

TRIED & TESTED

Busch Pile Turner

After 30 years, it's still going strong, performing the same vital function, but it is capable of more than just turning paper, writes *Lisa Berwin*

SPECIFICATIONS

Max sheet size

SE/SWH 90 540x740mm
SE/SWH 125 80x1,200mm
SE/SWH 155 1,020x1,420mm
SE/SWH 180 1,220x1,620mm

Price

Used 1990 SW £4,000
Used 1999 SWH 125 £7,000-£14,000 dependent on extras and refurbishment
New SWH 125 with airing and jogging £26,800

What to look for

- Hydraulics
- Check all functions

Not many machines can last three decades and still be used with upgraded presses, changing markets and demanding output levels. The Busch Pile Turner has achieved this however, and even its earlier versions can still be found in use as a reliable part of the pressroom.

"As long as the machines are kept clean and lubricated we have found that our customers need little else to keep them in good working order," says Ian Jones, managing director of Busch Graphic Machinery in the UK. "Customers have been able to update their presses time and time again without having to change the pile turner. They are extremely robust so they have very much stood the test of time."

The service call outs for this machine have been so rare that when Busch set up its sales arm in the UK in 1999 employing full-time engineers seemed surplus to requirements. "This is not to say that we are not totally committed to service. We have trained 12 self-employed engineers nationwide who can respond to any problem, and they also install new or used machines for us," Jones explains. "If they were here full-time there simply would not be enough call outs for them to respond to."

Slow starter

The pile turner itself was launched in 1976 by German manufacturer Busch Graphische Machinery. It was initially quite a large machine with the turning device run by gears. They were sold globally by Heidelberg, but in the UK they were handled by a separate agent. Until 1999 there were only 15 Busch Pile Turner installations in the UK, but since the manufacturer set up a base in Oxfordshire to sell them itself more than 110 have been snapped up. Worldwide Busch are the largest manufacturers of pile turners and make about 120 each year. To date approximately 1,500 have been installed worldwide.

At Ipex 1993, the first major advance for the Busch Pile Turner occurred. Now powered by hydraulics and not gears, the machine took up less than a third of the space of its predecessor. There were two versions, the SE and SWH, which came in four sizes – B1, B2 and sizes 6 and 7 for larger formats and packaging manufacturers.

The options in the SWH series were L, which included turning and airing, LA that added an alignment feature and RLA that added jogging. The SE was the basic version, which was more economical and could have jogging or airing options but on its own only turned.

Steady demand

The older generation of the machine was phased out in the UK but there are about 10 still working around the country. Last year one such machine changed hands for around £4,000. There is a steady demand for these machines on the secondhand market, although they are fairly rare, they have proved a vital addition to many printers who had previously not owned a pile turner.



SWH 125 RLA: comes in four sizes, with a jogging option

Jon Whitehead, operations director of Halston Printers, a music and commercial printer based in Amersham, had never used one in his pressroom before acquiring another B1 commercial firm. "When we took over we saw just how much time was taken lifting and turning the paper," he says. "We also became aware of how much time people were off work with bad backs and knew this had to change. Our company had been going 86 years without a turner so I decided to buy secondhand just to test it out. Now, without the machine it would be like losing a limb."

Multiple uses

Pile turners are important for their main turning function as it means less heavy, potentially dangerous work for operators. However, they are capable of much more than just turning paper. They can air paper, blowing off dust and fibres that can enter the press leaving marks on the paper. This is especially true with cartons and board where lots of debris can build up. The debris can lead to extra cleaning time for an operator on the blankets. Also, when spray powder is used on one side of the paper to dry it for printing on the reverse side, excess powder can cause similar problems. The airing function will eliminate this before it is turned and sent through the press.

Pile turners do not only turn paper, they can turn many different substrates, including board, cartons and plastics. The height of a turned stack is not important and the weight lifted can be up to a tonne on the B1 models.

Busch will buy back machines if it can and refurbish them before re-selling with a 12 month warranty. Secondhand dealers sometimes have them available if, for example, a factory has gone into liquidation. Busch will always offer a full service and spare parts to customers who have bought from other dealers. ■