

# Conversions

## 24 Years of Partnership

### A Visit to ISOFlex Nashville of the Sigma Plastics Group

When walking around the ISOFlex Nashville plant one thing is clear, there is a lot to see: two MDO units, standing side-by-side, numerous blown film lines (including the VAREX II from K 2019), and many types of winders built by W&H. Even the adjacent property is waiting to be converted into a brand new, spacious 50,000 ft<sup>2</sup> warehouse.

The Nashville plant is just one location in the vast Sigma Plastics Group. Established by Alfred Teo in 1978, Sigma Plastics was built steadily, brick-by-brick, and now comprises 45 locations across the United States, Canada, Mexico, Poland, and Thailand. Specializing in the production of plastic film and bags for diverse applications, the company remains under the ownership of the Teo family, with Alfred's sons, Mark and Andrew serving as President & CEO and CFO respectively. In 2022, Sigma Plastics was recognized as the third largest film producer in the United States, with an impressive revenue of \$2.6 billion, according to the Plastics News Film & Sheet Rankings.

During the visit to Nashville, Dave McKinney, President of ISOFlex, said "As a member of the Sigma Plastics Group, we take pride in being a debt-free organization with the financial might of a Fortune 100 enterprise, yet each member company within the group has retained its entrepreneurial spirit. The diversity of companies also brings with it a wealth of technologies and redundancy, which gives us agility to tap into our enterprise and be able to deliver high-quality products."

"We have seen a lot of anti-plastic and sustainability movements come and go over the years, but the recent attention has been

*continued on page 4*



The ISOFlex Nashville team l to r: Trey Reuss, Aaron Fontana, Orina Rucker, David Stanley, and Tim Sanford



Andrew Wheeler and Alfred Teo in front of Sigma's K-Show line at K 2019

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# President's Corner

## Thoughts While Shaving

### Addressing the Elephant in the Room

Compared to ongoing problems with our supply chain, we got through the first few waves of COVID easily. We were “on time” for the first 14 months of COVID, miraculously, with technicians working incredible hours and our plant in Lengerich churning out equipment. Our “forward thinking” Purchasing Group had built up our backlog of raw materials and crucial componentry, with the hope that it would suffice in any situation.

Stockpiling components can only cover you for so long however, and as drives, electrical components, UL cables, electrical cabinets and circuit boards dried up, we were at the mercy of the world's limited supply.

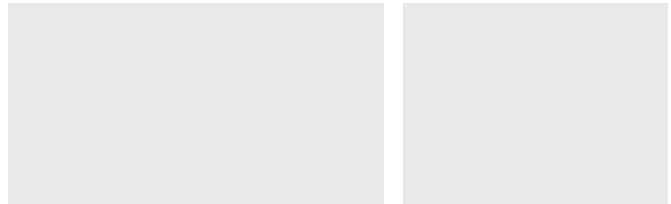
While most customers acknowledge that W&H has done much better than our competition, we typically gauge ourselves against our own expectations, and those of our customers. It is not enough to simply be better than the competition.

I can only say, on behalf of our whole company, that we are sorry to have disappointed you. We are sorry that we have not lived up to our promises, or your expectations. You have been patient, and we have let you down. It is not our fault, but it is our responsibility, and we will continue to work hard to regain your trust and faith in us.

We have incurred massive costs to supply our customers with the necessary components to get their machines running, and yet we still fall behind in our expectations of ourselves. We are W&H, we go the extra mile, which is why customers rely on us.



W&H technician at an installation during the early stages of COVID.



Andrew Wheeler

### Impressions from K2022

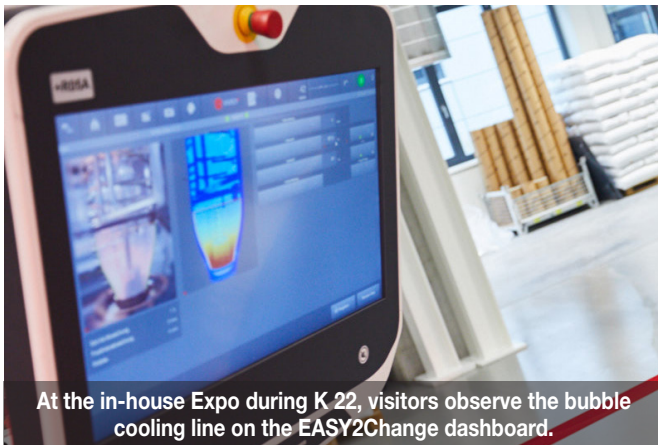
Meeting with longtime customers after K, I was overjoyed with some of the reactions we received. Across the board, customers were stunned at how many amazing new developments had been done since the previous K. Not only did we show a running line (unlike most of our competitors), but the creative genius of Torsten Schmitz and his extrusion team, introduced developments that have clearly set W&H apart from all competition.

The common international lament from customers is that talent and operators continue to be difficult to find. W&H's efforts to automate certain features in order to remove that “expertise” from an operator's job description and make the blown/cast lines “easier” are revolutionary. Granted, these efforts remove some of the “art” of extrusion, but they address real world problems and increase consistency and reproducibility.



Circular Economy solutions from K 22: a recycling pet food bag with a co-extruded EVOH barrier layer.





At the in-house Expo during K 22, visitors observe the bubble cooling line on the EASY2Change dashboard.

Replacing operators with technical advancements has never been the goal...it has always been about creating consistency and repeatability. Even the very best operators occasionally forget something...the % of an additive in the hopper, inserting the trim blades, setting the correct temperature in the extruder...there are hundreds of things that must be remembered. If we can help take some of those factors into account, it allows them to focus on the critical part of their job, namely, to make excellent, consistent product.

**Javeed Buch - Goodbye to a trusted colleague and friend**

As many of you may already know, our Senior Vice President, my longtime colleague, Javeed Buch, has decided to leave W&H. After 26 years with our company, the only employer he has ever known, Javeed has decided to try out a new opportunity, that he felt was just too good to pass up.



Javeed enjoying a sunset cruise in Newport, RI with Todd Krupa, Dominic Barnes, Catherine Mattson, and Matt Okruta.

Javeed started with W&H in India at age 22, fresh out of school, having received his master’s in electrical engineering. As required at the time, he learned German and was sent off into the world as a Multiwall Technician. We “stole” Javeed a few years later and he quickly climbed the ranks, his smarts and business acumen, not to mention his “customer-first” attitude, making his eventual leadership at W&H a forgone conclusion.

Javeed became a trusted confidante and friend whose advice I constantly sought out. As difficult as it is to lose someone like Javeed, we have a strong core of dedicated, loyal, caring professionals, committed to our company, who are eager to take this opportunity to grow the company even stronger. Few people realize that W&H has been selling in the United States for over 120 years, which HAS to make us the longest tenured machinery supplier in this industry.



Musical team building session concluding a day of international strategy meetings in Lengerich.

We are fully committed to the North American Market, the biggest and most successful in the W&H Group and will take whatever steps necessary to support our new and longtime customers.



# W&H Sustainability Report



Video



Are you curious about W&H's sustainability practices? Look no further than our first sustainability report, published last year! This comprehensive analysis details our commitment to the circular economy, efficient production for both us and our customers. We've included our current carbon footprint and our path towards a more sustainable future. Want to learn more? Simply scan the QR codes provided for the report and a video.

For more information, email

**Catherine Mattson**

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## Sigma Plastics Group (continued)

different. That is why we are investing in W&H technology and leaning towards sustainability and the future of plastics. We have worked hard to develop films to help address any of our customers' sustainability needs. We make recycle ready films, which incorporate about 40% PCR, and invested in MDO technology for PET replacement early in the game," said McKinney.

Trey Reuss, plant manager at ISOFlex, said, "The MDO process is complex, and it took some time of trial and error to master. My production manager and I would watch the lines run, experiment with the jobs, and gradually build our expertise. The process was challenging, but also fun and rewarding."

The partnership between the Sigma Plastics Group and W&H began in 1999. Since then, Sigma has acquired over 80 W&H machines, including blown film extrusion lines and flexographic



Trey Reuss and Aaron Fontana in front of one of ISOFlex's two MDO lines in the Nashville plant.

printing presses. The show lines from K 2019 and K 2022, equipped with the newest technologies and automation belong to ISOFlex in Nashville. The K 2022 line is an 87", 5-layer VAREX II with Easy2Change, the newest technology combining several automation systems, including: Turboclean, EASY Change, EASY Wind, Profile Booster, and Purge Assist. The line also has an ARCTIS II automated air ring, and RUBY IoT system for monitoring, analyzing, and optimizing production data. This new line will be running in 2023. Four additional lines have been ordered this year for companies within the Group.

McKinney says the quality, output, ease of use and service are what keep the Sigma Plastics Group buying from W&H. Reuss added, "The W&H interface is the best in the business. It is so much easier to train operators on, and if there is ever a problem, there's 24/7 support."



Touring the plant: l to r Aaron Fontana, Kasie Fairbarn (W&H), Trey Reuss, and Dave McKinney

[www.sigmaplasticsgroup.com](http://www.sigmaplasticsgroup.com)



# Gelpac Adds Capacity

Partnership & Trust that Grew during COVID

Gelpac, a Canadian converter of multiwall and polyethylene bags, has invested in a FLEXA II printer, ARCOMAT palletizer (both for converting), and a 3-layer OPTIMEX II blown film line, for their plants in Marieville and Farnham Quebec.

Founded in 1956, Gelpac is well known for producing high-quality multiwall and plastic bags. They are also renowned for having a resourceful group of talented engineers who possess the ability to fine-tune older equipment and make it work like new, including multiwall equipment from W&H.

What makes this partnership and purchase so special is not only that the machinery is new, but that the relationship and incredible trust was built during COVID, over Teams, without having met in person until after the purchase was completed.

Jonathan Blanchard Granger, Corporate Director of Engineering & Maintenance at Gelpac, said, “We were looking for a printer for our multiwall equipment and opened talks with W&H subsidiary, GARANT. The conversation led to a 6-color FLEXA II printer. At the same time, we explored used equipment, but after carefully assessing cost and risk factors, the FLEXA II made more sense.” The printer, which is one of the first in operation, is running well. Gelpac and W&H worked closely to train the operators and help them master the press. “The ARCOMAT palletizer is exceptional; it runs fast and is highly accurate,” added Blanchard Granger.

While the other two orders were in the works, Gelpac reached out again, this time about a 3-layer blown film line for its plastic bag business. Granger explained, “The OPTIMEX II was attractive

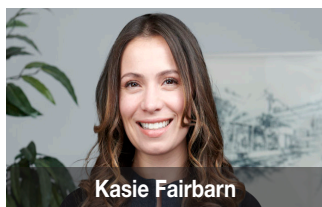


Gelpac's new 3-layer OPTIMEX II; inset: Operator on the FLEXA II control panel.

because of the film quality and that we could run back-to-back winders with multiple ups. We knew the film quality would be good and the support from W&H is there, which made the decision to buy a new line easy.”

Gelpac is committed to lowering its environmental footprint. All bags manufactured by the company are 100% recyclable and multiwall bags are designed to easily separate the plastic liner from the paper. They are also dedicated to promoting non-toxic packaging.

[www.gelpac.com](http://www.gelpac.com)



Kasie Fairbarn



Vladimir Utovac



FPA's Emerging Leadership Council pictures at the FPA Annual Meeting in 2022.

## Kasie Fairbarn Next Co-Chair of the ELC

Exciting news! Kasie Fairbarn, Vice President of Sales, has been selected by her peers as the next co-chair of the Emerging Leadership Council (ELC) for the Flexible Packaging Association (FPA). She is replacing Adrienne Tipton, Chief Technology Officer at Novolex and will co-chair with Jonathan Quinn, Director of Market Development and Sustainable Packaging at Pregis.

Congratulations are also in order for W&H's Vladimir Utovac, Vice President of Service, the newest member of the ELC.

The ELC is dedicated to creating a network of future leaders and driving issues that impact the advancement of the flexible packaging industry in the United States.



# GARANT: Reporting from interpack

News from the W&H Group's Paper Bag Division



GARANT made a significant impact at interpack in Düsseldorf, celebrating its 50th anniversary as the paper bag machinery subsidiary of the W&H Group. GARANT introduced new technologies at their in-house Expo in

Lengerich, including hygiene packaging machinery, e-commerce mailer bags, and a backend packing automation. These key themes captivated industry professionals, sparking discussions, and driving innovation in response to the evolving demands of the e-commerce, hygiene, and logistics sectors.

E-commerce packaging is experiencing remarkable global expansion. At the in-house Expo, GARANT showcased their e.BAG series, featuring versatile options like block, flat and satchel and cross bottom bags. Unique is the opening strip, which is made of paper, rather than the usual plastic.

According to Mike Reinhardt, Sales Manager for GARANT in the U.S., there is a significant demand in the United States for paper-based solutions that facilitate easy recycling, including curbside collection programs. To reduce waste, an optional double adhesive strip for returns is also available.

At interpack, a new machine was introduced for manufacturing cross bottom bags. The most popular current applications are for hygiene packaging, such as for diapers, which is recyclable with

**Follow service technician, Max, on a tour of the GARANT headquarters in Lengerich.**



Resealable ecommerce mailer, cross bottom hygiene bag, block bottom carrier bag - all from GARANT

the current waste stream. While cross bottom bag technology is not new, the modern equipment brings notable advantages, including enhanced efficiency and reduced waste. In addition, by using an adhesive, the bags are heat sealed.

In 2020, GARANT established an office at the W&H facility in Lincoln, RI. Since then, our primary objective has been to reinforce our presence in North America, ensuring that we are readily available to assist you when needed. If you require support with service, spare parts, or sales, please don't hesitate to reach out to our dedicated team!

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# Glenroy is Ready!

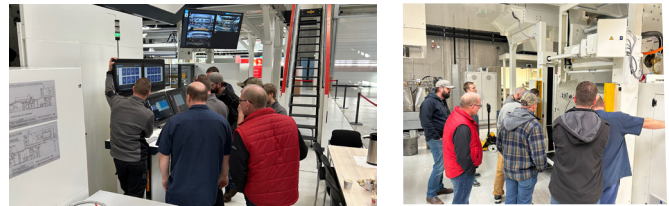
## Press Training in Lengerich Prepares Team for New MIRAFLEX II

While getting ready for the arrival of their first W&H press, WI-based Glenroy, Inc. sent a team of eight - one person from each shift crew - to Lengerich for training. "It was an investment the company made to give our team the best possible start on the press," said Keith Trzebiatowski, Printing Manager at Glenroy.

"Initially I was hesitant to go, but once we were in Germany at W&H and getting professional training from experts, I realized what a wise investment it was - both in terms of time and money," added Trzebiatowski.

The team spent five days in Lengerich, in classroom sessions and getting hands-on experience on press with the trainers. "It was an amazing experience. We first learned the basics of how to operate the press. Then it came time to run the line with automation and one of our team members said, 'How can it get even easier?'" recounted Richie Klein, Product Development Engineer at Glenroy.

The experience was also an effective team building experience. "Our people saw that we are investing in their success and their future. They also saw that W&H is doing the same, which strengthened our partnership," added Klein.



Front l to r: Chris Demler, Mike Jones, Jon Kreitzer, Todd Krupa (W&H). Back l to r: (W&H trainer) Michael Köhne, Richie Klein, Jon Bartsch, Keith Trzebiatowski, Jason Gundrum, Thomas Klinge (W&H Trainer)

The new press, a 10-color MIRAFLEX II, is expected to be up and running at Glenroy this summer.

[www.glenroy.com](http://www.glenroy.com)

# Get the Most out of Training

## W&H Academy's 2023 Training Program

Interested in exploring training in W&H's technology center for your crew? Talk to your W&H representative to discuss tailored options for your team's specific needs. You can also scan the QR



code below to find out about the W&H Academy's 2023 Training Programs, designed for our customers.



# W&H Employee News



**Ken Register**

Ken joined W&H in January as Regional Sales Manager of the Southern U.S.. He has over 25 years of experience, including as sales and marketing director at Mitsubishi Films and in procurement and R&D at Anheuser-Busch. He started his career as a press operator before becoming a development specialist at Cryovac (now Sealed Air), and has a degree in Business Management from Southern Wesleyan University.



**Ramil Galmullin**

Ramil has been a field service technician with W&H since 2015. Originally from Russia, he moved to the U.S. with his family to join our North American team in December 2022. He specializes in presses but also has experience working on extrusion and converting machinery. Ramil holds a Master's in Radio Physics and Electronics from Kazan State University. When he's not on the job, Ramil enjoys adrenaline-fueled activities like XC paragliding and has even won competitions.



**Amarish Pandey**

Amarish Pandey, with 3 years of experience as the head of IDC in Rhode Island and 13 years at W&H, has graciously accepted the role of Spare Parts Manager. We are thrilled to have him in this position, as his extensive background and analytical strengths will prove invaluable in identifying trends and areas for optimization, ensuring continuous improvement of our customer service.



**Amritesh Jaiswal**

Stepping into the position of Manager of IDC is Amritesh Jaiswal, who has been a dedicated member of the W&H team for 20 years. Amritesh not only possesses exceptional technical expertise but also exudes a calm and reassuring demeanor that the company deeply admires and respects. This summer, we will be welcoming two new technicians from within the W&H Group to join our Rhode Island IDC team. Their addition will further enhance our capabilities and strengthen our commitment to providing top-notch service.



**Catherine Mattson**

We are pleased to announce that Catherine has added a new role of Sustainability Manager to her current Marketing Communications position. The W&H group has made a commitment to reducing it's carbon footprint and is addressing how to become more sustainable across the board. Catherine has been with W&H for 14 years and has a Masters in International Marketing from University of Strathclyde.



**Mark Kessi**

Mark Kessi joined W&H as a field service technician in November 2021 with 20 years of electrical experience. Prior to W&H, he was the electrical supervisor at the largest ski resort in the United States responsible for 48 ski lifts across 8000+ acres. Before his time in the ski industry, he worked for a small custom powder blending manufacturer on the east coast overseeing their operations. Mark was born in Switzerland and moved to the U.S. when he was 6 years old and currently resides in Salt Lake City, UT.

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Sept 11 - 13 [Pack Expo](#) | Las Vegas, NV
- Sept 11 - 13 [WPA Annual Conference](#) | Palm Springs, CA
- Sept 9 - 11 [FTA Fall Conference](#) | Louisville, KY
- Oct 10 - 12 [PT Extrusion Conference](#) | Indianapolis, IN
- Nov 15 - 16 [AMI Extrusion World Expo](#) | Cleveland, OH
- Nov/Dec [AMI Stretch & Shrink](#) | TBD



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