

IMAGE REPORTS

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Widthwise Round Table

What print chiefs have to say about business in the large-format sector

Angel Awards

The 2018 product winners are...

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Key technology trends and developments to watch for large-format print



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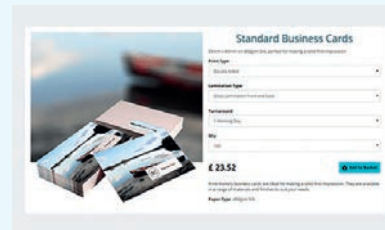
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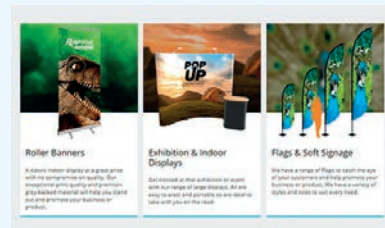
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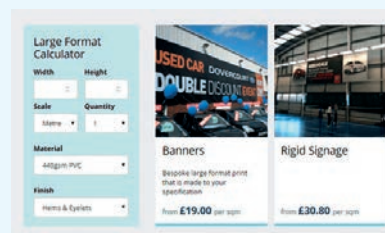
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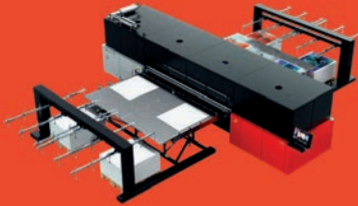
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THAT B***** WORD

On and on it rumbles...Brexit! 'Say no more' I hear you cry. Well actually, in this issue we have quite a lot to say on the topic. When I say 'we', I mean the print chiefs who assembled at our annual Widthwise Round Table - kindly sponsored by Agfa - to discuss what it's like doing business in the large-format print sector right now, and to talk about expectations for 2019 and beyond. Turn to the special report from the meeting for a heads-up and see if you agree with the views of: Mark Bartlett, MD, Signbox; Andrew Burdett, MD, Very Displays; Stuart Maclaren, founder, Your Print Partner; Andy Wilson, joint MD, PressOn; and Richard Clark, MD, Raccoon.

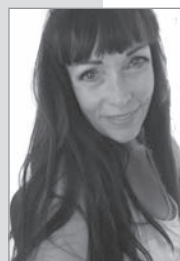
And let me just remind you that our 12th annual Widthwise poll of large-format PSPs kicks off at the start of January. As in previous years, this grassroots data will be analysed to form the basis of the 2019 Widthwise Report - free to all registered readers as a business support tool. I urge you to please be counted and get involved. A link to the survey will appear on the Image Reports homepage (www.imagereportsmag.co.uk) in the New Year.

Speaking of New Year, what technical developments can we expect to impact large-format print in 2019? Simon Creasy put that question to key manufacturers, so turn to p12 for the lowdown. In this competitive marketplace you might also be wise to keep abreast of how inkjet applications are developing - there's a report from TheIJC conference covering just that on p42. And then there's that tech development we're being told will affect all of us in the coming years - autonomous vehicles. Walter Hale gives a steer on how they're likely to impact PSPs. Turn to p17.

If that all seems too much like futuregazing you can return your focus to the here and now and take a shifty at our 2018 Angel Awards, where we dole out plaudits to those companies that have released products over the last 12 months that, in the eyes of the editorial team, should make a real difference in the wide-format print sector. Do you agree with our choices?

Signing off on 2018 with a Merry Christmas, and looking forward to seeing you again in 2019 for a Happy New Year!

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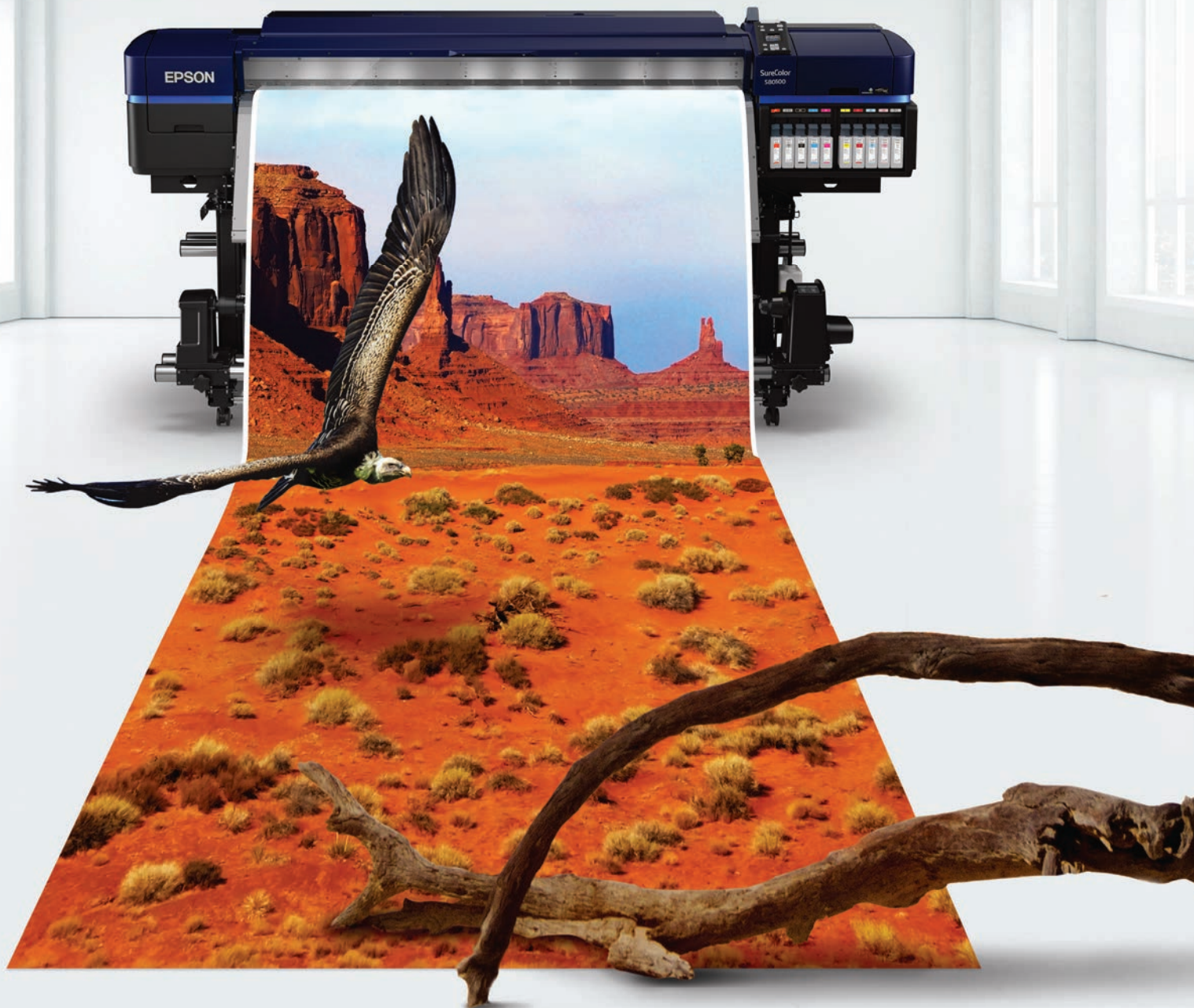
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CONTENTS

DECEMBER 2018 / JANUARY 2019

REGULARS:

8 News

Keeping you abreast of all the latest news in relation to digital wide-format print.

10 Cover Story Advertorial

Carrick Signs – it's all going swimmingly now!

36 Think Bigger

Gallery showing off the creativity and complexity of large-format inkjet print.

39 Forum

Vital stats to help you run your business; Digging below the surface with Industry Mole; Out and About - events diary; Over to You with Richard Frayling, owner, Signs Express (Taunton).

42 Zeitgeist

Lessons from The IJC on the future of inkjet.



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SECTIONS:

Technical

12 What to Watch I

Where to expect large-format technical development in 2019.

17 What to Watch II

Autonomous vehicles: will their adoption impact how you do business?

Business

24 Talking Point

... with Debbie McKeegan of TexIntel, a new venture bridging the gap between printers and creatives.

26 Top Tips

Dispute litigation and how to handle it.

Environment

29 Hatching a plan

Why one young print company has gone vegan.

Special

21 Angel Awards

Bestowing halos on the best heaven-sent products of 2018.

30 Round Table

Print chiefs discuss doing business in the large-format sector.

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Simpson Group ramps up investment

Simpson Group has spent £250,000 on a new MIS system from Tharstern. The MIS is the second significant investment for Simpsons since its management buyout in February this year - in the summer it installed an Inca Onset X3 flatbed printer. Together the purchases have cost over £1.25m

North East-based Simpson Group has also taken on two business developers and a recruit to a new apprenticeship scheme. The moves coincide with the appointment of a new finance director, Kevin Wills.

The Tharstern MIS will allow Simpson's to manage its operations more efficiently. The intention is that through bespoke automated workflows, the system will enable it to automate repetitive and mundane tasks and improve turnaround times, in turn allowing it to price more competitively.

Mark Jerrard, commercial director at £12m turnover Simpson Group - which employs 100 across its North East site and a satellite southern operation in Langley - said: "We've had a strong year this year and have our sights set on further growth for 2019."

Signbox uses R&D tax credits to fund eshop

Signbox's new eshop has gone live, offering off-the-shelf sign and display solutions.

"We're known for our bespoke, high-end graphic interior and external signage solutions," said MD Mark Bartlett, "but we also supply simple off-the-shelf signage and have been working for some time on a solution to streamline that offering and make it as accessible and efficient as possible.

"As any business owner knows, the two great challenges with getting a project like this off the ground are time and money. Key to finding the finances for the project was an R&D tax credit incentive scheme. Like any tax regulation it is a highly complex process, so we were grateful for the assistance of Kene and Partners whose services we employed to walk us through this regulatory minefield and help us to maximise our business growth opportunities.

"With Adam Kene and his team's help, over the course of the last two years, we've managed to save a six-figure sum off our corporation tax bill which we have been able to invest back into the business: training and up-skilling staff, purchasing a new Zund precision cutting device to automate production, a new Trotec laser and of course investing in the digital infrastructure which has made our attractive fresh, user-friendly eshop a reality."

Echo House to install Fujifilm Acuity Ultra still in development

The success Echo House has had with a 5m-wide Fujifilm Acuity Ultra since its installation in June 2018 has prompted the company to order a machine still in development. Precise specifications of the new Acuity Ultra are still to be confirmed, but the smaller format model will offer the same print carriage configuration and deliver the same level of quality at comparable speeds as the 5m and 3.2m models currently available. It will be installed at Echo House in January 2019.

"The [5m] Fujifilm Acuity Ultra has proven itself to be a perfect addition," Mark Cardwell, chairman at Echo House. "We're using it to print a huge range of quality general signage and POS work, taking full advantage of the 5m width to print super-wide substrates and to print to multiple rolls simultaneously. The ability to print white ink



has been fantastic for ultra-high quality backlit applications. The opportunity to directly feed into the development process for the new machine is hugely exciting and gives us the chance to provide even more value to our customers."

Leach designs high impact Vision Lightwall offering

Leach Impact has unveiled Vision Lightwall, an ultra-bright LED illumination with high definition large-format graphics for the retail environment.

A self-assemble, lightweight pop-up with options up

to 2m tall x 3m wide is available as a freestanding Lightwall. The tool-less system is easy to transport and erect, and CE-certified. For larger stores there is the modular Lightwall, which can be supplied in sizes up to 5m tall x 20m wide, and is also CE-certified.

A series of add-ons can be incorporated into the modular system, such as in-built TVs, hanging profiles, and the merchandising capabilities of Leach's Product Wall Lite. Users can choose from edge lighting with beam LEDs, a back-lit option, or a soon-to-be-launched flexible lightsheet, which enables the system to be rolled up for easy movability.



Tilia Labs introduces Griffin 2.0 for large-format users

Tilia Labs has released Griffin 2.0. Exclusively for large/wide-format production requirements, Griffin provides the ability to search for the most cost-effective, tightly-nested layouts. Griffin 2.0 has a new Dynamic Tiling feature, that allows tiling to be controlled independently in horizontal and vertical directions. It also introduces an Advanced Image Tracing feature enabling automatic generation of tight cutting tool paths at high speed for cases where no dieline path has been specified in the artwork.

The 2.0 release introduces new export formats for integration with a wider range of equipment - a new ZCC Export cutting format provides out-of-the-box integration with Zund Cut Center workflow management, while the new DXF Export format allows a seamless flow with an even wider range of post-press devices. Exporting for printing and cutting can now also be performed in a single step using the new Griffin 2.0 Multiple Export feature.

Esko appoints Mattias Bystrom as new president

Mattias Bystrom will replace Udo Panenka as president of Esko on 1 January 2019.

Joakim Weidemanis, executive vice president of Esko's parent company Danaher, said: "We thank Udo for his excellent service to Danaher over the past ten years, including leading Esko since 2015. Under Udo's leadership, Esko repositioned the flexo plate production business and moved to a new site in Itzehoe. Udo also built up Esko's business serving brand owners, including the acquisitions of MediaBeacon and Blue, and initiated Esko's software migration to SaaS."

Panenka's replacement has more than 20 years of management experience - most recently he was CEO of FlexLink, a \$300m factory automation solutions business in Sweden. Bystrom has also worked for Danaher in the past - he has eight years of prior experience in different leadership roles in what was then known as Danaher Motion. Earlier in his career, Bystrom co-founded two digital start-ups.

EFI names Guy Gecht's replacement as CEO

EFI has a new CEO in the form of William (Bill) D Muir, until recently the COO of Jabil, a product solutions company. He succeeds Guy Gecht, who at the end of July announced his intention to step down when a replacement had been found. He will remain a member of the board of directors and will be an advisor to Muir.

"Bill is going to take EFI to the next level," said Gecht. "I look forward to helping him in any way he chooses as the company continues to lead the digital transformation of industries globally where colorful images matter."

"I am honored and humbled to join the EFI team," said Muir. "I have developed a deep admiration for the culture of courageous innovation, technical leadership and customer care, and I look

forward to leading our exceptional team as we work tirelessly to delight our customers and create shareholder value."

Muir has spent the past 25 years helping brands bring products to market, including launching Jabil's Blue Sky Innovation Centre. He has a background in complex engineering and manufacturing honed over progressive leadership roles at Jabil, a \$22 billion product solutions company with more than 100 facilities and 170,000 employees across the globe.

Muir holds both a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering and a Master in Business Administration from the University of Florida.

Interim CEO for Inca as John Mills steps down

Inca Digital CEO John Mills has stepped down to set up a specialist business consultancy. He has been replaced by former deputy CEO Akira Hayakawa as interim CEO. He will be supported by Inca Digital COO, Matthew Negus, and the incumbent Inca Digital management team.

Mills said of his departure: "My plan was always to lead Inca Digital for a period of five years, with a remit to turn the business into a leading digital player in the graphics market, as well as drive product innovation to put us in a commanding position to exploit the opportunities in a range of new sectors including the packaging and industrial markets."

"Led by the success of the Onset X series, we've grown to become one of the dominant players in the digital graphics market. With the launch of the Onset M last year and our single pass machines currently in development, Inca is on course to deliver the next generation of transformational inkjet technologies. I believe I am leaving Inca Digital on a firm footing to take on the challenges of the future and I'm very proud of what we have achieved as a business during my time here."

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- Ricoh Pro L5130/L5160 latex printers to hit the market early 2019
- EFI Reggiani Bolt makes its debut
- New sales and marketing manager for Zund UK
- Mimaki brings out clear ink for UCJV300 series
- New chief at Fespa UK
- Pure Digital moves to Eindhoven in 2019
- ISA UK announced at BSGA Awards
- Bigger Printing represents UK in international print challenge
- Drupa 96% booked
- HP finalises Apogee acquisition
- Imaginators clinches 'Best SME Business of the Year 2018' gong
- Beflex first in Europe to install EFI Vutek h3 printer
- Rose gold added to ImagePerfect 6500 Metallised Series vinyls
- Atlantic recruits to extend its HP and Mimaki service and support
- Sun Chemical names new president and CEO
- 'Winning in an Evolving Print Services Market' study published
- Tradeprint appoints new MD
- Durst Delta WT 250 and Rhotex 325 clinch SGIA awards
- Roland collects Buyers Lab awards for TrueVis
- Pyramid Display Materials appointed HP Latex reseller

Ricoh finalises ColorGate acquisition

Ricoh has acquired print software firm ColorGate. The move continues the 'Ricoh Ignite' growth plan set out in February 2018 and designed to expand the company's printing technology portfolio. This acquisition is designed to strengthen Ricoh's growing industrial printing business and comes on the back of its recent acquisition of LAC Corporation, a company with inkjet technology that supports printing on 3D surfaces.

Peter Williams, corporate vice president and general manager of commercial and industrial printing business group, Ricoh, said: "By combining ColorGate's proprietary software technology with our own industrial printers, Ricoh will provide solutions covering the whole printing workflow from pre-press to post-press. This acquisition will enable ColorGate to expand its industrial printing business and

global presence as together we become better able to support our customers to accelerate their transition from analogue to digital based production."

Thomas Kirschner, co-founder of ColorGate, who will continue to serve as CEO, added: "We are delighted to have been selected by Ricoh to contribute to this strong future growth strategy whilst we continue to serve our established customer base, OEM partners and reseller channel."

Founded in 1997, Hannover-based ColorGate provides software for the wide-format and industrial printing sectors, and is best known for its colour management technology and workflow software in digital print markets, including decor and textiles.

Rocket Graphics expands site and kit line-up

Rocket Graphics has expanded its Watford-based facilities, adding 557m² (30%) of print production space that houses a new 3.2m Vutek LX3 UV hybrid printer - a machine with speeds up to 60% faster than its predecessor. The new space is also home to a Zund G3 3.2m-wide cutter, which has been added to a current 2.2m-wide unit.

The company also recently bolstered its existing bank of five Mimaki printers with a UV LED-curing JV300 1600mm-wide machine with the aim of streamlining the linear throughput production process across the full range of printer options. Other machines include an EFI Vutek GS5000r and 3.2m M-Tex dye-sub unit.

The investment at the Croxley Business Park site also creates extra office space for Rocket's growing project management team, and part of the new area will be used in a multi-functional way - eg for vehicle wrapping, collating or partly pre-building modular graphic framing systems and lightboxes etc.

Grangeprint takes UK's first Roland Texart RT-640M

Nottingham-based Grangeprint has installed the UK's first Roland Texart RT-640M dye sublimation with the aim of boosting its turnover from soft signage.

The printer - which enables direct-to-textile and indirect sublimation printing - was installed in the autumn by Quality Print Services (QPS), which also installed Nazdar NDT600 series sublimation inks on the machine.

Paul Evans, director at Grangeprint, said: "The new Roland machine will enable us to offer our corporate clients soft signage and external feather flags. We are confident that it will help boost our turnover significantly when we expand our business with the launch of our flags and banners offerings early next year."



CARRICK SIGNS – IT'S ALL GOING SWIMMINGLY NOW!

There was a time when it wasn't so rosy for Carrick Signs when they were on the brink of disaster, but two years on business couldn't be better.

Carrick Signs Ltd, a thriving large format printing business based in the Manchester area, was a very different picture at the end of 2015. What had been a dream of the MD, Mandy Roscoe, to own and run her own print business looked like ending in a disaster. A month's worth of rain fell in just 24hrs overnight leading into Boxing Day, 2015, causing many rivers to burst their banks which resulted in some of the worst flooding ever seen in the Greater Manchester area.

Having taken over the business only 3 months prior, Mandy awoke to the news that her business premises had been flooded, but what she found when she arrived on-site was far worse than she could have imagined. The water had swamped the entire premises "everything was ruined, all the machinery and all the stock". Mandy continues "nothing could be salvaged, and I wasn't sure I still had a business to run".

But with the family spirit that she has installed in the company Mandy didn't give up, everyone from the company and their families turned up the next day to see what could be done. HP and Perfect Colours, one of HP's leading reseller partners for large format, were quick to take action, securing new large format printers for Carrick to get them up and running within three weeks, "I simply couldn't have done it without HP and Perfect Colours" Mandy says.

Mandy's background was in screen printing, so she has extensive knowledge and a passion for the print industry, but she wanted to move to printing direct to substrate so was looking to purchase equipment that could help with that transition. Carrick had made their first HP hardware investment with a purchase of the HP Scitex FB550, hybrid large format printer, following a previous printing solution that had not been satisfactory with quality or in operation. They did not find these issues with the HP range and within twelve months of purchasing their first HP Scitex FB550 they had purchased a 2nd unit and they are now the busiest two machines in their business.

The HP FB550 runs with HP UV-curable inks, requiring no special ventilation and instant dry straight from the printer. Producing high quality printing on a wide range of media's up to 2.5" thick, this highly productive printer with 3-litre ink capacity for long un-interrupted runs, simply allows you to do more. "The HP flatbed printers are pretty quick and can print on all different sorts of stock," Kirsty Davies, Assistant Office Manager, "and the fact that we can print on all these different media's means that we don't have to turn jobs away." The two HP FB550 printers are the two busiest printers at Carrick with the growth in foamex and corex applications which is their mainstay, but they have also printed on many more substrates even doors!

They continued their investment with HP by looking into the HP Latex solutions and swapping to this technology from Solvent to achieve better quality printing for their clients. Using water-based HP Latex inks all prints emerge dry, and odorless free, making for a clean and productive working environment and allowing you to directly apply from the printer with no curing time needed – a world of difference from previous workflows needing at less 24hrs to dry before you could use. Now those last-minute requests can be turned around in a day.

The HP Latex inks are also scratch resistant and durable for outdoor use with high image quality so are suitable for a wide range of applications from billboards to bus shelters. Plus, you can reach sensitive indoor environments that solvent can't with water-based HP Latex Inks that are in accordance with best-in-class indoor air quality certifications.

Carrick Signs have invested in four of the HP latex printers ranging from the 64" or 1.63m up to 126" or 3.2m wide production printers with the HP Latex 1500 printer. Mandy concludes, "I do believe the investments I've made in the HP hardware technology over the last couple of years has allowed me to offer better quality products to my customers, expand into new applications and get a much faster turnaround on print jobs."

But the vision has just been about investing in the right equipment, creating the right customer experience online has been a major part of the success of Carrick Signs. Milosz Nasadowski, Office Manager and Alex Davies, Web Designer at Carrick Signs have developed a number of microsites for customers to navigate through the



different applications and what can be printed. Amongst these new microsites are ones for corrugated plastic and foam boards and their newest site for 'Selfie' boards (www.selfie-frame.co.uk) capturing the expanding opportunity of the social media world.

"We look to guide customers through the different choices they can make", Milosz explains, "when choosing their print product, and we are finding what they initial thought they might have wanted, once they look through all the options they change their minds and buy something completely different and more than they had planned!"

Alex continues "the reason behind the microsites was a simple one, to make it easier for our customers to find what they want but also to inspire them with new ideas that they might not have thought of."

And how is the future looking for Carrick? Well business has never been busier with the business growing year over year, so busy in fact Mandy is often found helping out on the production line when they up against timelines!

Mandy explains, "this year, we are looking to target the interior design sector with an incredible range of personalised wallpapers. We will continue to change our business to suit a dynamic market. By developing and strengthening relationships with our clients and suppliers, we will endeavor to provide high-quality, technologically advanced solutions for our customers' everchanging needs. And to meet this new demand we are also hoping to increase our workforce and have plans to explore apprenticeship schemes over the next 12 months."

"I can't believe how things have changed since that day in 2015" Mandy concludes, "it seems like a distant memory now with how things have turned around, with the partnership with Perfect Colours and HP we are just going from strength to strength."



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TOMORROW'S WORLD

AS WE LOOK TOWARDS 2019, SIMON CREASY ASKS: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF I4.0, WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF IT GAINING GREATER TRACTION IN 2019, AND WHAT ARE THE OTHER KEY TECHNOLOGY TRENDS TO LOOK OUT FOR OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

What do you know about 'industry 4.0', or i4.0 as it's become known? Some argue it's not relevant to large-format PSPs today. Image Reports' own Widthwise survey - conducted amongst 151 of the UK and Ireland's large-format PSPs at the start of 2018 - found that only five respondents had invested in i4.0 technology over the last 12 months. Furthermore, none of the company's questioned said they intended to invest in i4.0 technology in 2018. But is there a danger they're missing a trick? Are you? Plenty of industry experts believe that the UK print sector needs to wholeheartedly embrace i4.0 now if it wants to remain competitive in the future.

So what are the benefits of i4.0, what are the chances of it gaining greater traction in 2019, and what are the other key technology trends to look out for over the next 12 months?



INDUSTRY 4.0 IS DRIVING DEMAND FOR INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND LOWER COSTS, AS WELL AS FULLY AUTOMATED AND INTEGRATED PROCESSES

Wayne Barlow of Canon

There is little doubt that when it comes to i4.0 the print industry lags behind some other industry sectors. But, measures are being taken to push it further up the agenda according to Phil McMullin, sales manager, prographics at Epson (UK), who was at the autumn's Fespa UK conference 'The Future of Print i4.0'.

"The main message is they're trying to get UK industry competing competitively with the rest of the world particularly with the 'B' [Brexit] word flying around," says McMullin. "Their brief from government is to make sure industry 4.0 is being actively discussed and progressed right across the industry."

This awareness exercise is desperately needed as Steve Wilson, director of R&D at Inca Digital, says that in Europe, and particularly in Germany, the print industry is much more advanced when it comes to understanding and embracing the concept of i4.0.

"The simple reason for that is the EU gives out money to help support capital equipment purchases that contain industry 4.0 functionality so they are more familiar with it," says Wilson. "When we sell into Europe we have to supply information about i4.0 capability to customers, but in the UK the grants aren't there so people aren't that interested in it."

But we need to get interested, and quickly, argues McMullin: "It [i4.0] will come at some point, but what nobody really knows is how quickly. It's a good thing for everybody to start a dialogue and the thought process about it now so that we don't get caught out and left behind, because at some point the danger is European organisations, or organisations from other parts of the world, could potentially start muscling in on our territory as the world gets more and more connected. If we're not there that could be dangerous."

So as a PSP, do you need to wise-up on i4.0? Well, the benefits are manifold, as Wilson points out. "I4.0 essentially brings the advantages of intelligent connectivity to industrial equipment," he explains. "One example would be planning activities. Traditionally everyone used an MRP system. A lot of our customers still use pieces of paper, or they might have a log-in to their MRP on the machine, but often there is no direct connection so they have to look on the MRP to look at what they're supposed to be doing next and then tell the machine what the MRP tells them. In theory you can short circuit that so the MRP tells the machine what it's doing next and the machine tells the operator. All the connectors and tools are there - the main barrier to doing that is getting cooperation from the MRP providers."

Under i4.0 this sort of 'intelligent connectivity' will become much more commonplace, but to date we have only just scratched the surface of what's possible in the print industry, agrees Paul Cripps, vice president Europe sales at EFI.

"Digital technology is leading print's entry into the fourth industrial revolution, giving us artificial intelligence, cloud computing, augmented reality, 3D printing, robotics, interconnectivity, remote management and manufacturing and hands-off just about everything," says Cripps. "And some of these technologies are relevant and critical for today's print providers and might be so more in the future."

He points out that technology like cloud computing enables PSPs to access apps and data "from anywhere and anytime and collaborate with clients and staff easily and efficiently," whereas virtual reality can aid manufacturing processes and enable real-time, remote equipment maintenance. "As the market gets more competitive and meeting consumer needs gets more challenging, it is important for PSPs to keep up to date with these innovations," argues Cripps.

Wayne Barlow, head of the graphics and communications business groups at Canon UK, is of a similar mind. "Industry 4.0 is driving demand for increased productivity and lower costs, as well as fully automated and integrated processes, so PSPs must evolve to keep services relevant and sustainable.

"PSPs are currently adapting to customer requirements for print-on-demand, shorter print runs,



Phil McMullin of Epson

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mass personalisation, and environmentally-friendly printing practises, but these are only the latest in a continuous stream of emerging trends. They need to be ready to embrace ongoing developments in the sector, from new materials and improvements in print heads, to integration with innovative software to enable maximum efficiency."

One rapidly developing area you may find yourself needing to get your head around, sooner rather than later, is robotics.

"Mimaki has started to incorporate the computerisation of manufacturing, with halo products such as the robotic arm designed to feed printable items onto one of its flatbed machines featured at an exhibition earlier in 2018," points out Brett Newman, chief operations manager at Hybrid Services, distributor of Mimaki equipment in the UK and Ireland.

Epson is also investing heavily in R&D to look at the role robotics could play in the industry. "And we're not just talking about having a robot arm feeding your machine," says McMullin. "We're talking about connecting it to your network, using big data to analyse production and streamline it and then interfacing that with your client requirements so you work out what your clients really want and which bits are more profitable for you. It's that whole connection piece and how can you improve the process flow in your business is a big starting point. This is a multi-phased process and a long process, but as with all these things you have to start somewhere."

Many of the innovations being developed around robotics by the likes of Mimaki and Epson are for the longer term, but in the short to medium term there is plenty for you to your teeth into. For starters, McMullin says that Epson has a number of things in the pipeline that will hit the market in 2019.

"In the last five years we've moved into signage and display, textile printing and labels, so if you look at our portfolio across those areas in some areas we don't have a full range of products," he explains. "So what we're going to be looking to do is fill that range in, but mostly with a focus more on higher production capacity equipment."

Meanwhile at Canon, Barlow says the company is looking to bring forward new products that meet growing customer demand for machines that are capable of producing high quality prints at low volumes, cost effectively.

"This trend will drive the development of LF inkjet printers that can deliver speed and productivity, as

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BUSINESS AND PRODUCTION
WORKFLOW AROUND THE DIGITAL
PRODUCTION OPERATION



Paul Cripps of EFI





single pass will be in textile, with a new EFI Reggiani Bolt technology.”

The company also intends to introduce innovative new equipment to its industrial markets, with Cubik single pass technology for the wood and building

materials markets, and the fifth-generation EFI Cretaprint printers for the ceramic tile market.

“You’ll see continued innovation in print production capabilities there and, across all our inkjet technologies,” says Cripps. “You’ll also see in the future, integrated ecosystems that drive our customers’ businesses forward not just from a printer standpoint, but with a focused, integrated ecosystem that boosts and automated the entire business and production workflow around the digital production operation, whether it is for roll-to-roll and rigid signage and display work, apparel and décor, packaging or other markets.”

In short, 2019 looks like being a busy year in terms of innovative new product launches in the large-format sector, which could make it hard for PSPs to keep on top of where to invest to deliver the best ROI. It presents a challenge, but at the same time there are also opportunities for PSPs to adapt and capitalise on the changing marketplace, believes Canon’s Barlow.

“The role of PSPs will inevitably evolve, shifting from a product-centric to a service-centric model where they will act as consultants. PSPs will ultimately need to use their experience coupled with new technologies to deliver tailored yet efficient solutions.”



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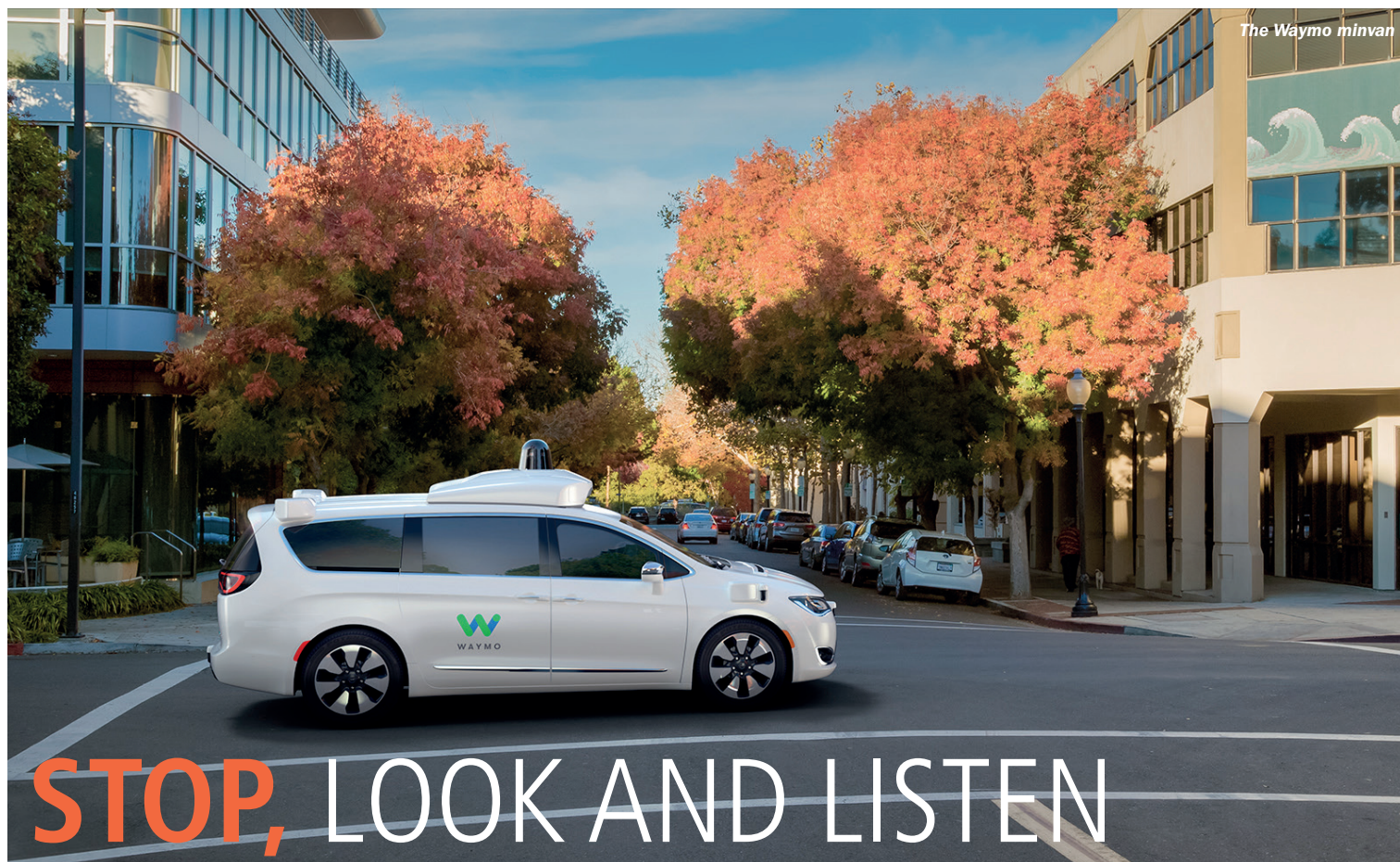
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AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES - WILL THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION IMPACT HOW YOU DO BUSINESS? WALTER HALE CONSIDERS THE ISSUES.

Three years ago, a Mercedes lorry made history by driving itself on a public road. What was particularly intriguing about the journey in Germany was that the vehicle itself was a run of the mill, heavy-duty truck - the model had been introduced in 1995 - fitted with Daimler's Highway Pilot technology, a system of radar, sensors and cameras. With this technology, the Actros truck could steer itself, brake and, if it approached a stationary vehicle, alert the driver to take over.

That experiment was reasonably successful and yet, in September, Martin Daum, who runs Daimler's truck and bus business, seemed to put the brakes on autonomous trucks. In any new technology, he told the media, there are three stages: headlines, knowledge and business. The headlines are generated by tests and flashy demonstrations at exhibitions. They help a company acquire knowledge that it uses to create a business that can sell the technology.

Analysts concluded that Daimler was still acquiring knowledge and that self-driving delivery trucks would not be taking to the world's roads for at least five years. To be clear, nobody is saying that autonomous delivery vehicles will never happen - in the US alone they are expected to save the transportation sector \$300bn and eliminate 180,000 trucking jobs. (This isn't as seismic a shift as it sounds: in the UK, for example, there are 45,000 unfulfilled driving and, given that the average age of a lorry driver is 53, many will have retired by the time autonomous deliveries become widespread.)

It is possible that Daum - and Daimler - is trying to play down the hype. The British government certainly

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seems more optimistic: in August 2017, it pledged £8.1m to help fund trials by the Transport Research Laboratory. Transport information firm Inrix has gone as far as to identify the M6/M74 corridor as the most commercially viable road for the autonomous trucks to be tested on and, slightly bizarrely, the M25 as the safest route to test them on.

The government has also promised to establish a legal framework for the use of autonomous vehicles by 2021.

In the US, inevitably, things are moving a bit faster. Driverless trucks have already been introduced in the state of Nevada. In Arizona, Walmart has piloted a scheme that allows customers who order groceries online to be driven to and from the store in an autonomous vehicle provided by Waymo, the autonomous technology company owned by Alphabet (Google's parent company). Walmart, Ford and logistics provider Postmates are also collaborating on a test in Miami, Florida, to acquire the knowledge, to use Daum's term, to define what shoppers want from an autonomous vehicle delivery system.

Although much of the early hype focused on cars that drive themselves, Ford has indicated that vehicles that can carry people and freight will be essential if the technology is to be scaled up and be made profitable. The company is investing at least \$4bn in AV technology between now and 2023 and aims to have vehicles on the road by 2021. As Ford is stopping manufacturing many kinds of cars to make more sports utility vehicles and trucks, freight is likely to become mission critical for the multinational behemoth.

So what do Daimler, Ford, General Motors, Waymo, Tesla and Jaguar Land Rover - to name only a few of the companies exploring this technology - mean exactly when they talk about autonomous vehicles?

At the risk of being tediously specific, it might be worth defining the five levels of autonomous driving, as categorised by the Society of Automotive Engineers.

At Level 1, one element of the driving process is automated, as in cruise control or technology that helps the driver stay in lane.



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At Level 2, computers manage more than one driving function. A good example is the Mercedes S-Class which takes over directional, throttle and brake functions for its cruise control system and uses sat-nav data to brake automatically for corners ahead. This is roughly the state of the technology as it exists today.

At Level 3, a vehicle can automate every aspect of motoring but a driver must be on hand to intervene or answer a request if necessary. Audi claims that its new A8 is a Level 3 car.

At Level 4, the car will drive itself although there will still be a person behind the wheel. To do this, the vehicle will draw on HD mapping, real time data, car-to-car communications and off-site call centres (to deal with the unusual or unexpected). The technology will work best in a carefully managed, high tech, probably urban environment. By 2022, 20 car makers say they will be selling this level of functionality in the US.

At Level 5, the driver is optional. The car can stop and start itself, and drive in urban or rural areas. The steering wheel - invented back in 1894 by French racing driver Alfred Vacheron - may have finally passed its sell-by date.

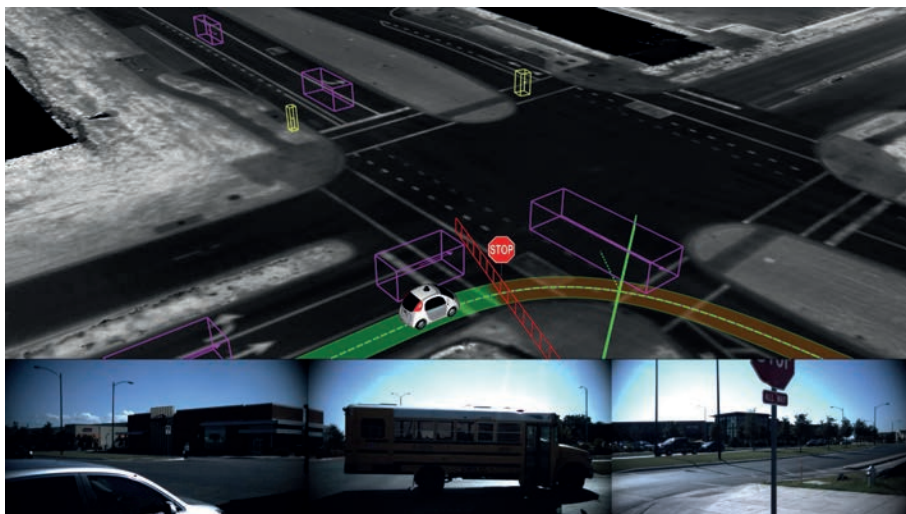
Imagining how those levels of automation will improve the lot of managers, sales staff and managing directors of print service providers is reasonably straightforward. Autonomous vehicles may put the last nail in the coffin of the traditional company car fleet. It might make more sense, financially, for companies to rent these vehicles rather than own them.

It becomes a bit more complicated when you try to apply these levels of automation to trucks - and deliveries of wide-format print. For a start, it is hard to imagine many situations where delivery can be made without a driver. Someone is going to have to take the signage out of the vehicle and give it to the client and that person isn't going to work for the customer.

Automating the process of unloading freight out of the back of a vehicle is technologically feasible but probably not that lucrative for the car manufacturer and not something that many customer-facing businesses will want to place their faith in. Pioneering companies may be tempted to experiment with drones, if the package being delivered is a suitable size.

So even if a car, truck or lorry reaches Level 5 automation, it will probably still need someone in it to complete the delivery. They may not necessarily need an HGV licence, or even have passed their driving test, but they will still hand over the printed product. That should reduce the cost of labour and make recruitment a bit easier (and cheaper).

Level 5 vehicles could make an even bigger difference to a printer's insurance costs. This may not happen overnight. There will be a fascinating, and hard to quantify, transitional period where motorists and autonomous vehicles share the roads. Two and a half years ago, a Google AV car crashed into a bus in California. The incident was partly caused by the presence of sand bags on the road, but also because Google's car was programmed to assume that the bus,



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SCHEMES - SUCH
AS SMART STREET
LIGHTS THAT
EXCHANGE DATA
WITH VEHICLES -
SEEM POSITIVELY
DYSTOPIAN IN
A NATION THAT
CAN'T FIND THE
MONEY TO FIX ITS
POTHoles

approaching in its left-hand mirror, would stop or slow to allow it to pass. In the event, the bus did neither. After admitting partial responsibility for the accident, a spokesman for Google admitted that it had refined its self-driving algorithms: "From now on, our cars will more deeply understand that buses (and other large vehicles) are less likely to yield to us than other types of vehicles."

The potential for similar problems in this transitional period is immense. In Germany, for example, so many motorists drive the wrong way down an autobahn - sometimes in a race with other drivers - that they even have a word for it: *geisterfahrer* (ghost driver). In many countries, notably Brazil, drivers don't stop at red lights at night because they fear for their safety. There are a multitude of characteristics and traits for Google and others to factor into their algorithms to make them safe.

Looking further ahead, if we assume that, by 2040, every vehicle is autonomous and the number of accidents has fallen by 90% - it is widely accepted that nine out of ten crashes or caused, wholly or partly, by human error - insurance premiums will plummet. We'll see about that!

The technology will create its own risks - many of which we cannot foresee at this stage - that need to be hedged, but the savings should still be considerable. The more pressing problem may be to fix the regulations. At present, experts say, there is a "black hole" that needs filling with rules about accident liability.

There is also the small matter of infrastructure, something Britain has not always excelled at. A national network of charging points will be essential if electrically-powered AVs are to become popular. Some of the other advanced infrastructure schemes - such as smart street lights that exchange data with vehicles seem - positively dystopian in a nation that can't find the money to fix its potholes.

Many British print service providers will seize the opportunity to own or rent an autonomous truck. Only a fool or a prophet would put a timeline on that. These revolutionary new trucks should be kinder to the environment and cheaper to insure. Yet will they be completely autonomous? Probably not in our working lifetimes.



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Angel AWARDS 2018

IT'S TIME TO SING THE PRAISES OF THOSE COMPANIES THAT HAVE RELEASED PRODUCTS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS THAT, IN THE EYES OF THE EDITORIAL TEAM, SHOULD MAKE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN THE WIDE-FORMAT PRINT SECTOR. THOSE DEEMED PARTICULARLY WORTHY OF ATTENTION THIS YEAR ARE...

OCC ZUND

In March 2018 Zund introduced this intelligent optics system for automated digital capture of registration marks. The camera is mounted above the centre of the cutter - either on a support frame or suspended from the ceiling. One-shot capture technology means the number of register marks along with their position on the cutting surface become irrelevant. Data processing functions are integrated in the ZCC (Zund Cut Center) software so that in seconds, algorithms analyse the data captured by the camera and simultaneously compensate for any distortions.



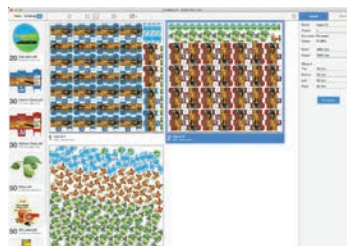
VUTEK H SERIES EFI

At Fespa 2018 EFI unveiled its next generation hybrid flatbed/roll platform - the 3.2m Vutek h series which comprises the h3 and h5 - the h3 has three rows of 7pl UltraDrop Technology greyscale printheads and the h5 has five. The machines offer 4- or 8-colour+white printing as well as five-layer print capability in a single pass. The h3 (pictured) has a maximum throughput of up to 74 boards per hour and the h5 up to 109 boards per hour. The printers sit between the GS and HS series machines.



GRIFFIN 2.0 TILIA LABS

Exclusively for large/wide-format production requirements, Griffin it is a cross-platform solution designed to provide simplicity for printing and cutting. Griffin 2.0 - presented at SGIA Expo in October - offers the ability to search across millions of combinations to find the most tightly-nested layouts. It also has a new feature that allows tiling to be controlled independently in horizontal and vertical directions, and another that enables automatic generation of tight cutting tool paths at high speed for cases where no dieline path has been specified in the artwork. Other 2.0 features include: remove dielines; multiple shape import functionality; camera mark enhancements, including a new setting to automatically mirror marks between the front and back of the layout for facilitating face-down cutting; separate single and double sided; and improved retina display support.



JETI TAURO H3300 AGFA

The Jeti Tauro H3300 is a UV LED inkjet hybrid workhorse that builds on Agfa's Jet Tauro H2500 device. The machine spec says it is capable of printing up to 3.3m wide at speeds up to 453m²/hr, and it is convertible to enable different degrees of automation: manual loading and unloading; master roll-to-roll, allowing for single- or dual-roll printing of up to 600mm in diameter and up to 800kg; semi-automation where loading is done manually and unloading is automated; and full automation where a 'pick and place' system picks the boards or sheets directly from the pallet and places them on the media registration table. After printing, an unloader picks up the boards or sheets from the output conveyor and puts them directly onto the pallet.



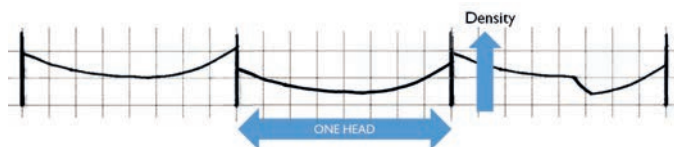
STORM HD6 KORNIT DIGITAL

The Storm HD6 is a direct-to-garment printing system targeted at small to mid-size businesses wanting to handle runs of between one and 500. Unveiled at Fespa 2018, the unit uses Kornit's HD print engine combined with NeoPigment Rapid ink to reduce ink consumption and cost per print. Kornit said the Storm HD6 will reduce both by approximately 30% compared to the Storm Hexa. The Storm HD6 has six colour channels (CMYK, red, green) plus white.



SCREENPRO 2.0 GLOBAL GRAPHICS

ScreenPro smooths out imperfections in inkjet printing. Recently released Version 2.0 reduces non-uniformity across the web, commonly known as the inkjet smile. The software can be applied to any inkjet technology and print industry workflow, can be added to printers already on the market, or incorporated into an inkjet press that's still on the drawing board.





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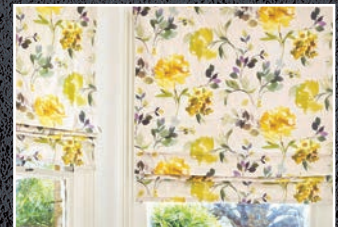
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ONYX 18

ONYX

If you were on the Onyx stand at Fespa 2018 you will have seen personnel sporting Onyx 18 lapel badges and making lots of noise about the launch of this wide- and grand-format software - a package that enables PSPs to prove to customers that colour accuracy, consistency and conformance to standards such as G7 and Fogra have been met. At SGI Expo in October the company claimed a first for the wide-format print industry with the 18.5 release - the first Rip solution with the Adobe PDF Print Engine 5 (APPE 5).



ONLINE PROOF OF COMPLETION

OPOC

Former Cestrian boss Phill Reynolds has set up a new business selling OPOC, or 'Online Proof Of Completion', a clever software tool that makes data collection at remote sites more efficient, allowing businesses to track and improve live print installation projects. A Cloud-based desktop platform links with mobile devices, using an app to automatically geostamp location, time and date, from the start of the job to the finish. Data is streamed instantly to the control centre, where thousands of details are clearly displayed and made available for use.



P5 250HS

DURST

The 250HS is the first in Durst's new P5 printer series announced back in February. The new printers have printhead arrays built with Fujifilm Mems nozzle plates (designed for 24/7 production), use new inks (P5 Premium WG ink and P5 POP HS ink available initially), have a new media transport system (with gearless direct drive for precision, 16 vacuum chambers and a special synthetic coating to prevent static friction), and incorporate Durst Symphony, which comprises a new touchscreen icon-based user interface, a workflow suite of applications (with features beyond Ripping such as print data management and versioning and customisable colour management), and an analytics platform. The flagship 250HS is based on the Durst P10 250HS but is 70% faster, boasts a 20% increase in resolution, a 80% decrease in printhead maintenance, and 40% quicker media changing. It has a top resolution of 1200dpi, with a drop-size of 5ppl. In two-pass mode the P5 250HS can run at up to 240m²/hr.



DIMENSE

VEIKA

This neat 3D wallpaper printing technology was first previewed at the last Drupa, but with units just reaching the UK from the Lithuanian manufacturer we've decided to include it this year. Dimense - based on latex eco-friendly inks and PVC-free structure-forming Ecodeco media - delivers output that won't fade in direct light, can be cleaned without scratching or damage and is C1 fire rated. It can print at speeds of up to 20m²/hr with a print width of 1.6m and is sold in the UK via Colourgen.



LATEX R2000

HP

HP announced its rigid technology at the ISA Sign Expo in March and the R2000 is the first machine to use it. Using HP's water-based latex inks - and that includes a white ink - the Latex R2000 prints at up to 88m²/hr with continuous loading and can handle up to 100kg rolls. It has automatic maintenance, smart vacuum, and easy loading capabilities, and productivity can be enhanced with HP Smart Services



AUTOMATION ENGINE QUICKSTART FOR SIGN

ESKO

Released in March, this package - which directly links to Kongsberg cutting tables - comes preloaded with workflows for sign and large-format production, with Esko promising that in five days you will be up and running with an automated system that handles tasks like preflighting, PDF optimisation, cut path and bleed creation, tiling and nesting - as well as producing reports. It costs £29,000 implemented.





Debbie McKeegan...

It's Heimtextil in January, an event that gets those involved in textiles all excited.

But you don't have to go Frankfurt to do that crucial job of networking - you can go online to TexIntel, Never heard of it? Well perhaps you should because it was founded by Debbie McKeegan, a designer with more than 25 years experience in textile design, buying, sales and manufacturing - including an in-depth knowledge of digital print. Her aim is to bring creatives and PSPs together. Sound useful? I met her to talk about the project, and how she thinks the relationship between creatives and printers can be improved.

By Lesley Simpson

Debbie, people may know you from the conference circuit where you speak as an authority on digital design and print, but TexIntel is perhaps under their radar. It's a fab idea - a portal that acts as a conduit between all parties involved in textile design and print production. For those that don't know it, can you tell us what you want it to achieve?

It is something I've been passionate about for a long time. Having been both designer and manufacturer in my career it's so obvious that there's a huge disconnect between the various players in the textile industry. I decided that, in order to fulfil my own creativity, I needed to help all parties across the textile supply chain to better understand techniques, expectations, problems etc.

Digital technology has given designers the capability to generate low-volumes, and with that, the marketplace for fashion has changed dramatically. Now that is all about customised orders - the days of warehouses full of stock are long gone. Everything is being created on demand - whether it's a one metre or 10,000m order.

The developments in both hardware and software digital technologies are allowing any more entrants into the textile print space, including wide-format print companies as well as the designers themselves.

When you look at what's going on at the entry-level, the price of technology has come down massively over the last five-years - I'd say 50% cheaper - and it's much easier to use. This technology in the hands of creatives really pushes the boundaries and starts to open up the marketplace, which is great - but it also means there are lots of people with lots of questions about technology, sourcing materials, finding production partners etc., and helping with that is what TexIntel is all about.

One of the problems the print sector has in educating potential new customers about digital textile print possibilities, is knowing how best to reach them. What's your take on that, and how does TexIntel reflect your thinking?

I was once asked to write an article titled 'Translating the Conversation of Print' because, as you're aware, there's such a huge difference in terminology between the designer and

the printer. Designers know what they want to create but they're not used to the confines of production, especially new, young designers who haven't yet perhaps had commercial experience. They don't understand file formats etc., so printers get jobs that cause them a huge headache. So, there's a responsibility I believe, for all parties to be more informed and informative.

With TexIntel my intention is to deliver information in a way that the various people involved will understand. It's about deconstructing boundaries really, and I think that with my background I can translate for parties from all sides. The website is a mix of things - I'm a naturally curious person, so I'm constantly looking at what opportunities new technologies are opening up, such as UV inkjet for instance, and blog about what I've come across. There are articles that go quite deep and there's lots of pictorial content, so whether people have two minutes or two hours there's something to educate and inspire them.

Also, I build connections by featuring people and products that grab my attention, whether that be a young designer doing something unusual, or a piece of software that will have an impact on production.

How do you know if you're getting it right or not?

Our analysis shows we get a mixture of people to the site, which was only launched this year, so it is still very new. What's interesting is that we're seeing that creatives are reading some of the deeper dive, analytical stuff on the development of digital.

We also do a weekly edit - we take blogs or stories that have had the most reactions and send them out to our newsletter base, which is again a mixture of everyone in the textile industry.

I love it that within your directories you have one of digital printers. Have you specifically curated that list, and how do other PSPs get onto it?

Yes, it is curated by me, through my knowledge of the industry. Those that are on there have all been invited by me to provide information, and I'm being very careful actually to make sure it doesn't just become a list.



...CEO, TexIntel

It's early days, so the functionality of the directories will grow. At the moment you can search by tags in the system, but it will become more involved in terms of searchability though the key is for it to remain simple to actually use.

There is definitely scope for PSPs not already in the directory to apply to be included - there's a button on the page that enables them to contact me then I'll check them out. Everyone is short of time, so I don't want to build something that is full of waste! The important thing is that everyone in these online 'communities' adds value to the chain.

It may mean that companies are sharing IP information they wouldn't normally share organically, but if this market is to grow as it potentially can, we need to share. I have found that all of the really great things I've been involved with have happened through collaboration.

TexIntel offers a wide range of services, including consultancy via experts. Who are the experts and where does print fit in?

I drive all of the projects and bring in people as I need them. So for example, I had an interior designer who needed to find a fabric for a London restaurant, but he also needed to source a design. I asked what kind of thing he was looking for, and he said 'tropical' and 'I need it within the next three weeks', so using the directories I helped pull that together.

Now, some creatives will know more about print than others, so that will impact the PSP they need to work with. Some will need lots of hand-holding, so I can help steer them if necessary to someone who will take a design, turn it into a format that can be printed, who can source suitable materials for them etc. The consultancy is about connecting people with the right skillsets so everyone fulfills their creative and commercial objectives.

You have a 'sustainability' section on your site, with 'resources'. How big an issue is environmental sustainability to the creative community in terms of print?

It is an issue. It's a Millennials issue. The generation of 'print buyers' coming through now have a sustainable conscience, and if you ignore that you're going to lose out longer term. And that's whatever area you're in, be it fashion,

decor, events - it has to be part of your agenda.

What has been holding things back as far as I can see, is the availability of consumables - which is again where TexIntel connects in. We already have lots of sustainable suppliers in the sustainability section, but as with the printers directory, it will gradually build. Creatives can use it, but so can printers, and indeed they are using it! Why wouldn't they - you can spend weeks trawling around looking for suitable materials - this will take you straight through to workable options. The same goes for sourcing inks etc. Whether you are volume producer, small design studio, print company - the idea is that this is a quick reference tool for everybody.

I'm frequently editorialising about the need for PSPs to do better in engaging with creatives, but it can be difficult to reach them. Do you think designers need to do more too to open themselves up to what must be useful information?

Perhaps it's because I'm a designer myself, rather than a printer, and have my own brand etc., but I find creatives are happy to have a conversation about digital print possibilities. I have been talking with them my whole life so perhaps it is all about speaking their language as we keep saying, and also maybe about perception - that as a designer I'm not going to bamboozle them with terminology they just won't understand.

So do we need some sort of 'ambassador for digital print' - people like yourself - to put in front of creatives?

Absolutely, and that's why I work with Fespa along those lines. I did it for the Berlin show and I'll be doing it again for the Munich show in 2019. It sounds a bit corny, but my role will be to translate that conversation on print into a format that engages and inspires visually. So, using the technologies and substrates that the manufacturers provide to create live on the show floor products that capture the imagination.

Everybody wants a USP. In dye-sub we're right at the start of what could be an explosion of opportunity, but it needs people to play with kit and materials and inks to push boundaries. TexIntel is a sort of melting pot of information that should help people do that.

IT'S ABOUT
DECONSTRUCTING
BOUNDARIES
REALLY, AND I
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FOR PARTIES FROM
ALL SIDES

You done

Opponents are playing tough, daring businesses to issue court proceedings and risk substantial court fees, meaning many disputes that have a good chance of winning are going unheard. But, with the right support, you can do better than just chalk it down to experience as lawyer Gemma Carson outlines.

SO HOW DO YOU PUT THINGS RIGHT WHEN A TRADE DISPUTE ESCALATES? COMMERCIAL LITIGATION LAWYER GEMMA CARSON OF WRIGHT HASSALL EXPLAINS HOW TO GET ON THE RIGHT TRACK TO RESOLUTION.

1.

GET DOCUMENTING

It sounds obvious, but do you include a clear dispute resolution clause in all your business contracts? You should - it can really help you should a dispute arise. It enables you to outline each stage of the process as each party's obligations increase. A lawyer can check the wording of contracts to help prevent confusion at a later date.

Whether or not you have clauses in place, be sure to keep records of key details such as product or service details, warranties, leases, agreements, along with dates and times of any correspondence that takes place between you and your customer. This may be referred to if a claim is brought and could possibly be used as evidence to help support your case.

2.

KEEP CALM

Remember to remain objective throughout a business disagreement, avoiding the use of any offensive or abusive language in communications that could provoke further conflict or be used against you at a later stage in the process.

Staying calm and professional can help negotiations run smoother and is more likely to secure a quick resolution, without the matter escalating.

3.

BE CLEAR

Minor disagreements can be handled over the phone, whilst more complex issues may require face-to-face discussion. Either way, make sure you listen carefully to the aggrieved party and respond clearly so there is no possible way they can misconstrue your perspective or intentions.

If required, instruct a law firm that is willing to attend business meetings, review contentious correspondence before it is sent out, and be a professional sounding-board to test strategies.

All of these services can be 'behind the scenes' from your opponent's point of view, so the lawyers' involvement need not exacerbate any existing tension.

4.

THINK CREATIVELY

Compile a list of possible, yet realistic, solutions that you can put forward for discussion in negotiations. If you contact a law firm early in the process, it should be creative in its approach to problem-solving, considering all practical options available to assess if a resolution can be reached without the need to go to court. That should be the last resort.

YOUR CLAIM
MAY FALL AT
THE FIRST
HURDLE
IF YOU'RE
UNCERTAIN
ABOUT THE
IMPACT IT WILL
HAVE ON YOUR
BUSINESS AND
FINANCES

me wrong

WHILST THERE IS A COST TO FUNDING, THE BENEFIT IS BEING ABLE TO HEDGE THE RISK AND LIMIT IT

5.

ESTABLISH YOUR POSITION

Can the dispute be resolved without the need to start court proceedings? If not, and your business has a claim against an opponent with the means to pay, law firms with specialist commercial dispute resolution expertise - and more importantly, funding prowess - will find a funding solution for the case to get it off the shelf and its value realised.

Your claim may fall at the first hurdle if you're uncertain about the impact it will have on your business and finances, even if it does have good legal prospects. So, be sure that your case contains all the elements required to establish a legal claim before you proceed further.

6.

FIND THE RIGHT LAW FIRM

Lawyers that specialise in litigation not only have expertise in the court process, they are specialist negotiators and problem solvers - their early input in a business disagreement will often deliver a resolution more quickly.

In terms of funding the dispute, the right law firm should be well versed in the range of funding products available to you and will distil the wealth of information into easy to understand options. It should focus on what the outcome may look like for you - with and without funding - so that informed decisions can be made as to your best option. Achieving a financial benefit for the claimant client should be the law firm's primary concern, not just winning the case at trial and disregarding how the costs incurred impact you.

7.

GET TO GRIPS WITH FUNDING

The funding solution must be transparent and easy to understand. Conditional fee arrangements, backed by insurance, can be better understood if they are explained to you in terms of the likely overall financial outcome if the case is won or lost. There are various costs claimants will need to consider, with different products available to address each one. Details on the various funding options are available from most law firms, but in brief, the costs are:

- Your lawyer's costs. One option is to enter into a conditional fee agreement, where some or all of the costs are only payable if you are successful and your lawyer shares at least some of the risk with you. Alternatively, your own costs may be met by an existing insurance, like business or home cover. There are also third-party funders who, in return for a fee, will invest in claims to enable them to be brought.
- Your expenses - also known as 'disbursements'. These include court fees, barristers' fees and experts' fees. Again, you may have existing insurance that covers these. Otherwise 'after-the-event' (ATE) insurance can sometimes be obtained to meet these costs, or a third-party funder may cover them.
- Your opponent's costs and expenses. If your claim is unsuccessful you are likely to be ordered to pay at least some of your opponent's costs. Again, insurance or the investment of a third-party funder can be used to meet these costs.

8.

WEIGH UP THE COSTS, RISKS AND BENEFITS

Remember, funding is not free. Where the payment of costs depends on a successful outcome, there will of course be more to pay if you are successful, to balance the risk of that fee being lost. A third-party funder will charge a fee, which is usually calculated as a percentage of the damages awarded or the monies invested. After-the-event insurance will attract a premium, however, these costs can sometimes be deferred until conclusion of the case to assist the claimant in meeting these liabilities.

Funding enables you to run claims you otherwise would not wish to fund - either due to lack of available funds or because you do not wish to divert valuable cash from the business.

Whilst there is a cost to funding, the benefit is being able to hedge the risk and limit it. Those of you that use funding products may receive less of your claim overall, but it enables you to limit the potential liability you would otherwise be exposed to should you lose.

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HATCHING A PLAN

GARY TOOMEY'S FLEDGLING VEGAN PSP IS ON TRACK TO TURNOVER £1M IN ITS SECOND YEAR OF BUSINESS. THE NUMBERS SEEM TO STACK UP, BUT IS THAT WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT?

"No one lives isolated and every action we take affects others and nature. We believe we need to protect the planet we live in, so we have made conscious decisions about how we run our business." So says Gary Toomey who gave birth to Hatch Print in July 2017 - and why it's vegan. Yes, vegan - since March 2018 it has held Vegetarian Society Approved vegan status. But that's not all.

"Offering 100% animal-free products is a great achievement for Hatch as well as the printing industry. But it doesn't stop there, we also offer recycled paper options, recycle our waste, have CO2 neutral press and LED lighting in our factory and are Gophr partners, meaning customers' orders can be delivered by bicycle (no pollution) the very same day," adds an enlightened Toomey, prompting PSPs to: "think of your product, suppliers and location and search for options to make it more sustainable and green." As he sees it, "running a business in an environmentally-friendly way is becoming less of a choice. Nowadays, I believe it's a necessity."

Doing that has paid off for this innovative Bermondsey-based company that only this autumn reinforced its green credentials by offering a fully recyclable roller banner to the UK market. With a cardboard constructed base, paper based display and printed with vegan accredited processes, Hatch believes the product to be 100% recyclable due to its fully compostable materials. Its full size is 800 x 2000mm and, if carefully dealt with, it can be used multiple times. Oh, and its base has a lining of seeds so users can bury it when done with and potentially have a bed of flowers to mark the spot!

It might sound whacky, but it's based on commercial nous - as well as on an ethos to do the right thing. The company had a sales target of £500,000 in its first year and "we were just short by a couple of quid so, all in all we were very happy. Our average order value and daily order count are all where we need them to be and growth is steady with the target for our second year being £1m," says Toomey, explaining that online orders (processed directly through the website) account for around half of the work Hatch produces in terms of job numbers. Of

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those, 60-70% are for large-format roller banner orders.

"With the ability to deliver same day into the city [London] and next day internationally we are in a great position to hit some real crazy turnaround times," enthuses Toomey, who says: "I would expect that figure to grow as we plan on releasing more roller banner options."

"Adapt or die' has never been more relevant. Keeping products and services relevant is imperative - reacting, revising and innovating is key. It's about listening to customers and transforming opinions into insight about the market and acting on that."

"I've been in print for good decade, I've worked in lots of areas, artwork, printing, large-format sales, marketing, so I guess I have developed a very well rounded set of skills. A lot of companies seem to be becoming more and more automated but you'll notice that, through that, the customer service side of things begins to tail off so... if we wanted Hatch to be a success we knew we had to make sure customer service was a key part of our operation. And that meant being greener."

Given it uses HP large-format printers for its roller banners and HP Indigo for all of its small-format work, Toomey says "we had to work with HP to have all the inks signed off as vegan. We also worked with the Vegetarian Society, discussing our products, the materials we use, the packaging, tape we use, everything. It was great to really go back to the roots of a product and tick off every aspect to ensure everything is as green as it possibly can be."

"I think in a world which is waking up to being green and ethical we need to work together as an industry to develop products that are just that - ethical, green, recyclable."

"We have lots of ideas, lots of products ready to release, lots still in R&D which we will release when we know we are ready and have the ability to deliver and hold our ground. We are very excited for the year ahead and what we can bring to the market."

It will be interesting to see how this works out and whether being vegan is good for business longer term, but it's not all about the money. As Toomey points out: "The main thing is that we did it for ourselves, for our impact on society and earth, and I think that's the main thing, right?"

BEING WIDTH WISE



WHAT'S EATING WIDE-FORMAT PRINT CHIEFS, AND WHERE IS BUSINESS AND THE SECTOR HEADING? WE BROUGHT TOGETHER FIVE CLUED-UP MDS TO THE ANNUAL IMAGE REPORTS ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION TO GET THEIR INSIGHT. HERE'S WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY....

"It's the unknown of Brexit that's the issue." That comment by Andrew Burdett, MD of Very Displays at the opening of the 2018 Widthwise Round Table on the state of business in the UK/Ireland large-format print sector, pretty much set the tone for the whole afternoon's discussion, which this year brought together print chiefs from five PSPs representing the broad swath of players in this market. Plenty of other topics were of course up for discussion, but time and again we came back to the issue of Brexit.

"Yes, it's the uncertainty that's the killer," agreed Signbox MD Mark Bartlett. "When I look at our business, which mainly handles London-based signage contracts for the architectural market, I can see that the contractors are still very busy. But the work we're doing was pre-ordered five years ago. Architects here are now starting to talk about work slowing down over the next few years. We come in at the end of the build cycle, so we expect to see that slowdown hitting us. Added to that, there are many other places in the world where people are continuing to invest. If parts of the City [London] relocate to other countries we'll see even more reduction in what we get. That in turn is impacting how we look at things like investment and growth plans."

KEY WIDTHWISE 2018 DATA

- 151** PSPs responded to the 2018 survey
- 60%** have up to 5 employees - 5% over 100
- 51%+** have a turnover up to £250,000 - nearly 15% a turnover £1m+ (almost 10% over £5m)
- For 30%** large-format (LF) print is under 20% of turnover - for just under 6% it is 100%
- 44%** said LF margins increased in 2017 - nearly 18% saw a decrease
- 43%** said LF margins better than other parts of their business - almost 10% said worse.
- 40%** said they were concerned about their business's prospects, but less so than in 2017 - 11% felt more anxious than in 2017
- 20%** said Brexit will be harmful to business - 10% said beneficial (rest not sure)
- 35%** said they had a zero spend on kit/products across their whole business in 17/18.
- 47%** said they were not planning to buy a new LF printer in 2018/19 - 37% said they were.
- Only 3%** said they have invested in Industry 4.0.
- 75%** of the rest said they didn't plan to in 2018 either
- 45%** said it's more important to offer green print options than it was two years ago, but 22% said less important!
- 25%** said no shift - that has never been important!



"That's a problem with UK people not wanting to do those kind of jobs."

"It is a Brexit issue in that foreign workers feel unhappy here since the Brexit vote - speaking for Lancashire anyway - and that impacts the skilled labour workforce I need for my business," came back Maclaren. And so it continued...

Speaking of skills requirements in the sector, Burdett pointed out that hiring people with foreign language skills is a focus for Very Displays. "I came in as MD in January and since then we've been fighting Brexit negativity. We're having to work harder than we ever thought we would, but in our first year we'll do £5m worth of business, a third of which is from outside the UK. 20% of business is in large-format print, the rest is in display hardware, and we see big opportunities in the UK and abroad. Hence we're looking to open a business in the Euro currency, and to hire people with language skills."

Will newcomers include those capable of speaking Chinese, given the company does a lot of trade there, a situation that has its own issues. "We buy a lot from China to try and keep costs down, but even there it has become much more expensive," said Burdett. "I have to now go further north to buy cheaper supplies and travel about from region to region to find the right products at the right prices."

"We buy from China too and find prices are getting higher," said Maclaren, pointing out that rising costs across the UK and Europe are impacting business, and that "the dollar issue is massive for us".

"The thing is, materials prices have shot up, from wherever you source them," outlined Bartlett. "Our turnover is still around £4.5m but margins are down because we have to tender for projects a year in advance, and for us the money is not in the job at the price you're committed to doing it for."

"And price pressure on the print we deliver is such that we can't put prices up. We've seen people in Bulgaria selling print for more than we are - and that's on textiles where the margin is supposed to be," laughed Maclaren. "And that's without considering transport costs etc., that are also going up. I find it's now cheaper to ship to parts of mainland Europe than to Ireland for instance."

"Our turnover is static but margins down because costs have gone up," added Wilson. "We work hard at trying to work the shortest supply chain to keep things in check, but the prices just keep going up, especially in regards to self-adhesive vinyl and textiles. I find it quite unpalatable that once a few biggies put prices up, everybody else follows, even though they can't all possibly be in the same boat. We've dropped suppliers because of that."

Clark put the situation in a nutshell: "Creeping costs are the norm. One day you look at your system and you realise that since the last time you looked a roll of material has gone up from £400 to £500. You can't afford to not keep constant watch."

Continuing on the theme of rising costs, Bartlett re-entered the fray on the issue of staffing. "We're definitely seeing a pressure on wages. We are based close to Heathrow, which has a huge workforce and pays well, so finding the right people at the right price is a real issue for us. Plus, youngsters are pressurised to earn

"We're already very clearly seeing a dip in business because of the state of the UK economy. The minute we had a vote for Brexit we saw business slow down," added Andy Wilson, joint MD of PressOn. "This year has felt slightly recession-like as far as I'm concerned. Turnover is static. It's the whole 'wait and see' mentality that is doing the damage."

At this point Wilson's sparring partner Richard Clark, MD of Raccoon, admitted: "I'm a Brexiteer - I hold my hand up! And I agree that we have to get through this as soon as possible and get a deal of some sort that keeps the UK as a trading partner with Europe." He added: "The argument to my mind, is that we in Britain start making more and selling to other countries," admitting that Raccoon "doesn't sell into Europe, but we do buy."

"We need to remember that Europe is not our only trading partner. I'm still taking enormous amounts of money from companies outside of Europe," interjected Wilson, trying to lift the mood. "Those opportunities will remain post-Brexit. The Pound is in the toilet but it gives us an opportunity to do business with new people."

But Stuart Maclaren, founder of YourPrintPartner (YPP), was not to be appeased. "I think Brexit is a nightmare," he said, highlighting issues he's facing with foreign workers leaving the business. "We have EU people working with us - with the skills I can't find elsewhere - and they're leaving the country because they just don't feel welcome in the UK anymore."

"But that's not a Brexit issue," countered Clark.

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**2018 WIDTHWISE
ROUND TABLE**



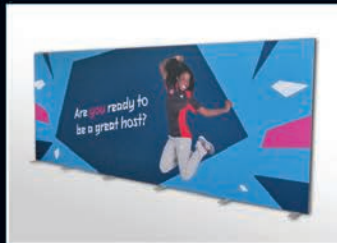
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well because of their own costs - they come out of university with a £50,000 debt, have high housing costs etc."

"Similarly, I'm damned if I can recruit the right person to bridge the gap between marketing and customer service. In 12 months I've taken on three people, one of whom didn't even start because they were offered more money somewhere else. Millennials come in, fancy a change and go," said Wilson, to which Clark added: "It's that Tinder mentality. They're never satisfied with what's in front of them."

"Also, people are 'sold' this better life/work balance philosophy, which can be really hard on a business where you need people who will put the work in when it's needed," continued Wilson, with Barlett joining in: "In the US people tend to work where and when needed. Here staff want six weeks holiday, not to have to travel far..."

"Sub-contractors and freelance can be the answer, which is why we're seeing so many more in areas like installation," stressed Wilson.

When it comes to in-house staff recruitment, designers are a point of focus, unsurprising given the findings of the Widthwise poll which flagged up creative design as a key area of investment and development.

"We've taken on a designer who was made redundant from John Lewis to help bridge the gap between us and clients wanting more experiential/creative projects," said Clark, who already diversified his one-time vehicle wrap specialist business into bespoke vehicle rental (and more) a few years back, though large-format print still accounts for over half of turnover.

"The thing is, we get a lot of visuals with a brief that doesn't really explain what the client really wants. They don't really know! So we're left to interpret sketches etc. and present back to them, with prices, so the client understands how it all comes together. We've invested in the kit and software to do that but you need someone who can put it in front of them and talk them through the project in terms they'll understand. Basically, we're filling in the gaps for clients who no longer have the in-house staff at their end to talk to us properly about what they want."

To nods of agreement that the 'professional print buyer' is dead if not yet buried, the conversation turned towards customer development - and how that is impacting PSP's strategic planning. Attention focused on Maclaren as he explained that as of November the YPP structure was changing rather significantly to reflect a growing focus on the consumer market for personalised printed products.

"We want to be the Moonpig of large-format Web-to-print in the personalised gift market," he said, to what were practically gasps around the table.

"We are changing massively. The £3m turnover YPP soft signage business will have a new commercial director, and Santa Sacks, our £500,000 online personalised Christmas

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SERVICE (Wilson)



gift business, will run separately, as will the new CustomerGifts online business which is just kicking off. (see feature: <http://bit.ly/2ILgXtV>).

"The new service offers almost 3,000 products that consumers can personalise online, including many branded to the likes of Warner Bros etc. Around 70% of the production will be handed by us, but we also have two other licensed printer partners to fulfil orders. The whole point is that we have the kit [which includes a newly ordered 140m²/hr 1.8m wide Mimaki TS55] and staff to run production overnight without impacting on what we already do during the day!"

To a barrage of questions from other Round Table participants, Maclaren pointed out that as more dye-sub printers are coming to market with a better ROI and easier operation (eg inline fixation), and thus competition in the textile print market becomes more fierce, "we thought we needed to step it up".

"I think the consumer market is the way to go," said Maclaren, prompting comments that we've become used to in relation to both that sector and to Web-to-print.

"But dealing with the general public is a nightmare," said Wilson. "Managing expectation is really difficult. If I have someone who wants a one-off car wrap for instance, I hand it to someone else. And if you have a kit failure and 50,000 personalisation orders you'll end up on the national news!"

"Also, so many people expect free delivery, free returns etc. - wanting a fab product at a rock bottom price," added Clark.

Maclaren was not to be dissuaded, accepting that: "Web-to-print in large-format is not easy because people

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think you can turn a tiny crap image into a something high res and fab. But we think we've got a very workable service." He's got pluck - and a vision that's driving him. "I want to make as much money as I can, as fast as possible, and exit this business by I'm 35."

That created a stir and got people talking about online development. Bartlett pointed out that Signbox has invested in its eshop (for non-printed signage products), much of which was funded through R&D tax relief. "We do quite a lot of R&D and have got back £165,000 in tax relief on projects conducted over the last two years," enthused Bartlett.

Burdett too said R&D tax relief had been forthcoming, prompting general discussion on the what's, how's and why's of claiming. But of course, not all services offered by PSPs are developed in-house. Indeed, plenty are outsourcing to test new markets or to provide 'additional' services to keep investment - and risk - in check.

Bartlett for instance pointed out that: "Large-format print is a very specialist part of our business, accounting for around 40% of our turnover. The rest is metal bashing for signage. We'd need to make a major investment in a new unit to grow at all because we are so tight now for space. Our Dursts handle glass manifestations and HPs our wallpaper requirement. When it comes to other print it is cheaper and more sensible to outsource than to make the decision to invest in the space, kit and staff we'd need to take on to do the job ourselves."

Wilson said he's seen a big increase in trade work, now a significant part of the company's business, while Burdett flagged up that Very Displays "sells only to the trade, a growing opportunity because printers don't want to invest themselves necessarily right now, especially not in specialist kit." Thus we came full circle.

So just what exactly is going on when it comes to investment? 35% of those PSPs responding to the last Widthwise poll said they had a zero spend on kit/products across their whole business in 2017/18. 47% said they were not planning to buy a new LF printer in 2018/19, only 3% said they have invested in Industry 4.0. Almost 75% of the rest said they didn't plan to do so in 2018 either.

"Don't underestimate the level of kit capability already on the market," said Wilson. "Companies that have invested over the last few years now still have really good kit."

"Yes, kit longevity is better than it used to be, especially with all the firmware updates now available, and thanks to the modularity of many systems," added Maclaren. And then there's the possibility of buying secondhand kit with plenty of equipment on the market via administrators etc., though the feeling among participants was that you could get new kit at similar prices in the current climate.

"As for Industry 4.0, what is it?" asked a baffled Clark. "I've probably invested in it but don't know it." And given conversation about his use of Point Cloud Surveying technologies, it seems he has. "I was asked if we could do one of those," said Bartlett, explaining the building scanning tool and talking of the trend towards value-add technological investment for closer customer relationship building.

And what about robotics and production automation? "It's just not palatable to our generation," said Wilson. "The likes of me enjoy the craft part of the business. At what point do we just sit at home pulling in the cash?" That sounded aspirational to some, like Maclaren: "Our

W2P orders are fully automated. The system even prints off the barcoded labels for shipping."

Perhaps the environment would be more of a unifying topic as the Round Table grew to a close. Well, perhaps not! As expected it divided the group, with Bartlett saying that there's little call for things like plastic-free products in the architectural market as yet, Burdett pointing to the "waste scrapheaps in China" where he does much business, and Maclaren saying he's "never been asked for 'green' certificates".

On the other hand, Wilson said clients such as HS2 need information down to engine compliance on its delivery vehicles, and that "PVC is a big concern". Clark went as far as to say its 'sustainable' range of products is bringing in business, with the likes of designer and environmental champion Vivienne Westwood becoming a client. "We're talking to her too about upcycling graphics products into something else. So the conversations are happening."

Overall the Round Table participants were sanguine about prospects for 2019 and beyond. Wilson put it well: "There's plenty of opportunity in large-format print, but you need to be on your toes. There isn't the margin anymore to be anything other than on it 24 hours a day. What's important is to build sustainable communication channels with your customers. My 11 year old daughter will be our next generation of customer. We need to ask ourselves how we'll relate to them?"

WE WANT TO BE THE MOONPIG OF
LARGE-FORMAT WEB-TO-PRINT IN THE
PERSONALISED GIFT MARKET
(Maclaren)





a. Elephant trumpets Andesign message

Andesign has set a new World Record with a 3D printed elephant head produced on its Massivit 1800 machine. The 3.5m+ high model is now advertising the company's 3D model-making capabilities by appearing to smash through the wall of the Sutton Coldfield-based PSP having being unveiled in-situ to hundreds on onlookers by Andrew Mitchell MP.

Created over five days, the elephant has been weatherproofed and reinforced to withstand anything the British climate can throw at it, and will remain a permanent fixture at the Andesign site, where the spectacle brought passing traffic to a halt when unveiled.

"We're in the business of getting noticed. We have major international clients who want to achieve genuine greatness with their retail, display and advertising and this shows the incredible spectacle that can be achieved with 3D," said Andesign's founder Andy Williams. "It wasn't easy and our management team worked like hell to overcome what we soon realised were unprecedented problems - we had to chop down a door of our spray paint booth, a room we can usually drive trucks in to! This elephant is an absolute monster, there's no doubt, and it's amazing that anything as big could all be created on our 3D printer, but we'll be reaping the publicity rewards from it for many years to come."



b. Soda Stream pops

Stackawraps has produced another eye-catching 3D 'model' for retail branding - this time for SodaStream.

c. Lest we forget

To commemorate the centenary of the end of the First World War, Signs Express (Central Lancashire) worked with Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to install a 5:1 replica of the Menin Gate memorial covered in more than 30,000 knitted poppies. Signs Express transformed an MDF structure by applying over 90m of printed vinyl to represent the red bricks, plaques and decorative features.

d. Signs Express (Exeter) shows its metal

A job undertaken by Signs Express (Exeter) on behalf of Leat Student Accommodation landed the company a finalist position in the British Signs and this year. The commission included the provision of both internal and external architectural and wayfinding signage that created an industrial heritage feel, achieved by using three different metals - stainless steel, Corten steel and aged verdigris copper.

e. It's a wrap for MetroWrapz

MetroWrapz of Hollywood, Florida, won the title 'King of the Wrap World' in the Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions 'Wrap Like a King' challenge for this Mission Flyer 2.0 vehicle wrap.







Actively investigating and supporting the wide-format print sector

Authored by former print professionals, Image Reports provides intelligent news coverage which targets those that produce and sell wide- and grand-format digital print.

Dedicated entirely to the digital print provider rather than the manufacturer or supplier, Image Reports presents information via three main filters – business, technology and the environment.

Also part of the Image Reports family is Widthwise Report, an annual survey and report on the state of the UK and Irelands wide-format print sector which is packed with facts, figures and features.

Think Bigger takes a stab at defining the type, role and motivations of those the print sector is so eager to better understand!



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Someone told me recently that Millennials approach finding a job in the same way they search for a date on Tinder. As my social media expertise only extends as far as Instagram, I asked him to explain.

"It's like this," he said, flicking through the pages of an imaginary app. "You find someone on Tinder you like the look of, go on a date and, the next day, go back on Tinder and look again. You can always find someone who looks more exciting than the person you just dated."

It made sense. I don't do much recruiting but it's a hassle - especially with Millennials. In the old days, you were competing for a promising recruit with a printer on the same industrial estate, or a large local employer. Now you're competing against their fantasy employer - probably Google, Apple or Tesla. At Mole Graphics, we don't have an equivalent of the Apple genius bar. Our job titles are terribly ordinary - executive, assistant manager, manager, director - and our shop floor isn't as shiny as an Apple store's.

To be fair to Millennials, they have problems we never had. Many are encumbered with £50,000 of debt from

university, can't contemplate how they will get on property ladder without having a panic attack, and have been indoctrinated in the glories the gig economy. The gig economy is great if you're the Rolling Stones - who make \$10m a gig - but not so attractive if you're on a zero hours contract in a high street sports store.

Like Queen - and, by the way, if you haven't seen Bohemian Rhapsody yet you really should - Millennials want it all and they want it now. And who can blame them? That's how they've been sold to. Nobody's told them, "Oh, by the way, even though you're a graduate, it'll take you two years to really master your first job", because we don't want to lose them.

The other day, when I finally found someone I thought could, with a few rough edges honed off, manage our social media marketing, I was appalled (but not surprised) when, a week before she started, she tried to renegotiate her deal.

I met her halfway, reluctantly, because I couldn't face the whole rigmorale again. Will it work out? Your guess is as good as mine.

STREET

HEIMTEXTIL	PRINT UV 19	SIGN AND DIGITAL UK 2019	FESPA 2019
When? 8 - 11 January, 2019	When? 27 - 19 March, 2019	When? 2 - 4 April, 2019	When? 14 - 17 May, 2019
Where? Messe Frankfurt	Where? Encore by Wynn Resort, Las Vegas	Where? NEC, Birmingham	Where? Messe Munich
Cost? Day ticket €32	Cost? \$1,545pp. Early-bird fee is \$1,445pp before 31 December 2018.	Cost? Free for trade visitors	Cost? TBA
Who will be there? Intended as a meeting point for anyone interested in textiles you'll get exhibitors spanning the whole gamut - including digital print kit and materials suppliers. More's to the point, there is a very interesting seminar programme where you will rub shoulders with creatives.	Who will be there? This will be the 12th Print UV conference, with dive deep info on core UV processes with experts from multiple fields and case studies from successful UV printers.	Who will be there? A bit early to say but no doubt there'll be a decent number of large-format digital print orientated suppliers.	Who will be there? Most of the key players in the digital inkjet space plus those in the non-print orientated European Sign Expo running alongside.
Should you go? There were 2,975 exhibitors at the 2018 show and 70,000 visited, so yes, if textile print is in your sightline.	Should you go? A good shout if you want to better understand trends driving the growth of UV printing, hear how industry leaders have developed proprietary offerings, learn about advances in inks, coatings and equipment, oh, and network - but bear in mind it will be mostly with those in North American UV printing market. The rating below reflects the distance of the show - not its content!	Should you go? As a UK-based show it's worth attending, though exhibitors tend to keep major launches for the following Fespa event.	Should you go? Again, yes as I remains the main European show for the large-format digital print community.
Rating 7/10	Rating 6/10	Rating 8/10	Rating 10/10

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OVER TO YOU...

RICHARD FRAYLING, OWNER, SIGNS EXPRESS (TAUNTON)
WWW.SIGNSEXPRESS.CO.UK/BRANCH/TAUNTON

What's having the greatest impact on your business at the moment?

General growth within the sign industry as a whole is having the biggest impact. More and more companies are thinking outside the box when it comes to their signage needs meaning I am constantly adapting to trends and keeping my business offerings relevant. The rise of companies selling cheaper, more basic signage online with quick delivery times has also meant that I have had to ensure my prices are as competitive as possible with turnaround times my clients are happy with.

Where do you see the greatest wide-format opportunities?

Currently the most exciting opportunities within wide-format signage are around architectural, soft signage with bespoke wallpapers, wallcoverings and window graphics.

What would make your day-to-day operations easier?

With me being out of the office a lot, an office administrator would help free up more time for me to focus on growing the business.

Your favourite bit of kit is..?

I have three favourites - the HP Latex printer, Alexa and Smart Switches. I would not be able to produce the high quality signage and graphics we do, without these.

What's the best bit of business advice you've been given?

If you do a good job they will only tell 10 people but do a bad job and they will tell 100 - even more apt in this day and age. With this in my mind, I pride myself on delivering the best customer service and advice. Should any issues ever arise, I do everything I can to rectify it so the customer is always happy.

What are you most proud of achieving?

Of the relationships I have built and maintained with my long-term clients and our reputation for getting quotes back to customers within a very fast timeframe. I am also incredibly proud of my team.

What lesson does the wide-format sector need to learn?

The scale of options available in the wide-format sector is something you need to be continually looking at. The different materials and effects that can be used means the opportunities are endless in this dynamic industry.



VITAL STATISTICS

THE BRITISH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'S QUARTERLY ECONOMIC SURVEY OF 5,600 BUSINESSES INDICATES THAT THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL ECONOMIC GROWTH IS SET TO BE THE LOWEST SINCE THE FINANCIAL CRISIS.

UNCERTAINTY OVER FUTURE TRADING CONDITIONS IS CONTINUING TO ACT AS A BRAKE ON BUSINESS INVESTMENT IN BOTH THE MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES SECTORS. IN Q3 2018, THE BALANCE OF FIRMS WHO LOOKED TO INVEST IN EITHER PLANT AND MACHINERY OR TRAINING FELL IN BOTH SECTORS TO THEIR LOWEST LEVEL IN OVER A YEAR. BUSINESS CONFIDENCE IN TURNOVER AND PROFITABILITY ALSO WEAKENED IN THE QUARTER.

81%

The percentage of manufacturing firms citing the cost of raw materials as the source of cost pressures has risen sharply from 65% to 81%, the highest since Q2 2011.

67%

The percentage of manufacturing firms attempting to recruit fell from 77% to 67%, Of these, 75% reported recruitment difficulties.

+44

The balance of firms confident that turnover would increase in the next 12 months fell from +47 to +44.

+29

The balance of firms confident that profitability would increase in the next 12 months fell from +35 to +29.

+20

The balance of firms reporting improved domestic orders fell from +22 to +20



Students of the future

THINK YOU KNOW ALL INKJET CAN DO? WELL, THE ANNUAL INKJET CONFERENCE, ORGANISED BY THE EUROPEAN SPECIALIST PRINTING MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION (ESMA), MIGHT CHALLENGE YOUR PERCEPTIONS.

The Inkjet Conference - or the TheIJC as it's known - has one purpose: to provide insights and inspiration for any business impacted by digital inkjet. As additive manufacturing has so blatantly shown, inkjet is not only competitive as a printing method - it is being adopted as a manufacturing process and TheIJC sets out to discuss applications ranging from aeronautics, packaging, sportswear and design through to textiles, ceramics, laminates, printed electronics...and graphics. While praised for its technical content, the conference is not just a destination for techies, engineers and chemists. The most recent iteration comprised 61 presentations from all corners of the industry and research world, so it's hardly surprising that it flagged up some issues and developments you may not be total conversant with, but perhaps should be if you want to keep a step ahead of the rest. Take ColorGate's new 3D Surface Creator for instance.

You likely know that for a growing number of customers, when it comes to surface imitation photo-realistic flat prints no longer cut it. Looking like the real thing is no longer good enough - it has to feel like it too. It's that haptic effect clients are after.

CEO of German-based ColorGate, Thomas Kirschner, pointed out at TheIJC 2018 that its 3D Surface Creator allows you to provide just that. It captures natural surfaces - such as weathered wood or leather - including colour, glossiness and depth information. It can scan templates of up to 49 x 85cm, with several shots taken with different illuminations. All surface characteristics are digitalised, visualised, manipulated, evaluated and reproduced at one workstation. The same 'materials' can then be replicated at different production sites under different conditions. Neat.

And how about jetting fluids to save the planet? Renewable energy is much talked about but still

LOOKING LIKE
THE REAL THING
IS NO LONGER
GOOD ENOUGH
- IT HAS TO FEEL
LIKE IT TOO

relatively expensive and far from balancing out the traditional fossil sources. Inkjet-printed solar cells based on halide perovskites can be a game changer - 'Science' magazine listed them among the top ten scientific breakthroughs in 2013 and since then the technology has been gaining ground.

One of the newcomers to TheIJC, a Polish start-up called Saule Technologies, presented how perovskites - already on par with silicon cells in terms of efficiency - can be solved and deposited on random surfaces, including clothing, paper or even building walls.

Inkjet printing enables designing of freeform perovskite solar modules, as the shapes and areas covered by each layer can be all tailored according to the requirements. Currently, Saule is collaborating with the construction giant Skanska on an office building project where semi-transparent and opaque perovskite solar modules will be integrated in windows and facades, so could you be involved in creating electricity generating walls and windows, even clothes covered in inkjet-printed photovoltaic layers? It's a thought.

And what about edible inkjet? Printing inks onto foodstuffs or pharmaceuticals such as capsules and tablets has been established for some time to allow traceability in the supply chain and date coding to be done on the fly. This has been dominated by continuous inkjet printing e.g. date coding of eggs and marking pills with a logo.

But the trend towards personalisation is also tickling tastebuds. Swiss-based Sensient Imaging Technologies has introduced a water-based edible ink called SensiJet FSE, which can be used for personalising confectionary, baked goods and other food items.

With plenty of inkjet development to come, keep your eyes and ears open for more on TheIJC 2019, which will take place on 22-23 May 2019 in Chicago and on 29-30 October 2019 in Dusseldorf.

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