GOEX Sheetline
QUALITY CUSTOM PLASTIC SHEET
Vol. 6

# The John Henry Co. Implements GOEX Corp.'s "Zero-landfill" Plastic Recycling Program

JOHN HENRY, A DIVISION OF MULTI PACKAGING SOLUTIONS serving the horticulture market, is among the first companies to participate in the GOEX Corporation's breakthrough "closed-loop" plastic recycling program.

**Finding A Better Way**

John Henry supplies plant tags, merchandising, and marketing solutions to growers, greenhouses and garden centers, as well as to florists and wholesale floral operations.

Recognizing the industry's interest in sustainable practices, the company has worked to develop recycled products, plastic alternatives, and recycling programs for its customers. John Henry's closed-loop program with GOEX is the second recycling program it has implemented this year, following the Blackmore program it recently announced to collect clean styrene tags from growers and garden centers and recycle them to produce plant trays.

"The GOEX program is helping us focus upstream to combine sustainable manufacturing practices with recycled products," says Jon Luea, John Henry's Product Development Manager for Grower Plastics. Although John Henry has recycled paper and plastic scrap for years, "This is the first time we've worked with the extruder to reintroduce it as a product. It's a very exciting opportunity," Luea says.

**Waste Not, Want Not**

GOEX promotes its "zero landfill" program as an opportunity for customers like John Henry to extract value from processed plastics they previously regarded as waste. With proper handling procedures in place, plastic scrap (makeready waste, finished scrap, etc.) can be collected, recycled, enhanced with virgin raw material and extruded into a functional, printable plastic sheet that customers can use over and over again.

The John Henry R&D team evaluated numerous

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## *New VP Manufacturing Favors Scientific Problem-Solving*

WHEN ALAN SWEARINGEN JOINED GOEX as Director of Manufacturing, he encountered a fast-growing company whose operational needs matched perfectly the set of capabilities he was uniquely prepared to deliver. Recently promoted to the position of Vice President of Manufacturing, Swearingen quickly recognized that the consistently high growth in the company's business over the past several years called for the speedy integration of efforts to standardize, streamline and keep its processes under tighter control.

"Building on the company's foundation, our free-flowing, innovative mindset has been enhanced with an APQP (Advanced Product Quality Planning) approach to new product and process development," Swearingen says. "Implementing this system has shortened the development and learning time for launching new products while ensuring the consistency and repeatability of the processes in place to produce it.". By uniting the best traditions of craft with modern models of efficient process control, he adds, GOEX can sustain its creativity and entrepreneurial approach without incurring unnecessary wasted time, labor and materials.

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*Director of Manufacturing Alan Swearingen*

# President's Message:

## Lighting Out for the Territory

"The more efficiently we marshal our resources, the higher the level of quality, innovation and responsiveness we can provide."

This issue of the GOEX *Sheetline* is about pioneers. Not the covered wagon variety, but individuals and businesses with the same intrepid, goal-oriented spirit as our buckskin-clad forebears. The frontiers may have shifted, but challenges remain. As a society, one of the foremost challenges of our time is achieving sustainability in terms of resource use.

According to Robert Gilman of the Context Institute, "In its broadest scope, sustainability refers to the ability of a society, ecosystem, or any such ongoing system to continue functioning into the indefinite future without being forced into decline through the exhaustion or overloading of key resources on which that system depends." In these pages, you'll read about The John Henry Company's successful implementation of GOEX's closed-loop plastic scrap recycling program, which returns a fully functional, printable sheet to customers for resale – without adding waste to the ecosystem via the landfill. You'll also read about Gill Studios, Inc., which anticipates a groundswell in demand for the GOEX CAROM 45r recycled PVC it recently introduced in its 2009 product catalog. Finally, because a well-run business has a lot in common with a healthy ecosystem, we review the ongoing mission of our newly appointed Vice President of Manufacturing, Alan Swearingen, to assess and enhance our new product and process development for the benefit of our many customers.

Because at the end of the day, it's our customers that matter. The more efficiently we marshal our resources, the higher the level of quality, innovation and responsiveness we can provide. It's this process of ceaseless improvement, a refusal to settle for less than the best from ourselves that has always been a hallmark of the way GOEX does business.

Enjoy this edition of the GOEX *Sheetline*. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

Sincerely,

Joshua D. Gray,
President

## *John Henry Co.,* *continued from page 1*

materials options, including "biodegradable" and recycled plastics. We concluded that the GOEX solution using recycled plastic was a more viable solution for customers trying to balance sustainability and costs. There are biodegradable plastics such as PLA available, but research shows that these materials do not fully decompose and are relatively expensive with limited availability," Luea says.

"While these materials partially degrade, they leave behind microscopic pieces of plastic that never go away and won't revert to organic matter, creating a long-term problem. Short-term, you feel pretty good about it, but if there's a better solution, you should look at it. That's what recycling is all about and GOEX has been a huge help in making this happen."

John Henry currently prints on three types of virgin plastic material: Polystyrene, HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) and Polypropylene, which are used primarily in the manufacture of plant tags. Of these, GOEX Polystyrene is the only material for which a recycling program has been set up thus far. When the GOEX program is fully implemented, the company expects to recycle 30% to 40% of John Henry scrap Polystyrene into litho-grade material, Luea says. "Eventually, it would be nice to have all of the post-industrial scrap returned and reincorporated."

"If there's a better solution, you should look at it."

The imminent launch of the John Henry program marks the culmination of a period of intensive testing to ensure that the recycled material can withstand the extreme environmental conditions typical of most growing environments. "We have a weather chamber and lab on-site that we use to determine how the material will perform under

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# *Customer Focus:* Gill Studios

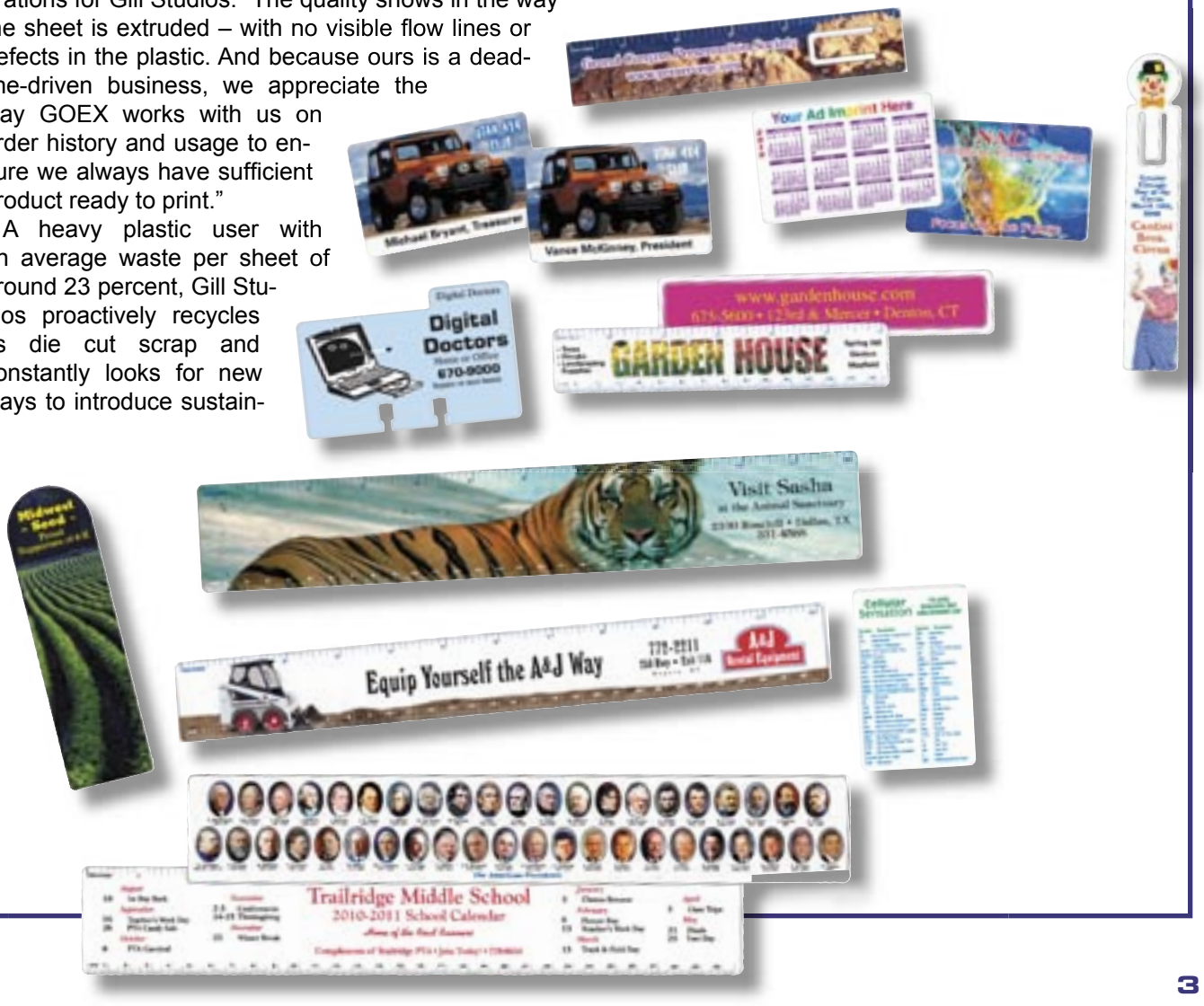
## *Gill Studios Finds an Apt Partner in Goex Corp.*

Longtime GOEX customer Gill Studios, Inc., Lenexa, KS, was founded in 1934 as a silkscreen company specializing in the hand printing and decorating of canvas products. Today, the company operates two neighboring plants on 13 acres in Lenexa. The facilities boast a combined area of 300,000 square feet and no fewer than 420 employees who turn out custom decals and labels, signs and posters, computer products and a wide variety of magnetic and plastic ad specialty items. Gill Studios also performs offset, flexo and wide-format digital printing. The company uses GOEX extruded white and clear PVC vinyl sheets to create ad specialties like rulers, bookmarks and loyalty, membership or calendar cards, staples of Gill's extensive product lineup.

"We've been very satisfied with outstanding GOEX service and products," says Tom LeTourneau, VP Operations for Gill Studios. "The quality shows in the way the sheet is extruded – with no visible flow lines or defects in the plastic. And because ours is a deadline-driven business, we appreciate the way GOEX works with us on order history and usage to ensure we always have sufficient product ready to print."

A heavy plastic user with an average waste per sheet of around 23 percent, Gill Studios proactively recycles its die cut scrap and constantly looks for new ways to introduce sustainable manufacturing practices. The company recently implemented GOEX's "zero-landfill," closed-loop recycling program for its PVC scrap. (At present, GOEX is one of the only plastics manufacturers able to recycle PVC plastic.) For a recent test run, Gill returned 3,000 pounds of PVC scrap to GOEX and received 15,000 pounds of recycled CAROM® 45r for resale. The next batch will likely fill an entire truckload, LeTourneau says.

"Recycling is very big for us and for our customers, who generally are more interested in keeping waste out of the landfill altogether than in biodegradable options," LeTourneau says. "GOEX closed-loop manufacturing fits that scenario to a 't'. We are introducing GOEX recycled PVC in our 2009 catalog and expect a very positive response." ✪



## John Henry Co., continued from page 2

conditions typical of the environments we supply into. This includes intense UV sunlight comparable to conditions in southern Florida, high and low humidity – it even rains in there," Luea says. "Our testing of the GOEX recycled material has shown that it performs exceptionally well under all the conditions typical of horticultural environments. We also found that it would cost considerably less to change our processing than we had anticipated. The recycled product from GOEX is on track to be our flagship substrate."

"The biggest challenge to setting up the GOEX program has been working on the process of returning scrap material to GOEX, in order to be recycled into John Henry tags. To that end, all of the material to be reused is shredded and loaded into individually labeled gaylord containers right off the end of the press and loaded directly into trucks. With the materials thus quarantined," Luea says, "there is no point at which the scrap could become contaminated with foreign matter or dissimilar polymers."

> "This is the first time we've worked with the extruder to reintroduce our plastic scrap as a product. It's very exciting."

In response to growing customer demand for "green" product options, John Henry now offers five different eco-friendly materials ranging from paper and paper composites all the way to GOEX recycled Polystyrene, which it expects will become a popular choice with like-minded customers. Every product made with recyclable material will be marked with a logo similar to the one reproduced on Page One. Otherwise, the finished recycled tags will look identical to the original and will perform to similar specifications.

As John Henry prepares to promote its new capability, Luea provides a glimpse into the future of horticultural plastic recycling:

"The ideal would be for recycling centers to be set up at every garden center and greenhouse. If every pot and plant tag – ours as well as the competition's – were marked with the appropriate recycling symbol, customers could take their used pots and tags back to that garden center and drop them off to be recycled again. We view the closed-loop manufacturing model developed by GOEX and pioneered by John Henry as a major step toward a sustainable future." ✪

## New VP Manufacturing, continued from page 1

This undertaking requires shop floor personnel to become more intimately involved in the initial product and / or process development decision-making phase. Over the past 12 months, Swearingen has introduced Six Sigma problem-solving methodology and 5S+1 process improvement initiatives. The company posts SQDC (Safety-Quality-Delivery-Cost) boards on each of its extrusion lines to help employees and determine whether the output is in line with expectations.

GOEX also conducts a weekly safety audit to identify and correct all potentially unsafe work practices. "Where the focus in the past had been on time lost due to safety incidents, now our safety initiative is process driven," Swearingen explains.

All shop floor personnel are trained in activities designed to promote efficiency in the workplace, as well as in seven-step problem solving, autonomous maintenance and continuous improvement.

The results are visible and positive. For the past year, GOEX delivery, quality and productivity metrics have set new records. "We're able to do more with our employees by providing them with the appropriate tools and enabling them to work smarter," Swearingen says. "Supervisors are doing a good job of encouraging their staffs; the technicians think and behave like they own their equipment and are constantly looking for further improvements."

Current projects focus on issues relating to coatings, opacity, sheet cut consistency and setup reduction, all of which are vital in reducing the volume of scrap produced to the lowest possible level. To further improve efficiency, operators will take responsibility for final product packaging on the shop floor, in order to eliminate a handoff in the warehouse and expedite shipping. "This change in packaging location and responsibility also will enable us to increase our inventory accuracy," Swearingen says.

Swearingen views his first year with GOEX as a "year of learning," to be followed by a "year of doing" in 2009. With training in place and a number of new initiatives underway, he says, "2009 will be a year to drive those changes." ✪

"One thing you can't recycle is wasted time."

- Author Unknown