*En*trepreneurs Sourcing E*x*pert

Home	Contact Us	Feature Articles	Business Profile	Company on the Move	Free Subscription	Calendar of Events	Free Tech Help	Ad Rates & Demographics
Press Releases	Manufacturers List	Industry Associations	Advertiser Contacts	Industry Salary Surveys	Contributing Writers	Classifieds	ENX Archive	Hot Links

Renaissance for the man who pioneered laser printers

By Jamie

Hamilton

Get your color toner from the man who created the first laser printer!

That's right—before HP, there was Stramondo. Anthony "Tony" Stramondo, a physicist with degrees from MIT and the University of California, helped invent the first laser printer in 1978.   HP consequently came out with its first model in 1982.

"Ours printed three times faster than HP's," Stramondo adds.

After the first black laser printer came color, in 1986. Stramondo's company would make a color toner to fit black laser printers, printing in a specific color like red, green, blue, brown, and others instead of black.

While some of his licenses are still used by some office equipment manufacturers, Stramondo came out of retirement to enter the remanufacturing business after several companies called him for consulting. "I just can't seem to retire," he says.

KLE is his current project. It deals in color "because that's where the market is going," he says; the only black toners offered now are blacks that correspond to magenta, yellow and cyan toners for various printers.

With 1000 SKUs, KLM can get "any color toner that you are looking for." The printer models that correspond to the cartridges he produces are so many that it takes four double-column pages of single-spaced, 8-point type to list them all.

KLE also specializes in color toner, sublimation toner, cleaners, coatings and security toner for government applications.

Sublimation Toner Changes Everything

Sublimation toner may change the way companies advertise on buildings, the way a family designs their bathroom, or the trophy that a bowling league will win after taking the championship. In

short, it could be a very lucrative industry for the print world as well as remanufacturers.

In short, sublimation is the process of taking a solid to a gas and back to a solid again; there is no intermediate liquid state. For instance, users can print an image directly onto a ceramic tile using toner by printing on a plain piece of paper, and then setting it with a heat press at 300 degrees. The heat press takes it to a gas and the gas is then pressed into the tile, sending it back to a solid as it cools.

"Instead of engraving trophies, they are all printed now. You can do 60 plaques at one time, it takes you 30 seconds to do 60 instead of engraving them at 5-10 min a piece—a whole days work done in a few minutes. Now it doesn't take an artist, it takes a technician."

Besides trophies, companies that currently use sublimation create awards, T-shirts and printings on metals and custom tiles. But soon, with the increase of home laser printers, end-users may get interested in the technology themselves.

"Where is the one place you can't hang a picture?" Stramondo asks. "The bathroom. It would get all wet. With this technology you could put a picture of a rain forest in your bathroom made out of tile, or a backsplash of a family portrait in your kitchen."

The image is impregnated into the tile in about 30 seconds. Since the ink is actually inside the tile, you cannot detect any roughness or texture change when running a finger across the image versus a blank section of tile.

Needless to say, sublimation toner is becoming a hot commodity at KLE.

"At the show (Recharger World Expo), we had a lot of interest because of buildings," Stramondo goes on. "High-end buildings can be customized with murals by placing tiles on the wall with whatever pictures they want."

A remanufactured sublimation toner can be made from any regular toner. So, a company or end-user would not have to change their laser printer to create a sublimation print—just the toner. The price from manufacturer to dealer would be about $2 per tile, Stramondo says.

KLE is ready for bulk orders

KLE is set up to deal with large distributors. With 50 % of its business going to Asia and Europe, shipping a large bulk order to distributors fits in well with its typical business operations.   Even though 99% of its business is done on a wholesale basis, there is *no* minimum order requirement at KLE (online at **http://www.colortoner.com/kle**).

Located in Jupiter, Fla., KLE is in prime position to ship to Central/South American, Europe, Africa, and within the United States. It offers drop shipping and a reliable 100% satisfaction guarantee.

KLE is home to HP, QMS/Konica Minolta, Textronix, Xerox, Lexmark, IBM, Samsung, Panasonic and Canon, including MICR laser toner cartridges. It also supplies remanufacturers with toner, fusers, OPC belts, fuser oils and a coating for OPC drums that makes them as hard as diamonds.

"We call the coating Osmium, after a chemical discovered by the Laurence Berkley Laboratory," Stramondo says. "It makes the drums harder than diamonds, so they stand up better during remanufacturing."

Creating the First Laser Printer

With prices for color laser printers declining, end-users and small businesses may now find the cost effectiveness of lasers compelling. Remanufacturers will feel this shift, says Stramondo. And what he says is worth its weight in gold. After all, Tony Stramondo has seen the business change from the beginning and now perhaps come full circle to the laser printer he invented.

"In the early '70s, I went to work for Itek Corporation and designed a laser printer that would print spy satellite data," Stramondo says, recalling the story of his pioneering device. "The idea of using laser printers derived from the fact that they were using high-definition film then, and to print that material using a dot-matrix printer would require an entire room just to print a single photo.   We saw that the laser would let them print a one-micron-dot-size image, and so we designed it."

In 1978 he designed the first desktop, plain-paper laser printer. It was about the size of an office copier, measuring approximately 24"X 18" X 15" tall. "We were able to do this in part because we used laser diodes, even though the Japanese manufactures told us we couldn't do it," he notes.

Stramondo joined General Optronics in 1980, where he created a desktop, plain-paper laser printer that could print 34 pages per minute. This put him ahead of HP, who came out with its 8 ppm version in '83.   Stramondo also consulted with QMS on how to get into the laser business.

In '83 he began selling the printers retail himself. He started Office Automation Systems (OASYS), a company that competed with the OEMs in selling laser printers under the name OASYS Technology. He also sold his technology under established names: Kyocera, Minolta, Memorex, NEC and Troy.

After retiring, he came back into the industry through the remanufacturing market. He started a supplies company and started recycling in 1986; the company name was Lasers Edge. In 1990, it developed the dianippon drum for the OPC drum, built on Stramondo's specifications.

From Today's Laser to Tomorrow's Toner: Color

Then came KLE, his current project—a toner remanufacturing facility.

Founded in 1989, KLE has 12 employees, mainly technicians. It's small and manageable, and that's just how Stramondo wants to keep it.

"At OASYS, I had over 200 employees," he says. "At Laser's Edge, we had 75. I learned a long time ago that the result was that we worked hard but made less money. Even though you sell less, you make more because you don't have the layers of middle management to contend with."

So, what does KLE see in its future? "Color, color and more color," says Stramondo—and once again the industry is headed in the direction of this pioneer in the industry.

To contact KLE:

1-800-TONER99 (866-3799)

Fax: 561-745-2415

E-mail: sales@colortoner.com

Online: www.colortoner.com

by Jamie Hamilton— in addition to writing business profiles in ENX, Jamie writes and designs ads, brochures, catalogs, newsletters, and technical manuals for companies in the imaging industry. She can be contacted at: Tel/ Fax 502-896-1051 or e-mail her at: jamiewriter@hotmail.com.

Now Shipping Over 40,000 Copies Nationwide!

www.enxmag.com   www.enxmagazine.com

enx magazine   2029 Verdugo Boulevard, PMB 159, Montrose, California 91020, U.S.A.   **1.800.850.4949**