



aleph Srl Aims to ensure clients maximum return on their investments

aleph Srl is a leading Italian manufacturer of sublimation and direct-to-fabric inkjet printers for the textile and visual communication industries. Founded in 1999 in Como, in the heart of Italian textiles district, aleph has become an international player in digital printing solutions with a dedicated sales force and a distribution network located in key textile markets. To know more about the company and its further plans, *Apparel Views* Editor Arvind Kumar, recently met and interviewed, **Alessandro Manes**, CEO & Co-Founder, aleph. Given are some excerpts from the interview....

Please tell us more about the company?

aleph, with its 20 years of experience, is a strategic partner offering reliable fully integrated digital printing solutions that increase production performance. Our extensive know-how in high quality proprietary printing software, and the experience gained with major textile companies have allowed aleph to become a manufacturer of technologically advanced inkjet digital printers. From high-tech digital printers to drying systems, from proprietary software to consumables, aleph is able to offer integrated printing solutions to their clients in order to become a partner for their success. Thanks to our customer centered approach, cost-effective solutions and the expert service, aleph aims to ensure the clients the maximum return on their investments.

What is your company's mission and vision?

To become an international strategic partner for our clients by providing high end digital printing solutions across various markets and cultures with a cooperative customer-centric attitude to complement our emerging technologies. Produce printing results based on cost-effective investments through premium quality, ground breaking technology, and passionate service. We want to establish long-term value-driven partnerships.

Which are the latest technologies you have introduced?

We have recently unveiled a range of brand-new scanning printing systems aimed at enhancing and integrating our flagship series, LAFORTE. We have introduced latest cutting-edge technologies and a wealth of textile applications, including textiles printed with modern and trendy patterns and designs, aiming to demonstrate how advanced digital printing technologies are transforming the high-end fashion, fast fashion, sportswear and athleisure, home textile industries.

Three pioneering models from LAFORTE series are top-of-the-line LAFORTE 600 Fabric, LAFORTE 200 Fabric and recently launched, dye-sublimation entry-level printer,

LAFORTE 100. Not only have we boosted our range of high-performing digital print solutions but we have also experienced a continuous corporate growth, up to 30 per cent, following the joint venture with Italian private equity firm, Wise sgr.

Since the official launch of LAFORTE project, back in 2015, our R&D team has been working hard to improve and consolidate the series. We decided to keep our focus on developing the digital print scanning technology, which can now deliver high volumes, top printed quality and lower production costs, while we consider single pass print technology still at an early stage of its evolution. Furthermore, we have also focused on boosting our workflow software, enhancing our pigment inks and creating complete lines for printing on fabrics, through both the development of proprietary pre and post-press systems and strategic partnerships.

Could you tell us more about LAFORTE series?

The LAFORTE series ranges from entry-level to flagship models. LAFORTE 600 Fabric is an industrial inkjet direct-to-textile printer designed to deliver high-volume manufacturing of extremely high-quality printed textiles. Enabling a print speed from 600 up to 1,000 sqm per hour at a print resolution up to 1200 dpi, LAFORTE 600 Fabric almost reaches the same productivity as single-pass inkjet presses but featuring scanning technology. The printer features a compact design, which facilitates its integration into various production environments, and a waterless process that reduces the consumption of water and energy, resulting in drastically lowered production costs and environmental impact.

Besides, our LAFORTE 200 Fabric is a direct-to-fabric inkjet printer featuring a compact design and a patented rotary belt. The printer is designed to address mid to high print volume production (up to 400 sq mtr per hour with 3400 mm print width in one pass and up to 300 sqmtr per hour with 1800 mm print width in one pass).

LAFORTE 100 Paper is a versatile inkjet printing system. A water-based dye-sublimation entry-level solution with production speed up to 200 sqmtr per hour,

LAFORTE 100 features 4 to 8 printheads and is equipped with a patented rotary belt with vacuum system, which enables to print on paper with grammage starting from 10 gsm. The printer is suitable for the fast fashion and sportswear market segments, as well as the out of home and soft signage industries.

Apart from these machines, what are the other innovations at ink side?

We have all kind of inks like reactive, acids, disperse, sublimation and pigment. Recently we have developed brand-new advanced pigment inks and direct disperse dyes which don't require pre and post treatments – enabling a significant reduction in water consumption – and guarantee durability and colour vibrancy thanks to an innovative binder with ultra-clinging-to-the-fibre capability. In addition, aleph has recently developed new pre and post treatment solutions that help further enhance the solidity and colour vibrancy also on special fibres.

Can you tell us more about pigment printing solutions?

We have focused on enhancing our pigment inks over the last years and have now achieved excellent results. Our advanced pigment inks guarantee unmatched colour vibrancy and durability, as well as soft-touch hand on all fabrics. We strongly believe that pigment printing solutions will mark the future development of the digital textile industry, due to the operation flexibility and the advantages in terms of environmentally-friendly production processes enabled by this technology. The demand for pigment inks and pigment printing solutions is already growing fast and it will further accelerate in 2020, and aleph is ready with its advanced, high-performing and profit-generating integrated solutions.

Do you have your own Rip software?

Yes, we have complete solution for printing software. Our SmartPrint™ is a software that can pilot all kinds of large format digital printers and plotters. Rip Software for digital the textile industry. SmartColor™ is a software to produce colourways with colour charts. Design Collection™ is a software application designed for the web, to manage image filing, sharing and display over the internet. Newton™ is a professional program designed for colour profiles and colour measurement in order to ensure that colours can be reproduced perfectly on each device.

How is aleph different from other brands already operating in the market?

aleph was started 20 years ago as software house which is the core of the company. We develop software for digital textile printing; not only RIP software but colour matching software also. aleph researches and invests in technology to anticipate the challenges of the next generation printing world with an emphasis on the improvement of client's businesses. We are a committed and technology-driven team of people observing and engaging in the digital printing evolution to continuously strengthen our products and solutions.

In Italy, the heart of textiles, all main leading brands are using aleph software. Due to our customers, we understood the requirement of digital textile printing. So later, we started to produce printers and accessories for the textiles market. In the last two years, we entered visual communications and soft signage market too.

We are ready to enter different field of applications. We have two big competitors but their focus is on numbers. Whereas our focus is on quality and service. We try to put inside our machine all the request of our customers. We have powerful quality, the alignment of the printer rotary belt system. In addition, we have developed a patented vacuum rotary belt system, only one in the world with faster speed. Also we are offering one point solution.

How do you make sure to ensure the quality of your products?

aleph uses durable materials and forerunner technology to propose premium and dependable solutions built upon the tradition of Italian design – with proven quality, high production standards, and stability to insure maximum output is achieved. We strive to enhance our product's quality and guarantee trouble-free printing by effectively managing down-time creating a tangible business added value for our clients. We invest about 6 per cent of the annual turnover in technology research and development. We strongly believe in innovation, and I think the two new products that we launched in 2019 can easily show our commitment to innovation in the textile printing industry.

How has been your joinery so far in world market?

aleph is growing fast internationally, currently counting on an installed base of about 60 LAFORTE units worldwide. Also, our customers are satisfied with the production performances and the quality of our printers and with the after sales

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service that we provide. Italy, Turkey, South Korea, Indonesia, Mexico are currently the major markets for aleph. We have our presence there and are strengthening our position by building long-term partnerships with local dealers and distributors. All those countries have seen a dynamic growth of the textile printing industry over the past two years. Many printing houses are investing to boost their printing equipment on a yearly basis, and our LAFORTE series has proved to be a profit-generating choice for them. At the same time, we are focusing on establishing a presence in countries such as US, Argentina, Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All in all, we strongly believe that aleph is set to mark yet another significant landmark in the company evolution this year.

What are your plans for India and Bangladesh market?

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Have you installed any machine in India?

Yes, in last three months we have installed few units in India. The customer is very happy with the performance of the machine and now asking for another machine. During ITMA, many Indian customers have shown interest in our mid-range and entry-level solutions, LAFORTE 100 and LAFORTE 200, in both direct-to-textile and dye-sublimation modes. Now we are in the process of further expanding our presence in the country.

How do you see the future of digital printing?

Today, the demand is for sustainable printing solution, and digital printing is the solution. As we all know, digital textile printing is about 4-5 per cent of the total textile market, which means there is a huge growth opportunity there. The latest, advanced digital textile printing platforms are making it more affordable to a wider range of users compared to the past, also due to the diversified range of applications demanded by the market. Both the price of the ink and reduced production costs are key to the future growth of digital textile printing.

Do you feel single pass is the future?

We are a dynamic and international team of experts growing together with a passion and curiosity for building cutting-edge printing solutions for tomorrow. But we are not thinking about single pass technology at the moment. Today scanning is more flexible, easy to manage and maintain. If you buy few LAFORTE 600 you will get flexible and at the same time able to run different jobs and achieve good quality. In my opinion the industry is not ready for single pass technology.

What is your message to the end users of machine?

Digital is the future. The business in which our company operates has made it clear and explicit. A group of experts, working to achieve common goals and grow together as a company. We are a welcoming organization and create solutions for our customers business. We seek to establish a long-term partnership through caring services and quality printing. aleph listens and proactively gives ad hoc consultancy to the diverse business requests – supporting the needs of clients and cultures. Customers should look for company who provides complete solutions and has expertise in textile printing. We believe in listening to our customers and working on their feedback ■