fed

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offset printed labels, the largest part of its business at 60 percent, as well as folding cartons – 30 percent. A wide-format Mimaki digital printer handles publicity work, which represents 10 percent of production.

After five years, Calidad Gráfica installed a Webtron flexo press in order to test the water in that market. 'It was hard to make the machine profitable,' recalls Salcedo. 'We needed specialist finishing equipment and had to import materials from abroad. We realized we needed to focus investment either in offset or in flexo.'

'We could see the trend of clients wanting to move from offset to flexo: flexo materials



The Omicron was Globalflex's first flexo press



Calidad Gráfica runs three Heidelberg Speedmasters

are cheaper, and there can be more options for adding value through advanced finishing. But because the initial flexo press wasn't a success, we decided to create a new company, Globalflex, housed within the Calidad Gráfica factory, and invest in an Omicron press, slitter rewinder and sleeve equipment.'

Successful move

The Omicron 7-color UV flexo press – a vertical machine from China equipped with

corona station, cold foil, lamination, delam/relam, video inspection and two die-cutting units – was the pair's first real experience of flexo technology. Alongside it, they added a die-cutting system and shrink sleeve equipment, also from Omicron. 'The move was a success: we achieved 40 percent growth in our second year,' says Salcedo.

Needing to increase capacity, Salcedo began looking at alternatives to the Chinese press, studying machines from suppliers in North America, Brazil, Europe and China

"The expanded gamut printing brought by the Nilpeter press is a huge advantage. We can show clients tangible examples of the improved quality of our printed products"

before installing the Nilpeter FA-4* in late 2017. 'It's a value-added machine, the first of its kind in Colombia,' he says. 'It will increase our production capacity by five times, thanks to its speed of 200m/min.'

The servo-driven 8-color UV flexo press has a 16in web width and is equipped with lamination, cold foil, delam/relam, die-cutting, turnbar and a screen unit from SPGPrints. According to Salcedo, only five other label converters in Colombia have rotary screen capabilities.

'The expanded gamut printing brought by the Nilpeter press is a huge advantage,' continues Salcedo. 'We can show clients tangible examples of the improved quality of our printed products.'

Globalflex, which has 11 dedicated employees, continues to operate within

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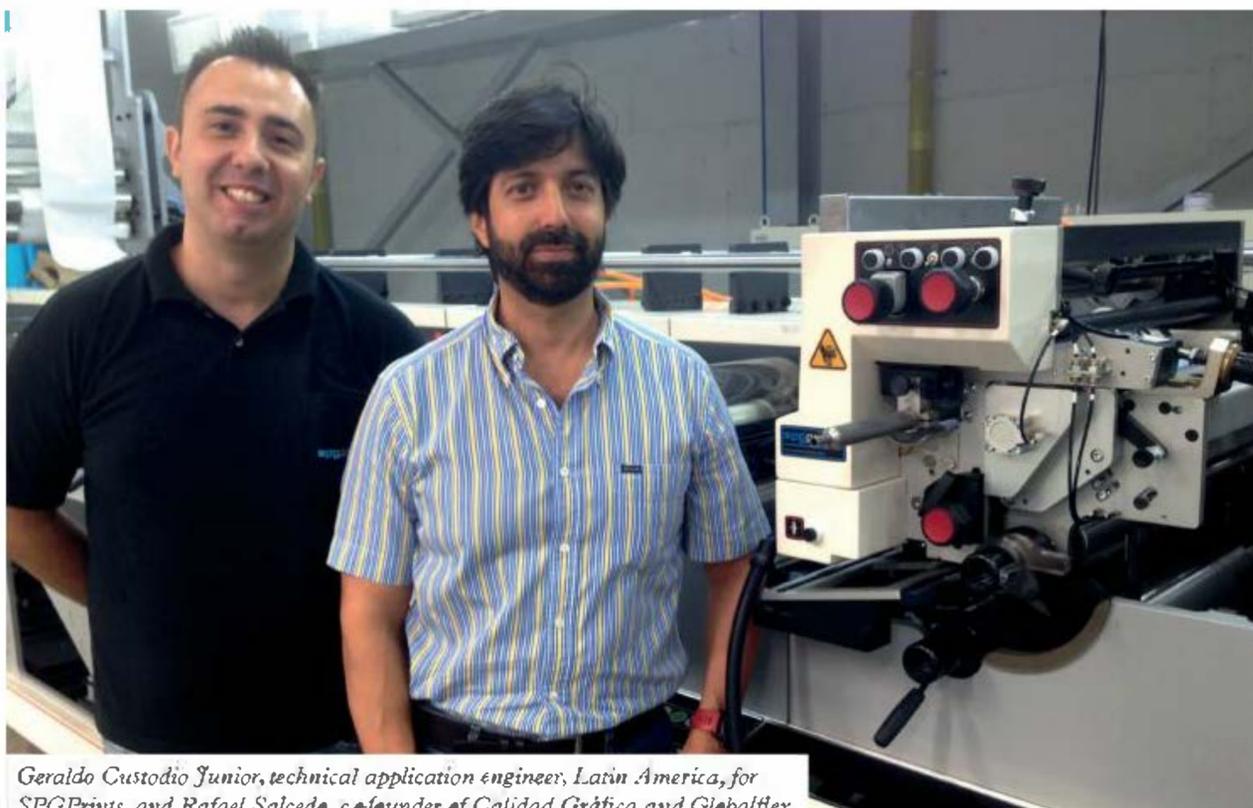
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Geraldo Custodio Junior, technical application engineer, Latin America, for SPGPrints, and Rafael Salcedo, cofounder of Calidad Gráfica and Globalflex

Calidad Gráfica's factory, which has been expanded from 2,400sqm to 3,000 sqm following the Nilpeter press installation. The Nilpeter and Omicron equipment is housed in a specific area dedicated to self-adhesive label, wraparound label and shrink sleeve production, alongside a fleet of Chinese slitter rewinders.

Self-adhesive materials are sourced from Colombian manufacturer Arclad, while shrink sleeve materials come from Klockner Pentaplast. RotoMetrics and Kocher+Beck supply tooling; inks are bought from Nazdar. A workflow software developed in-house by Calidad Gráfica has been implemented at Globalflex.

It's not only technology that the companies share: some 80 percent of clients buy from both companies, with many ordering both offset- and flexoprinted labels.

Globalflex's biggest end user markets are

liquor, representing 20 percent of production, and agrochemical, at 15 percent. It also serves the pharmaceutical, cosmetics, personal care, food and beverage sectors.

Growth prospects

Salcedo is bullish about Globalflex's growth prospects. The installation of the Nilpeter FA-4* press helped the company boost growth to 90 percent last year – only its third year of operation – while a further 100 percent growth is forecast for 2018. To help achieve this, the company plans to invest in high quality finishing equipment in the near future.

While Calidad Gráfica only serves the Colombian market, Salcedo says a focus for this year is to expand Globalflex's export business, particularly in Central America and the Caribbean. It already has clients in Panama.

Climate control

Due to Barranquilla's average year-round temperatures of more than 28 deg C, and high humidity levels, presses at Calidad Gráfica and Globalflex are housed in climate controlled rooms within the factory.

Fifty percent of the companies' energy costs go towards air conditioning. Two hundred liters of water are produced by air conditioning units every day in the Nilpeter press room alone. The water is reused in the factory's bathrooms and other areas.

According to Rafael Salcedo, Barranquilla is one of Colombia's fastest-growing local economies, thanks to its increasing industrial sector. Its strategic location next to the delta of the Magdalena river and close to the mouth of the Caribbean sea means it serves as a port for both river and maritime transportation within Colombia. It is the biggest city in Colombia's Caribbean region.



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