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This kind of philosophy and commitment characterizes Loewe's creative spirit. Although his involvement with International Business Forms Industries Inc. (IBFI), Arlington, Virginia, spans two decades, it reaches an apex this year as he takes on the role of 1992 IBFI chairman.

"Our firm joined IBFI in the early 1970s, and I have attended almost every major conference and technical symposia in the ensuing years," said Loewe. "IBFI has had a big influence on my company's policies and in our international strategic planning, which has helped us expand our sales and marketing over borders throughout Europe."

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Loewe sees his new role as IBFI chairman as an opportunity, in part, to make member companies aware of the extensive changes taking place in the forms environment.

"Business forms manufacturing is evolving beyond just putting ink on paper," said Loewe. "Today profits come from developing systems solutions that resolve end-users' business communications problems. IBFI has explored those changes during the past decade, and we can reiterate the importance of our new role through our meetings and technical conferences, research studies and other products."

EARLY INVOLVEMENT. Incorporating cutting-edge forms equipment and software technologies into the manufacture of high value-added customized products, Loewe has established his company as one of the pre-eminent forms producers in Europe. The firm employs 400 people and enjoys an annual sales volume of more than U.S.\$50 million (DM 80 million).

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Change with Creative Spirit: Peter C. Loewe

By JOHN S. ROSENBERG

IBFI 1992 Chairman Peter C. Loewe (right) accepts the gavel of office from IBFI 1991 Chairman Marion E. Sanchez



Vienna, Austria, and educated at private schools in Germany and Switzerland, Loewe mastered English, French and German. He pursued studies after secondary school as a printing compositor. Following that three-year training course and an additional year's work as an assistant to managers in several forms companies, Loewe joined his father's firm in 1966 as an operator of a continuous press and collator.

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"My father ordered our first continuous press, assigned me to run it and expected me to fulfill other responsibilities in estimating and order-entry departments, as well," Loewe recalled. "I began to sell continuous forms and developed the sales and marketing approaches for the company."

Interaction with American forms equipment company sales representatives, who encouraged the firm to use equipment incorporating new technologies being used in the United States, enhanced his early days in the industry. As the company's product base expanded, Loewe took on additional duties as manager of

production. About 15 years ago, he took charge of all sales and marketing functions and assumed his current role in 1981.

DIVERSITY. In the early 1980s, Loewe made a strategic decision to expand the company's product mix beyond traditional continuous and snap-out forms. This diversification began with a search for unique equipment and products that could be turned over with a relatively high margin.

"The forms market was large and greatly competitive, and we determined that our opportunity to grow and develop was through specialization," said Loewe. "Printing remained the core part of our business, but it became only one part. We added specialized applications in bar coding, direct mail, forms warehousing and added value to the product in both printing and finishing."

Loewe's willingness to bring on new staff with expertise in a variety of areas distinguishes his firm from others. "Changing to a focus on systems solutions and value-added means an investment in buildings and equipment, but it also means an investment in human resources," he said. "You

need employees with diverse technical, engineering, marketing and computer systems analysis expertise."

RAILWAY FREIGHT INNOVATION. Loewe excels in developing specialized production configurations to meet marketplace needs; his manufacture of a freight document for the German railway system represents a highly profitable example.

"We began as one of 50 firms competing for production of a simple 1-color form, which was used to identify freight shipped on the German railway," said Loewe. "To distinguish ourselves from competitors, we introduced a 2-of-5 interleaved bar code and several colors to be imprinted on the freight document and used in combination with an optical character recognition (OCR) numeric system. We invested nearly \$4 million and two years' time in developing specialized technology to make sure the OCR combinations match the bar codes exactly, and that the six parts of the form are finished in-line to one complete set."

The result is that the German railway system now is able to use bar code readers to

scan incoming freight and compare it to the bar coded master list of inventory with a guarantee that everything on the requisition order matches the items in the freight shipment.

Loewe's creative marketing and production skills also are evident in his relationship with 3M Co., Minneapolis, in the sales administration and production of Post-it™ pads.

"3M approached us before they introduced the product on the European market to determine if it would be accepted in Germany," said Loewe. "They gave us the opportunity to add some value to the product, so we began adding up to four colors. We have enjoyed great success selling these value-added Post-it™ pads. In fact, we have moved the entire 3M operation out of our main plant and built a new production facility just for these products. We now are adding up to six colors on the Post-it™ pads in response to marketplace demand."

INTERNAL EFFICIENCY. The company uses different marketing approaches to serve its five primary business areas, which are profit centers--each having different customers and different competitors. These enterprises include business forms, which are sold by a catalog with more than 1,000 items, for the German railway, postal office and customs administration; traditional continuous and snap-out forms and ticket systems, primarily for the German railway. Professional printing for direct mail and advertising is covered by a European joint venture with Venturini & C SpA, Italy, established in Loewe & Venturini GmbH.

Loewe is able to manage the diverse and complex product mix because of a fully automated print material warehouse. The firm stores and retrieves, on average, 500 pallets per day using only one operator.

"We invested in an electronically controlled software-driven system, and it took about 1 1/2 years just to get the software to manage the internal life of this warehouse," said Loewe. "We determined that the forms producer who wants to survive in the 1990s has to have the capability to get orders to its customers in a just-in-time mode. In effect, we are changing from a printing company to a service company. We handle orders that we never received before because now we have the people, the production facilities and the warehouse infrastructure to process these orders quickly."

CATALYSTS OF CHANGE. Loewe is aware that increasing competition, more demanding

end-users and erosion of traditional product bases are affecting IBFI members in every corner of the world. The change is especially poignant in Europe with the opening of economic opportunities in Eastern Europe and the emergence of the One Market.

"The development of the One Market, the re-unification of the two Germanies and the emergence of Eastern European countries into the free market sector means IBFI can serve as an increasingly important strategic link for forms producers across Europe," said Loewe. "These changes provide us with an opportunity to attract new members by encouraging forms companies, forms equipment companies and paper companies to become part of an organization that transcends European national boundaries."

IBFI OBJECTIVES. IBFI can break down the national barriers in Europe, according to Loewe, because it provides a forum for sharing ideas and exchanging technical, marketing and product information.

Loewe feels that the establishment of the free market system throughout all of Germany could offer IBFI an opportunity to facilitate Eastern Bloc form producers' development of new production and management techniques.

"In Eastern Europe, IBFI already has a strong member constituency in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary," said Loewe. "We can capitalize on the opening of these markets by opening doors for Eastern Europeans. We can give them the chance to attend programs and conferences. We can help by giving them information to make the right managerial decisions, to train their employees and to incorporate the production technologies they need to meet the demands of the marketplace."

Loewe's involvement and concern for IBFI extends beyond Europe, however, to include IBFI members worldwide.

"At its core, IBFI is an international group bound together by common concerns, interests and opportunities; and it is my role to work with the IBFI membership around the globe to continue to develop our programming, our technical information and our meetings throughout Europe, North and South America and the Pacific Basin," Loewe said. "The forms industry is changing around the world. Together we can anticipate changes, plan accordingly and adapt successfully." ■

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