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WEDNESDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2014 00:00 | MATHIEU RÉGNIER, PAPER ADVANCE
(ORIGINAL TEXT IN FRENCH) [INDUSTRY PEOPLE - INTERVIEWS](#)

The Cristini group celebrates its 100th anniversary. For this occasion, Paper Advance met with Vittorio Montiglio and John Feola, President and General Manager of Cristini North America. Far from the alpine valley of al Serio where this company first saw the light of day in the 18th century, it is in Lachute, Qc that this small but dynamic paper machine clothing has evolved in to a market leader.



John Feola, General Manager, and Vittorio Montiglio, President of Cristini North America

Paper Advance (PA): What's hiding behind the walls of your Canadian plant? Please describe Cristini's activities.

Vittorio Montiglio (VM): It was in 1997 that we decided to build the plant in Canada. 5110m2 dedicated to the North American market. Behind our plant walls, you'll find much more than paper machine clothing production. We offer our customers a plethora of products and services associated with PMC and our Diagnostic Instrumentation repair center is also located in Canada. Press felts continue to be our core product worldwide but we offer products such as carrier rope, including rope threading systems, pulleys etc from our Lachute plant. Spiral Fabrics for the filtration and Paper machine dryer sections is our major product being manufactured in Lachute.

PA: PMC seems to be what Cristini is known for, can you elaborate more on this?

VM: You would be mistaken in thinking that we are only known for our PMC. Times have changed and we have adapted to the changing demands of our customers. We have become the world leader in diagnostic systems. At Cristini, we talk about Innovative Papermaking. This is our mission statement and our cultural identity. This led us to launch a new division of diagnostic systems and a new series of innovative PMC products. The days of wool fabrics are well behind us, even though these were used well into the 1960s. After the war, technology quickly evolved and now only synthetic fibers are used to produce our products. We made the strategic decision to customize our products for each customer as no two paper machines are the same.



Vittorio Montiglio, President, Cristini North America

John Feola (JF): In the year 2000, we formed our Diagnostic Systems division. Today we are the market leader in portable and online equipment for the paper machine. Our equipment monitors PMC performance in real time, or when required, using portable gauges. Our latest product is the PermflowDuo which is quite remarkable as it measures both moisture and permeability simultaneously while also measuring felt surface temperature. This product is available in the portable format or the online version allows you to take measurements in areas that are unsafe on the paper machine.

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Base Fabric for a Press Fabric

PA: Speaking of wool blankets brings us to another era. Can you talk to us about the history of Cristini. How do you stay competitive 100 years after your creation?

VM: The Cristini Group wasn't born yesterday! We come from a long tradition of manufacturers located in the northern valley of Italy known for its expertise in textiles. It's in this region that Cristini was born in the 18th century. Founded by Giuseppe Cristini in 1914, our family took over an existing plant that was already making products for the paper industry just as the First World War began.

Our products are made at the highest quality standards. This helped us gain the trust of numerous customers in over 150 countries. Our products are manufactured in Europe and North America for Pulp and Paper, Nonwovens and the filtration industry.

In the 1980's, the group went through an important series of investments. The consolidations by our customers lead to consolidations with suppliers such as us as there were too many suppliers at that time. In Europe alone there were hundreds of small PMC manufacturers. Today we are less than ten! We grew through acquisition in Austria, Spain and Italy. We then decided to establish ourselves in Canada, first with a small local producing carrier rope and later in 1997 we built our offices and manufacturing plant. We came to North American as it was the largest market for pulp and paper and we wanted to be closer to our customers. We are still a "small" supplier as we have only about 5%marketshare, but we like to think of it more as 95% market share left to conquer! (Laughs)



Press Felt CMD Yarns.



Pre-needed batt.



Seam for Press Fabric.

PA: What are your strengths?

VM: One of our strengths may be the fact that our small size makes us more flexible than our larger competitors. We have a very flat hierarchy so our response time is quick and applicationdecisions canbe made on the spot. We are committed to making customized products for our customers. The industry trend is to go with less product availability and to use technologies that will help reduce manufacturing costs for the PMC supplier. We don't believe that this is the best decision for our customers. We believe that we can help our customers save much more money through production increases and energy conservation than by saving a few dollars on a piece on machine clothing.

PA: What have been the most notable advances you have made with regards to research and development?

VM: We hold patents for numerous products ranging from Diagnostic systems to forming fabrics and press felts. Cristini holds the first patent for pin seamed press felts granted back in the 1950s! Today this type of press felt is the standard in our industry. We are constantly developing new products at the request of our customers andthe needs of the industry.

In packaging grades for example, all our competitors have gone with heavier and thicker felts to be able to increase void volume and dewatering. We went in a completely different direction based on the research of our designers. We are proud to say that we are supplying the world's fastest and most efficient packaging grade machines. We are supplying thin felts that have exceptional water removal capabilities that clearly outperform the thicker felts on the market by allowing to reach increased speeds and record dryness levels.

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PA: Wouldn't you consider your new Diagnostic systems division to be a concrete example of a successful research and development project?

JF: We are the industry leader for diagnostic equipment whether it be portable or fixed versions. Our fixed units have brought a new dynamic to the paper industry by allowing the papermaker to get real time data. This gives the decision makers access to information that was not available in the past, allowing them to make real time decisions. There is also a safety aspect as having a fixed (or traversing) unit removes the need for technicians to break the plane of the machine.

Cristini has officially entered the era of big data!

PA: What is Cristini's vision?

VM: Cristini is celebrating its centennial by solidifying our commitment to innovation. It's with this commitment in mind that we have launched a series of technologies never before seen in the paper industry. In this context, it's with great pleasure that I sit on Cristini's board of directors with highly competent colleague who are truly visionaries, some are even my cousins! (Laughs)

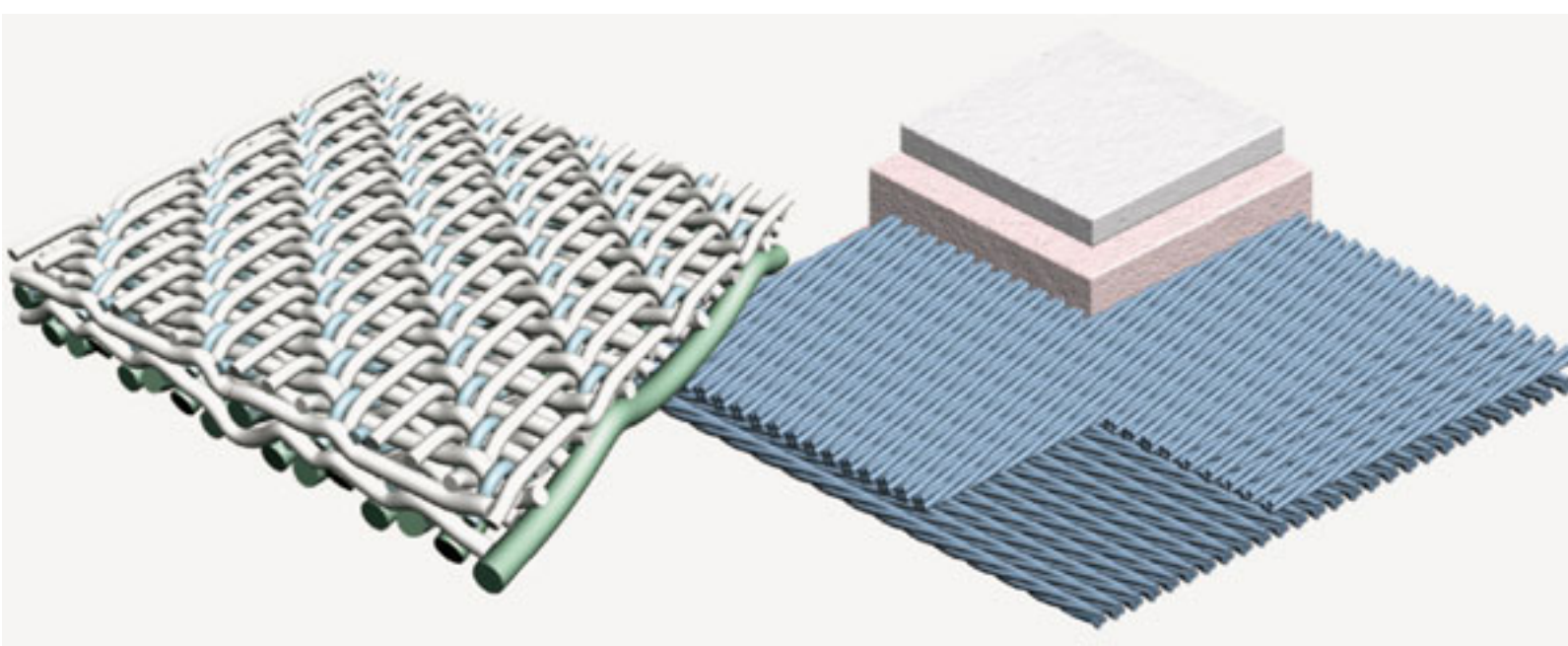
JF: The recent economic downturn has led papermakers to rethink the status quo and search for new, innovative ways to increase efficiency. Cristini's management group understood this and invested in human capital as well as in research and development to align our product line to the needs of the market. Our strategy is clear, we will continue to align our products towards energy conservation through our paper machine clothing and our diagnostic systems division.

VM: We may be considered a small Italian company but we are very dynamic and competitive fabric but we want to remain a high end supplier – the Ferrari of PMC! Ferrari and Cristini are both in northern Italy and we both offer high end products based on high performance and high speed but mainly its our passion and commitment to excellence that is comparable.

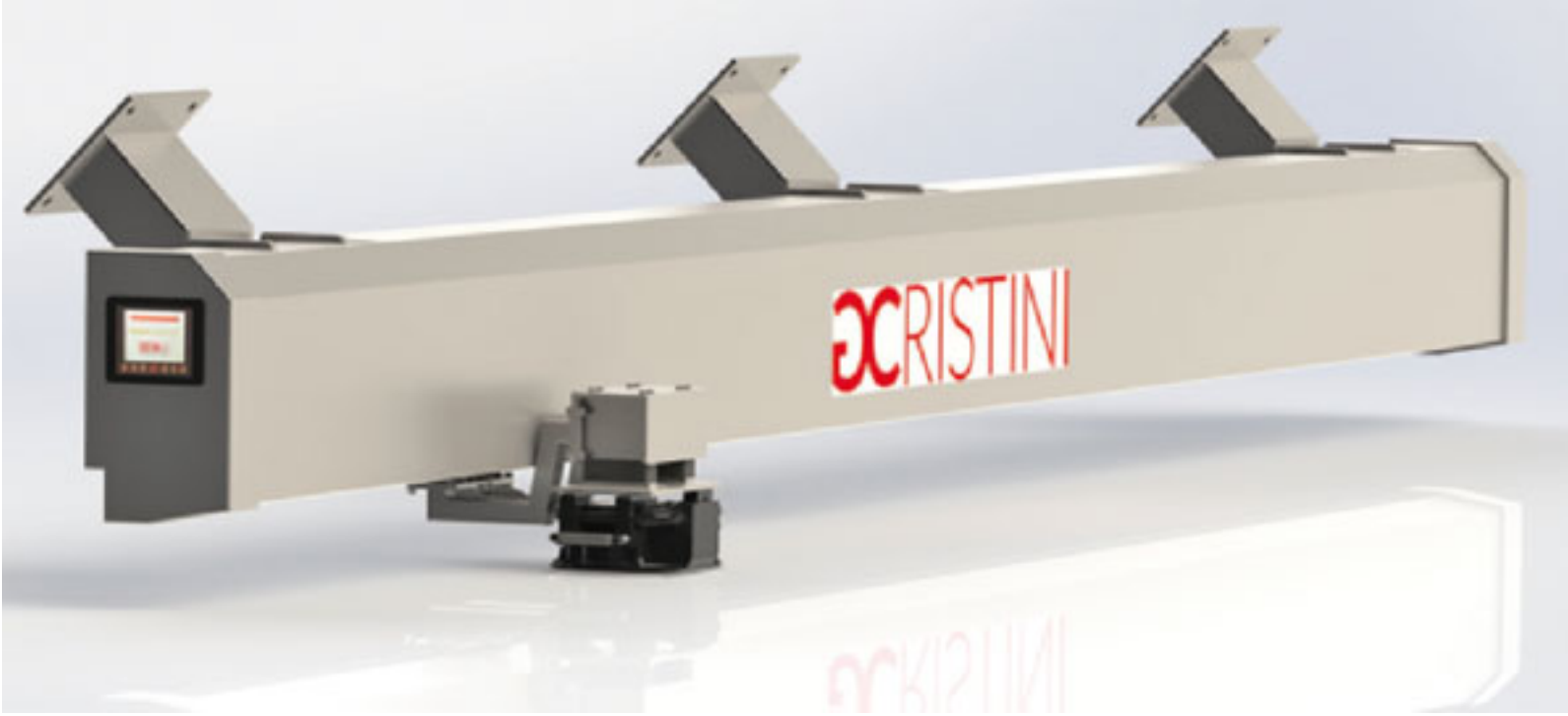


Left: PermFlowDUO, portable press felt moisture and permeability measurements

Right: FiberScanONE, forming section consistency and drainage meter



Essential, ESB (Energy saving Binding) Forming Fabric / Crossless Base Press Felts



EasyScan, Safely measure Online Press Felt Moisture and Permeability



Cristini S.p.A. supplied the Pulp & Paper Industry for 100 years, since 5 generations.

100% family owned, the Company distributes the product lines to more than 1000 customers, in 50 Countries worldwide.

Our Research & Development has engineered innovative products, which have become important in the evolution of the Pulp & Paper Industry.

Some of the technologies widely used nowadays, like the first seamed press fabric (US Pat no.569040, 1956), the first microwave consistency meter (2005), or the first spiral link fabric in corrugator belts (2004), have been introduced to the market for the first time by our Company.

The high quality standards of Cristini's products have earned the appreciation and trust of many highly competitive markets.

With production units throughout Europe and North America, the Cristini Group is a reliable partner for all Pulp & Paper Companies.



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