

Brothers Brendan (right) and Ronan Tumilty with Truform's new Rotax Plus machine.

A chance partnership between two like-minded tooling manufacturers an ocean apart has set the stage for growth in each of the company's respective markets. U.S. based Container Graphics Corp. (CGC) and Ireland based Truform Laser Dies Ltd. began working together about four years ago when Truform purchased CGC's corrugated rotary diemaking operation in Ireland. Through a license and technology agreement, Truform now builds rotary cutting dies with CGC's technology and brand name.

The partnership creates scale and offers opportunities to develop new products



Neil Saunders, Container Graphics Corp. CEO.

through the sharing of processes and ideas. The two companies offer complementary product lines. While Container Graphics' core products are rotary cutting dies and printing plates, Truform specialises in flatbed cutting dies and supplies.

A MODEL PARTNERSHIP

TRUFORM'S PURCHASE OF CONTAINER GRAPHICS' OPERATION IN IRELAND HAS BEEN A WIN-WIN FOR BOTH COMPANIES. BY JACKIE SCHULTZ

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SHARING TECHNOLOGY

“What has made this successful for both of us is the fact that they have very good relationships in the field with a lot of the same customer base that we had and they have more scale with the flat die business,” says Neil Saunders, CGC CEO.

The Introduction

CGC, which is headquartered in Cary, N.C., established a presence in Ireland in the late '80s to support Ward Machinery's expansion into the European market. As a result, Mr Saunders was familiar with Truform and its products. For a time, the Celtic Tiger fueled rapid economic growth in Ireland, but then the tiger took a nap and manufacturers either closed or moved.

“The market size for rotary cutting dies in Ireland hit a scale that was very difficult for us to support remotely from the U.S. We had the majority of the rotary cutting die business there, however the number of dies purchased was relatively small,” Mr Saunders says. That's when he received a phone call from Brendan Tumilty, Truform General Manager. “That call came at a critical time four years ago just after the economic crisis where we were taking a hard look at every division that maybe was not going to be supportable,” Mr Saunders says.

After several months of discussions about future strategy, they reached an agreement.

Truform supplies cutting dies and raw materials to corrugated and folding carton converters as well as commercial printers. The partnership with CGC is helping the company support and expand its rotary die-cutting business and extend its products beyond Ireland into other parts of Europe.



CGC's video studio in Toledo, Ohio, offers technical support.

The corrugated die-cutting process in Europe is primarily flatbed, however, Mr Tumilty says rotary is gaining traction. "There is definitely a trend from flatbed to rotary die-cutting in the corrugated industry. It's more cost-effective than flatbed and it allows printing and die-cutting inline at higher speeds," he says.

The relationship with CGC provided a win-win for both companies. CGC helped Truform become more established in the rotary die-cutting market and Truform is distributing CGC's products into Europe.

CGC offers several products suitable for the European market. "We have some specialised products that address specific types of packaging challenges in Europe, which are high recycled content liner and crush issues as a result of die-cutting. Also, there is a lot of shelf ready packaging so the tear open features are critical. Brendan will be able to channel a lot of our specialised products right to those markets."

Truform will be introducing several CGC products into Europe, including Phase 4 HPS™ (High Performance System), LinerGuard™, and MicroTrim™.

Technical support is provided by CGC's Toledo, Ohio, facility, which has a video conferencing system. The Polycom system was initially set up to support distributors of CGC products around the world, but has become extremely useful when working with Truform. "We can actually demonstrate to the diemakers in Ireland what we're doing about a particular die-cutting issue or technique," Mr Saunders says.

"It's a quite powerful tool in allowing us to see face to face and discuss products," Mr Tumilty adds.

Mr Saunders says the partnership has helped CGC zero in on key efficiencies. "It has given us some discipline. For instance, Brendan had a project where he was going to produce a lot of rotary cutting dies for one account. He asked if we could produce some pre bent knife that we would process in the U.S. and ship to him. We worked together on that project and that took a lot of discussion between our CAD team and his CAD team because there are differences in our processes. We were able to produce some steel for him remotely to augment his capacity by using our system. We got to know a lot about his equipment and systems so going forward we can support that even better."

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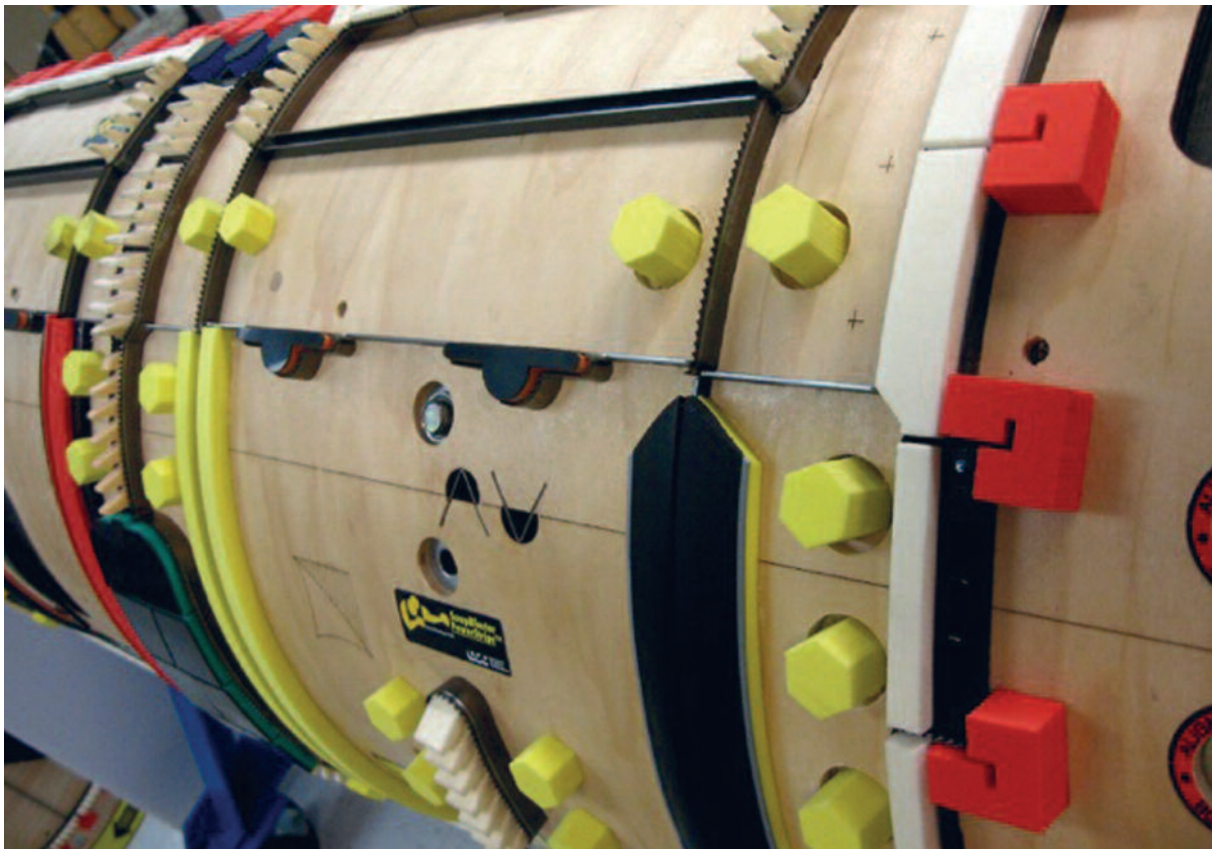


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Truform will be introducing several CGC products into Europe, including Phase 4 HPS.



Well Matched

CGC and Truform are both family owned and operated companies that are very similar in philosophy. "We're very compatible," Mr Saunders says. "Brendan's company is very customer focused and problem solving focused and so are we. They are very much an engineering company and work on continuous development of their products and trying to stay ahead of the needs of the packaging industry."

CGC was founded in 1960 by Mr Saunder's father, Phil, and Truform was started in 1967 by Mr Tumilty's father, Noel. Mr Tumilty says his father wanted the letters "Tru" in the company name because they reflect accuracy, honesty and integrity, which are core values.

CGC has 16 locations in North America as well as distributorships around the world. Mr Saunders says the partnership has

established a blueprint for CGC's growth internationally. "Brendan has done a great job keeping a brand going post economic crisis. This is a new model that we're finding working internationally. Brendan looks at it as a great way for him to expand into Europe. I personally am looking at this model and working with my son, Graham, who is focused on development of the company, as a potential model to look at other parts of the world."

Truform is headquartered in Dunkalk, Ireland and has 30 employees. Since establishing the partnership with CGC, Mr Tumilty says Truform has almost doubled in size. "It's allowing us to broaden our product mix and open doors that previously weren't opened," he says. "Also, Container Graphics has some patented products and I've been able to exploit that on the European side. That's something we see as a strong offering."

Truform has made substantial capital investments in diemaking with the addition of a Rotax Plus rule processing system from ServiForm in Italy. Mr Tumilty says the system is the first of its kind in Ireland and the UK. The company has also installed an 'Idea' to produce rules for folding carton and corrugated flatbed dies. Rules produced from this machine are 95 per cent ready for insertion into any typical cutting die. Both machines were installed in February. "This installation brings to a close our recent investment programme, which began with the acquisition of Container Graphics in January 2011," Mr Tumilty says. "Around the same time, we added a 2.5Kw Rofin flat and rotary laser from Mechtronic. In 2014 we installed a DRD Allrounder, which allowed us to bring braille manufacture, milled plates and other functionality under one roof." ■