

A successful combination!

Board games and puzzles have been growing steadily in popularity and this growth accelerated during the corona pandemic and the resulting lockdowns. In the face of rising demand and also to meet its own escalating quality criteria and the demands of up-to-date production processes, the games manufacturer Ludo Fact in Jettingen-Scheppach, in southern Germany, installed a new – and to date unique – laminating system from Kolbus in the summer of 2021.

The figures are impressive: at its location in Jettingen-Scheppach in southern Germany, Ludo Fact produces over 70,000 board games and puzzles a day with an average production run of 6000 units. The company supplies around 200 game publishers worldwide. Total annual production adds up to roughly 16.5 million product units. The company not only produces game components, it also assembles and packages whole games and then ships the finished products. While board games and puzzles were already showing moderate but continuous growth before Corona, the pandemic brought a steep increase in demand. In December 2020, for example, the Federal German Toy Trade Association (BVS) reported a 24 percent increase in sales, especially sales to adults, with 27 percent new customers. For Ludo Fact, this meant one thing above all: full order books.

Two-sided lamination is essential

“We were gradually reaching the limits of what we could achieve with our previous machine park configuration,” says Marcel Riehle, Operating Manager at Ludo Fact, looking back to spring 2020. “This applied not only to performance, but also to quality, efficiency, system availability and service. After all, the machine we were replacing was already 16 years old.” Riehle and his team were obviously well-acquainted with Kolbus’s mature, high-performance systems for one-sided laminating of book casings and premium packaging. “These machines also turn up the lining edges, which is of fundamental importance to us,” emphasizes Riehle. For the production of game boards and push-out figure sheets, however, Ludo Fact needed a system that would laminate both sides of a sheet. Their team of specialists led by Marcel Riehle came up with a possible solution and they approached the engineers at Kolbus with it.

“Fortunately, we met with quick understanding,” recalls Riehle. “Kolbus engineers immediately started working on the technical implementation and on developing solutions for the necessary functional details. It wasn’t long before they presented us with a solution.” The solution was actually blindingly obvious; it was simply to use two Kolbus casemaking machines – one for laminating the front and one for the back of the cardboard sheets. The machines naturally had to be specially adapted.

Register accuracy is critical

The choice fell on the DA 290 casemaker, which is not only capable of processing large-format sheets, up to 1050 x 735 mm, at 40 cycles a minute, but also offers a high level of automation throughout the process – from the pallet feeder to the stacker. The real challenge was to achieve non-stop production with the highest register accuracy between the two sides of the sheets. “Sheet alignment is critical for quality,” says Riehle. He keeps very quiet about the details of the process – it’s a trade secret! “This is where our special know-how comes in,” he says, pointing out that the laminating system in this form is not only a world first, but also unique. “To my knowledge, there is no second system anywhere.” And Riehle wants this to remain the status quo for a while yet for competitive reasons.

Proven Kolbus engineering

“The system in this configuration is unique in the world,” confirms Andreas Hülsmann, Sales Manager Germany at Kolbus GmbH & Co. KG in Rahden, East Westphalia. “The very short set-up times and the very high quality achieved are also features that have never been implemented anywhere before.” The strong basis for the system is the two DA 290 casemaking machines with their minimal set-up effort, excellent handling and ergonomics, precision material guidance and great operational flexibility. A DA 290 can process both dispersion and hotmelt, operator input can take place during running operation, while maintaining maximum process reliability – all these factors played a decisive role in the choice of system. In mid-September 2021, the system went into production in Jettingen-Scheppach. “This is our first Kolbus system; with it we’ve now acquired a completely new technology. Because it is so new, we’ve naturally been monitoring it carefully,” explains Marcel Riehle. “The outcome of this partnership has more than convinced us that we made the right move.”

Smooth integration

With the Kolbus system, Ludo Fact has achieved not only better product quality, but also higher productivity. “When it comes to lamination, we are now achieving the standard that we have always aimed for. The downtime risk has also been substantially reduced.” For Riehle, however, it’s also the “soft factors,” that have convinced him the company was right to choose Kolbus as a partner. “Our cooperation is working excellently. Not only did they immediately understand our needs and work closely with us to implement the idea successfully, but Kolbus engineers also provided expert support with integrating the system into our production flow. As a result, integration was achieved without any drop in output.” Marcel Riehle was also impressed by the openness of the Kolbus team: Such a project, especially when you are moving into new territory like this, will always need fine-tuning. Kolbus's willingness to continuously improve programming, production speed and set-up times and to stay on the ball all the time was just as important for the partnership as the real-time connection to the Kolbus service team. Andreas Hülsmann naturally welcomes praise like this, “It is part of our self-image that we learn from understanding the requirements of our customers and that we deploy the know-how we gain to their advantage. The fact that this project, which teams up two of our machines in a unique configuration, has been such a success reinforces our endeavours.”

Photos_Case Study Ludo Fact



The headquarters of the Ludo Fact family-run business in Jettingen-Scheppach, in southern Germany between Ulm and Augsburg

"For over 20 years, our business has been to offer the world fun: 7,000 board games a day, 350,000 games and puzzles a week and up to 17 million units a year supplied to games publishers around the world."



Ludo Fact supplies whatever customers need, from creating instructions and manufacturing components to assembling complete games, together with packing and shipment.



To meet production demands at Ludo Fact, Kolbus developed a new machine configuration linking two DA 290 inline casemakers complete with automated pallet feed and output stacking.



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