

Finnish quality in the heart of Europe

Stracel Newsprint in France came on-line in late 1990. Nigel Farrand visited them recently to find out their approach to quality management.

Within hours of the first reel of newsprint leaving the new Stracel paper machine it was running on the local newspaper's press. Stracel employees still talk with pride about that day in late October 1990 when the machine started up, producing paper at 1040 metres a minute. On the twelfth day they wrapped over 700 tonnes and Stracel was truly in the European newsprint market. The market strategy is simple: quality that the customers expect from Nordic producers but in quantities that embody the 'just in time' philosophy. Located in Strasbourg, France, with Germany just half a kilometre away, Stracel is well positioned for the single European market.

United Paper Mills, Stracel's owner, pulled expertise from its mills in Finland as well as Shotton in Wales for the project. Quality was one of the key factors in equipment purchases,

starting with the Valmet SpeedFormer HS newsprint machine. To ensure quality targets were being met, a quality management system (QMS) from Valmet Automation was selected together with a Kajaani PaperLab, the Automated Paper Testing Laboratory.

Process automation at Stracel is based on the Valmet Damatic XD which manages the operations of the entire mill. Using a data communication bus over two kilometres long, the XD collects and uses process information from wood handling, power boiler, TMP plant, paper machine and effluent treatment. The main selection criteria for the process automation system was reliability. Says Olli-Pekka Peltola, production engineer, finishing: 'Of course usability, service and price are very important but the system has to have a proven functionality and be capable of working 100% of the time.'

Quality and process management

The QMS system is based on the Valmet PMS (Process Management System) because of its flexibility. It is quite clear what data needs to be collected, but how it should be presented is another question. The Valmet system contains all the basic functions for efficient and secure data collection and offers a fairly flexible base for reporting and further development. 'That's what quality control is in the end. You just collect as much data as you can afford, and when variations are found you should be able to first find the data quickly and secondly be able to print it in a readable format for analysis. Most of the data we collect is saved just in case. But whenever needed it has to be found,' says Olli-Pekka Peltola.

Parent reel averages and profiles from on-machine basis weight, moisture and caliper sensors plus some instantaneous values from the machine are fed automatically to the QMS. PaperLab profiles and averages for each reel plus minute by minute Damatic averages from key areas all go into the QMS relational database. Other laboratory measurements are entered manually at a PC terminal in the lab. Personal computers in all control rooms and process engineers' offices are connected to the system, and presently can access data for every reel since start-up (at the time of



One of the Damatic XD control rooms