



Complete Packaging Tooling Solutions

Combining the very latest technology & a wealth of diemaking expertise our range of tooling solutions include: Rotary dies; Flat dies; Steel dies & cutting plates; Creasing counters, Dynamic stripping tools; Blanking tools; Embossing & foiling blocks.

In accordance with our ISO 9001 2008 accreditation, we offer a full range of products & services tailor made to suit individual customer requirements.

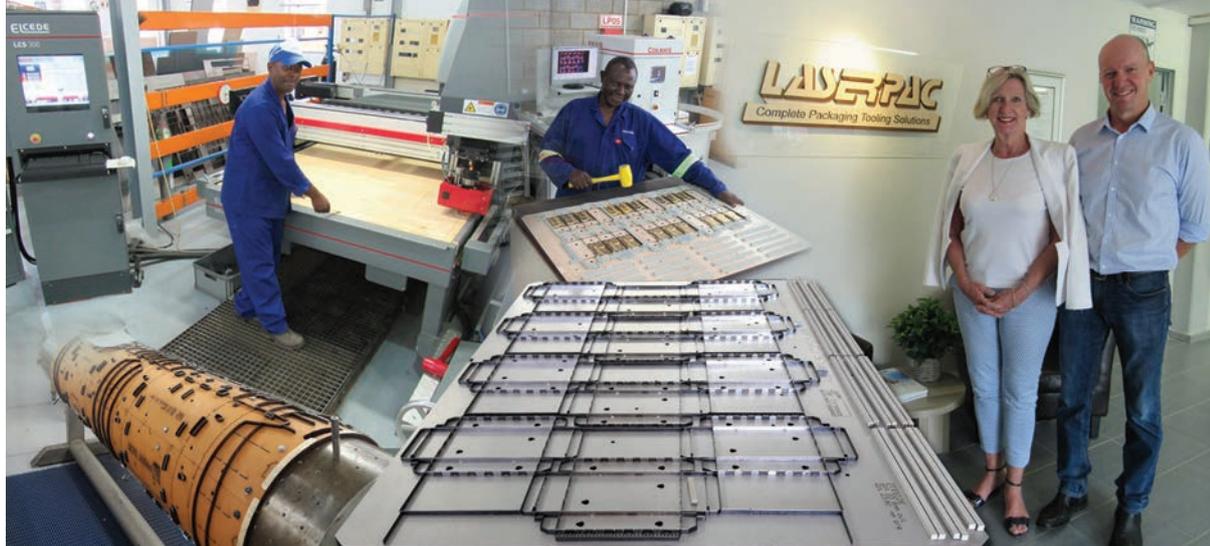


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Honing workflow and efficiency

Laserpac, a specialist die-maker and manufacturer of press-ready tooling for the packaging industry, has moved to new premises in Germiston (Gauteng) to improve workflow and speed up daily deliveries. Nici Solomon pays a visit.

ACCORDING to Laserpac MD, Craig Beswick, moving the business to more spacious, brighter and friendlier accommodation has brought morale- and efficiency-boosting benefits. 'Several long-serving staff members have actually thanked us for the significant improvement in their working conditions,' Craig remarks.

'Ours is a true "service" industry where customers need and demand precision tooling with short turnaround times,' he continues. 'The move to these premises in Germiston was necessary not just to improve workflow but also to accommodate additional specialised rotary corrugated die-making equipment.'

The addition of these assets has significantly improved Laserpac's rotary corrugated tooling capacity and accuracy, while other recent developments have improved the performance of dies supplied to folding carton converters. One problem with earlier-generation dies was dimensional instability caused by humidity changes, but Laserpac now offers high-stability dies. The composite material used in these dies also allows the use of Laserpac's long-life hardened-steel milled cutting plates.

Streamlined workflow: key success factor

In Craig's view, the key success factor in moving facilities has been streamlining the workflow so substantially that a change from two 12-hour shifts to a single day shift has been possible. And, he contends, this facility, taking up four units in the Knightsgate Industrial Park, is now on par with world-leading die-shops.

'Although we've only gained an extra 100m², the space feels much bigger because it's all on one level and under one roof. The layout in Germiston was a perfect fit and very little structural work needed to be done.'

Apart from cosmetic changes, a major adjustment was installing additional power to run the two laser cutters and improve the lighting.

'We did a lot of pre-planning trying to avoid as many potential hiccups as possible and believe the move went as smoothly as we or our customers could expect – fortunately the new premises are just 8km from the old. We continued work in our existing





The improved workflow at Laserpac's new Germiston premises has allowed an improvement in productivity speeded up daily deliveries.

die-shop while moving the first laser. Once that was up and running, we moved the die-shop, and then the second laser,' Craig relates. He adds a special word of thanks to Beswick Machinery's staff and IT teams who put in many late nights.

Technicians from Elcede in Germany, who assisted Beswick engineers with the move, also stayed for an additional week to service the milling machine, rule processors, rule cutter and sample machine.

Another major benefit is the facility's level loading bay. 'We bring in many materials, including die shells and wood from Europe; and offloading these large and heavy containers can now be done in half the time,' says Craig.

The location is also more convenient for daily deliveries to Laserpac's biggest customers, and for shipping to freight forwarders or to the airport. Additionally, packaging companies located on the east/west link are now 5km closer than before.

The new production excellence is backed up by a small 'hand-made' die-shop for producing intricate shapes and pieces that aren't suitable for putting through the semi-automatic rule processors.

Laserpac also boasts an innovative design facility utilising state-of-the-art software and a sample maker, so converters and their customers can see what the products will look like before dies and tooling are manufactured.

Additionally, Laserpac's specialised ram-punch die sharpening facility is a value-added service for customers with paper label punching departments.

'Our service team numbers 40 in Gauteng and 80 across the country. Some of these technicians are located at customers' sites to maintain dies,' Craig concludes.

Keeping it square and stable

LASERPAC'S carton converting customers mainly supply the fast food, tea, cereal, cigarette and pharmaceutical markets where high-speed packaging lines are used, while corrugated converters supply outer packaging for the beer, spirits, agricultural and POS markets, much of which is becoming more complex with eye-catching graphics.

Explains Craig Beswick: 'Dimensional stability is critical for boxes and is dependent on crease quality and accuracy. Squareness is equally important on high-speed food and pharmaceutical filling lines because if the creases aren't absolutely perfect, the line jams and packers have to spend time cleaning spillages. Understandably, they avoid this at all costs and if there are repeated box jams they might simply send the whole order back to the converter.'

For this reason, Laserpac has invested heavily in milling equipment to assist converters.

'We take Bobst cutting plates and mill channels into them. When they're used with precision flat dies they create an extremely stable and square combination,' Craig stresses. 'The main difference, in this case, is the composite material we use for the die. This lasts as long as the plate and allows converters to achieve exceptionally long runs – typically around five-million impressions with some reporting up to 20-million, depending on who is doing the job and the particular market application.'

Additionally, to improve customer service, Laserpac supplies carton converters with sets of spare rules allowing them to pull out and replace rules when wearing occurs.

Ed's note: Laserpac also has a Cape Town branch that supplies tooling to both corrugated and folding carton converters, improving service to coastal customers.

