

IMAGE REPORTS

ISSUE 4 • VOLUME 27 • AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019

ONSET X HS the ultimate flatbed production platform



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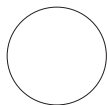
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STRAIGHT BACKWALL.

	Hardware	Graphic	Total
2.4m	£75.00	£180.00	£255.00
3.0m	£78.00	£190.00	£268.00
4.0m	£100.00	£235.00	£335.00
5.0m	£125.00	£330.00	£455.00
6.0m	£150.00	£395.00	£545.00



CURVED BACKWALL.

	Hardware	Graphic	Total
2.4m	£58.00	£180.00	£238.00
3.0m	£63.00	£200.00	£263.00
4.0m	£80.00	£250.00	£330.00
5.0m	£90.00	£380.00	£470.00
6.0m	£100.00	£400.00	£500.00



FABRIC TUBE DISPLAY.

	Hardware	Graphic	Total
600mm	£29.00	£90.00	£119.00
800mm	£40.00	£95.00	£135.00
900mm	£44.00	£100.00	£144.00
1200mm	£58.00	£110.00	£168.00
1500mm	£68.00	£120.00	£188.00



FABRIC POP UP.

	Hardware	Graphic	Total
3x2	£80.00	£145.00	£225.00
3x3	£102.00	£175.00	£277.00
3x4	£125.00	£210.00	£335.00
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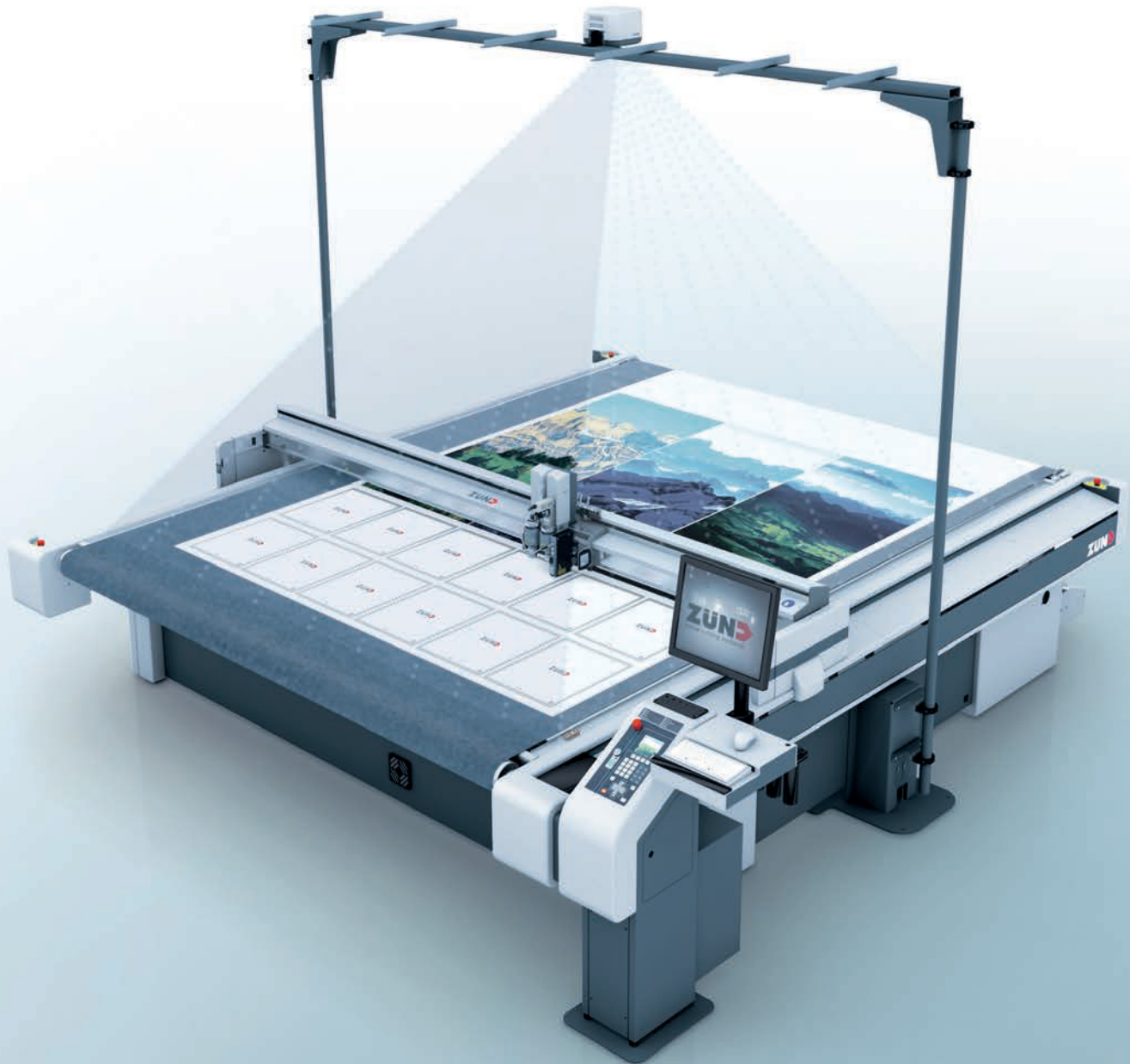
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TO BOLDLY GO...

Fear can be debilitating. Is this why Industry 4.0 and artificial intelligence are still so low down your agenda? According to our 2019 Widthwise poll of UK/Ireland-based large-format print producers, these topics hardly register as priorities. According to PrintFactory's Toby Burnett - who at Fespa Global did a straw poll of PSPs on the subject - it's a lack of understanding that is the problem. And what we don't understand tends to be feared and/or ignored. Can we afford to let that happen when it comes to such technological advances that will, for sure, impact upon how we do business? In this issue we explore the topics - you may be surprised at how fast, or slow, things are moving!

Another recent development that has everyone sitting up thinking, is the new PVC Banner Recycling Scheme - a collaboration between Soyang Europe and waste/recycling company Blue Castle. Yes, it really is happening. After years of talk in the industry about how we're going to deal with this problem - one that is becoming ever more critical in a greening supply chain - there's now a live solution. Gardners likes it. The company is one of four UK-based PSPs that has been taking part in trials. Read what managing director Richard Courtney has to say about it in the article starting on p32. You'll find out all you need to know about the scheme right there.

Should diversification be somewhere near the top of your 'must do' list it may be worth turning to p25. StackaWraps is on the lookout for PSPs to partner as it works to expand its 3D graphics Panawrapping services. Could be a nice little bolt-on for your business.

So, there's plenty to get stuck in to while you're lounging on that sunbed haha. Keep smiling
See you again in the autumn.

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Soyang introduces PVC recycling scheme

Soyang Europe has partnered with waste management specialist Blue Castle to create the PVC Recycling Scheme.

"The PVC Recycling Scheme is the first step towards a very real recycling solution to the use of PVC banner material, which is widely used within the printing industry, but not currently recyclable," said Soyang Europe managing director Mark Mashiter. "The demand for print providers and their customers to consider the environmental impact of the print they produce is a hot topic and we've been in discussions with our customers about the need for this for some years, which until now has seemed unattainable. Now we're delighted to be able to reveal that, thanks to the dedication and specialist knowledge brought to the table by Blue Castle Group, we can now offer PVC waste recycling to our customers."

(See feature p33 for details)

Hollywood Monster's EFI Vutek investment nears £5m

Recent installation of an EFI Vutek FabriVu 340i by Hollywood Monster has brought the number of Vutek printers at the operation to 11, in a total investment approaching £5m. MD Simon McKenzie expects to add another FabriVu within the next 12 months.

This new printer - which like the others were bought from CMYUK - is expected to enable Hollywood Monster to take full advantage of the growth in appetite for digital textile printing. It has also increased capacity for the busier months.

"We haven't just invested in capex, we have invested in people to make this work," added McKenzie. "We have taken on some fantastic and proven commercial people that will really drive this product within their portfolio of clients, and I am very confident that within the next 12 months we will be looking at a second FabriVu."

At present, the FabriVu 340i, at Hollywood Monster runs alongside a Vutek GS5000R, 5R, two HS125 Pro's and two digital cutting tables.

"A lot of our clients purchase dye-sub and then give us their UV production," said McKenzie. "This is a great position for us as we can really be a true one-stop-shop, and give our customers the belief that we can deliver a complete event or retail campaign. This is a major USP for us as our customers don't like to split campaigns, due to inconsistency in colours, extra delivery costs and so on."

McKenzie added: "We expect the company to grow by 15% this financial year and a further 15-20% next year, which is really encouraging and in line with our business plan to reach £13m for next year. We will continue to explore new technical advances to enable us to be at the forefront of the latest technology."

Inca Digital brings out Onset X HS range

Inca has officially launched the Onset X HS (High Speed) UV inkjet printer range - comprising the Onset X2 HS and the Onset X3 HS - which print up to 1450m²/hr using a new single cycle mode.

The new single cycle print mode on the Onset X HS optimises print jetting profiles and jetting frequencies, to deliver the quoted 1450m²/hr speed, which is more than 50% higher than previously published throughput figures.

Downtime too has been reduced according to the manufacturer via automated on- and off-loading systems, UV shutter alignment and table skin adjustments, bringing job set-up time down from an average of 15 minutes to around 30 seconds.

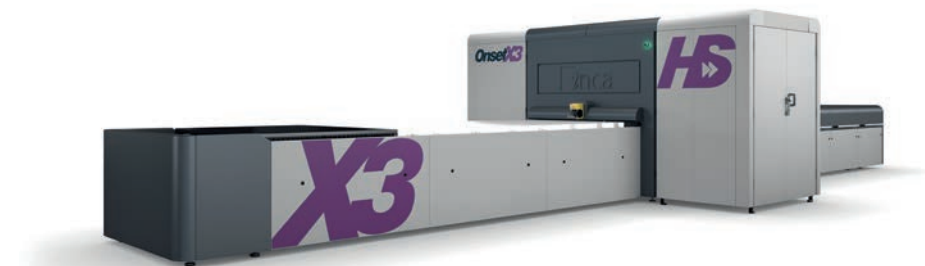
A new patented Fujifilm ink, Uvijet OX - which the company said achieves exceptional adhesion on rigid plastic media at the highest speeds - has been developed specifically for the Onset X HS machines to help PSPs target applications/markets requiring high quality print on corrugated board, packaging and non-PVC rigid plastics.

"We are very proud of this new range of Onset X HS machines. They are the latest example of

Inca Digital's proud tradition of launching inkjet machines that have a transformative effect on the industry. To secure such a significant increase in the headline speeds and overall productivity of the Onset X series is an outstanding achievement. Credit must go to the R&D teams at Inca Digital and our partner, Fujifilm, both of whom have worked hard to bring together an integrated solution that puts us once again right at the front of inkjet innovation," said Stephen Tunncliffe-Wilson, CEO Inca Digital.

"We all know the market is constantly evolving, and print businesses need to ensure that they have printing technology that not only fits today's needs, but gives them the ability to respond with speed and agility to tomorrow's challenges. I believe the Onset X HS range gives these companies the speed, productivity, quality and flexibility to take on these challenges and opportunities with confidence," Tunncliffe-Wilson, added.

The new Onset X HS series is available now and sold exclusively on a global basis by Fujifilm.



Andy Kent replaces Chris Broadhurst in key role at Fujifilm

Chris Broadhurst has been replaced as general manager of the Fujifilm graphic systems division in the UK by former national sales manager Andy Kent. The UK inkjet sales team will now be led by Alice Murray.

The moves coincide with Broadhurst's promotion to head of offset, at a time when, as Fujifilm points out, offset printers are under greater pressure than ever from the combined challenges of rising aluminium prices, falling print runs and advancing digital print technology. He will now be based in Dusseldorf.

Kent brings more than 30 years of industry experience to his new role and will be based at the company's Bedford HQ.

"Fujifilm is a forward-thinking company, at the forefront of technology developments in both the offset and inkjet sectors of our industry. New developments in our Acuity, Onset X and Jet Press ranges have all been made recently and there is still more to come," he said.

XMf Workflow subscription service announced

Fujifilm is now offering its XMf Workflow solution as a subscription service.

"Many print businesses are unhappy with their current workflow solution, but struggle to justify the significant up-front cost of investing in an entirely new system. By making XMf available on subscription, benefits to small and medium sized businesses will be substantial," said John Davies, group product manager, workflow, Fujifilm Graphic Systems Europe.

Davies added: "Fujifilm XMf is one of the most comprehensive workflow platforms for managing integrated production. It has been designed to meet the hugely varied production demands of sheet-fed, web and digital printers, and is based on Adobe's PDF Print Engine. Since its inception, it has led the way in combining the creative depth of Adobe's Creative Suite applications with efficient and streamlined print production. Our XMf ColorPath and Griffin planning software solutions are already available via subscription, so we see this service as the logical next step."

Print merger creates £30m turnover business in Glasgow

Glasgow-based J Thomson Colour Printers has merged with Bell and Bain to create a £30m annual turnover business following the sale by Nick Thomson - chairman of J Thomson Colour Printers - of his 100% equity holding in the business to Bell and Bain for an undisclosed sum. A statement said all jobs at the 300-strong merged group would be protected.

The two businesses will continue to operate in their respective markets under managing directors Kevin Creechan at J Thomson Colour Printers and Karen Baillie at Bell and Bain.

Stephen Docherty, a well-known print industry executive who took full control of Bell and Bain in 2019, and who will be chairman of the merged business, said: "This exciting transaction offers us the ability to capitalise on our respective strengths to create a major force within the Scottish and UK print industry.

"With our combined resources we will be in a position both to expand our current operations and to invest substantially to create new efficiencies and opportunities for future growth.

"By investing consistently in new technology, as well as in the skills of our merged team, we

are very confident about the future for our industry and believe we can make a major impact in the UK print market."

Thomson, who will continue until the end of the year as a consultant to the merged business, said: "I am delighted that this coming together of two first-class Glasgow-based print companies will create an enhanced business with tremendous potential for growth. It is a meeting of two outstanding businesses which will provide a major boost for our industry in Scotland."

Founded in 1831 by James Bell and Andrew Bain and based in Thornliebank, Glasgow, Bell and Bain is an independent book printer and works with most of the country's major publishing houses and institutions, including both Oxford and Cambridge universities as well as the Open University.

J Thomson Colour Printers is based in Glasgow's Tradeston district and was established in 1952. It provides a full printing service to a range of large and small business across Scotland and throughout the rest of the UK.

Print Trailblazer receives approval

The print industry has its first new print standard for apprenticeships. The Print Technician Standard Level 3 programme, which began in March 2015, has received full and final approval from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) - the department given the responsibility for development, approval and review of all new Trailblazer standards by government.

The consortium has been led by the chair James Buffoni of Ryedale Group, vice chair Ian Wilton of CDS, and is made up of representatives from BCQ Group, BPIF, CDi, CDS, De La Rue, GQA, Learn2Print, Leeds City College, PageBros, Reach Plc, Ryedale Group, The Printing Charity, Unite the Union and Westrock - MPS, with the BPIF providing organisation and administrative support throughout this project.

Wilton said: "Print has a long history of support for apprenticeships and it is great to see that through the collaboration of our industry these standards have been futureproofed."

With input from the industry, the standard was first defined, and secured agreement for the standard itself as a core of print technician, with the specialist options of pre-press technician, press technician and post-press technician. This approval was secured early in 2018. The last year has seen work undertaken on developing the assessment plan to support this new standard. With the support of the BPIF and the consortium, input from training providers and awarding bodies the assessment plan has now been approved by IfATE and also by Ofqual, as the external quality assurance body, along with allocation of the funding band.

New applications categories added to Fespa awards for 2020

Fespa is now inviting entries to its 2020 awards scheme, which has four new applications-focused categories - Printeriors, packaging on paper and board, packaging on plastics, and vehicle/object wrapping.

The Printeriors award will feature five sub-categories - public spaces, hotels and restaurants, events and pop-up experiences, offices and workplaces, and retail.

Neil Felton, Fespa CEO, said of the Printeriors award in particular: "Over the last five years we have developed our Printeriors proposition to reflect the demands in the industry. We can see from our exhibitions and events that printed decor plays a big part for a number of manufacturers and PSPs. By introducing the Printeriors Award we want to share the creative examples of printed decor that our global community is producing."

In addition to the new Awards, PSPs and sign-makers can also enter projects in the established categories:

- Display and POP on paper and board
- Display and POP on plastic
- Posters
- Serigraphies and fine art
- Decals and printed labels
- Creative special effects - paper, board and plastics
- Special effects on T-shirts, garments and other textiles
- Printed garments

- Roll-to-roll printed textiles
- Glass, ceramic, metal and wood products
- Direct printing on 3D products
- Non-printed signage
- Functional printing - fascias, dials, nameplates

There is also a Young Star Award, which is marked across all categories and can be entered by 16 - 25 year olds working as an employee, trainee or student in a print-related discipline.

In addition, there are three awards which cannot be entered directly and are voted for by the Fespa community and judges:

- New for 2020 is the Judges Award for Innovation, to be selected by the Fespa judges across all categories for the most innovative piece of work.
- The Best in Show award is chosen by the Fespa Awards judges from all categories.
- The People's Choice award is voted for by Fespa's online community across all categories. Voting for this award will be open 8 November - 9 December 2019.

2020 awards entries must be submitted by Friday 1 November 2019. The shortlisted entries will be announced on 9 December 2019 and will be displayed at Fespa Global 2020, which will take place 24 - 27 March at IFEMA Exhibition Centre, Madrid, Spain. Awards winners will be announced at the Fespa Gala Night in Madrid on 25 March 2020.

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- Durst unveils Alpha Series 5 190 / 330 textile printers
- Optimism high in sign and graphics industry says association research
- Global print market to shrink in volume but grow in value says report
- Mimaki demos hybrid TX300P-1800
- VirtualSign makes it easier to picture final print in-situ
- New CEO for Onlineprinters
- Digital Sign Services takes second 5.2m wide EFI Vutek 5r+ in six months
- US visual comms group takes on director of corporate social responsibility
- Drytac consolidates operations at new Canadian site
- Imaginators founder recognised in IoD awards
- DGI extends textile printer portfolio
- FaberExposize UK appoints new creative head
- Antalis introduces out new Coala Textiles
- The Printing Charity extends its reach and impact
- Barberan introduces trueTexture print system
- Soyang adds Desardi wallcoverings to its portfolio
- Perspex Distribution introduces Palboard recycled core PVC product



ONSET X HS: THE ULTIMATE FLATBED PRODUCTION PLATFORM

NEW UV INKJET FLATBED MACHINES FROM INCA DIGITAL AND FUJIFILM OFFER A SPEED INCREASE OF OVER 50%, 'SINGLE CYCLE' PRINT MODE, FULL AUTOMATION AND 30-SECOND JOB SET-UP.

At a recent UK launch event, Inca Digital and Fujifilm announced the introduction of a powerful new addition to the market-leading Onset X UV flatbed series – the Onset X HS (High Speed) range. These new UV inkjet flatbed machines offer a substantial increase in productivity thanks to significantly higher print speeds and reduced job set-up times and, in combination with Fujifilm's new Uvijet OX ink, offer much greater versatility for printing on rigid plastics at high speed.

Featuring two new machines, the Onset X2 HS and Onset X3 HS, the new models offer a dramatic increase in speed and productivity, with the ability to print up to 1450m²/hr using a new

'single cycle' mode. The new Onset X HS models are launched with a new Fujifilm UV ink, Uvijet OX, which features a brand new, unique & patented ink technology developed by Fujifilm Speciality Ink Systems in the UK, to achieve exceptional adhesion on rigid plastic media at the highest speeds.

The Onset X HS has been introduced to help print service providers meet the increasingly demanding requirements in the display and POP market, both in terms of productivity and the versatility to print on a diverse range of media. It is capable of radically improving job turnaround times thanks to its high performance in four key areas which, in combination, put the Onset X HS platform well ahead of its competitors when it comes to real world productivity:

1. Job set-up time. The time taken to change jobs is one of the biggest causes of machine downtime, due to the set-up changes often required. These can include robotic automation adjustments, the alignment of UV shutters and the adjustment of the table skins. In the Onset X HS, these set-up procedures have now been fully automated, taking the job set-up time from around 15 minutes down to around 30 seconds, resulting in far less operator intervention, less opportunity for human error and a substantial boost to printer uptime and utilisation. As run lengths continue to come down across the industry, reductions in job set-up times become ever more significant.

2. Raw print speeds. In addition to the radical improvement in job set-up times, the Onset X HS also offers headline speed increases of over 50%. This is because of the introduction of a new 'single cycle' print mode, together with a new high performance Uvijet OX ink. The single cycle mode features optimised print and jetting profiles that allows speeds of up to 1450m² per hour to be achieved. Combined with the introduction of Uvijet OX, adhesion can be achieved across a wider range of media at the highest possible speeds. This means high speed, high quality, single cycle printing is suitable for a much wider range of applications

3. Press uptime and reliability. Print speeds and job set-up times are important, but an often overlooked area is machine reliability, as when a press is down for maintenance, it's obviously not making money for its operators. Fujifilm and Inca Digital are immensely proud of the justified reputation Onset printers have developed for extraordinary reliability, achieving 90% uptime. Intelligent features enable all Onset X printers to achieve optimum performance, and monitor and diagnose potential problems remotely before they occur. Onset hardware is built to last, with 95% of all Onset platforms ever installed still working tirelessly today. The Onset X HS, with all its added benefits, maintains this ultra-high level of reliability.

4. On the floor productivity. The productivity of the Onset X HS is further enhanced due to the automation options available. With ¾ and full automation for standard display and point of sale applications, along with a specific fully automated solution for corrugated board, the ultra-fast productivity of the Onset is matched with superb media handling systems.

PROFITABLE SUSTAINABILITY

As the sign and display industry moves increasingly away from PVC to more easily recyclable and environmentally friendly polypropylene materials, one of the major challenges facing large format

print businesses has been the difficulty of achieving consistent ink adhesion to these substrates, particularly at high speeds.

Often, production has to be slowed down to ensure that the ink adheres effectively and, in a highly competitive market, where fast, efficient production can mean the difference between turning in a profit and making a loss, this poses a huge challenge. So how can large format print businesses ensure that this important, environmentally sustainable switch is also sustainable in a business sense? In the new Onset X HS and Uvijet OX UV ink range, Fujifilm and Inca Digital have met this challenge head on.

The Onset X HS can, when paired with Uvijet OX, print on many more challenging rigid plastic substrates, reliably and at the highest possible speeds. So as applications in the sign and display sector move increasingly towards these more easily recyclable substrates – the Onset X HS and Uvijet OX ink provide the perfect solution to help large format print businesses to boost their profitability and their environmental credentials simultaneously.

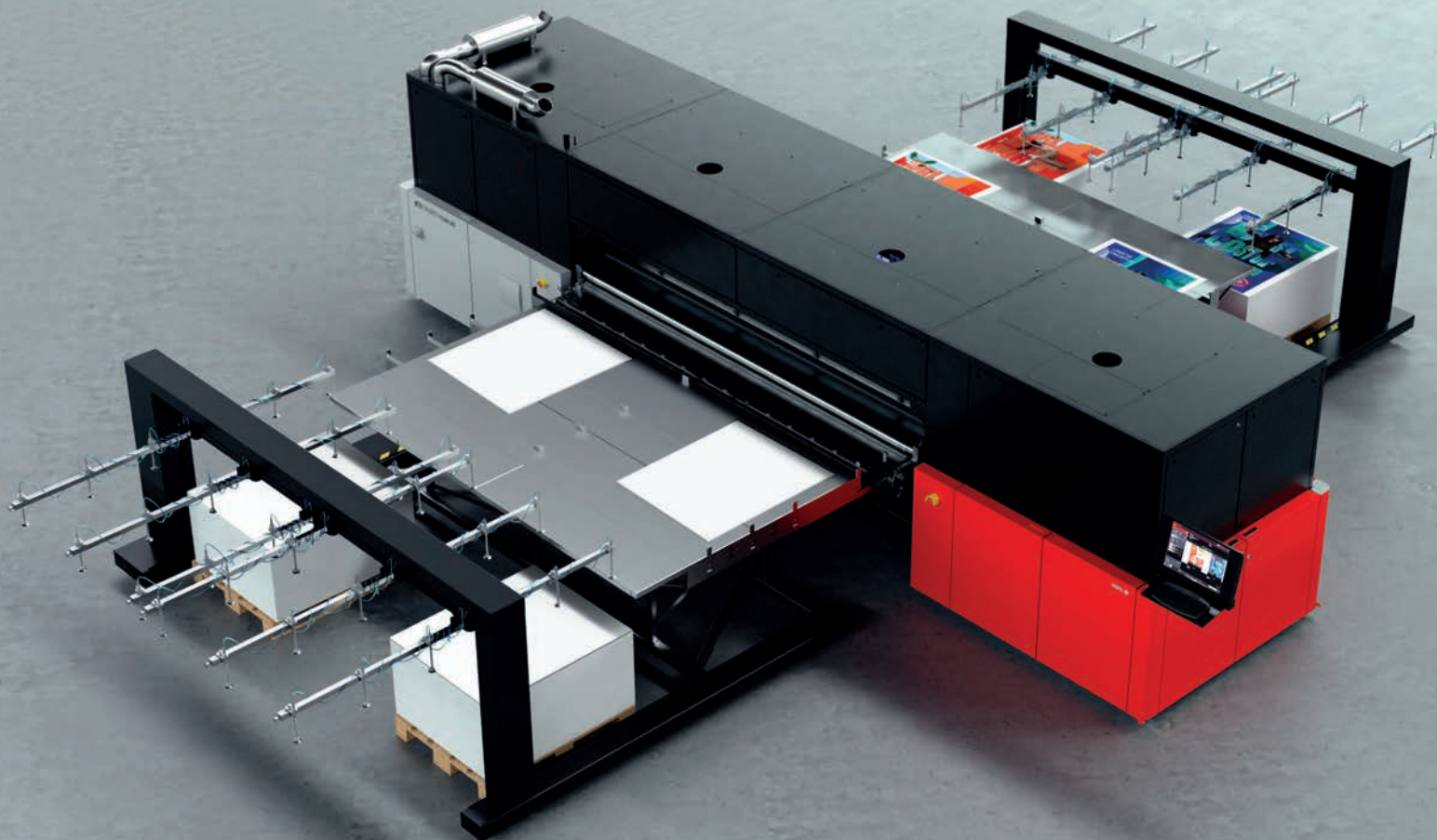
Developed in the UK by Fujifilm Speciality Ink Systems, Uvijet OX features a completely new UV ink technology that makes use of a specifically weighted monomer blend. The blend's key qualities include particularly low shrinkage when polymerised and inherently low polarity. These two factors combined offer excellent wetting properties both before and after polymerisation, providing exceptional adhesion at the interface between the plastic media and ink. This adhesion is achievable even at the highest 'single cycle' speeds of the new Onset X HS, without an impact on the quality of the finished print.

The ultimate production flatbed platform and Fujifilm's unique high performance ink, in combination, mark a milestone in the inkjet industry. Together they are set to help open up new markets for large format print businesses all around the world, while also helping these businesses to dramatically improve their environmental credentials.

UVIJET OX – KEY FEATURES

1. Outstanding adhesion to a wide range of rigid plastic substrates, especially polystyrene and fluted and flat sheet polypropylene (achieved in both four-pass satin and gloss modes)
2. Powerful curing performance in all print modes without loss of adhesion
3. Can be used with more environmentally-friendly and non-hazardous polypropylene materials without compromising print quality or finish
4. Improved scratch resistance
5. Same gloss uniformity, colour gamut and finishing characteristics as other Uvijet ink systems
6. Same stability and jetting performance as other Uvijet ink systems

THE ULTIMATE
PRODUCTION
FLATBED PLATFORM
AND FUJIFILM'S
UNIQUE HIGH
PERFORMANCE INK,
IN COMBINATION,
MARK A MILESTONE
IN THE INKJET
INDUSTRY



JETI TAURO H3300 LED

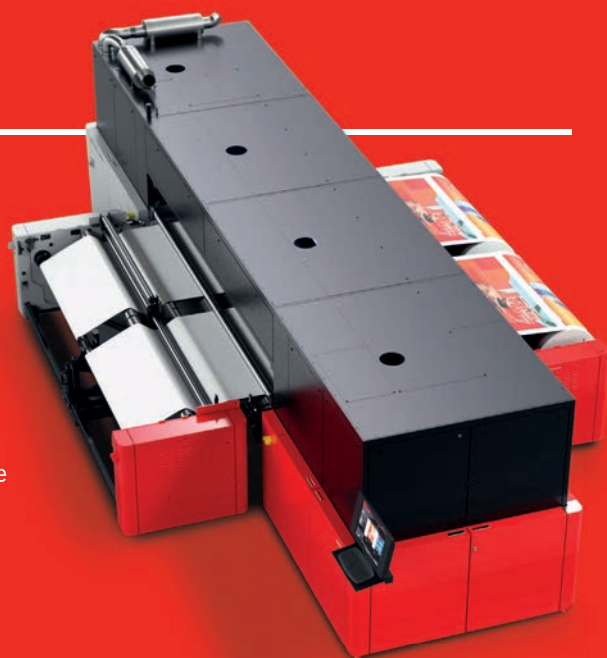
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Driven by Asanti workflow technology, integrable with Agfa's data exchange service PrintSphere and optimized to work with our high-pigmented, thin ink layer UV inks, the Jeti Tauro H3300 LED takes on any challenge.

Expect only high-quality, vivid prints that stand out every time.



THINK SMART

PRINTFACTORY'S TOBY BURNETT MADE A PUBLIC PROMISE PRE-FESPA GLOBAL 2019 - THAT HE'D USE THE EVENT TO TALK TO PSPS AND CHECK OUT HIS HUNCH THAT MANY ARE FEARFUL OF I4.0 BECAUSE THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. HERE HE DELIVERS ON THAT PROMISE.

"Fespa Global 2019 gave us a consensus: for most PSPs, the idea of getting ready for Industry 4.0 is a nightmare. They also see it as unnecessary, but anyone who's serious about staying in business competitively may have to accept that I4.0-ready workflows are an inevitability. What appears to be most frustrating, is the perception of a massive leap from 'here' to 'there' in terms of getting ready - and the lack of information about what's needed now. What people want, is practical support from the industry for the journey to Industry 4.0."

That's the feedback from Toby Burnett, director of EMEA at PrintFactory, after speaking to a huge number wide-format business owners at the event to ascertain their mindset on i4.0 - a topic that according to Image Reports' own annual Widthwise survey of PSPs is still just a niggling background thought for most.

At Fespa Global 2019 Burnett explained the benefits of investing step-by-step in Industry 4.0-ready software, such as PrintFactory's workflow software suite, which provides an Editor, a Nesting tool, a Calibrator, and a Rip. As a cloud-connected piece of software, it grows in capacity as the business does.

"When I spoke to business owners and print operators it became clear that Industry 4.0 is often misinterpreted as being a 'maybe one day' idea. It was interesting to hear how often people compared I4.0 for the wide-format print industry with self-driving cars being in everyone's garages - the 'It's a nice idea but it's not going to happen in my lifetime so I don't need to think about it...' kind of response. I disagree. But it's a good analogy," says Burnett.

"Think of it this way: a couple of decades ago, we had a simple choice when it came to buying a new car - you chose petrol or diesel. Now though, you've got electric options, hybrids, and Teslas parked everywhere. It hasn't taken us as long as we thought for things to change. And, as long as the infrastructure rolls out - and it will, we know that - driverless cars will soon be on our roads everywhere. Eventually, we'll see a huge proportion of driverless cars in showrooms and it will be more expensive - society will make it expensive - to run other types of vehicle.

"The reality is, I4.0 isn't about complex technology. It's a way of working. It's about realising the availability of high speed internet connections that let you use software to make better decisions, faster, but still do so in a way that gives you total control over the service you're providing to your customers and the business you're trying to run."

"The trouble is, the industry sometimes talks about I4.0 preparations as though people need to replace all their printers and then buy extra, expensive, new pieces of kit



PRINTERS ARE WORRIED (OR IN DENIAL) ABOUT I4.0 BECAUSE THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND I4.0 AND THE PACE OF CHANGE THAT'S HAPPENING. THAT'S WHERE WE MUST FOCUS

that can all be connected to a massive server-farm somewhere. That's not the case at all. By talking to the decision-makers in these business, I've discovered that PSPs are worried about four things...

First, they're worried about the cost of upgrades. In the short term, some of that may be justifiable. However, with changes in the economy on the horizon, manufacturers will probably move towards pay-as-you-go models, so it won't be an issue. And in reality, any software that's helping you to prepare for Industry 4.0 should save you money from day one in the process.

Second, PSPs are worried about using complex software that, in some ways, is going to replace 30 or 40 years of a hands-on colour expert's knowledge overnight. I'll come back to this.

Third - and this is the tough one - they're worried about job losses. There'll be changes in roles, of course there will. But if the connectivity of I4.0 software can handle colour management issues in nanoseconds, and print every job right first time, every time, on any printer, anywhere, then your print operators aren't out of a job, they're simply free now to focus on parts of the business that never get enough attention - things like maintenance, servicing, even perhaps marketing and after-sales if you own a smaller business.

Fourth, most importantly, printers are worried (or in denial) about I4.0 because they don't understand I4.0 and the pace of change that's happening. That's where we must focus.

Many PSPs are convinced I4.0 is 'all about tomorrow's business, not mine'. That's where software and hardware manufacturers like us have to step up, and make it easier to see the value of making changes sooner rather than later. We have to emphasise the importance of retaining colour knowledge in the business, but the value of using it at the right point in the workflow - assisted by software that's handling jobs faster, better, and more efficiently.

The benefits of being connected to the Internet of Things may seem a long way off. We've got to be on hand to explain the value of getting ready for I4.0 - because that trickling pace of progress is about to turn into a waterfall, and that's when it'll get really competitive."

CHEAP, AND MAKING YOU CHEERFUL?

WITH SOFTWARE COMPANIES CREATING PRODUCTS THAT ARE CHEAPER TO BUY AND EASIER TO USE, SIMON CREAMY TAKES A LOOK AT HOW THEY CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS.

Large-format software providers have never had it so tough poor things. A decade or so ago some products, like Rips, used to sell for as much as £2,000-plus a pop. Today, users can choose to lease, sometimes for just tens of pounds a month, or buy for just a few hundred pounds, a software solution that can be downloaded instantly from the internet with no training provided, or indeed needed.

As a result, over the last few years the primary focus of large-format software companies has been to create products that are cheap to buy and easy to use, which ultimately leads to greater levels of commoditisation and makes it increasingly difficult for developers to make their offer stand out from the crowd. Thank heavens that that hasn't deterred some software providers from trying. Over the last 12 months or so a number of companies have introduced innovative new levels of functionality to existing products and launched brand new products to meet PSP's demands.

Take EFI. In December last year, it released version 6.5 of its Fiery proServer, which was specifically designed with the burgeoning textile market in mind.

"The main focus was on the area of colour management because in the textile market you have quite a lot of different ink combinations and different ink versions," says Stefan Spiegel, general manager of EFI's Fiery wide-format print server/software operations.

To this end, EFI introduced Fiery Textile Bundle, to be used with its Reggiani digital inkjet printers, which includes new Fiery DesignPro Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop plug-ins and the latest Fiery proServer digital front end.

"It's a complete new development from our side because it's the first time we are going in the direction of [EFI's print job management interface] Fiery Command WorkStation," says Spiegel. "We have approximately 1.5 million users of Command WorkStation and version 7 is the first time we are talking about what we are calling 'one Fiery'. That means you have a Fiery that can drive your toner device and at the same time drive your inkjet devices."

He says the introduction of this

functionality, which he describes as a "big step" forward for the firm, was driven by customer feedback.

"When we go out to visit our customer base, if we see a customer who is doing inkjet I am pretty sure I will find a cut-sheet in the office as well and vice versa," explains Spiegel. "When we go into shops customers are running a lot of applications sometimes and that is getting more and more complicated. This is the first time we can drive all devices, including cut-sheet, from one application."

These changes have been largely driven by printers trying to eradicate inefficiencies, according to Spiegel, who says: "Printers are coming more and more under pressure because the square metre price is going down, so the only way to keep their margin and make money is to speed up their machines in terms of set up and getting data faster. People are looking for easier applications that can control their complete [print] shop."

John Davies, product group manager, workflow, at Fujifilm Europe, agrees, saying he has witnessed a growing trend of print customers who are looking to consolidate the number of Rips they use.

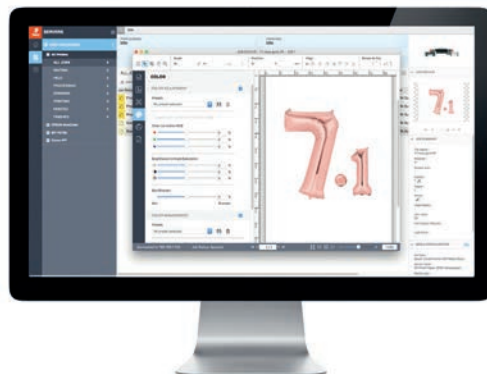
"In the past what companies tended to do is they would buy a new piece of equipment that fits a specific purpose and it would come with a Rip from that vendor - it could be ColorGate, Caldera or Onyx - and then very quickly they would have six pieces of equipment in-house all with a different Rip and front-end. What that means is not everybody who works on that production floor can use every piece of equipment to its most efficient level." So what's increasingly happening is that PSPs are looking to standardise their front-end so that machine operators can jump from different pieces of equipment. This in turn helps to drive efficiencies. Davies sees the current pressures and trends in the large-format sector following the same "efficiency pattern" that general commercial print followed a decade or so ago.

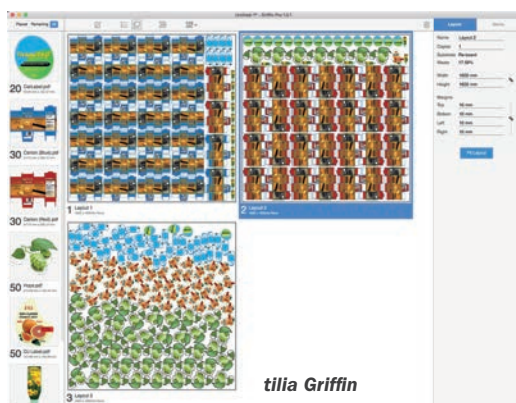
"We go into a lot of wide-format companies and they tend to just have a Rip on the front of a device and everything that happens before it gets there is a very manual process, which is just like the commercial print world was 10-15 years ago," he says. "But I think the pressures are coming into the wide-format space as well now, where there is a bit more competition so there is a need to have a bit more automation and a bit more efficiency. All of these things put together are driving companies to think 'we have the equipment, but we are not using the print capacity that we've got efficiently'."

Davies says one way large-format printers are addressing this capacity issue is through tools like the wide-format automatic solution tilia Griffin, which was added to Fujifilm's suite of XMF workflow products late last year, and automates a number of tasks that were previously done manually. The automation of time consuming processes is a growing theme from customers who are trying to optimise the way they operate.

"Automation and efficiency is where people look to first when they are getting squeezed on price," says Davies. "How do I get more out of what I've got without taking on more people or buying more equipment? It's looking back and saying 'this machine is only printing two hours

Fiery XF 7.1





tilia Griffin

a day and we have a seven hour day in our business'. Or some customers might say 'we are quite busy all day, but we are not printing all the time, so how do I make my operation more efficient up front so that when the jobs come in they go quickly from being booked in by the customer service person to being ready to be printed on the shop floor'?"

Jonathan Rogers, international marketing manager at Onyx Graphics, agrees that "automation is everywhere" at the moment.

"Customers are asking for tools that increase production automation and output capacity, reduce manual error and have the means necessary to prove superior prints to their customers in a simple manner," he explains. "PSPs are looking for ways to cut costs and reduce errors in the print shop and are looking for automation to help. Wide-format printing is inherently complex and not always straightforward to automate. This is an area we see growing in demand."



To this end the company recently unveiled Onyx 19, the latest iteration of its wide-format Rip and print workflow software, which features Spark Engine - a new performance platform that Onyx claims brings Rip speed increased of up to 400% and printer performance increases up to 200%.

"Onyx 19 is the culmination of 30 years' of innovating in the wide-format print industry and showcases Onyx Graphics' commitment to its worldwide customer base with new technologies that put users ahead of the curve," says Bryan Manwaring, director of product marketing at Onyx Graphics. "By continually investing

WITH LEASE PRICING FOR AS LITTLE AS
£30/MONTH WE NOW HAVE WHAT WE FIRMLY
BELIEVE IS THE BEST VALUE PROFESSIONAL
RIP SOLUTION ANYWHERE ON THE MARKET

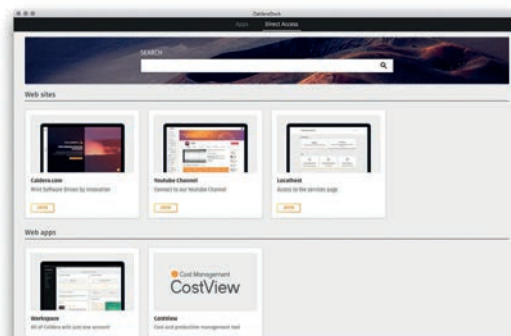
into research and development to produce industry leading software solutions for wide-format, Onyx Graphics has the unique position to meet the growing industry and evolving customer needs."

PSPs are evolving and at different stages of digital transformation, but there are some commonalities across all businesses and this has played a large part in influencing the latest iteration of products brought to market by software providers, according to Arnaud Fabre, product manager at Caldera.

"Since the last Drupa our product portfolio has been developed to help our customer's activity that is far more than just print: they create and deliver unique customer experiences and universes," says Fabre. He adds that "agile" print shops are eager to source products that offer "differentiation and high added value propositions" and that many of the features added to Caldera's Rip software version 12, which was released last year, were in direct response to customer demands.

"They wanted more help to master the software, so we integrated direct help access links per module and views through HelpLinks; they wanted help with media savings for special applications where the media is textured and so orientation really matters, so we added ContourNesting 180°; they wanted a flexible and common interface to manage multi-layer printing to print special effects, so we introduced MultiLayer; and they wanted to have the ability to handle the optical brightness on all they media they manage - either opaque or transparent - so we added TotalColor qb."

CalderaDockDirectAccess



At Fespa Global 2019 the company unveiled V12.1 version with a focus on "improving processing speeds for high-end print shops, while at the same time providing a better and simplified user experience".



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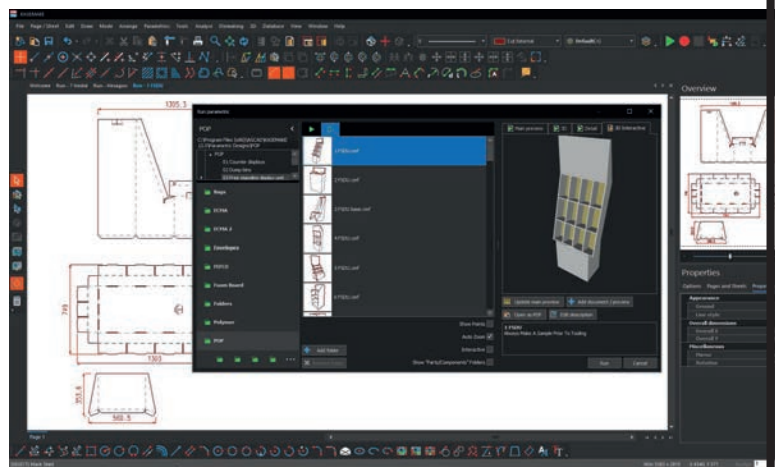
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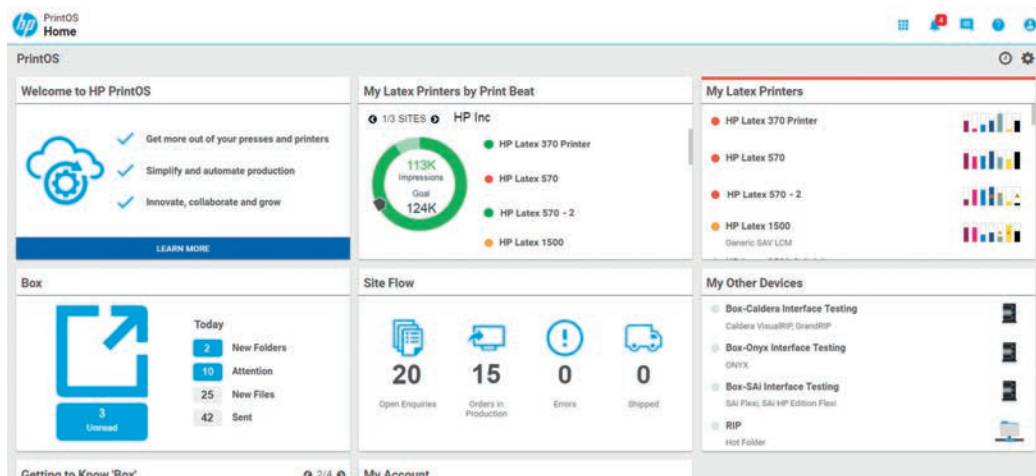
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These are similar areas of focus for HP which has launched a number of products responding to the needs of customers, says Phil Oakley, large format business manager UK and Ireland at HP. Over the course of the last 12 months HP has also expanded its HP Click Software for use on all DesignJet T-Series machines “in response to the demand we were seeing for an accessible, low-maintenance printing experience. With no need for a driver, the software offers easy, simple one-click printing, plus drag and drop multipage PDF printing and real-print preview, while optimising media usage and costs,” explains Oakley.

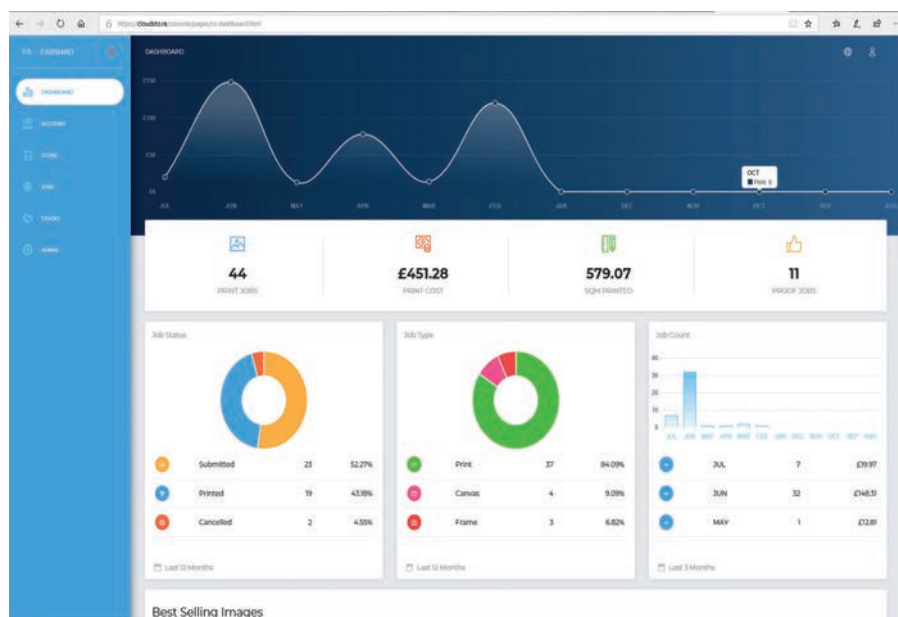
Going forward there are a number of areas where software providers think there is scope for further product innovation and growth. As you might expect, one is cloud-based software offerings.

“Everything to do with cloud processing and cloud colour management is a big, big topic,” says EFI’s Spiegel. “The people in the shops are really looking for help and that is coming from the cloud. It’s a big trend that we see more and more of, and we are trying to address this.”

HP LFP dashboard

“EVERYTHING TO DO WITH CLOUD PROCESSING IS A BIG, BIG TOPIC. THE PEOPLE IN THE SHOPS ARE REALLY LOOKING FOR HELP AND THIS IS COMING FROM THE CLOUD”

Shiraz Rosetta



It is a trend Rip provider Shiraz Software is already focusing a lot of its efforts and energies on, according to the company’s business development director Ramin Shahbazi. He says Shiraz recently launched the Shiraz Rosetta Rip - which is a complete end-to-end web-to-print solution for the large-format market - to capitalise on this growth area.

“At the moment, if a job is submitted via ecommerce then what tends to happen is the customer has to prepare the job then they send it to the Rip to be printed. We’ve effectively eliminated that process - it is all automated,” says Shahbazi. “With lease pricing for as little as £30/month we now have what we firmly believe is the best value professional Rip solution anywhere on the market.”

The Rosetta Rip was launched on Shiraz’s new dedicated website at the start of July and can be tested for 15 days in fully working mode. Shahbazi says he hasn’t been as excited about the Rip market for many years.

“It’s been the same old, same old, whereas now I can see an area where we can add a lot of value to someone who is looking for a solution like that,” he says.

Products that add value is what PSPs are increasingly on the lookout for, so in the months ahead, in addition to solutions that help to drive efficiencies you can expect to see further innovation from software providers in these emerging niche areas.

AI: when's it coming to this sector?



Dr. Nandini Chakravorti

Technology manager, data and information systems
The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC)

Q1

Where, as far as you are aware, is AI already being used in the digital print sector?

Each day, around 5m devices connect up with each other, with the internet, or with both. There are around 6.4bn data-communicating objects in the world today. And by 2020, this number is forecast to explode to around 20bn. Emerging disruptive technologies such as Artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) have the potential to have a huge impact in industries and society. In a 2017 report, the World Economic Forum identified a \$100 trillion opportunity for both industry and society through the adoption of digital technologies.

The ultimate goal of AI, is to have machines and systems capable of performing tasks and cognitive functions that can only currently be performed by human intelligence. In order to perform these tasks, machines must be able to learn these capabilities automatically instead of having each of them be explicitly programmed end-to-end. Today AI is being used in a number of different sectors such as financial services (for fraud detections, speech recognition for automated customer service interactions), health care (computer vision to automate the analysis of medical images) and media (Netflix uses machine learning to predict which movies a customer will like). In manufacturing in particular, AI has multiple applications such as the potential to predict maintenance of assets to minimise downtime, identify product defects more reliably than the human inspection to reference but a few.

Q2

Are there particular areas where it will be deployed first – and why?

According to the 'Made Smarter Review 2017', the UK has the strongest AI and machine learning market in Europe, with over 200 SMEs in the field (compared to just 81 in Germany and 50 in both the Nordics and France). The UK has a tremendous platform to capitalise on disruptive technologies like AI.

AI has huge potential in a number of use cases within manufacturing such as, predictive maintenance, quality management and enabling faster more reliable design, to name a few. Within the digital print industry context, an example might be intelligent printers which through the advent of IoT-based sensors, could be instrumented and become more data rich, enabling predictive algorithms to be used to monitor the health of printers, or even generate service requests before a printer fails. An AI augmented technician can then recommend software updates or other necessary adjustments with minimum disruption to production.

However, the adoption of AI in industries has been slow due to a number of reasons including: lack of leadership knowledge and awareness, lack of support for start-ups, and a lack of clarity on the return on investment. Developing an AI strategy with clearly defined return on investment, finding individuals with the appropriate skill sets, clear ownership and strategic commitment to AI on the part of leaders are some of the ways forward to ensure AI is deployed to get benefits.

Q3

Do you think people running digital print companies understand the potential of AI to their business?

The application of AI is a paradigm shift from inflexible solutions to adaptive self-learning solutions based on huge amounts of data and intelligent algorithms. The application of AI in industry offers £198.7bn value at stake to the UK economy between 2017 and 2027 ('Made Smarter Review'). A 2016 study by global management consultancy firm Accenture suggests that the productivity enhancing impact of AI can add £650bn GVA to the UK, with a productivity level 25% higher than it would be otherwise (Accenture, 'Why Artificial Intelligence is the Future of Growth, 2016').

Though AI and machine learning have been around since the 1950s, the technology's ability to live up to its expectations is becoming possible due to the increase in high-performance computing and more widespread connectivity, thus making more data available. For example, the data captured in the printing process can be used to create intelligent algorithms to make real-time, in-process adjustments such as paper alignment and image quality. This can potentially lead to an optimal printing outcome without human intervention.

Printing companies have a significant opportunity to take advantage of existing software and equipment to inject AI in their businesses. AI can give print companies an opportunity to create targeted print catalogues for users based on their online viewing pattern.

Q4

By 2030, do you think AI will be making operational decisions within digital print companies?

The first companies employing AI systems across the board will gain competitive advantage. AI can be used to improve business performance in areas including predictive maintenance, where deep learning's ability to analyse large amounts of high-dimensional data from audio and images can effectively detect anomalies in factory assembly lines.

However, it is a leap of faith to think that by 2030, humans will have learnt to use AI in a responsible manner, and we will have also learned to ensure that AI is regulated appropriately. The 'black-box' complexity of AI techniques poses a challenge of explaining the outcome. It is of particular importance to generate trust and reliability of these techniques. We will also live in an improved world with potentially more use of intelligent robotics and automation in industrial processes. So, with this trend we will have a much bigger debate about up-skilling and re-training the workforce.

There's plenty of talk about artificial intelligence and how it's going to impact life as we know it. But to many it's still a nebulous concept. So what's the situation when it comes to its deployment in the large-format print sector?



Mark Stephenson

Product manager, digital printing and press systems,
Fujifilm Graphic Systems Europe

Low-level AI has been with us for decades. Anything that is automated, robotic or that replaces a human decision or action qualifies as AI. A press that monitors itself for faults, software that controls colour or page layout or even simple mail-merge functions can be described as AI.

It's already started, as described in the answer above, but there is certainly more to come. PwC define three waves of AI. These are automation - Wave 1 (to early 2020s): algorithmic, Wave 2 (to late 2020s): augmentation, and Wave 3 (to mid-2030s): autonomy*.

If we've already ticked the box for the first wave, then the second wave - augmentation, where AI starts to work alongside humans - is already well under way.

In the world of digital print software analytics and dashboards, such as Fujifilm getFIT, analysis tools are advising customers of the most cost-effective or time-efficient print technologies to use for a given batch of jobs. Also, cloud-based colour management tools like Fujifilm's ColorPath can predict potential colour consistency issues across a fleet of devices or a cohort of operators.

(*<https://www.pwc.co.uk/services/economics-policy/insights/the-impact-of-automation-on-jobs.html>)

It's a mixed bag. Some are grasping the developments and seeing the benefits while others will see AI as a threat. But the print industry is, in general, very good at adapting and integrating new technologies. Those who ignore the benefits will unfortunately be left behind. The survivors will be those who engage with their suppliers and partners to discover what value they can bring to the further adoption of AI in their business.

This is the nirvana of the third wave, autonomy, where we have systems that learn and, rather than just follow rules, begin to make new, more efficient or appropriate rules. Systems that constantly improve and develop to become greater than their original brief or concept and make decisions on their own. However, we will always need humans to keep things on track. There are many stories of chat bots that develop racist tendencies or recruitment systems that pick men over women when left to learn from data alone. I'd like to answer this question more comprehensively but my task management system is reminding me that I have more pressing matters that require my attention.



Gudrun Bonte

Vice president, product management.
SAI

In some areas of the industry, AI has already started to make in-roads, and more and more PSPs are beginning to notice the potential that implementing AI could soon have on their businesses.

SAI is already exploring the potential and has launched a collaborative three-year research project with Oxford University's Department of Engineering Science.

While AI as a whole is still in its early stages, we are starting to see which areas of the digital print sector it be effected. For instance, new technology is helping to reduce waste in printing, with smart software that is capable of calculating the best layout for documents to make the best use of available space. AI could save businesses time, money and even improving their global footprint. Similarly, AI could aid inspection and quality control systems, with the potential to improve speed and accuracy thanks to intelligent algorithms.

If our own project with Oxford University runs successfully over the coming three years, it is possible that the development of an AI-assisted software solution could take place and become the first of its kind within the sign and display industry.

One of the key ideas envisaged with this project is a software with the ability to inspire designers as they work, by providing suggestions such as best practice fonts, images and layouts. Being able to take advantage of ideas that an AI tool is trained to supply will really boost efficiency and throughput. At this stage, even toying with what might be possible later down the line is creating a real buzz within the industry, so I can't wait to see how the print industry evolves when AI becomes more and more prominent.

It's probably still a bit early for most people, so there's clearly an education process required in order to ensure digital print companies are aware of its capabilities. I personally believe that any technology that presents an enabler for digital print companies to offer something extra to customers or enhance the way in which they work with customers, is worth exploring

As the technology continues to evolve, I'm sure that AI has the potential to make operational decisions within digital print companies. Our hope is to offer an AI solution that aids the design process. As with any technology, all I can say is watch this space.

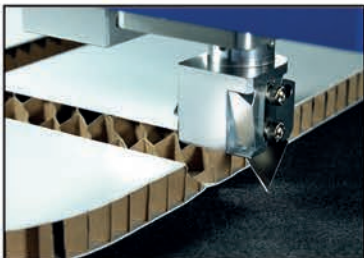
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FINISHED WITH INVESTMENT

HAVE YOU GONE AS FAR AS YOU'RE GOING TO GO WHEN IT COMES TO FORKING OUT ON NEW FINISHING KIT - OR WILL THE LATEST TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS, KIT BUNDLES AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES MAKE YOU THINK AGAIN?

According to our Widthwise 2019 research, investment in finishing kit is flat across the UK/Ireland large-format print sector (the report is downloadable for free at: <https://www.imagereportsmag.co.uk/widthwise>). So what are manufacturers/suppliers doing to convince you to fork out on new large-format finishing kit when so many of you feel you have spent the last couple of years focussing on this area and now have the right kit in place?

Well, Robert Marshall, vice president (market development) at XYZ Automation Group, says that to make investment in new print finishing equipment an attractive option in the face of a currently slow-moving market conditioned by the impact of Brexit on capital equipment expenditure, it has been able to "buck the trend" by introducing an enticing machine trade-in initiative. Unlike previous initiatives that related only to the company's own-brand XYZ and Pacer machines, this latest programme extends to any comparable CNC machine from any other manufacturer/supplier regardless of type and country of origin. He says that with a trade-in allowance of up to £7,500, owners of a new XYZ print finishing system also benefit from various machine enhancements and technical support to boot.



An important addition to the XYZ portfolio has been the hybrid Trident print finishing system, recently redesigned to include new routing/cutting heads that are much easier to operate and service, a narrower carriage construction contributing to a 12% smaller footprint and improvements to the knife-cutting units to allow a wider range of materials to be processed. Furthermore, knife blade attachments can now be as long as 120mm to better accommodate the processing of harder, thicker and heavier materials.

Users of the XYZ Trident also have access to a range of both standard and optional machine enhancements. These include an expanded (up to

XYZ IS
OFFERING
A TRADE-IN
ALLOWANCE OF
UP TO £7,500

33 stations) ATC (Automatic Tool Change) system, the latest XYZ Auto Zone Management facility for optimum material hold-down efficiency and the new A2MC machine controller with integrated AVS (XYZ Vision System). There is also the latest helical rack and pinion drive system that features a multiple gear teeth configuration to help spread the workload more evenly, thus increasing material throughput rates and reducing material wastage, leading ultimately to a longer than normal machine life.

At Atlantic Technical Services, distributor of the Neolt range amongst others, an attractively priced and spec'd finishing package is key to winning business in today's market. Director Keith Pratt says: "We are particularly excited by the Neolt XY Matic Plus because it competes favourably against competition on both features and pricing."

"It is supplied with adjustable X and Y axis speeds and has a new automatic self-alignment adjustment feature, double sensor cross mark reader and LCD touchscreen, which also has a built in operator training video for the continued reference or support of the operator or any new operator after installation."

The XY Matic - which starts at £18,750 - also features a built in silent compressor with pneumatic pinch rollers, and automatic waste collection with up to 10 vertical cutting devices.

At Colourgen, which sells the French-made Kala range, the best-selling model is the Arkane 1650 because, according to Colourgen's business development manager Phil Donoghue, "It's such a great all-rounder and really suits the UK market".

The Arkane - which costs from £8,950 - differs from the Kala Mistral range only in that the temperature of the top roller goes up to 140°C. The Arkane 1650 (65") offers single-sided lamination, simultaneous lamination and adhesive mounting, encapsulation and board mounting up to 50mm thick. It will happily deal with output printed using water-based, LED UV, solvent and latex inks. It also has an auto media alignment system so the machine can be left unattended for long roll-to-roll jobs.



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**AppliKator**

Another product in the Kala range is the relatively new flatbed AppliKator. It has a useable width of 1.70m and basic length of 2.07m, but the length can be extended in sections of 2.35m without limit - just choose between 4, 6, 8 or more metres when ordering and extend it over time as your business grows. It costs from £8,500.

Keeping with the value-for-money theme, note that Vivid, best known for the Easymount range of wide-format laminating systems, has added swing out arms to its Easymount EM-1600SH and Air Systems to make loading easier. Its next move is to produce the Easymount Sign with a pneumatic option while keeping it at a competitive price. Watch this space!

For Zund, automation continues to be a key focus. In 2018 we saw automated processing of large-format rigid substrates via Zund's integrated production line with a D3 cutter and the Board Handling System BHS. The two independently operating beams can each carry up to three different tools and, depending on the specifics of the job, deliver up to twice the throughput.

The company also brought out the high-powered RML router spindle (delivering up to 3.6 kW of power) for processing hard, dense materials such as acrylics and wood. With the automatic router bit changer ARC, Zund provides a solution for completely automating the routing workflow and increasing productivity for acrylics, Dibond, Forex, and MDF applications.

**Zund OCC**

This spring much noise was made over the introduction of the Zund OCC (Over Cutter Camera), which can be added to any G3 cutting system. Powered by the ZCC (Zund Cut Center) it takes one image to register all marks visible in the working area. The OCC automatically captures all register marks after each advance, and in doing so, helps create maximum productivity.

When it comes to the trend for textile print, Zund is on the case there too, most latterly bringing out the G3 3XL-320 digital flatbed cutting system that can handle rolls of fabric up to 3.2m wide.

At Esko flexibility and efficiency are watchwords when it comes to finishing innovation. One of its newest offerings - the Kongsberg C Edge - is a completely upgradable cutting table. Similarly, the relatively newly-launched Dual Heavy Duty Unit makes it possible for corrugated converters to cut, crease and perforate jobs without the need to change tools - boosting finishing productivity by up to 50% according to the company.

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BUNDLES'
COMBINING
PRINTERS AND
FINISHING KIT
AT A REDUCED
PRICE

**Esko MRF**

Both of these innovations follow hot on the heels of the launch of the Esko Motorized Roll Feeder for soft signage applications at the Fespa Global earlier this year. The company says it developed the new hardware after recognising that signage and display manufacturers today require more flexibility, efficiency, throughput and accuracy in operations, "demonstrating the company's commitment to innovation in hardware and software and working to unlock long term production flexibility and profitability."

Jan De Roeck, marketing director, industry relations and strategy at Esko, takes this further: "With a specific focus on delivering digitalisation and automation, Esko solutions connect people, processes and data from both outside an organisation and through every step inside a business to drive operational efficiency, accuracy, quality and performance. This combination of significant automation, increased efficiency and reduction in costs - in terms of materials, energy and time - is now a major factor in delivering on the demands of customer requirements."



Large-format reseller printMax agrees. In its demo centre the Summa F1612 cutter has become a central feature, and in July it brought in a Mimaki JFX200 EX UV flatbed printer to demonstrate the high productivity levels generated when these two machines are used in conjunction.

In order to combat the apparent issue of investment in finishing software and technology being relatively flat, printMax offers a variety of financing options to make the prospect more feasible and attractive for those looking to expand their businesses. In addition it offers 'Workflow Bundles' that combine production level printers and large-format finishing solutions at a reduced price when bought together.

Further still, printMax is beginning to promote multifunctional Rips - such as Onyx - whereby the operator can control both printers and cutters on the same software, creating a simple, seamless process to streamline production and maximise workflow efficiencies.

When it comes to finishing, the story is far from finished.

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MODEL OF SUCCESS?

WANT TO BE ABLE TO TRANSFORM CUSTOMERS' 2D IMAGES INTO PHOTOREALISTIC 3D DISPLAY PRODUCTS? THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD TALK TO STACKAWRAPS

Two years ago Image Reports carried a feature on StackaWraps and its novel 3D printed product offering. Now it hopes to extend its patent pending PanaWrapping services via relationship building with large-format PSPs. Worth considering?

Well, the company has been continuously developing its PanaWrapping technology and has rolled out a number of 3D printed products that it believes can "reinvigorate display branding internationally," pointing out that there's been interest from FMCG CPG brands such as Coca Cola, Kellogg's and Carlsberg, and that "the latest discussions are of course under wraps but 2019 is quickly proving to be a massive year". Momentum is building with its latest offering - PanaWraps - which fills a gap in the market for greener 3D branding products and which it believes could provide new opportunity for partnering PSPs.

WE NEED MULTIPLE LOCATIONS TO MEET THE SURGING DEMAND FOR PANAWRAPPING. WE'RE LOOKING FOR AT LEAST A HALF A DOZEN PSPS ACROSS THE UK AND ANOTHER 12 ACROSS THE USA

StackaWraps Digital Studios CEO, Richard Peter, says demand is such that the only way to get PanaWrapping to clients quickly enough to meet the demand is to join forces with the leading experts in large-format print. "I'm renowned for my high energy levels but even I can't keep up with the speed we're having to scale-up to as orders go exponential, from a couple of hundred in the first three months to orders in their thousands these last few weeks. If large-format printers want to get in on the PanaWrapping action now is the perfect time."

So what's it all about? Basically, PanaWrapping is a technique developed over the course of the last two years by StackaWraps Digital Studios (SDS) to convert 2D images into 3D graphic products. It takes a 2D image file, keeps the full photorealism of the original image, enhances sensory realism without distortion and generates technical print-and-cut files for output to be made into 3D products.

Last summer Stackawraps introduced Shelfies for POS and Panoramic Posers and Popheads using the technology - now it has brought PanaWraps to market.

Made from as little as two pieces of recycled (and recyclable) material, PanaWraps are flat-packed for low-carbon logistics, and offer a plastic-free alternative to other 3D visual branding products, important in today's landscape where, as Peter points out: "Non-sustainable materials like fibre glass or vac form are considered a less green friendly approach to displays than recyclables and power-hungry sources such as inflatables are becoming a no-no for many consciences brands and retailers. Large companies such as P&G are utilising displays with high green credentials and retailers such as TK Maxx are phasing out the use of all non-environmentally friendly display accessories such as balloons."

Print partnerships between StackaWraps and PSPs have increased fivefold over 2018-19 from the original hand-tailored 3D StackaWraps for product replica FSDUs and POS, to PopHeads 3D posters for the consumer marketplace via Amazon in conjunction with NEC Grafix.

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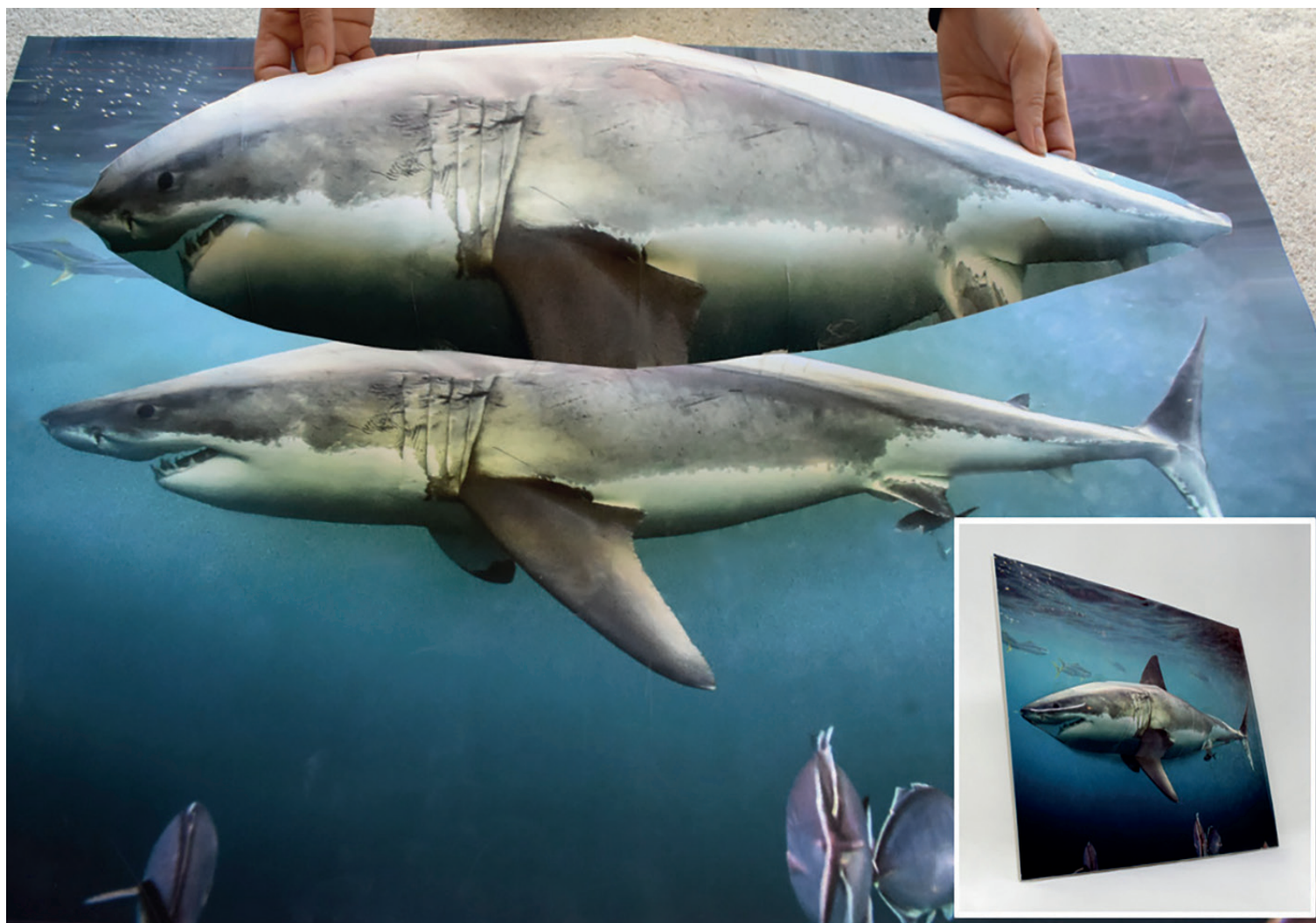
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The new PanaWraps product has been perfected for any size, any application, 3D displays. Peter explains: "Printers simply provide the 2D images from their clients to the Stackawraps studios and we work our magic to generate files for print-and-cut 3D elements bespoke to their needs. The initial set-up and tooling is charged at a one-off per image fee subject to detailing - we send them the files and support them through prototyping and first runs with a royalty percentage from the sale paid to StackaWraps on a project by project basis, dependant on order quantities."

Boston, US-based Abbot Action has already been signed up as a partner - chosen due to its fully solar panelled plant. The digital PSP is expected to select a number of other US based manufactures to take the product out into the marketplace. Here in the UK, it is hoped PSPs will see the benefit of taking it out into the market too.

Stackawraps' co-founder Natasha Leigh says the company's innovations are in response to a need for print to survive in an increasingly green-conscious trade that's fast shifting from traditional methods to a more eco-mindful industry. "With interest from global brands overtaking manufacturing capacity, it's time to expand the PanaWrapping 3D print product possibilities via more PSP partnerships. For the lowest carbon footprint possible, we need multiple locations to meet the surging demand for

PanaWrapping. We're looking for at least a half a dozen across the UK and another 12 across the USA."

The company points out that the UK's 2050 zero carbon pledge has upped the ante for greener thinking, and that G7 countries are progressively seeking to phase out non-environmentally friendly industry practices, meaning that suppliers of retail and exhibition displays are having to think way outside traditional methods to compete when it comes to eye-catching solutions. "There is little place left for inflatable, solid builds (vac form and injection moulding) and for costly haulage items that don't tick the green boxes of large international clients. The R&D team at StackaWraps spent the last four years rethinking and reinventing ways to breathe fresh life into printing and are confident that PanaWraps is the start of a new 3D journey for global print partnerships," says Peter.

He adds that the time and money invested developing the team, the technology and the applications has been extensive and that the commitment of staff has been inspirational. "Sharing this innovation with the rest of the industry has been a great leap of faith and we've been rewarded with loyalty and enthusiasm. Those working with us have challenged our capabilities and forced us to evolve to perfect the process. We are confident this is the way forward and welcome interest from forward thinking minds across the international print industry who are looking to form mutually beneficial long-term commitment to print development."



Sara Jeffery ...

The print industry - and the large-format sector specifically - has bemoaned the lack of women running businesses for as long as I can remember. Signs Express is witnessing an increase in female franchisees - up 40% in the last 20 months. So I went to talk with the Sara Jeffery, the network's head of brand and recruitment, to ask: "Is franchising the route to getting women into print management roles?"

By Lesley Simpson

How many Signs Express franchises are there now, and how many are run by women?

In the last 20 months, Signs Express has seen female franchisees increase by 40%.

We have 67 franchised stores, and 13 of them are now run by females - a few who are co-owners with their partner, and three who are sole owners.

In fact, since April 2018, we have welcomed new female franchisees in Oxford, Colchester and Chelmsford, and Leicester and Loughborough.

Have any of the women now running Signs Express stores had previous experience in running a print business?

I'd say 95% of all our franchisees have had no previous print industry experience when they come on board. Looking at the women specifically, there are one or two that have had some sort of background in the sector. So Jane Wiles, who is co-owns Signs Express (Portsmouth) with her husband, previously worked for many years at Signs Express (Hull). Cathy Johnston, who owns our Belfast centre, worked in the centre with her father and has taken on the legacy of it since her father passed away.

Overall UK franchise figures - from the 2018 BFA/NatWest survey - show that the number of women taking on such a business has grown something like 20% in the last two years, so what is it about this model in general that is beginning to attract women do you think - and why now?

Historically, men have dominated franchising, however, more and more women are now owning and running a franchise than ever before. With the

number of women taking on a franchised business growing by 20% in the last two years, the landscape is certainly shifting and not just with franchisees. Last year, 65% of people employed in a franchising business were female, equating to over 400,000 in the UK alone.

As you know, Signs Express has witnessed an increase in women coming on board. But I don't think it's the fact that it's a franchise that we're getting more women coming in. I think there are just more women out there now with the mindset that they want to run their own business. More women seem to have the drive and self-belief that they can make a go of it.

I think whether it be a man or a woman, their reasons for going the franchise route are the same. It's about liking the idea of buying into a proven business model with a clear structure, and one with a hand-holding ethos - which is specially useful if you're entering an industry you don't know anything about!

I think print is especially attractive to those with an entrepreneurial spirit - men or women - because they see that there is always going to be a need for print businesses. The women that we have in particular though seem to love the diversity and creativity of the sector. They like the idea that they are dealing with people from all walks of life, and they like that they can see what they actually produce for customers.

At Signs Express you offer three franchise options - Premium, Greenfield and Resales. Are female franchisees drawn more to one than the other, and if so, why do you think that is?

Premium and Greenfield are both essentially start-up businesses. So, franchisees are setting up in



...Head of brand and recruitment, Signs Express

a vacant territory where there is no existing Signs Express centre. The difference between them is that Premium sites are ones that we've identified as having the biggest potential - eg. in more densely populated areas, where we have a geographical gap in terms of centres, where we can see greater demand etc. And we will have looked at the situation regarding competitors. We want there to be competitors, but we don't want to be operating in a saturated area either.

We will have looked at how easy the site is to service, and have checked that there are the light industrial types of unit available that the centre would require etc. We even will have a tentative look around for staff, to check that the franchisee would be able to get the right calibre of people on board.

There is no price difference between a Premium and a Greenfield franchise.

Resales sites are just what you'd expect - centres up for sale because existing franchisees are looking to exit.

So are female franchisees in particular drawn more to one type of franchise than another?

I'd say not, but when I think about it, the majority - especially of the newer female franchisees - have taken on Premium/Greenfield sites. So Mayura Joshi has taken on Colchester and Chelmsford; Priya Lowry and her husband Ian have set up in Oxford; and Val Duggan is in Leicester and Loughborough.

Oddly enough, the women seem to be more up for the challenge of setting up a new operation from scratch than the men. I guess they like that extra control and being able to mould everything to how they want it to be.

How it works, is that we have a franchise fee of £20,000, which we reinvest back into our Premium/Greenfield sites. Overall investment for a start-up is about £120,000 and we help them find the unit, we will co-interview staff with them - important if they're new to the sector and don't know technical skills requirements - do a lot of marketing with them, get them set up with a website etc. We make it as much of a turnkey operation as possible.

So what happens in regards to choosing print kit?

All of our centres have large-format print capability. A franchisee's 'starter pack' includes a printer, plotter and laminator. We usually provide as choice of two or three machines. We'll guide them as to what we think would work best in their operation but it's then their decision.

How long do franchisees tend to stay on board, and do you see/expect to see much of difference in terms of gender? I'm wondering if you think we're likely to see more women entering the wider print management market as they find their feet via franchising first?

We don't see any difference between the men and women - 15 years is our average 'term'. Franchising in general is seven years so ours is quite unusual. I don't know that any of our franchisees have moved on to run another print business - most have retired or gone on to do something more lifestyle-based.

But, over the last three or four years, we have seen younger people - in the 30- 40 age bracket - taking on franchises, so maybe that will change things.

THE WOMEN SEEM TO BE MORE UP FOR THE CHALLENGE OF SETTING UP A NEW OPERATION FROM SCRATCH THAN THE MEN

Measuring the

How much is your company worth? In the 1970s and 1980s, valuing a business was relatively straightforward. You estimated the worth of your key tangible assets, totted these figures up and, if the company was being sold as a going concern, added in a little something for goodwill. That traditional yardstick is still reflected in most PSP's financial statements. It is still the way most accountants like to work. But there are there other considerations.

DELOITTE SUGGESTS WE'RE MOVING TO A MARKETPLACE WHERE 80% OF A COMPANY'S VALUE IS DERIVED FROM ITS INTANGIBLE ASSETS. SO HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS? WALTER HALE PROVIDES SOME POINTERS.

1.

WHAT DOESN'T GET MEASURED, DOESN'T GET MANAGED

Like many clichés, this has more than a grain of truth. Most print service providers don't actively consider how much their company brand, people and reputation are worth. This effectively hard wires managers to allocate capital to the things they do measure and understand - new equipment, new premises, new vehicles - rather than, say, a new website, a new sales director or a new company identity. It's easy to get a handle on the revenue-generating potential of a new inkjet printer. At a very crude level, you can multiply its capacity over time by the going rate for that kind of wide-format print. Drawing up a business case for a new corporate brand is necessarily more speculative. How do you quantify the return on that investment in terms of new business won? And yet it is entirely possible that your brand needs a refresh to retain or gain customers and to retain or gain staff.

There are steps you can take to get a sense of how your company is perceived. On the employee feedback site Glassdoor, the average company is 3.3 (on a 1 to 5 scale). If your business is reviewed there, check out your rating. If your business isn't, why not ask your staff to rate you on a scale of 1 to 5? You can do the same with your customers. Ask them to rate your performance and/or your brand on the same scale. The answers may make you uncomfortable but the sooner you learn the sooner you can start improving.

2.

REPUTATION MATTERS

How your business is perceived is, in an increasingly networked world, more critical than ever. It can attract - or repel - customers, partners and talent. At best, a company with a dodgy reputation may find it more expensive to attract and keep staff and have to accept tougher terms from its suppliers. At worst, companies can be treated as pariahs - with investors looking to cut their losses, suppliers fretting about payment terms and customers wondering how quickly and easily they can place their business elsewhere. So projecting a positive image of your business - on the internet, on social media, in the trade - is crucial. Once again, it is not easy to extrapolate, in terms a hard-nosed financial director might understand, how a sizeable following on Instagram can enhance the bottom line. That is one reason why so many companies don't use these channels properly, consistently and intelligently. Yet the cost of such initiatives is so marginal there seems no real excuse for not doing so.

THESE ARE NOT THE KIND OF ISSUES THAT ARE EASILY REDUCED TO FIGURES THAT CAN BE ENTERED INTO A STANDARD PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT, BUT YOU CAN'T IGNORE THEM. AND NOR, FOR THAT MATTER, CAN YOUR FINANCE DIRECTOR

immeasurable

“ARE YOU SELLING ON AMAZON MARKETPLACE? IF NOT, WHY NOT? IT MAY BE UTTERLY IRRELEVANT BUT HAVE YOU CHECKED IT OUT?”

3.

PEOPLE REALLY ARE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSET

How many times have you heard this cliché, often uttered by executives who look as if, back in the 1920s, they would have tried to sell you snake oil? The ironic thing is that, especially after Brexit, this will finally be true. As the HR director of a fast-growing upmarket British hotel chain told me recently: “Companies who think they are good at HR in general - and staff recruitment and retention in particular - will need to become excellent, or they are going to struggle to compete.”

At industry forums like the Image Reports' Widthwise roundtable, British wide-format companies in different sectors regularly complain about the time, expensive and difficulty involved in getting the right staff. (For the record, it is estimated that the average cost of hiring an employee is £3,293.) That problem is likely to become more acute in the short term, not less. Now might be a good time to look around your operations and ask which departure(s) would do most damage to your business and what you can do to stop that happening.

4.

“PEOPLE DON'T LEAVE BAD JOBS, THEY LEAVE BAD MANAGERS”

Measuring morale across the business is essential, but it is also important to drill down a bit and explore why some parts of the business are better at retaining employees than others. You may have a manager who has a problematic relationship with staff. They may be newly promoted, undertrained, badly mentored, incompetent, dishonest or vicious. Either way, you need to find out why this is happening and do something about it. Wide-format, like most industries, is like a village where everyone knows everyone's business and it's surprising how much damage a disaffected former employee can do.

5.

DON'T IGNORE THE BRAND

Are your sales slowing? Are the best people choosing to work for your rivals? Do you find yourself apologising for your brand? Does it feel 'flat' to you? If you answer yes to one or more of these questions, it might be time to rethink your brand. This can mean anything from a complete makeover, with an entirely new logo, to a refresh which takes the existing ingredients and develops them to address the kind of issues outlined above. A successful rebrand - no matter on what scale - will always start with such questions as who you are and what makes your business stand out.

6.

CREATIVITY COUNTS

Be honest, how innovative is your company? Do your clients regard you as a creative powerhouse - or a safe pair of hands? Does your culture encourage creativity - or is it all about getting the job done? In a business world increasingly defined by networks of collaborating companies, such perceptions matter. You don't have to be Steve Jobs or Apple to position your company as a creative, innovative business. If you can do that, the rewards, though hard to compute, will be significant. Technologically liberated from dependence on one supplier, companies are able - and likely - to gravitate towards innovators.

7.

TURN R&D INTO A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Many print service providers already do R&D - if only by customer request. In doing so, they create an intangible asset, intellectual property, that is of value to their own business and their client's. In a fiercely competitive market, R&D can help businesses distinguish themselves from the madding crowd of wide-format printers selling print as a commodity. Traditionally, some printers have relied on quality as their USP but, in a digitally driven market, being better is a subjective, comparative matter. Being able to prove that you are different - because you can do X and y and your competitors can't - is a much more compelling proposition to customers.

8.

ONLY CONNECT

One of the intangible assets which is going to become increasingly influential in determining the value of your business is your relationships with other companies. In short, who are you working with? How good, successful or innovative are they? And how do you ensure you make the most of out of those relationships? For example: are you selling on Amazon Marketplace? If not, why not? It may be utterly irrelevant but have you checked it out?

Equally, are you one of the print service providers suppliers use to develop and test new technologies? Or do you belong to a consortium that is devoted to reducing the sector's carbon emissions? These are not the kind of issues that are easily reduced to figures that can be entered into a standard profit and loss account, but you can't ignore them. And nor, for that matter, can your finance director.



WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR PVC BANNER WASTE?

EARLIER THIS SUMMER THIS SECTOR SAW A BREAKTHROUGH - SOYANG AND WASTE PARTNER BLUE CASTLE ANNOUNCED A SCHEME FOR RECYCLING PVC BANNER MATERIAL. GARDNERS, A TEST SITE, HAS BEEN IMPRESSED. SO SHOULD YOU BE GETTING IN ON THE ACT?

In June we brought you news of the PVC Banner Recycling Scheme, a collaboration between printable materials manufacturer and distributor Soyang Europe and waste and recycling expert Blue Castle Group. Given its potential impact on the large-format print sector it seems only sensible to delve beyond the headline making info published at its launch.

Stemming from discussions that started around three years ago between the two companies, the new scheme came about as a solution to meet the needs of an industry that both parties had independently identified - how to use the best material for the print job yet hit the environmental credentials that clients were starting to require?

"The PVC Banner Recycling Scheme is the natural extension of Soyang Europe's business ethos - it's simply the right thing to do," says Mark Mashiter, managing director at Soyang Europe. "It enables our customers to supply and support their clients, who predictably include major high street retailers, FMCG brands and exhibition companies, all with a similar desire to be environmentally accountable.

"Our close relationships both with PSPs and our manufacturing partners enables us to communicate

each party's requirements up and down the supply chain. Introducing an environmentally sound disposal solution for one of the most challenging substrates has been a long road but seeing the initial response and positive uptake of our test sites has made it all worthwhile," he continues.

Initial work on the project was started over a decade ago by Blue Castle's now innovations manager Gary Howe. He identified the significant volumes of printed PVC banner material being created, how it was being utilised relatively temporarily, the challenges faced with it going to landfill and also the volume of unprinted, scrap offcuts.

"Most materials were being baled and exported. It's difficult to incinerate because of the toxic fumes it generates and proposed disposal solutions with contractors would seem to stop as soon as they started," recounts Howe. "The amount of waste was staggering - hundreds of tonnes a month being created within the graphics and display industry and as time went on, it became apparent that the industry simply wasn't evolving."

Blue Castle formed a strategic partnership with the teams at the Green Chemistry Centre of Excellence at the University of York and Matrix Recycling Systems to develop the solution and entered its open funding

'Plastics Innovation' competition in June 2018.

Announced as the winners the following December, they successfully secured Innovate UK Innovation grant funding to support the project, resulting in the company designing and developing a pilot plant to demonstrate its capability to the market.

Investment in premises, a range of machinery (that pre- and post-process the material as well as shreds it) and intensive trials throughout 2018 led to a workable solution to enable end users to assist in the trial in early 2019, delivering 'second life' uses for the processed material that were then approved by partners in a variety of sectors.

Subsequent invitations to high profile events, including attendance at the UK Knowledge Transfer Network's 'Addressing the Plastics Challenge' evening reception at the House of Lords continue to position Blue Castle at the forefront of the industry, with a guest appearance tabled on the UK Circular Plastics Network stand at the Recycling and Waste Management exhibition in the autumn.

"With the launch of the PVC Banner Recycling Scheme, Blue Castle is now in a position to offer sustainable solutions for recycling the vast majority of the materials used in the display graphics industry," says Howe. "We're working with a number of partners to give recycling product second and even third lives, with a zero to landfill goal that offers a truly sustainable process."

Four print companies across the UK have taken part in initial trials, including Gardners in south

**Gardners MD Richard Courtney
endorses the scheme**



COMING UP ROSES AT GARDNERS

"We're living in an age of 'environmental breakdown', where eco-initiatives are increasingly at the top of political and societal agendas, with what many feel is a small window of opportunity to prevent further cataclysmic change. Globally we've experienced 20 of the warmest years since records began and concentrations of carbon dioxide have not been as high for between 3-5m years. Therefore, improving environmental practices and minimising the impact on what has already become a fragile ecosystem is something that all businesses must be focusing on." So says Richard Courtney, managing director at Gardners.

Courtney adds: "Within our sector specifically, ISO 4001 has become the 'norm' in terms of environmental best practice requirements, however we've certainly seen a growing demand for greener print practices that go above and beyond this and anticipate that this will only continue to increase. This is why we were keen to collaborate with Blue Castle and Soyang Europe on the pilot scheme to recycle our PVC.

"PVC is one of the substrates that has traditionally been challenging in terms of recycling - it's something we've been trying to crack for almost a decade so when we had the opportunity to work together to help refine and put in practice this solution it was a logical step for us.

"As part of the pilot, which has run for just over a year, we have stopped over 95 tonnes of PVC (which makes up 29% of our waste stream) going to landfill and which in turn has been recycled into other products. By rolling this service out across the UK print industry the impact will be phenomenal.

"We're proud to have been able to support the pilot and that 90% of our waste is now recycled. Through continuous improvement we're always working to minimise the environmental impact of what we deliver as a business as much as possible and we're looking forward to helping those we work with improve their green credentials (as well as our own) even further."

(See previous IR environment features at: <https://www.imagereportsmag.co.uk/features/environment>)

**'Second life' uses for the recycled
PVC waste have been approved**



Wales (see panel). The scheme already has over 20 signed up participants, and both Soyang Europe and Blue Castle are expecting this to increase dramatically. "Unsurprisingly, interest in the scheme has been substantial," says Mashiter. "We're receiving multiple enquiries every day so we're delighted with the eagerness from the print industry to be part of the scheme."

Aside from the obvious environmental advantages, with landfill costing upwards of £130 per tonne and



PVC RECYCLING
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BLUE CASTLE

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rising annually, there are financial benefits to the scheme for PSPs if they can avoid simply disposing of their waste, but monetising the reprocessed material has also helped make the project more viable for Blue Castle.

"The challenges in delivering the scheme were substantial," says the company's head of R&D, Stuart Darke. "Not apart from the requirement to develop a mechanical process, we made significant advances in designing a process that was specifically targeted at difficult to recycle, highly plasticised flexible PVC materials as it needs to recover PVC in a Reach compliant form and convert the additives to a valuable by-product."

Reach regulations restrict the use of certain chemicals (known as ortho-phthalates) which historically were used as plasticisers for numerous plastic products. "We were mindful of the need to achieve the necessary reduction in content of these additives in our output recycled product," confirms Darke.

"With the PVC Banner Recycling Scheme, we've made significant strides in developing a new method of recycling PVC materials including composite products into both a purer recycled product and achieving Reach compliance by conversion of legacy plasticisers and additives into other high value outputs," he concludes.

The scheme also acts as a springboard for assisting print companies with other areas of their business, as Marie Harley, Blue Castle's CEO explains. "We're able to audit not only the PVC waste aspect of PSPs but their total waste and energy requirements. Working closely with Soyang Europe's team, we've been able to guide their customers in a variety of areas that affect their day-to-day business. The PVC Banner Recycling Scheme is a significant area of change for them all, but other aspects such as utility management, energy use and additional recycling opportunities have brought positive results throughout."

So, what is the next step for an industry sector needing to green-up as part of a wider supply chain?

As Mashiter points out: "We have to be mindful of the fact that for some applications, responsibly using PVC is the right solution for a particular job, matching a customer's requirements with the most appropriate material - so the recycling scheme closes the loop.

"With the PVC Banner Recycling Scheme, we're trying to foster a feeling of collaboration, working together to overcome some important obstacles. This is everyone's responsibility and it's an industry-wide issue - we need companies to get on board to make it work right across the print sector.



Soyang Europe MD Mark Mashiter

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"Soyang Europe is taking a practical and responsible stance on what happens to a product when it's used in its original form. Secondly, we're also strong advocates of environmentally friendly solutions - offering materials such as Senfa's display fabrics that are made from recycled yarns - effectively using a raw material in its 'second life'."

As the roll-out of the new recycling scheme gathers pace, Mashiter says: "We're simply echoing the far wider feeling of a need to effect change and the PVC Banner Recycling Scheme is a very real embodiment of that. Blue Castle and Soyang Europe are committed to delivering this solution across the industry - many years of hard work, investment and R&D have gone into getting where we are today, so it's reassuring to see the take-up and enthusiasm from our customers."

HOW THE SCHEME WORKS

- Buy Soyang PVC Banner material. Products include laminated, semi-coated, knife coated, blackout and backlit products suitable for wide and grand format printing in thicknesses from 320g up to 720g.
- Print and supply to your end customer
- When the banner has come to the end of its intended life, a number of options exist for getting the material to Blue Castle for processing.
 - a) One option is that Soyang Europe backhauls baled waste material or offcuts following delivery of new banner material, bulks it up to a full articulated lorry load and then delivers to the Blue Castle recycling plant.
 - b) Alternatively, a PSP can bale and bulk up the banner material on site and Blue Castle will arrange for a full artic load into the recycling plant.
 - c) A further option is for Soyang Europe to store the material in storage crates and Blue Castle will carry out a national, multidrop exchange service and bulk up crates in different regions until complete artic loads are ready for deliver to recycling plant.
 - d) Finally, customers can store the banner themselves and deliver direct to the recycling facility when they're in the area. The key messages here are flexibility and the desire to minimise the carbon footprint when collecting and transporting the waste material.
- The waste banner is then processed at Blue Castle's recycling facility.
- Finally, the shredded and processed material is given a viable future uses in a range of industries, thanks to Blue Castle's strong partner relationships in other sectors.



a. Trick on the eye

This 40m illuminated display, designed by shopfitting specialist Replan and produced by retail graphic display specialist Leach, has been installed at Sports Direct's headquarters in Nottinghamshire. The graphic - displayed in the stairwell and showing a nature scene with cascading waterfall - is made from a 4m x 11m curved lightbox suspended overhead, with 30 x 1m² lightboxes staggered to the floor. It has been produced using Leach's new Lightwave technology, the result being a graphic display that looks like a giant video wall. But instead, dynamic LED has been integrated into the lightboxes to create an eye-catching sense of movement - for what is said to be around 20% of the cost of the video wall alternative.

b. Going up in the world

Working with Motion Icon UK & Europe, PressOn produced and installed these escalator graphics for Network Rail at London Bridge Station.

c. Having pride in the job

Oasis Graphics was proud to be asked for a second year running to print and install graphics for Coutts Bank during Pride Month. This was a large undertaking for Oasis due to the size and scale of the 12m high building. Installation took two days using a five-person team.

d. True or false?

Barberan, in collaboration with ZeeTree, has developed a digital printing technology to deliver embossed materials effects for the furniture and flooring industry. The trueTexture print system, incorporating its six-colour Jetmaster 840 and Jetmaster TRT 840 with ZeeTree patented technology, generates various embossing effects to imitate real wood, stone and other materials.

e. Sssh.....

Antalis has launched new Coala Textiles, a range of coated polyester printable textiles for signage and decoration. The 100% polyester Coala Textiles collection includes Coala Textile Sound Touch, a sound absorbing semi-sheer fabric.

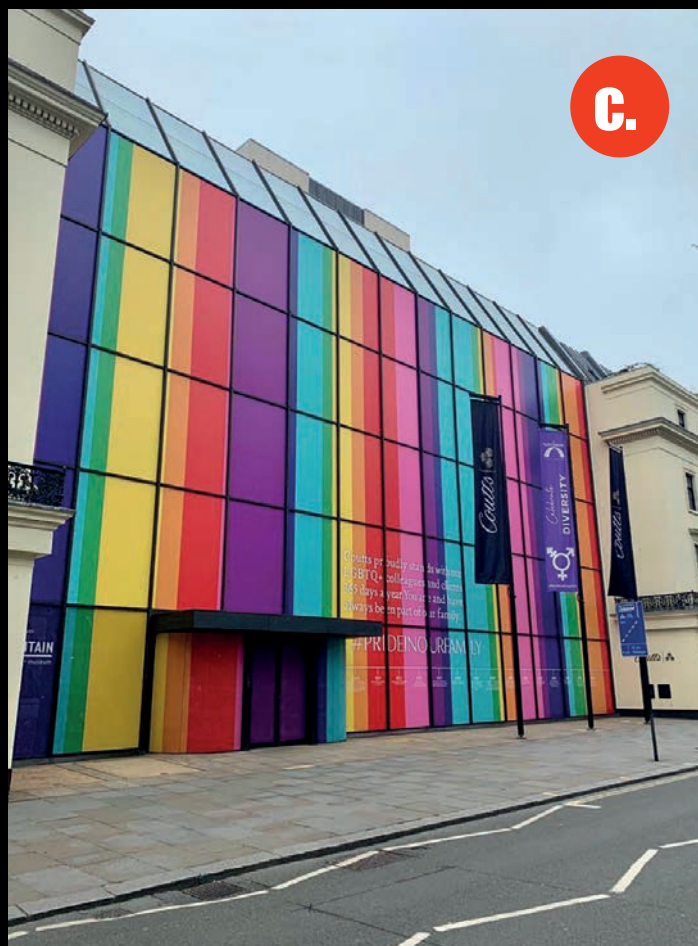
f. A whole in one

Papergraphics has extended its Digimura range to include Digimura-1, a one-piece wallcovering for super-wide printing of commercial flat-wall graphic installations. It has a semi-matt finish and can be printed Latex and UV. It has a PVC coating for durability, and a no-show-through grey back. It comes in a 3.2m roll-width.

g. Great result for Astra Signs

Manchester-based Astra Signs printed the graphics for Barcelona FC's team bus used for the 2019 UEFA Champions League matches. Covering the entire team bus including the windows, the vehicle wrap was printed onto PVC material from Drytac's Polar range using an HP Latex 570 printer.





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Apollo 11 was, as Neil Armstrong said, one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind - and also a giant leap for technology that, years later, created the industry, wide-format printing, in which Mole Graphics operates. When I watched the documentary at the local picture palace, it struck me, for the first time, how audacious, complicated and preposterous the entire mission was.

The clip from John F. Kennedy's moon speech summed it up brilliantly. The task he set in 1962 was to send a giant rocket, more than 300ft tall, made partly of metals and alloys that were yet to be invented, that could stand stresses several times greater than had ever been experienced, on an untried mission to an unknown celestial body 240,000 miles away and, at speeds of 25,000mph, causing heat that was half as hot as the sun, return the crew safely to earth.

NASA's four Apollo 11 computers collectively had less power than Mole Junior's new iPhone. The manoeuvres - the jettisoning of Saturn 5, the undocking - and docking - of the Columbia spacecraft and the Eagle landing module - and the calculations required to send Apollo 11 into Earth's orbit (and out of it), into the Moon's orbit (and out of it) and back into Earth's orbit, are still mind-boggling.

All this was achieved with fewer glitches than we suffer

bedding in a new digital printer. The 1201 and 1202 alarms that sounded just before landing were triggered by spurious radar data clogging up NASA's system. Buzz Aldrin realised they were triggered whenever he asked the computer to display Eagle's speed and distance to the landing site and, with mission-saving pragmatism, just asked Houston to tell them the data.

I left the cinema in awe at the mission itself, how far technology has come and, sadly, how limited our ambitions have subsequently become.

Afterwards, an usher asked me if I thought Apollo 11 really had landed on the Moon. "Probably," I said. "Why are there no stars in the images?" he said. "It's doing my head in."

The simple answer that because Armstrong and Aldrin were taking photos of brightly lit, white shiny objects, they shot with a fast exposure time and a small aperture. In those conditions, it would be impossible to capture faint objects in a dark background, like stars. The question also indicated that what Armstrong, Aldrin and Michael Collins (who piloted Columbia) accomplished remains so astonishing that, 50 years later, some people still find it unbelievable.

EVENTS

THE PRINT SHOW	FESPA GLOBAL 2020	SIGN AND DIGITAL 2020	DRUPA 2020
When? 17 - 19 September, 2019	When? 24 - 27 March, 2019	When? 28 - 30 April, 2020	When? 16 - 26 June, 2020
Where? NEC, Birmingham	Where? IFEMA Exhibition Centre, Madrid, Spain	Where? NEC, Birmingham	Where? Dusseldorf Messe, Germany
Cost? TBA	Cost? TBA	Cost? Free for trade visitors.	Cost? TBA
Who will be there? A mixture of suppliers from across the whole print spectrum	Who will be there? This is the biggie for large-format, so expect most of the manufacturers/suppliers to be there.	Who will be there? Too early to talk about the exhibitor line-up, and as it is sandwiched between Fespa Global and Drupa you may not see the same amount of large-format exhibitors as in other years.	Who will be there? Good question! We need to wait until closer to the event to see which companies of relevance to large-format will be exhibiting. It's likely that those who do so will have already launched any new products at the preceding Fespa Global 2020.
Should you go? If you want to see a cross-section of print solutions in one place. But don't expect to see the whole breadth of wide-format options.	Should you go? Oh yes!	Should you go? Given this is the UK show most orientated towards this sector it's probably still worth a look-see.	Should you go? Depends what you want from attending. If you want to see new large-format kit and you've attended Fespa Global 2020, you'll probably not see many more introductions. If you want to see how the industry as a whole is progressing, then it's a big tick
Rating 6/10	Rating 10/10	Rating 7/10	Rating 9/10

OVER TO YOU...

PETE SYMONDS, MD, DISPLAY WIZARD
WWW.DISPLAYWIZARD.CO.UK

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

As an ecommerce business it goes without saying that we heavily rely on traffic from search engines such as Google. With them now making sponsored results more prominent and blurring the lines between paid and organic search results, we're forced to spend more on Google AdWords to generate traffic. This makes the cost per conversion a lot higher and reduces margins - margins which have already been greatly impacted over the past few years by competitors that are willing to make next to nothing to win business.

Where do you see the greatest wide-format opportunities?

Backlit exhibition systems are becoming ever more popular and with the cost of LED technology constantly coming down, more and more systems are coming to market. Almost all the systems I've seen recently utilise silicone edge fabric graphics, which is a huge opportunity for any wide-format printer with that capability. Customers want to stand out and they don't want to see joins in graphics and backlit fabrics are the best way to achieve this.

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

More automation. At the moment we're doing a lot of jobs manually and it's simply not efficient or cost effective.

Your favourite bit of kit is..?

At the moment it's our new Jetrix LXiR320 but we've just ordered an Esko Kongsberg X24 cutting table, which may well take its place as my new favourite.

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

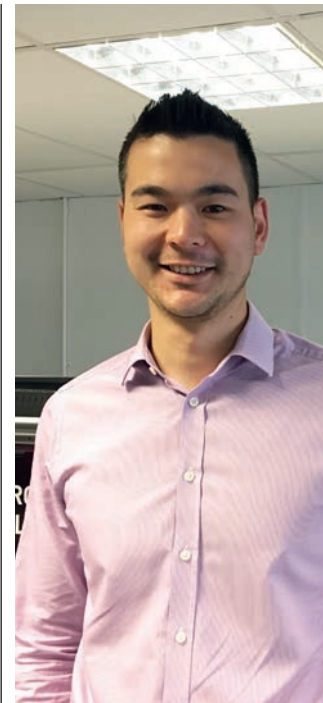
Someone can have all the qualifications and experience in the world but, if the fit isn't right, it's never going to work.

What are you most proud of achieving?

Along with an amazing team, I'm most proud of achieving continued success, a great reputation and helping create one of the most recognised brands (Display Wizard) in the display and exhibition industry.

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

Equipment manufacturers need to perfect products and new technologies before releasing them. Small businesses can't afford to invest in new machines that promise to world but don't deliver.



VITAL STATISTICS

THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY OFTEN GETS A BAD RAP IN TERMS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH CONSUMERS. LAST YEAR, AN IPSOS MORI POLL FOUND ADVERTISING EXECUTIVES ARE BRITAIN'S LEAST-TRUSTED PROFESSIONALS, RANKING BELOW POLITICIANS - AND A RECENT ADVERTISING ASSOCIATION REPORT SHOWED CONSUMERS FEEL "BOMBARDED" AND "OVERWHELMED" BY ADVERTS. BUT, ACCORDING TO A RECENT REPORT FROM INDEPENDENT CREATIVE AGENCY IMPERO, CONSUMERS MAY VIEW THE INDUSTRY MORE FAVOURABLY THAN PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT.

IN THE 'REBRANDING ADVERTISING' REPORT, IMPERO ASKED 1,500 CONSUMERS ACROSS THE UK WHAT THEY THOUGHT ABOUT THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY - AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE TO KEEP ADLAND FUTURE-FIT.

63%

of consumers feel mistrustful, to varying degrees, of the messages they see in advertising. 25% of consumers said they do trust the messages they see in advertising.

52%

said TV is their most loved medium. 22% liked outdoor advertising the best, 14% influencer marketing and 11% digital advertising.

43%

feel advertising has changed for the better in the last ten years vs 27% of respondents who feel it has got worse.

36%

said adverts "add creativity, colour, flavour and information" to their lives. Only 19% said adverts were an unwelcome distraction.

28%

cited targeted advertising as a positive, saying "they know what I need".



Contacts worth having

DID YOU KNOW THAT MEDIA SUBSTRATES SUPPLIER ANTALIS HAS AN IN-HOUSE INNOVATION AND CREATIVE CONSULTANTS TEAM? AND DID YOU KNOW THAT ITS HEAD, CLAIRE WHITE, AND OTHERS LIKE HER, CAN HELP YOU HAVE MORE PROFITABLE CONVERSATIONS WITH CUSTOMERS AND CREATIVES TO MAKE THE MOST OF NEW AND TRENDING PRINT OPPORTUNITIES?

We all know the potential for wide-format print - new markets continue to open up and grow as print technologies and consumables offer creatives ever more mind-boggling possibilities. For example, according to 'Business Leader Magazine', the UK's pop-up industry is currently worth over £2.3bn a year with almost 30% of British businesses beginning their entrepreneurial journey in this way. That's a great opportunity for large-format print. So how can everyone in the print chain cater for - and make money from - emerging/trending print applications?

For Antalis innovation and creative consultant Claire White it is all about communication and education - working collaboratively together at an early stage to help bridge any gaps between the designer's concept and specification of the right materials to get the end user the best result.

Antalis' in-house team of innovation and creative consultants is a relatively new concept, but they are well positioned to engage with professionals across a number of sectors including the design community, retailers and brands, print management, manufacture and the printer - helping to create strong working relationships and find the best print solutions.

White - who heads up the Antalis innovation and creative consultants team - stresses that early engagement is essential. "The key is to involve the

WE CAN
JOINT CALL
WITH PSPS
AND TRY TO
STIMULATE
MORE PRINT
WITH OUR
COMBINED
KNOWLEDGE

substrate supplier, such as Antalis' consultancy team from an early stage of design so they can understand the requirements before advising on a media specification to achieve the best end result. All too often specification is an afterthought, meaning production isn't the best it could have been, sometimes at the expense of the end result. It makes total sense to consider the specification at the briefing stage, to look at the best and most 'fit for purpose' materials and those that offer the best 'total-cost' option. Conversations around substrate cost are important, but also discussing minimising waste, ease of conversion, expected life-span and cost-effective disposal after use - after all the right choice can make or break a project in so many ways.

"Knowledge is key. If you're going to grow your business into more creative areas you really need to be able to speak their language know how to approach creatives with profitable print solutions.

White has spent over 20 years in creative roles within the retail sector and says: "With my background as a creative in retail, I knew how hard it was to find specification support and as a result often the quality of the production was disappointing. Projects occasionally had to be reprinted because the materials suggested weren't suitable to the purpose of the design or the length of time it was required. Specification was decided somewhere else down the chain by people I hadn't even spoken too!

"We need to consider how as an industry we are speaking to creatives and how we could better work together to provide knowledge, advice and understanding of materials so they can confidently specify what materials are to be used. We are also here to support the printer with bridging any design gap there may be between themselves and their clients. We can joint call with PSPs and try to stimulate more print with our combined knowledge."

White adds: "There are so many fantastic printable materials available on the market offering solutions across all sectors, yet the decision makers are sometimes kept in the dark. Together, we need to demonstrate what is available and what can be achieved in a market that is constantly looking for innovation and expert advice. Going back to pop-up's for example, here is a growing market and there are many considerations for the selection of substrates such as light weighting, safety, ease of application, removability and particularly cost effectiveness. We all need to improve our communication skills and knowledge in vertical markets such as this. It is not going to be easy but we want to stimulate more profitable print for these exciting markets.

"Antalis can help. We don't have all the answers but we recognise that things need to change and communication needs be improved - questions need to be asked. What we can do is work with together with large-format printers to better help them to engage and to understand the needs of the creatives. Our role should be to spread the message about digital print and what it can achieve. Our consultants are here to raise awareness of the materials in our portfolio and how they can increase print possibilities, coming from a creative background certainly helps visualise and truly understand the many challenges the market faces today."



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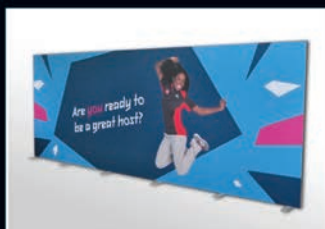


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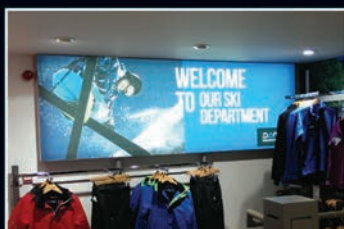


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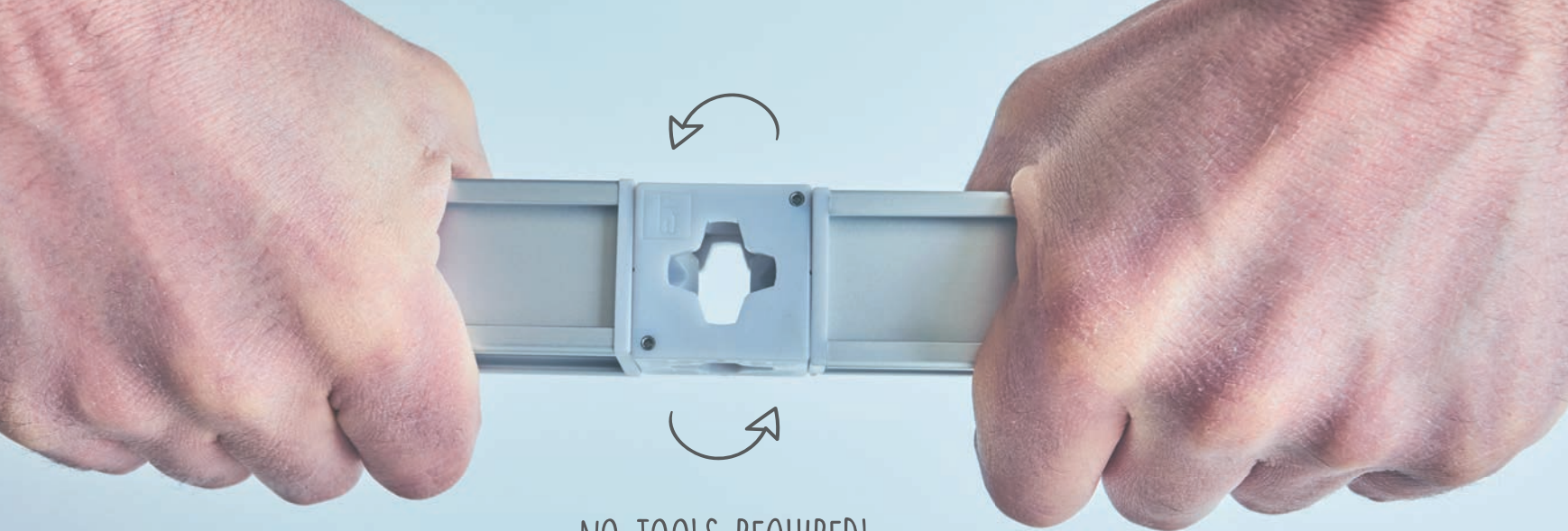
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