

# aleph invests 6% of turnover in technology R&D: CEO

**F**ounded in 1999 in Como, Italy, aleph has become an international player in digital printing solutions with a dedicated sales force and a distribution network located in key textile markets. From high-tech digital printers to drying systems, from proprietary software to consumables, aleph is able to offer integrated printing solutions to their clients in order to become a partner for their success.

**Alessandro Manes, CEO at aleph**, speaks about a unique range launched during ITMA, and the key features of LaForte 100, dye sublimation entry-level printer. Excerpts...

***aleph has launched a range of brand-new scanning printing systems. Can you tell us what is unique about this new range? How was the response at ITMA 2019 to your company's new offerings?***

Since the official launch of LAFORTE series, back in 2015, aleph's R&D team has been working hard to enhance and consolidate the company's range of cutting-edge scanning textile printing systems, focusing on both direct-to-textile (LAFORTE Fabric) and dye-sublimation (LAFORTE Paper) technologies. At ITMA 2019, we unveiled two brand-new scanning printing systems, LAFORTE 100, the entry-level solution of LAFORTE series, and top-of-the-line LAFORTE 600, a high-volume industrial printing platform.

We were very pleased with the enthusiastic response from visitors at ITMA, which has been a proof that we are going in the right direction. On the one hand, our LAFORTE 100 perfectly meets the needs of those printing houses looking to replacing their plotters with a high-productive and cost-effective printing solution. On the other hand, those printers from Asian countries—including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia—who were in search of high-productive industrial scanning digital printing systems, got very interested in our LAFORTE 600 Fabric, which enables almost the same productivity as single-pass inkjet presses.

All in all, ITMA has been very successful for aleph and we now aim at capitalising on the contacts and conversations built during the show.

***Please give some details about the key features of your LaForte 100, dye sublimation entry-level printer.***

LAFORTE 100 Paper—the model that we showcased at ITMA 2019—is a versatile inkjet printing system. A



water-based dye-sublimation entry-level solution with production speed up to 200 sq m/h, LAFORTE 100 features 4 to 8 printheads. Offering robustness and stability in production, LaForte 100 is designed to deliver high-quality print and is suitable for fast fashion and sportswear market segments, as well as the out of home and soft signage industries.

There are two main key features worth highlighting. The printer is equipped with a proprietary rotary belt with vacuum system, which enables to print on paper with grammage starting from 10 gsm. This feature, along the core inkjet technology, enables to cut the overall production costs of the printer, which makes LAFORTE 100 Paper a very cost-effective printing platform.

I would like to add that—as it is the case with all LAFORTE models—we also offer LAFORTE 100 Fabric, featuring the same features of the 'PAPER' model but with direct-to-textile technology.

***Which are your major global markets for your printers? How have these developed over the years?***

Italy, Turkey, South Korea, Indonesia, Mexico are currently the major markets for aleph. We have established



part of the joint venture process, over the past two years we have been focusing on an internal reorganisation, which has seen the company investing both in our production facility and in human resources, as well as on expanding and consolidating our LAFORTE product range. The next step—which is happening now—

a presence there and are strengthening our position in those regions by building long-term partnerships with local dealers and distributors. All those countries have seen a dynamic growth of the textile printing industry over the past two years. Many printing houses are investing to boost their printing equipment on a yearly basis, and our LAFORTE series has proved to be a profit-generating choice for them. At the same time, we are focusing on establishing a presence in countries such as US, Argentina, Indonesia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

### ***How has your company been doing in India, and also in other Asian markets?***

In India, we currently work with our established partner, DCC Group. We have just placed a couple of LAFORTE units in India and are now in the process of further expanding our presence in the country.

Building on the feedback from ITMA, the Indian market is very interested in our mid-range and entry-level solutions, therefore mainly our LAFORTE 100 and LAFORTE 200, in both direct-to-textile and dye-sublimation modes, with up to 320 cm height.

### ***Do you have any strategic plans for the Indian market? Can you give us some details?***

As I mentioned earlier, we are planning to further expand our presence in India. In order to do so, we are focusing on establishing a network of partners and dealers to ensure a widespread coverage of the country.

### ***The corporate growth has been impressive after your JV with an Italian PE firm? Can you tell us how did this strategy work out?***

aleph has experienced a continuous corporate growth, up to 30 per cent, in the past four years, also following the joint venture with Italian private equity firm, Wise sgr. As

relates to strengthening our worldwide network of dealers and partners, which will enable aleph to establish a strong presence in the key textile markets at a global level.

### ***Please give us some information on your company's facilities and R&D set-up? What are the future plans for the next few years?***

We are planning an expansion of our facility plant in Lurate Caccivio (Como area)—which is currently of about 2,500 sq m—by doubling the size by 2021. We are also planning to further invest in human resources, to grow from 50 up to 70 people by 2020-21. Concerning the R&D, aleph invests about 6 per cent of the annual turnover in technology research and development. We strongly believe in innovation, and I think the two new products that we launched in 2019 can easily show our commitment to innovation in the textile printing industry.

### ***How do you see the growth prospects for digital printing in the future? Will these be more affordable to a wider section of users? What are the other drivers of growth for this printing, according to you?***

As we all know, digital textile printing is about 5-6 per cent of the total textile market, which means there is a huge growth opportunity there. The latest, advanced digital textile printing platforms are making it more affordable to a wider range of users compared to the past, also due to the diversified range of applications demanded by the market. Both the price of the ink and reduced production costs are key to the future growth of digital textile printing. At ITMA 2019, we saw a significant reduction of the cost of digital pigment ink, which could really make a starting point for a ramp up in the growth of digital textile printing worldwide.

**SAMUEL JOSEPH**