

Losan Pharma reduces costs with the MLI multihead transfer printer by Allen Coding

Efficient Printing Without Interruption

In order to improve the efficiency within the printing company and to generate high quality prints, Losan Pharma has started to use the multihead thermal transfer printer by Allen Coding for its packaging line. Its high reliability and setting options customized for Losan Pharma not only enable the pharmaceutical company to speed up the printing process, but also to significantly reduce the costs with the application of the new printing solution.

Specialists for pharmaceutical technologies

Losan Pharma is a subsidiary of Dr. Falk Pharma GmbH, and collaborates worldwide with companies of the pharmaceutical sector in the field of modern pharmaceutical technologies. The company was founded in 1993, with a registered office in Neuenburg on the Rhine, and by now has more than 400 employees. The manufacture of multi-particle systems based on granules or pellets is one of the major production technologies by Losan Pharma. These are further processed to tablets or capsules, and then assembled into stick packs, blister packs or bottles. For quality assurance purposes with regard to the products, it is crucial to mark the packaging with the correct batch designations and expiry dates. Therefore, Losan Pharma cannot do without the proper printing system. The old printer model could not keep up with the increasing demands, in particular with regard to printing speed and reliability, so Losan Pharma was looking for a new solution that allows a more efficient and economical printing process.



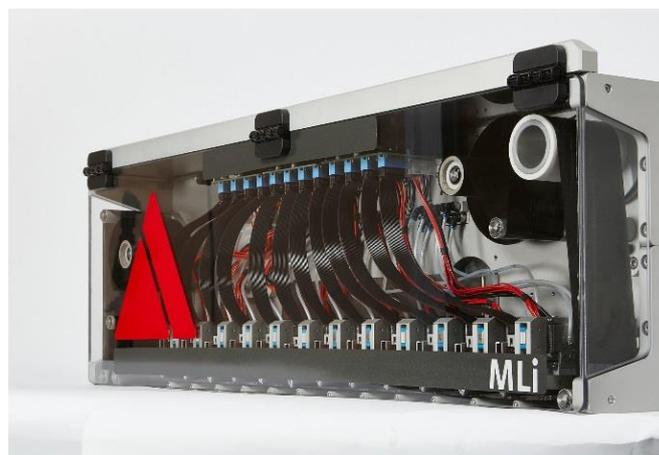
The objective: excellent reliability and higher efficiency

Karl Marquardt, project manager and technical coordinator for bulk materials at Losan Pharma GmbH, remembers: " It was especially important to us that the new printing solution offers a better control comfort than the former model. Ideally with an intuitive control panel that lets us understand incurring interruptions and rectify them accordingly." The printer software should, however, be available in German in order to simplify printer settings. Due the

to the packaging contents that consist to a great extent of fine dust and powders, another important criteria for Losan Pharma was proper sealing of the printer, as well as a design that allows for an easy access into the interior of the device, in order to facilitate cleaning. Further requirements for the new printing solutions were as follows: a consistent printing quality at high printing speeds, an adaptability of the printing intensity according to the nature of the packaging material, as well as adjustability of the print along the x- and y-axis.

Good experiences with printer system specialists

Losan Pharma commissioned the Allen Coding GmbH with its headquarters in Würzburg with the implementation and supply of the printing system. Allen Coding is an international specialist for industrial marking solutions as well as manufacturer and developer of printing systems in the packaging line. There were several reasons to chose Allen Coding: Besides the technical knowhow, Losan Pharma considered the positive experiences from previous collaborations as a decisive factor for the choice of this printing system specialist. The confirmation by Allen Coding to position the printer into the packing machine exactly according to the specification by Losan Pharma played a further crucial role. Losan Pharma decided for the new MLi multihead thermal transfer printer by Allen Coding as the actual printer unit, which, at this time, had not yet been introduced to the market (see info box). Losan Pharma was granted the opportunity to try out the MLi during an exclusive test phase. Marquardt reports: "We have been working together with Allen Coding for quite a while, and thus know their products well. When we heard that Allen Coding had developed a new printer that meets our specifications, we immediately agreed to try out this new printer extensively during the beta phase."



What is a multihead thermal transfer printer?

A thermal transfer printer applies the print by heating up a special colored foil. This allows bar codes, batch numbers, texts and graphics to be printed in high resolution quality. Special feature of the MLi: It prints with up to 12 print heads simultaneously on several lanes of packaging materials, such as materials used for blister or stick packs.

Installation in just three hours

In July 2015, Allen Coding and Losan Pharma determined the project scope, and discussed the design of the new printer system in the packing machine, as well as defined the most important setting options. "As a result, we could already start with the implementation of the MLI in November 2015", added Alexandros Plaschka, responsible project manager and product specialist on the part of Allen Coding. "In order to make the transition to the new printer unit as comfortable as possible, we also support Losan Pharma in decisions about the choice of packaging foils suitable for the respective color ink ribbons. The print quality of the ink ribbons was tested at our own test facility prior to that."

In the course of the implementation, during which the new printer system was installed into the machine frame by means of a mounting bracket, it was of significant importance to Losan Pharma to comply with the positioning of the printer to ensure that the thermal transfer foil could run through underneath the printer. "This prevents sagging of the thermal transfer foil as known from old typewriters", Marquardt explains. "This minimizes the risk of faulty prints due to the lack of numbers or letters." The implementation went smoothly: Within three hours only it was completed. This was followed by an initial test phase that also took three hours, during which the new printer system convinced Losan Pharma with its perfect print images of batch numbers and product expiry dates on the packaging foils.



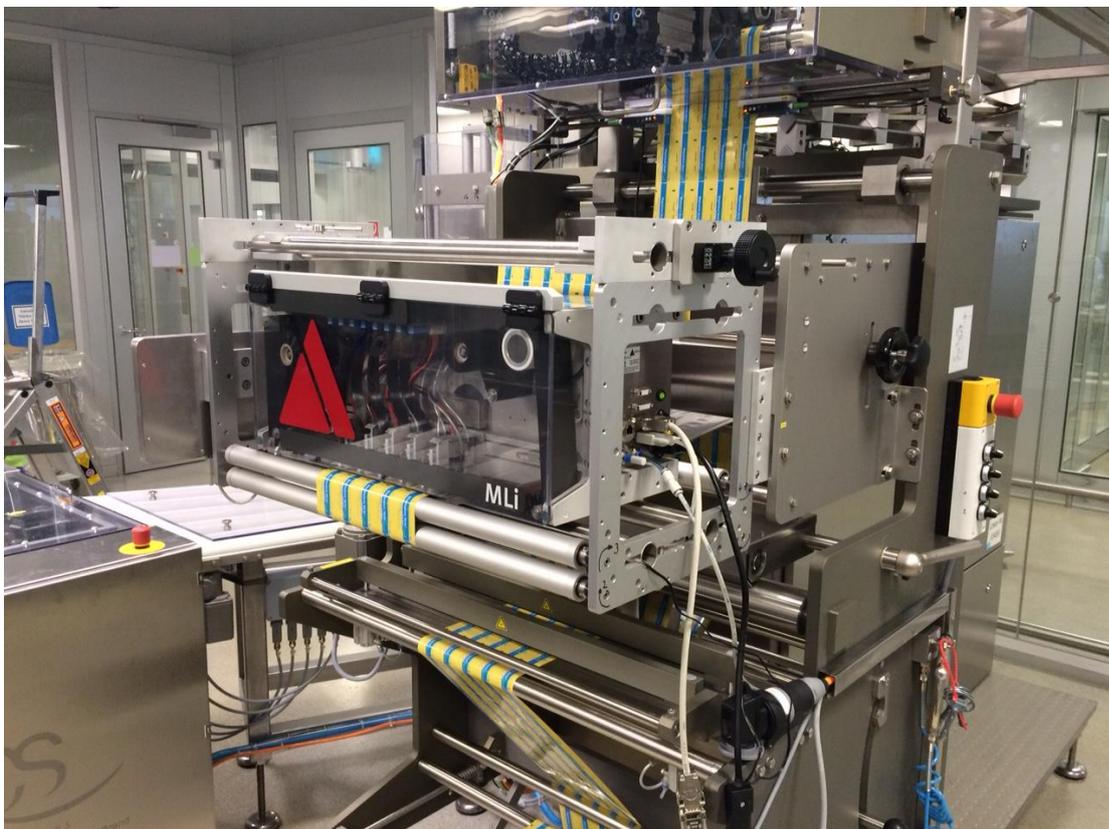
Successful start of the project and the five-months beta phase

Hence, the starting signal was given for the five months long beta phase, during which the printer was running consistently and reliably at all times, and always provided excellent printing results. In addition, the specified performance range of up to 70 cycles per minute was met by the MLI without any problems. While carrying out diverse fine adjustments, the position of the printer was still adapted even better to the requirements of the packing machine. The determining factor here was, above all, to integrate the printer completely into the packing machine, including the rear side of the printer. In the previous model it stuck out a few centimeters which resulted in a lack of space. This turned replacing the colored foils into a hassle - a factor that had to be avoided with the new printer by all means. In order to further enhance the printing process, the printer settings were gradually optimized and adjusted to the individual demands of Losan Pharma. The main focus here was the option to variably set the printing intensity so that the color could be printed more or less intensive

depending on the surface structure of the packaging material. Plaschka emphasizes: "Now, during the replacement process, we can adjust the printing intensity depending on the requirements of the packaging foil and according to its material in order to consistently achieve great printed results." After completion of a successful test run in June 2016, Losan Pharma decided to make the MLi a permanent part of the packing machine. So it was firmly installed and has been working productively ever since.

Intuitive handling and increased reliability

Being easy to operate, the new printer system has immediately scored points with Losan Pharma: "The MLi is controlled via an easy to operate touch screen. From there, we can now centrally carry out the printing of images and settings for all printer heads" Marquardt explains. Furthermore, the system security was significantly improved, as a password protected registration for the printer system must be carried out via the control panel. In addition, the work processes were simplified, as all settings (print formats, printing speed, contrast, ink ribbon optimization and print position) are now saved in the printer's memory, from where it can be quickly and easily called up at any time. Due to the intuitive control panel, the entry of batch numbers, expiry dates and manufacturer data while changing to a different batch has become stress free and straightforward for the user. Longer downtimes of the printer are prevented by the two alternative settings. Marquardt declares: "The position of the press can now be controlled electronically as well as mechanically. If the electronic mode reaches its limit with a defined range, the technician can set the range manually on the printer directly. This has significantly improved the reliability of the printer system."



Efficiency and high savings potential thanks to performance and design

Furthermore, Losan Pharma benefits from the increased printing speed of the MLI: Each printer head prints up to 70 times per minute; with 5 printer heads this totals up to 350 prints per minute. This demonstrates a 20 percent increase of the printing speed and improves the print quality considerably. A significant increase in efficiency is also the result of the 40 percent reduction in the time spent on the old printer model in order to eliminate disturbances or interruptions in the printing operation. In addition, new print jobs can be launched around 50 percent faster. The compact and closed in design of the printer also prevents damages to moving parts, and increases the safety for the operator. The large front lid of the printer also allows easy access to the components in the interior, such as brake belts and guide rollers. This makes cleaning the printer and replacing the ink ribbons an easy task. In addition, thanks to an intelligent ink ribbon economizing automatic mode, up to 95 percent of a color foil roll can be utilized now - before, only 70 percent of a roll was usable. Due to the improved utilization of the ink ribbons, an extended operation of the machine without interruption caused by the replacement of the foil could be achieved at the same time. "An additional benefit is that individual spare parts can be ordered with Allen Coding and replaced with the defective part in the printer system at any time, without having to replace entire modules - which constitutes major savings ", Marquardt states.

High quality and satisfied employees

Due to its intuitive operation, all employees involved have become accustomed to the operation of the printer within a very short period of time. A brief training during the beta phase has proven to be sufficient to acquaint the employees with the solution. Since then, the work efficiency has quickly increased and previous extra effort involved in documentation has been significantly reduced. "The printing results of the previous model were not always optimal; at times it would achieve unclear printing results even with the proper machine setting. Troubleshooting would cause great efforts and often involved downtimes. These have now declined by about 80 percent - not least of all, the previously often considerable resource expenditure, this laborious use of resources is now finally a thing of the past", Marquardt emphasized. Losan Pharma and their clients benefit from reduced downtimes of the new printer solution and increased printing quality. Marquardt declares: "The MLI ensures a clean printing process and is running reliably and consistently at all times. Benefits: From now on, our employees can fully focus on their work and are not interrupted by any problems caused by the printer. The work flow has been accelerated significantly ever since."

If you want to experience the truly unique MLI in action click on the [VIDEO](#).