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Diamond Packaging invests in massive press

MATTHEW DANEMAN • STAFF WRITER • FEBRUARY 23, 2010

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Diamond Packaging buys a new press roughly every five years to keep up with technology changes. The Henrietta packaging print company's latest investment, however, was a bigger production than most.



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At 105 feet long, the Speedmaster XL 105 required reconfiguring the production floor of Diamond's main facility and pouring a new, 36-inch foundation of reinforced concrete, said David A. Rydell, vice president of corporate and global technology development.

The press, built by Heidelberg Druckmaschinen AG, went live this month. And the investment — the press has a list price of \$6.9 million, though Diamond declined to say what it actually spent — comes as many companies still are waiting for an improving economy before making any sizable investments.

The recession actually moved up Diamond's plans to buy and install the press by a few months, President Kirsten Werner said. While lead time on getting such a press built, shipped and installed is typically nine months, she said, Diamond's took four.

"It was a buyer's market," she said.

The company ordered the mammoth machine in July, with its delivery and assembly starting in late November.

The eight-color press's coating features will let the company use ordinary paper stock instead of specialty papers when trying to achieve certain looks on packaging such as a metallic sheen, Rydell said.

Metal-coated papers are falling out of favor in the commercial print world, Werner said, as Diamond's clients — including numerous national beauty and cosmetic companies — are looking for packaging materials that are easily recyclable.

"What we were looking for was a machine that would differentiate us in the industry," said CEO Karla Fichter.

With the press, Diamond expects to hire 80 to 100 workers over the next five years, Werner said.

The company currently employs 225, and has on average more than 100 temporary workers helping out on any given day.

Because of that job growth, the company was able to secure government incentives in the form of a \$700,000 Empire State Development Corp. loan that is convertible to a grant and a \$2 million Small Business Administration low-interest loan approved through the Monroe County Industrial Development Corp.

Without the public-sector assistance, the timeframe of the purchase was less certain, Werner said.

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Chris Dieter, a pressman at Diamond Packaging in Henrietta, puts a plate on the company's new press. The 105-foot-long press required reconfiguring the facility's production floor. (JAMIE GERMANO staff photographer)

KEY INDUSTRY

The packaging industry helps bring food and other products to local shelves and no small amount of jobs to the Rochester-area economy. Packaging globally is a \$425 billion business, with most packaging being for consumer goods. Demand for flexible packaging, such as paper and plastic bags and pouches, is expected to grow more than 3 percent a year through 2013, while demand for packaging inks and coatings is expected to climb more than 2 percent annually over the same period.

Area packaging printers include Volpe & Associates, Flower City Printing, Hammer Packaging, American Packaging Corp., Gold Pride Press Inc. and Diamond Packaging. Collectively, they employ more than 1,000 people locally.

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