

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:00] DC: Today, on The Print Report, we are live from drupa in Hall 8A with Hunkeler.

[0:00:09] PM: Some of our favorite people are at Hunkeler, and today, we have one of my most favorite from Hunkeler, we have Daniel Erni.

[0:00:14] DC: Welcome to the Print Report with Deborah Corn and Pat McGrew. All the print that's fit for news.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:24] DC: Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador, more specifically, I am here recording an episode of The Print Report with Patricia McGrew. Hello, Patricia McGrew.

[0:00:36] PM: Hello, Deborah Corn. How are you?

[0:00:38] DC: I am fine. So, fine, before we came to drupa, we made our predictions of what we thought the ultimate theme was going to be at drupa. Not the theme that people wanted it to be, but boots on the ground. You said it was going to be the finishing drupa?

[0:00:57] PM: I did. I did.

[0:00:58] DC: I said it was going to be the flexible packaging drupa. Now, minus come to manifest in small ways, or in ways that were people looking for new applications or vertical markets to get into. But everybody needs finishing equipment. So, I bow to you and your prediction.

[0:01:21] PM: It's everywhere.

[0:01:22] DC: Yes, it is everywhere. But dare I say, the first name and finishing at drupa is Hunkeler. They are in every booth, Patricia. At the back of every machine. Their logo is everywhere as a partner. I am just so thrilled to be a Hunke for life.

[0:01:44] PM: Which brings us to sort of an interesting decision, Daniel, that you made coming to the show because we know drupa will tell us, their number one for print. Cool. But you've got such a presence in so many holes. Your own stand really didn't need to be giant, all singing, all dancing.

[0:02:06] DE: Oh, my gosh. Did I do a good decision on that?

[0:02:09] PM: I think you did.

[0:02:11] DC: Your equipment is literally selling itself in every, practically every booth with a piece of printing equipment that you brought.

[0:02:18] DE: You're totally right on that. It is great to have like a headquarter here on a booth where you can come back, having meetings with the customers. As you may have seen, we also have a key component with our robotic arm, which also, it's a great feature out there.

[0:02:36] PM: He just needs the eyelashes and maybe a mustache.

[0:02:40] DE: We still could do that.

[0:02:40] DC: Okay. There we go.

[0:02:42] DE: But I mean, that shows quite some intention here on the booth. I mean, people really walking over for that. I think, that pretty much shows, for us having this one key feature on our booth that works perfectly fine and we are focusing really on our partners. We are out there where the reality is with the other customers, with the other partners, and have a great chance to explain and show the overall process right there.

[0:03:11] PM: So, when you started to think about all of the people that were probably asking you for equipment for their stands, did you have to make some hard decisions about which pieces of equipment you actually wanted to bring to the show and install all over the 18 halls?

[0:03:26] DE: I try to be as generous as I could. But as you can imagine, I mean, bringing all their equipment to drupa is not inexpensive. That's some expense, what do we have here. But we try to be as generous as we could. I think, except about two, three different partners, we really could not combine very well, specifically on those areas where the market is heading. Graphic arts printing, the book printing. We definitely have covered that extremely well.

[0:03:59] PM: I saw here in your stand, I was really – I was intrigued by the roll that is currently on the line that's in your stand printed with HP on the VantagePoint 200. But it's not kind of what I would have walked up in thought. I would have maybe thought, "Oh, well, I might see some transaction or MIT." Something that looks like postcards, maybe. But these are like full-sized posters that you're doing, that are beautiful color, and such a great example of the versatility of the Hunkeler line.

[0:04:33] DE: But on the other hand, that shows also very well where our industry is in the meantime. We can do posters in that industry in the meantime, and we can handle the posters fully automatically from A to Z in the whole process. That's what you're seeing here is what our customers actually want to do. I mean, you do have the postcards coming for the first couple feet on the roll then they are switching easily you over to the poster, and that's exactly what we are exhibiting.

[0:05:05] PM: That's the versatility of the equipment, right? It's the ability to keep changing. Your workflow that's interior to the machine is something that every printer should, if they don't already know about it, should be asking you about because you can guide it through automation.

[0:05:22] DE: That's going to be a factor to get more industrialized going forward. Yes, we are talking about the automatization of the very moment. We are talking about the connectivity and we are working all that. But we also need to get more industrialized in our industry. That's going to help us to elevate to the next step.

[0:05:44] PM: And that robot helps.

[0:05:44] DC: Yes, yesterday, Pat, and I were actually in Hall 1, and we passed by the Müller Martini booth, and we saw your Starbook line in all of its glory. Actually, it was printing one of Pat's books.

[0:05:59] PM: It wasn't printing. It was finishing it.

[0:06:02] DC: I'm sorry, it was finishing it, oddly enough. You had mentioned a book printing, as one of the things that you were focusing on this year, one of the things that you were supporting with finishing equipment. Just very quickly, what is going on with you guys, and Müller Martini, and let's talk about like, really focus on this job.

[0:06:20] DE: So, before I answer that question, just let me say, I personally believe the Starbooks Sheetfolder is probably the greatest invention since sliced bread. I mean, this is such a cool unit. I mean, this will change the industry quite a bit, again, going towards more industrial. We are very proud to feature and show that.

Now, how about our new owner, Müller Martini. Obviously, our headquarters is just about three miles apart of each other. So, it was a very natural thing to come together. Then also, many of us were working for Müller Martini, or some of the Müller Martini employees were working for Hunkeler. So, it's really two families coming together, literally, in that sense. We are in the progress to get closer to each other. We are lining up certain processes internally. We are obviously lining up things like the ERP system and all that. We already see that fits perfectly together with each other.

Now, from our standpoint, this is going to bring us a lot of additional horsepower for development. I mean, being together with a big international partner like Müller Martini has much bigger software capabilities as an example, and that will help to envelope even further from the Hunkeler side.

[0:07:42] DC: I mean, I was taking photographs of the way it was configured. It certainly – I'm glad that they have that booth space because it would not fit in here. It was actually a closed loop or almost a closed loop. But it was pretty big. But it was doing so many things.

[0:08:01] PM: So, one of the things I love about the story is how much you've automated. I can remember my first exposure to Hunkeler, many, many years ago when I was at Kodak and operators still had to stand by each piece of equipment. While it was automated, it wasn't workflow automation, the way I think of it. But every year, there's more and more automation in the lines, to where even at the last innovation days, we saw so much automation, and then to come here and to see what they were able to do in the Müller Martini stand, to make it look like – I mean, you almost didn't need an operator. You need an operator.

[0:08:39] DC: But hold on a second. To your point, though, there was nobody standing in the middle while it was running. They were standing on the outside presenting on it. Certainly, if there was a problem, someone could have jumped in there. But there were no problems when we were standing there.

[0:08:55] DE: It is an extremely reliable piece of equipment already at that stage. Trust me, I mean, we didn't do the calculation on that. But I'm pretty sure you will have just one operator running multiple of those pieces. For sure.

[0:09:09] PM: One of the things we talked about at Innovationdays last time, was more of the rise of robots and AMRs and those as people aids, to help reduce injuries, and reduce labor requirements. Do you see that playing a growing role in the things that you'll bring to market?

[0:09:30] DE: Absolutely. That's the reason why we keep going on with development on the automation side. I may have that mentioned in an earlier interview. I don't believe that the robot is the ultimate answer for everything. We definitely will have also an automatic solution to the left and to the right, specifically, on the sheet-fed and you probably need more lateral equipment moving things around. But we are not going to stop on that. There will be more creative ideas going forward.

[0:10:00] PM: I think that that's something every printer wants to hear. They want to know what their options are because they know they're challenged with labor.

[0:10:08] DE: Yes. Also, back to Deb's point before, also space. Space is an issue too. I mean, always, every square feet counts. We will bring that into our developments to try to squeeze things down. But in the end, we are dealing with paper, so you do need a certain platform to handle that paper. But again, we stay creative on it.

[MESSAGE]

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:11:27] DC: Something tells me, and correct me if I'm wrong, you could set it up to go straight in one line. But in the other booth, they have it set up as a square. So, it actually is an efficient use of space, because you can put things in the middle. They had the bins for the finished books. Oh, and something that I loved is that you could do all the different sizes of the books at the same exact time. It was only when you finally cut the cover when you trim the cover on the blades that were in the configuration.

I mean, look, I'm repeating technical stuff to you, because I'm so fascinated by it and they were like, "I know you don't speak technical." I'm like, "I know. But that was really cool." Because the books are sized to the guillotines already. So, you don't have to go in there and line them up or do anything. As long as it fits in its little quadrant, it's just going to cut it to size. And there were

three different sizes of books on the same sheet that they were cutting down. I mean, it was fascinating to someone like me.

[0:12:34] PM: It was. Daniel, this is part of the innovation that you guys bring to the story. What are customers asking for next? There's always a next no matter what, how wonderful, you do things, they always want something more. What's the more?

[0:12:50] DC: Give me more Hunkeler. Give me more.

[0:12:53] DE: Now you're really catching me here. I mean, come on, we still have to have something for next year at the Innovationdays. We are already preparing for that. Trust me, we definitely will have quite a bit of new stuff coming out already in February next year at Innovationdays.

[0:13:13] PM: I'm betting that you're already – as you said you're already preparing for Innovationdays. It's the biggest party in print. I know drupa is number one in print, but Hunkeler Innovationdays, absolutely the biggest party in print. Do you find that more and more people want to come?

[0:13:27] DE: Oh, absolutely. We are going to adapt to the industry going towards next year.

[0:13:36] DC: It was pretty crowded last year.

[0:13:37] DE: I know. I know. But if I say we adapt to the industry is obviously sheet-fed and roll-fed are playing more and more role. We honestly believe sheet-fed and roll-fed needs to stay next to each other. Because there is a good reason to go sheet, there's a good reason to go roll. So, we are actually extending the Innovationdays in a way that we can combine sheet and roll-fed. We do want to be the inkjet show overall. With that, we will allow our great partners to really exhibit also in a way that they can show both of the process.

[0:14:14] PM: Wow.

[0:14:16] DC: That's breaking news in my brain.

[0:14:18] PM: I love that, because they all have brought such innovative machines to market, is I kind of walked through Ricoh. I walked through Canon. I walked through Xeikon. Every one of them is just bringing such cool solutions that are driven by what their customers are asking them for.

[0:14:37] DE: And what you're going to see from the Hunkeler side, also from a technical development standpoint, we are going to bring the equipment also closer together. So, in our mind with all the new developments, we are bringing the cut sheet units as well as the sheet-fed units, roll-fed units, certainly. From an operation point and closer together, it should be easier for the operator to walk up to a cut sheet unit or to a roll-fed unit who have the same type of operation steps using the same platform to operate it. We are also working with all our partners to help them go in design direction. Then again, roll-fed sheet-fed should be very close to each other. It should be easy for the customer to pick and choose to the left or to the right.

[0:15:21] PM: Are we going to ask the Messe to maybe move walls and make the hall bigger?

[0:15:26] DC: The Messe in Lucerne. Let's not get a little confused.

[0:15:29] PM: Yes, in Lucerne.

[0:15:30] DC: Oh-oh, something tells me that's something's going on in Daniel's head right now. He's not trying to answer.

[0:15:37] DE: The next big news, yes, we are going to add a hall.

[0:15:40] DC: Excellent.

[0:15:40] PM: Oh, look at that.

[0:15:42] DE: It's important for us that we keep the concept. We want to have the nice area to sit down, have the conversation, meet our friends from the industry. We do want to have the equipment right there in Lucerne. So, with that, we need to allow to our partners that they have some more space to shoulder roll-fed and the sheet-fed. With that, we do that in third hall.

But I mean, don't be worried. I mean, it will stay a nice familiar show, very close to each other. We will maintain that.

[0:16:17] DC: This is what I would say. There's no way you would have even opened up that third hall if you thought that it was going to take away from that really, truly personalized engaged experience that everybody has who walks in there because you don't have to walk 18 halls. You can speak to one hardware vendor, stick your head over the wall and verify information from the next one, come back. Or you can see everybody within one or two halls now right next to each other.

[0:16:54] PM: It's the only place on Earth, you can actually stand and size the equipment against each other.

[0:16:58] DC: Yes, you can see it.

[0:17:00] PM: "Oh, that'll fit in my – no, that one won't fit. Oh, that'll fit."

[0:17:04] DC: I mean, surprisingly, Switzerland is neutral in all of this.

[0:17:08] DE: That's what we are, exactly. We will keep it that way, for sure. But I tell you also the feedback which I get from all our great partners around the globe, they appreciate that.

[0:17:16] PM: Yes, they do.

[0:17:17] DE: I mean, we are a big family in that industry. We know each other quite well. We are competitors to a certain degree. But we are trying all the same. We are trying to develop that great industry of inkjet technology.

[0:17:33] PM: The very first time Deborah ever went –

[0:17:34] DC: You want to tell my story when I freaked out?

[0:17:36] PM: Go ahead. Go ahead.

[0:17:38] DC: Okay, I was at Innovationdays with one of your partners, and a team from another OEM came over. They weren't just looking at the press, Daniel. They were in the press with a video camera. I'm standing there freaking out, trying to tell somebody, "They're in your press with a camera. They're in your press with a camera." They were like, "Calm down, Deborah, we're in there, pressed with a camera."

[0:18:09] DE: That's a great story.

[0:18:11] PM: That's always been the case from the very first Hunkeler I ever did. There's always been that sharing because we all know how to build a press. But you've got a little innovation. I've got a little innovation. I'm very proud of my innovation. I will I'm happy for you to look at it. So, my favorite, the first one that I did with – George Promis was still with Rico at the time. He's here by the way. He said, "Oh, by the way, we're keeping beer in the press by the chiller. So, if you need a beer, just come by." I was working for Kodak at the time. That's the nature of this business. But that's what Innovationdays brings out in people.

[0:18:51] DE: Absolutely. Again, I think, it's in all of our interests to grow that industry further. Even though we're competing with each other, being friendly, and developing the things forward and utilizing the technology which we receive, put them into it, to help our customers to really be productive, and gain market share.

[MESSAGE]

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:19:43] PM: What should a printer be asking their friendly Hunkeler sales rep? Should they be asking for help by assessing their needs? Is that something Hunkeler can help with? Or should they be asking about specific pieces of equipment?

[0:19:58] DE: Don't ask about specific pieces of equipment. That just put you in a corner. Really put out what you want to do. Bring your products and start there to develop a solution. Don't be afraid, put also out your crazy ideas. I mean, I'm pretty sure they are asked from their customers some pretty crazy stuff. So, bring those over. Let's talk about, if we can, we find a solution. Maybe we are going to find a solution in a couple of months or years from now. But it's extremely overwhelming for us to receive all those ideas.

[0:20:33] PM: That's great.

[0:20:34] DC: When I first looked up Hunkeler on the drupa exhibitor map, it actually came up in three areas. I wasn't sure we were doing this podcast because of that. What are you hearing back from the other two areas? And we are at drupa, how has drupa been for Hunkeler?

[0:20:52] DE: So, drupa is great for us, not necessarily in number of people, which are walking up to the booths. It's the overall number which are on all the partner booths, and here at our headquarter booth in Hall 8. People are excited in what they are seeing. Again, I don't count really on the overall number. It's the quality visitor, the quality talk, which we have with a single one, with a single customer. That brings us also further as Hunkeler.

[0:21:25] PM: I think that's all we want in our relationships with the printers who come. We want them to come with ideas, questions, and a checkbook. I think a checkbook is a good idea so they can pay you.

[0:21:39] DC: Yes, of course. But also, I hope that a lot of people are thinking about the next thing, right? Not just how to optimize what they're currently doing with the most efficient equipment and workflow solution, but also to think about the vertical markets, like you said, publishing, direct mail is picking up again. Things like that. I was speaking to another manufacturer the other day and I mentioned that in my LinkedIn group, I can see trends pop up every once in a while.

One of the trends that has popped up very recently is how do I finish a book. They don't know necessarily what a book is. They're not defining it. They're kind of just defining it as a cover with some things inside, which I think opens up to your point, don't come with the idea, just come

with what you want to do and let Hunkeler really advise you on that. So, talk about book finishing –

[0:22:37] PM: Manufacturing.

[0:22:38] DC: Manufacturing now, maybe in a way that encourages people to check it out, why it's something they should look into?

[0:22:46] DE: Just in your question, you made an important point. Book is manufacturing. Today, we are manufacturing books. I totally understand. It is also an art to produce a book. But what we can do and what we can offer today in that industry is really the manufacturing process, from A to Z from the white roll, or from the white sheet, all the way down to the finished book, hardcover, softcover, you name it. That's all the way, fully automatically possible today.

With that, we don't stop. I mean, we are growing on that to make it even more reliable. I think based upon the sustainability today, it is extremely important that the first book which comes out is sellable. You can't go on and just wasting 10 books into a bin. You need to have the first one just right. And through your whole production flow during the whole day, the 24/7, you need to make sure 99% you can sell, and that's going to help us overall, also for our industry to get more sustainable.

[0:24:01] PM: I think one of the interesting things we also learned is that and the data shows us this from the various book research studies that more people are coming into book manufacturing. They may have been printing other things. But they've started to see the opportunity in short-run book printing. So, they may be coming to you without even knowing what they need. They just know, "Hey, I want to do books." And you can guide them.

[0:24:25] DC: I'm just saying, that's exactly what is going on in my LinkedIn group. "Hey, does anybody know how I can do this?"

[0:24:33] DE: That goes back to the industrial way. It is a standardized process which we can use. It is not just one type of book. I mean, you obviously can do all the different sizes. You can

use all the different paper substrates for it. And as we said before, you can pick and choose hardcover, softcover. It's part of the process.

[0:24:54] PM: Whatever you want. We often talk about book of one, but very often, in short-run printing, it's book of five, book of 50, book of a hundred, and the solutions will work –

[0:25:07] DC: From a hundred different costumes, too.

[0:25:08] PM: Yes, very often. So, the footprint of this equipment in combination with the footprint that we now have from the various press manufacturers makes it a very open market for anyone who wants to move into that area.

[0:25:26] DE: Maybe just quickly, catching on the footprint, which you said, going back to the equipment is footprint. Due to the fact that those lines are so efficient today, you most probably can scale down from two lines, just a one line, or from four lines to two lines overall. So, that helps you in your process too.

[0:25:44] PM: That saves you money, saves you energy, saves you everything. Yes.

[MESSAGE]

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:26:25] PM: So, Daniel, I'm a workflow nerd. I love workflow.

[0:26:29] DC: I can attest to this.

[0:26:31] PM: Yes, workflow is my life. Well, inkjet is my life, finishing is – everything's my life. It's print. But for workflow, we know Müller Martini Connex. And we've known that as a really robust solution. Now, that Hunkeler is part of the Müller Martini family, does this now extend to the Hunkeler equipment?

[0:26:51] DE: Yes. All our equipment, it's Connex ready. If you remember back in our interview, earlier, in our interview, I mentioned the additional software resources and all that. I mean, that brings a big portion to ask us how close we are now, in a better way, can get into that part with Connex, and also others. Being Connex ready, that brings a lot to the plate, then we all know how important it is to utilize that data. I mean, we don't want to create data and don't use them. With that, now being capable to connect to Connex, read the data of Connex, free the data back to Connex. It's just an outstanding thing.

[0:27:35] PM: Which makes it easier to handshake into dashboards from other vendors and handle the OEE metrics.

[0:27:40] DE: Absolutely. You mentioned that quite right. It is an open system. You're right. And it's easy for us to connect to others.

[0:27:47] PM: See, I knew there was a workflow story here.

[0:27:50] DC: You can always find one. Daniel, we want to be mindful of your time. I will put links to everything you need, especially for Hunkeler Innovationdays, which is going to take place, February 24th to 27th, 2025, in what I can only say is a breathtaking Lucerne, Switzerland. I try to describe it to people and I say imagine walking in a winter wonderland postcard, as if someone had imagined it and you're standing there in the middle of it. You turn around and you see the Alps for the first time. I'm like, it is breathtaking to be there.

Now, with the expanded hall, which is great to get the scoop on that. Please make your plans to see if you can attend that. You can certainly connect with anybody on planet Earth and find a piece of Hunkeler equipment. Something's telling me.

[0:28:48] PM: Oh, yes.

[0:28:48] DC: So, just thank you so much for your time. Any final words from drupa?

[0:28:54] DE: Thank you very much to both of you. I mean, it's always great to talk with you and it's so easy going with you guys. Yes, let's enjoy the last couple days off drupa. It's a great show. I mean, we enjoy to be with our customer and partner here. So, let's have fun for the rest of the time.

[0:29:12] DC: Excellent. I just want to show you, I'm wearing a Hunkeler Innovationdays tattoo on my arm. I think Pat has one too.

[0:29:17] DE: Oh, both of them.

[0:29:18] PM: Both of us.

[0:29:18] DC: Mathias got us yesterday.

[0:29:20] PM: Yes, he did.

[0:29:21] DC: Okay, everybody. Until next time, Hunkeler long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:29:27] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars, and leave us a review. Connect with us through [printmediacentr.com](https://www.printmediacentr.com). We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

drupa: <https://www.drupa.com/>

drupa Next Age (drupa DNA): https://www.drupa.com/en/Program/Forums/drupa_next_age

Hunkeler AG: <https://www.hunkeler.ch/en/>

Hunkeler Innovationdays 2025: <https://www.innovationdays.com/en/>

Daniel Erni: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/daniel-erni/>

Müller Martini: <https://mullermartini.com/de/startseite/>

Pat McGrew: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/patmcgrew/>

McGrewGroup: <https://www.mcgrewgroup.com>

Deborah Corn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahcorn/>

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