



## Homing in on Hubergroup

*In the first of a series of articles examining Trelleborg's partners for printing solutions around the world, David Ward, managing director of Hubergroup UK, explains how becoming the UK distributor for Trelleborg's offset blanket range has had a major impact on his business.*



David Ward, Managing Director at Hubergroup UK.

In almost every aspect of our lives we are all being advised, driven and pushed to be more efficient ... low energy light bulbs at home, ensuring we consume every morsel of food we buy, reusing supermarket carrier bags. The list of what we can and should be doing grows daily. That

philosophy is equally important in the world of business.

Manufacturers have made huge strides to help printers reduce wastage to levels that only a few years ago would have seemed unobtainable, press make-readies being an obvious example. Sometimes significant savings can be made in the way products are combined and sold and the appointment in 2011 of Hubergroup UK as the UK distributor for Trelleborg's offset blankets has resulted in benefits throughout the production chain.

"Hubergroup celebrated its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015, so we've been serving the printing industry for quite a while!" says David Ward, who has been with the group since 1989. "During the last five years we've greatly increased sales of inks to packaging printers so that we now supply around 45 per cent of the UK market, which opens up huge potential for future blanket sales. This success is due largely to our complementary product portfolio and how we approach customers' requirements.

"For instance, during our initial dealings with a company one of our technical experts will conduct an onsite survey to examine all relevant factors, from what type of work is



produced and on what presses, through to how stocks and consumables are purchased, stored and used. Because we provide world-leading blankets, inks and chemicals we are inevitably able to offer an unrivalled package of cost, quality and productivity.

"It's not uncommon for our recommendations to actually lead to a reduction in blanket usage. This may seem a strange outcome to aim for, but we would rather ignore short term sales and have long term relationships with customers who appreciate our commitment to them and their ongoing growth."



The CAD equipment at Hubergroup UK's plant is used to convert blankets from Trelleborg.

On the day of the interview for this article David Ward received the keys to a new 10,000 square meter factory near to Hubergroup's existing Nottingham site. The first facilities to be relocated will be those used to convert the enormous rolls of offset blanket material that are produced by Trelleborg.

These are cut and bared into versions suitable for a range of commercial and packaging sheet-fed presses, mainly B2 and B1. Hubergroup supplies more than half of the UK's commercial sheet-fed printers. Its 24/7 service is augmented by a nationwide network of technical and after-sales support experts, who can also provide press operators with specialist training relating to consumables. Ink sales are a major part of the company's business. Inks are shipped in bulk from the group's Continental factory and blended at the UK site, which is one of the country's main suppliers of spot colors.



Hubergroup UK's CAD equipment provides a highly efficient means of producing small or large volumes of offset blankets from rolls.

"The Huber family is still involved in the business and we combine the benefits of being part of a modern, pioneering global group with traditional values of good customer care, integrity and loyalty," says David Ward. "People still appreciate these traits and we like to have partners who hold the same beliefs.

"During the last few years we've worked extremely closely with the team at Trelleborg and the liaison between the two R&D departments has helped to ensure that we provide combinations of products that are perfectly suited for each printer's needs. The price of an



offset blanket might be a very small part of the overall cost of a job, but its impact on the profitability of that work is enormous.”

Trelleborg’s blankets are established brands in the industry, with names such as Vulcan, Printec and Rollin being well-known. The company is always seeking to develop new lines and has recently expanded its Vulcan range with the introduction of the X-Coat coating plate, designed to handle in-line aqueous and UV coatings. The first trials of the Vulcan X-Coat in the UK took place during March.

Another recent addition is Vulcan Pack UV, a dedicated blanket for packaging printing that is suitable for metal decorating. Investment in manufacturing facilities for printing solutions means that Trelleborg blankets for the packaging sector are produced without the use of solvents, which makes them suitable for printed material that comes into contact with food.



Trelleborg's premium brand blankets for all types of offset printing presses.

“Our experts have been able to help printers overcome a variety of production issues from poor dot transfer or color reproduction, to blankets prone to smashes or simply wearing out too quickly,” says David Ward. “The choice of blankets on the market today is vast and because of this it’s also confusing. The answer is not to stick to what has always been used because printers could miss out on advantages offered by new innovations, such as quality, cost and productivity improvements.

“Printers need suppliers that constantly invest in order to develop solutions for the future. We produce inks and chemicals that work perfectly with Trelleborg blankets designed for UV printing and for the emerging low energy technologies such as HUV and LED UV. The companies producing this sort of printed material may still be few in numbers, yet it’s important that manufacturers push forward the boundaries of what can be achieved in their field. Breakthroughs in one area can have benefits in others ... and that can help us all.”