

Turn the Wheels of Profit with High-Speed Rotary Scoring

By Mark Lee

Here's a question. You work for a high-volume print producer bidding on a beautiful six-color job on a heavy enamel sheet. The job calls for color breaks on folds and a T-perforated BRC (business reply card). It will be beautiful when finished, and it's just the kind of print job you're seeking. Before sending off your bid, you should call your local die cutter for a price on channel scoring and perforating, right? Wrong.

Don't ignore the many benefits of today's high-speed, versatile, rotary-scoring machinery. If you plan to die score jobs that should run on rotary scorers, you will probably lose the bid. Be smart: Assume your competition knows how rotary-scoring technology saves time and money on many types of scoring and perforating projects.

Concerned about rotary-scoring quality? Don't be. You will sacrifice nothing with rotary scoring. In some cases, you'll even gain quality vs. traditional letterpress die scoring.

Rotary scoring: fast, cost-effective

Rotary scoring has two important benefits: It produces jobs quickly and cost-effectively.

□ *Production speed:* When you outsource letterpress work, you immediately lose time — usually about a day — waiting for the die to be made. Then, once on press, die-scoring run speeds are significantly slower than rotary scoring. For many jobs, rotary scorers outper-

form letterpresses by a factor of two to three.

□ *Production cost:* Faster production speeds result in lower manufacturing costs. In addition, set-up charges are less because rotary scoring eliminates the need for letterpress dies, which typically cost between \$150 and \$300.

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Rotary-scoring quality, flexibility

Good rotary-scoring systems do some manufacturing operations better than letterpresses.

□ Rotary scorers are a cost-effective solution for many jobs that need T-perfs. With the help of sophisticated stop/start timing devices, late-model rotary machines can swiftly and precisely cut T-perfs into a wide range of direct mail and other printed products. Because T-perfing doesn't require letterpress dies and runs at high rates of speed, products with T-perfs typically cost less when produced on rotary scoring machines.

□ Consider a form that needs "opposing" scores. Most letterpress systems need to run these types of

jobs in two passes, which is inefficient, slow and costly. Even worse, scoring accuracy might suffer because the raised score of the first pass can cause feeding variation during the second. On the other hand, one-pass rotary scoring ensures the best quality, the lowest costs and the fastest turnaround times. Scoring jobs with color breaks and tight registration are better produced on rotary scorers because operators can run them using a sheet's true press guide and gripper. Also, rotary scorers don't need sheets cut prior to production, which, again, allows the operator to use the press guide and gripper.

□ A third area in which rotary-scoring systems outperform letterpresses is on very difficult stocks. For example, if your project needs cross-grain scoring or has heavy enamel coatings, clay fillers or brittle fibers, rotary scoring could be your best choice. Unlike one-pass, die-scoring letterpresses, dual-shaft rotary scorers can attack difficult projects with an inline, two-pass approach. The dual-shaft design allows a "soft" score to be applied as sheets pass through the first shaft. This prepares or "softens" the sheet for the final "hard" score as the sheet passes through the second shaft. The end result is an efficiently produced, cost-effective, beautiful project with minimal or no cracking on even the most difficult of folds.

Common applications

The uses for rotary-scoring machines are virtually unlimited.

Postpress

Common applications include book covers, brochures, promotional materials, coupon books, multiple-up BRCs, tear-off cards, perforated pages, book inserts, crack-and-peel labels, and so much more. Look for binderies with rotary-scoring machines so you can one-stop shop for integrated applications that involve mechanical binding, perfect binding, index tabbing, collating, folding and fulfillment.

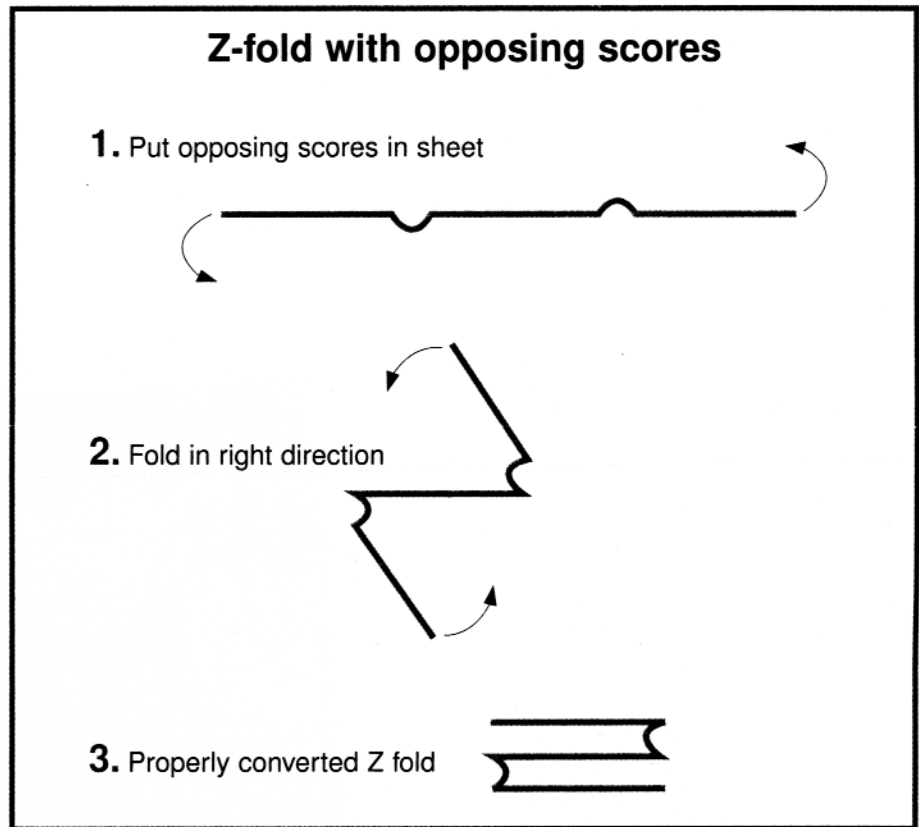
Some rotary scorers have stop/start solenoid-driven, timed perforating wheels. One of the first jobs that my company ran on a newly installed rotary scorer was a 16-page signature that needed one page perforated close to the binding gutter. The timed-perf feature was perfectly suited for this job and caused it to be produced much faster and at a lower cost than if run on a less efficient letterpress. When your job needs continuous and timed perfs, think of rotary scoring first.

Another great feature of rotary scorers is their microperforating capabilities. If you need to microperf sheets for downstream use in laser printers, the last place you should look for a solution is on a die letterpress. Rotary scorers can handle these types of jobs with ease.

Technical corner

Most rotary-scoring machines are able to convert stock as thick as 28-pt. index and as light as 16-lb. text. Run speeds on scoring machines like the Rollem TR system can exceed 10,000 sph and easily net between 6,000 and 8,000 sph. In addition to being versatile enough to convert stocks as difficult as synthetics, the Rollem can process sheets as large as 41 inches. One feature many rotary scorers and letterpresses share is a highly accurate top-loading paper feeding mechanism.

When planning multipanel pro-



jects with complicated folding sequences, make sure that you size your panels appropriately. Physics still applies. Allow for creep and push-out. For example, a roll-folded project with equal-size panels will suffer from wrinkling and bend-overs, regardless of how perfect the scores are.

If you're not used to outsourcing finishing services at a bindery, rest easy because rotary scorers are more like folding machines than die presses. In fact, with minimal training, many folder operators can run rotary scoring machines because so many of the core skills are the same. This is unlike die presses that require very different operational skills. To be fair, some projects still need to run on traditional letterpresses. If your job has an unusual shape, pattern, cutouts or kiss cuts, call a die-cutting services company.

If you need scoring done, do

yourself a favor by investigating the myriad benefits made possible by versatile rotary-scoring machines. In today's cutthroat graphic arts market, turnaround speed and a few cents are all it takes to lose work. Knowledge of high-speed rotary-scoring machinery can be one of those small advantages that will put profit in your pocket today. **H/P**

Mark Lee is president of Specialties Bindery, which has served the postpress needs of East Coast and Midwest print producers since 1971. The company offers mechanical binding, perfect binding, rotary scoring, folding, index tabbing and fulfillment solutions. For more information, call 800-638-LOOP.