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# Here to Stay and Grow!

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**The Cristini group is investing in North America where their competitors are "rationalising their operations". Paper Advance visited the plant of this family owned company in Lachute, Qc where Cristini just recently invested over 3 million dollars.**

Vittorio Montiglio was in Canada last week. Mr. Montiglio is the president of Cristini North America but works out of the head offices in Italy. During our meeting, we were joined by John Feola, general manager of Cristini on this side of the Atlantic. Our timing was ideal to discuss the wave of recent investments made by the company, the future of paper machine clothing, the current state of the industry, the evolution of technology, and of course the differences between the an Italian coffee and the Tim Horton's at the corner of Cristini Boulevard!



Vittorio Montiglio, President, Cristini North America

The Cristini Group built their plant in Lachute in 1997. This site produces carrier rope and rope threading systems. It is also at this site that Cristini produces spiral dryer fabrics for the dryer section of paper machines and for filtration applications. "1997, that's almost 20 years, but we have been coming to Canada on business since the early 1980s" explains Vittorio Montiglio. The Canadian entity dates back to over 30 years

## Continued Potential in North America

John Feola brings us back on track to discuss the good news, aside from the boss' visit, the plant just installed 3 new production lines to produce spiral fabrics. This is in no way a minor investment as many competitors, huge players internationally, have decided to shut down their operations in North America to produce in lower cost countries. Going against the grain, Cristini seems to be here to stay. "Given that our owners are Italian, many have asked me if we were thinking of pulling out of North America and I continuously tell them that we are here to stay and to grow" explains John Feola. Vittorio Montiglio adds by saying "We believe in the potential for growth in North America as it is well aligned with our business plan", he underlines that he understand why his competitors are tempted by Asia. "The machines in North America are more modern and perform better which suits the products that we have perfectly".

## The Cristini Advantage

In the not so distant past, few companies used recycled fibre in their products remembers Mr. Montiglio, "In Europe, we have been using recycled fibre for quite a while, it was a strategic advantage for us when we started coming to Canada 30 years ago and it still is today". Cristini products have continuously evolved in this market segment and today's products are ideal for recycled grades. "This explains our continued growth on world class machines making recycled grades". John Feola explains that their emphasis is on the Western Europe and North American corridors". We don't have the size of our competitors, so we have decided to channel our activities in markets where the machine's requirements are aligned with our advanced technology". Reducing their offer to this market allows Cristini to offer excellent technical service.



John Feola, General Manager, Cristini North America

The Lachute plant manufactures all the spiral fabrics for the Cristini Group. Each site within the Cristini Group specializes in a different product. "This allows us to be more efficient, and increase our performance and quality. In the end, it is much more profitable this way even with the transport costs" explains John Feola. Cristini exports in over 50 countries worldwide. The fabric in production during our visit was destined for a paper mill in Russia that day. Considering the international integration of the company's activities we understand that similar investments were made in Cristini' production sites over the last few years.

## Investment and historical continuum

« In all, it's over 3 million dollars that was invested in Lachute over the last 5 months" According to the company, around \$2.5 million was used to purchase the 2 primary pieces of machinery " The Lamborghinis !" used to produce the spiral fabrics. "In only 5 months we were able to increase our production by over 40% with the same number of employees (25)" John Feola adds that phase two of the project will begin in 2016 to further increase production efficiency and quality." In addition to the production increases we will add new equipment to our North American

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repair center for diagnostic systems". "There are 2 main angles for our current investment, one being the production increase for spiral fabrics and the other is to further boost our diagnostic systems offering in the paper industry".



### Lachute : Global Mindset in a Local setting

A huge motivating factor for Cristini's investment is the decision taken to produce flat yarn spiral fabrics. This product is highly specialized and of high quality in which Cristini would be the only producer of flat yarn spiral fabrics in North America. Flat yarn spiral fabrics are used on machines producing a variety of paper grades but often on very high speed machines. "The Southeast USA, Canada and Western Europe offer a large pool of potential customers" explains proudly John Feola. More specifically, Cristini would like to attack the lightweight packaging grade market. "There is an obvious market shift in North American where producers are moving to lighter weight liner".

Cristini feels that their experience in light weight packaging grades will be well received in North American. "The European lightweight packaging market is more advanced than it is in North American due to necessity" explains Vittorio Montiglio. "The average weight is 20% lighter in Europe than it is here in North America. When talking about lightweight grades in Europe we are talking about 70-80 g/m<sup>2</sup> whereas in North America we are talking about 100 g/m<sup>2</sup>." Cristini is now a major player on machines running lightweight packaging grades at speeds close to 1800 mpm. "We have developed a unique press felt for these high speed machines. Our incredible dewatering capacity allows papermakers to achieve high dryness levels so they don't need to slow the machines down".

Vittorio Montiglio recalls that, in the past, there were only 2 major markets for pulp and paper: Europe and North America, while Asia was only a small market. Now these three markets are relatively the same size and China is slowly surpassing the US market. This explains the phenomenon that sees Cristini's competitors moving towards the Asian market. Cristini's management feels differently. "Our business development model is to stick with the "traditional" markets and we feel that North American is where we wish to grow. "Although China has new machines, their paper quality standard are not as high as in Europe or North America and their machine efficiencies are low compared to OECD countries. Comparable machines in China run at 1200 mpm while they run at 1600-1800 in Europe.



### Personalized service

For paper producers, machine clothing is a small cost compared to those caused by unplanned shutdowns. Nowadays paper manufacturers and machine clothing suppliers have less and less employees on hand available for machine clothing monitoring. Cristini's on line diagnostic systems fills this void by offering real-time results to papermakers." Real-time data allows the papermaker to make immediate decisions which helps them increase energy efficiency and product quality" outlines John Feola. "On Machine measurements by technicians pose a safety concern and this practice will soon be forbidden by paper producers for this reason, our on-line instrumentation will be the norm" according to Vittorio Montiglio.

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**Recommended reading:**

"PAPER MACHINE CLOTHING: 100 years at 360 KM/h for Cristini" ([Paper Advance, October 2014](#))

For more information: [www.cristini.com](http://www.cristini.com)

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