

Soft Feel Tips

Soft Feel/Touch has become an extremely exciting and popular option for many printers. Both the AQ and UV versions are being looked at in more applications than ever before.

What makes it different?

NOT recommended for printing on plastics, films, foils or metallic inks because it needs to penetrate into substrate to dry.

The final dried AQ soft feel film will be relatively soft and as a result will have less rub resistance relative to conventional AQ coatings.

Since penetration takes longer to happen, they tend to have a “post cure period” where the final cured film will toughen up over time after the sheet is coated.

The desire to print AQ Soft Feel on both sides of the sheet comes with its own set of challenges. Due to the very “grippy” nature of the dried soft feel, when one sheet comes in contact with another soft feel coated sheet and is put under pressure, there is a “Velcro effect” that can occur. Some will mistake this for blocking. This “Velcro Effect” typically occurs when the print job goes to the bindery for cutting. The sheets can be separated with no adverse effect on the look of the sheets but they are capable of interlocking again and again. Blocking can occur if the sheets are put under too much pressure. This should be avoided.

AQ Soft Feel Coatings

Many are unaware that AQ soft feel products are NOT the same as normal AQ coatings that run everyday. In order to make soft feel application a success, we recommend the following:

- 1) Apply using 12 – 14 BCM anilox coater on paper and slightly higher for paper board
 - a. A smaller celled anilox can be used but a double bump might be necessary to achieve desired feel and lay of the soft touch.
 - b. If using a blanket coater, try using the higher viscosity version of the product. This will allow for a smoother lay.
- 2) Using a higher holdout paper will help you to achieve a better feel on the sheet.
- 3) Shorter lifts is recommended to help drying.

One side or spot application is recommended to reduce the “Velcro Effect”. If this product is to be worked and turned, extended periods of time MUST be used before putting sheets back through the press for a second pass.

Post Print Recommendations

- Wait 72 hours between printing soft touch and any post print operations. Check the color bar where coating is not applied for complete drying of the ink.
- Do not band soft touch sheets. Shrink wrapping sheets is a better way to transport. DO NOT shrink wrap until material is thoroughly dried.
- Soft touch can easily block under too much pressure. Do not exceed four inches in height when cutting or scoring sheets.
- Try to stack books vertically in the box, staggering the spines and when possible using slip sheets to help keep soft touch from sticking/velcroing to itself. Remember that any pressure on the soft feel film BEFORE it is completely dry will cause it to stick to itself.
- Soft touch is also susceptible to extreme heat. Storing soft touch sheets in an uncontrolled temperature atmosphere can cause blocking of the product.
- Soft touch can normally be spot uv coated, glued or foil stamped but MUST be checked and qualified before full production.

UV Soft Feel Coatings

All of the attributes of AQ soft feel mentioned above are also present in the UV soft feel coatings with a few additional considerations:

- 1) Apply using 8 - 12 BCM anilox coater on paper and slightly higher for paper board
- 2) There is an extended "post cure period" where the UV cured film goes from very delicate to fully cured. This period is a function of lamp dosage, stack temperature and the height of the lifts (small lifts are recommended).
 - a) It can take a few hours for the final cured film to be formed for proper handling.
- 3) The chemical nature of UV soft feel is very different from standard epoxy acrylate coatings and is NOT compatible with most epoxy acrylate based coatings. UV soft feel coatings are not generally compatible with standard UV press washes (that include IPA) to clean up epoxy acrylate coatings. NEVER blend standard UV coatings and UV soft touch coatings as they may not be compatible with each other.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE USE OF THESE MATERIALS, PLEASE CONTACT THE KUSTOM GROUP FOR ANSWERS BEFORE GOING TO PRESS. THIS WILL HELP GIVE YOU THE BEST INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO MAKE SURE YOU HAVE A SUCCESSFULLY PRINTED JOB.

Set-up and Running Instructions

Information to gather before the trial

- 1) Are they applying via roller coater or anilox? If anilox, what volume?
 - a. If anilox, when was the last time it was cleaned?
- 2) What ink and substrate will be used?
 - a. Make sure you have correct version (KS-532, KS-540, KS-540LV or KS-540HV) for the application.
- 3) What kind of pump will be used on the coating unit?
- 4) What are the diameters of the lines to and from the unit?

Set-up the day of the trial

- 1) Clean the coating unit.
 - a. Pump out as much coating from the unit as possible.
 - b. Flush the unit with UV press wash.
 - i. The press wash should be going in from one bucket and out into a different bucket.
 - c. Pump out as much UV press wash as possible.
 - d. Flush the unit with KS-718 conditioner press wash.
 - i. The KS-718 should be going in from one bucket and out into a different bucket.
 - e. Pump out as much of the KS-718 as possible.
- 2) Check the dip tube.
 - a. Make sure that there are no holes in the dip tube that are above the surface of the product in the container.
 - b. If there are holes, they should be taped closed with electrical tape.

Running the UV soft feel coating

- 1) Once you begin pumping the UV soft feel coating, you should check the following:
 - a. Check for foaming. If there is foam coming out of the return line, move the return line to a different container to make sure the original container does not accumulate foam. Then check for the source of foam.
 - b. Check to make sure the pump is not over pumping the coating
 - i. The return should have product coming out but very slowly.
- 2) If there is a need to shut the press down, do the following:
 - a. Make sure to keep the UV soft feel pumping through the coating unit. It will dry up and crust without movement and around air.
 - b. Make sure to keep the anilox spinning slowly to prevent the soft feel from clogging up the cells of the anilox.

When finished and ready to clean up

- 1) Clean the coating unit.
 - a. Pump out as much UV soft feel coating from the unit as possible.
 - b. Flush the unit with KS-718 conditioner press wash.
 - i. The KS-718 should be going in from one bucket and out into a different bucket.
 - c. Pump out as much KS-718 as possible.
 - d. Flush the unit with the UV press wash to make it ready for regular coating again.