



Jim Niemiec: Product innovation and the industry's value proposition

Editor's Note: This month, we continue our series of columns profiling the background and expertise of TJ's editorial board members. These volunteer members spend long hours overseeing the peer review process and contributing to TJ. TAPPI would like to express its gratitude to the editorial board members for their hard work and willingness to share their expertise with the forest products community.

– Monica Shaw, Editorial Director

TAPPI and the *TAPPI Journal* (TJ) editorial staff would like to welcome one of the newest members of the TJ editorial board, Jim Niemiec, product innovation manager at Verso Corporation's Technical Center in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. There, Jim is responsible for new product and business development of coated laser and inkjet grades for commercial, publication, and specialty markets, as well as technical relationships with digital printing manufacturers and customers. He also serves as intellectual property coordinator. Jim has been a TAPPI member since 1981 and remains heavily involved with the Coating and Graphic Arts Division.

After graduating from Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, NY, with a B.S. in Printing Technology, Jim's career began as printing ink chemist at Inmont Corporation, followed by a career in the paper industry where he has held R&D, product development and business development roles at Abitibi-Price, Fraser Papers, Consolidated Papers, Stora Enso, NewPage, and now Verso Corporation. Jim also received a business degree from York University (Toronto, ON) and an MBA from Lakeland College (Sheboygan, WI), as well as certificates in Product Management and Marketing from the University of Wisconsin. He holds several patents involving conventional and digital printing technology.



Coating and printing expert Jim Niemiec joins the TJ Editorial Board.

At Verso, Jim leads the company's production inkjet initiative. He led the development and launch of the trademarked TrueJet digital coated papers product line, which received a Printing Industries of America (PIA) InterTech Award in 2011 for its contribution to printing industry advancement. He and his team also developed several coated paper grade lines for the production color laser market.

In 2012, Jim was elected to the Gravure Association of the Americas' (GAA's) Gravure Cylinder Society, which "recognizes individuals who have rendered outstanding or extraordinary contributions to the gravure industry" and the association.

He has been a contributing author to *Gravure Magazine* and a contributor to the book *Gravure Process and Technology*, published by GAA.

TAPPI involvement

With the encouragement of his manager, Jim became a TAPPI member in 1981 after joining the paper industry.

"I migrated from the printing and ink industry and needed to learn coated papermaking," Niemiec described. "TAPPI had the best resources for training, professional development, and networking on a global scale. I was encouraged and supported by my manager, Ted Vanya, at Abitibi-Price Central Research."

Since joining TAPPI, Jim has organized numerous technical panels and short courses on laser and inkjet

printing, conventional printing technologies, and the future of print technology. He is also a regular presenter at the National Association of Printing Ink Manufacturers' (NAPIM's) annual Summer Printing Ink Course, California Polytechnic's International Print Week, and various other conferences and events related to this technology.

Jim was the PaperCon 2016 Steering Committee Chair and past Chair of the Coating and Graphic Arts Division, Technical Program, and Printing and Converting Committees. He received the TAPPI Coating and Graphic Arts Division's Leadership and Service Award and the DuPont Soy Polymers Prize in 2015. His TAPPI journey, he says, has been well worth the time and effort.

"TAPPI has provided technical training, practical education, a sense of identity, and networking with experts that have helped me grow a professional body of knowledge and see the bigger picture," Jim explained.

As for his new role as *TJ* editorial board member, Jim says he looks forward to "maintaining our high standards and finding ways to encourage conference papers for publication in *TJ*."

"The biggest opportunity is to grow and maintain public and supply chain awareness of paper and board as a sustainable and valuable option in communication, packaging, and other related areas."

Technical and industry perspectives

In the course of his career, Jim views automation and digital technology as the most influential technical developments.

"Substantial improvements have been made in process automation and productivity, with bigger and faster production lines designed to produce a narrower range of products," he said. "And, the digital revolution and convergence with big data has enabled color digital printing to provide higher value products and applications. Hard copy print was once a given, and is now an option among marketers and end users."



Jim, a member of the Porsche Club of America, with his 911 Carrera sporting a personalized binary "J" license plate.

Going forward, Jim thinks the biggest industry roadblocks and opportunities relate to the industry's value proposition.

"The biggest challenge for research is continued development of raw materials and processes to enable new and novel product development that preserves and enhances the value of paper and paperboard," described Jim. "The biggest opportunity is to grow and maintain public and supply chain awareness of paper and board as a sustainable and valuable option in communication, packaging, and other related areas."

On a personal note

A native of the city of Chicago, Jim has resided in Wisconsin for the past 25 years. Early in life, he "actually made money" as a blues and jazz drummer, but his primary hobby these days is as part of the Porsche Club of America, Fox Valley region. Jim's personalized license plate with "01010" is his first initial "J" in binary code. **TJ**