

## Press Release

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### **Management information systems in the printing industry – status quo and future perspectives**

*A joint project of the Stuttgart Media College and MAN Roland*

Each year, a series of lectures is given at the Media College in Stuttgart under the title "Technologies of the Future in the Printing and Media Industries", with speakers including MAN Roland's board chairman Gerd Finkbeiner as an associate professor. This series of lectures has repeatedly provided ideas for interesting projects. In the 2001/2002 winter semester, for instance, the 8th-semester students of the print media management/printing business engineering course under the aegis of Professors Rolf Fischer, Bernd-Jürgen Matt and Dr Raimund Baumann conducted an analysis of various management information systems (MIS) for the printing industry. The aim of the project was to find out what kind of performance features users expect from their management information systems as useful tools, and to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of the systems.

Under this project, a total of 101 printing companies were asked for information about the MIS software they are using, and their specific requirements. 44 of these companies were operations with more than 100 employees, 19 each with a staff of 51-100, 20-50 and less than 20 people.

The final report is now available and contains interesting findings, significant for future developments.

**MAN Roland Druckmaschinen AG**, Offenbach, is the world's second largest printing systems manufacturer and the world's market leader in web press offset. MAN Roland operates out of Offenbach and Augsburg in Germany. It employs 11,000 staff and has annual sales of EUR 2 billion, with an export share of 80%. Web and sheetfed offset presses as well as digital printing systems are the major product lines for publishing, general commercial, and packaging printing. The field of business ranges from small-format sheetfed presses to production systems for newspaper printing in runs of millions. MAN Roland is a subsidiary company of **MAN Aktiengesellschaft**, Munich. The MAN group is one of Europe's leading suppliers of capital goods from the fields of commercial vehicle manufacturing and engineering with 77,000 employees and annual sales of EUR 16 billion.

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## **Important: modular structure**

The evaluation of responses and checklists showed above all the wish for individual, tailored solutions. A modular structure was named as the essential criterion of a management information system. Ready-made, off-the-shelf complete packages do not meet with the necessary acceptance in practice because many of their functions, depending on company, have to remain unused and are therefore poor investments. Businesses in the printing industry simply differ too much in structure, economic situation and technical requirements of their operations.

The software solutions available in the market today all offer virtually the same modules for the following areas of operation:

costing/processing/process description,  
financial/plant accounting,  
materials control,  
investment management,  
sales/marketing,  
corporate communications,  
personnel management/suggestion system,  
project management and  
extended controlling/management cockpit.

Some of them differ greatly in their technical possibilities.

## **User requirements**

The market needs regarding a complete MIS differ very much but generally show a desire to optimize the processes of production, administration and networked communication between the areas in question, based on uniform data.

High-level technical standards are expected to be met above all by the electronic job ticket, the electronic planning board, and by integrated production planning and control. On the commercial side, fundamental importance is attached to job

handling from offer to actual costing and invoicing, as well as to estimating on the basis of full costs and portions of overall costs. Users expect sales and order canvassing to be supported and controlled by a sufficiently defined tool, and want their company's business results to be shown in a clearly structured and expressive way.

### **Deficiencies especially in smaller operations**

A remarkable finding is that in many printing companies, particularly in smaller ones, the importance of an efficient networking still has not been recognized, the prevalent opinion continuing to be that successful positioning in the market can be achieved only by high product quality or price reductions to below costs. Substantial cost cutting potential is left unused and, instead, a price war engaged in that endangers the existence of the business. In many cases, there is insufficient competence in business management. The situation in larger companies is different. It reflects a much more extensive incorporation of management knowledge.

Scepticism about total-operation networking and comprehensive gathering of data remains widespread among printing companies - on staff and management side alike. While the managers are still unsure about the value of such an investment, the employees fear intensive control of the individual.

Seen overall, the understanding of management information systems yet remains to fully develop in many companies: there is no such thing as push-button management. The management information systems in the market enable companies to make operations more efficient, transparent and more smoothly executed - thus letting the printing company of tomorrow work more profitably.

### **Complete results in WAYPOINTS**

The results of the study will be detailed in the next supplement to WAYPOINTS, to appear this autumn.

WAYPOINTS originated by initiative of Prof Bernd-Jürgen Matt, Stuttgart Media

College, and Gerd Finkbeiner, with the Senefelder Foundation as publisher. WAYPOINTS is a reference work for the positioning and strategic orientation of companies in the graphic arts industry. Published in loose-leaf form, it provides information about opportunities, risks and necessary actions relevant to the economic and technical development of a printing company into a media provider. Scientific work and observations form the basis of its contents. In its original edition, the publication in German and English consists of 300 pages and costs 153 Euro plus shipping charges; supplements are 36 Euro.

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