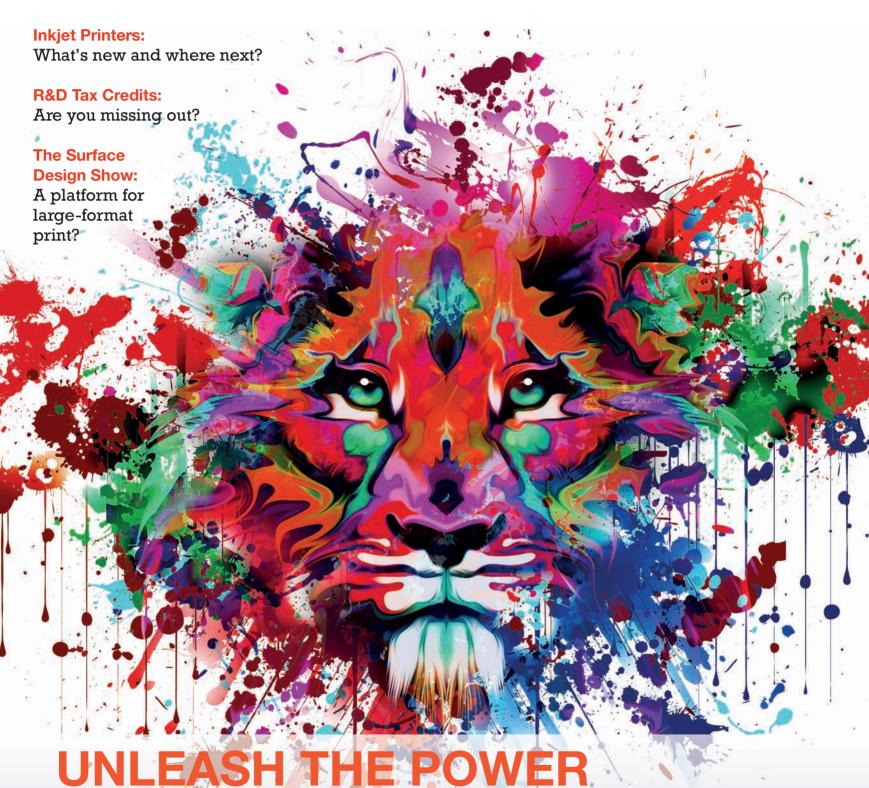


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Ricoh brings new market opportunities

to life at Sign & Digital UK



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Imagine.



WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING OF IT?

Should you be making more noise than you are? Perhaps you're sick to death of hearing me ask the same question, but the reality is that though the UK and Ireland's large-format print sector can do exceptional things, still not enough people know it! I suppose your existing customers do. But is that even really the case? Most of you are innovators to some degree, with constantly evolving applications and service portfolios. Maybe you're very good at keeping your own customers - and perhaps targeted prospects - constantly up to date with developments and stretching their imagination - and their print spend. The sector as a whole isn't.

You've heard me go on about the need for 'print ambassadors' to reach out to the wider creative community and enthral potential print buyers. That's still to happen - and it could, but people need to put themselves forward for the role. Fancy it? If so, I know a man worth talking to. Chris Newton is organiser of The Surface Design Show. At the 2019 event digital print will get an airing, but it could be a much bigger focus in 2020 because Newton is very open to discussion on how this sector can get its message out to his show visitors - your potential new customers. Turn to p35 for the low-down.

One company that is being particularly proactive at the moment in spreading the word about its diversified offering is Showcard. At the end of 2018, structural print accounted for 30-35% of the company's digital, screen and litho total £18m turnover. By the end of 2020 it's expected to be 50% of a larger £22-23m turnover. The detail is on p27. And if you're thinking you could do with hiring a 'business builder' to extend your own reach, go to p28.

Talking of innovation, are you getting money back from the Government when you do it? Heck, it's being offered, so grab it. If you've dismissed the idea of claiming R+D Tax Credits, think again.

Many - if not most - large-format PSPs are missing out on free money. Turn to p24.

And one final thing - if you haven't already taken part in the 2019 Widthwise Survey, please do so. You can take part at: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/C83ZNBW Your input is invaluable. The more feedback we get from PSPs the more accurate will be our independent sector analysis, which will be published free in the Widthwise Report later in the year. Our thanks go to CMYUK, Roland and Agfa for sponsoring what is the 12th annual Widthwise project.

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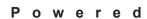


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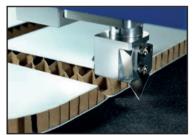
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SGP forms non-profit educational arm

The Sustainable Green Printing Partnership (SGP) has formed the SGP Foundation (SGPF), a non-profit organisation set up to provide education and awareness on the best practices associated with sustainability in the printing industry - including printers, suppliers and customers/print buyers.

SGPF key focus areas include: the promotion of sustainable and technological innovation; advocacy for sustainable supply chains; to act as a forum for sustainability discussions; and to educate the public on print sustainability.

SGPF will be chaired by long-time supporter of SGP, Jonathan Graham of TE Connectivity. "Companies, especially in the retail space, require printers to be part of a more sustainable supply chain. SGPF plans to provide educational programs and information that will positively impact sustainability success with our SGP certified facilities, brands, suppliers and the printing industry as a whole," said Graham. "The SGP Foundation will directly address the needs of the market and provide best practices via seminars, webinars and information sharing to make the sustainability journey easier."

Mutoh brings out new ValueJets

Mutoh Europe has added the ValueJet 1627MH and ValueJet 1638UR to its portfolio.

The VJ-627MH is a 64in wide, five-colour machine incorporating a hot air knife media drying system and using new MP-31 resin-based inks for direct printing on both rigid and roll substrates. Compared to its predecessor, the ValueJet 1617H, it is said to deliver a performance increase of up to 20%.

The MP-31 series inks (CMYK + White) have a UV durability up to two years outdoors without lamination, and Mutoh said they are also extremely stretchable and shrinkable.

The VJ-1627MH can produce print up to 720 x 1440dpi. In CMYK set-up, print speeds up to $12m^2/$ hr at 720 x 720dpi are possible.

The unit can be equipped with foldable print tables, allowing it to handle rigid substrates up to 16mm and 15kg. An optional media alignment system can be mounted to the front to enable double sided printing. The VJ-1627MH can also be used with customised jigs for printing on pre-cut blanks. For roll prints, the machine can be equipped with a 30kg automated take-up system.

The VJ-1638UR is a 64in-wide roll-to-roll 6-colour UV LED printer with print resolutions up to 1440 x 1440dpi. It uses Mutoh's new US11 UV LED CMYK, White and Clear 0% VOC inks. Media roll weights up to 100 kg can be handled by the machine

Durst makes LFP management changes following Schulz departure

Durst has reorganised its large format printing (LFP) segment management following the departure of Barbara Schulz, EVP sales.

"Barbara Schulz decided to leave the company in the first quarter for personal and family reasons. We are grateful to her for her five years of hard work and dedication and wish her all the best for the future," said CEO Christoph Gamper, who has taken over the commercial management of the group's Lienz operation on a temporary basis.

A new dual leadership has been formed for the LFP/fabric division, and the "historically grown structure will be dissolved in favour of better efficiency in the daily dealings with Durst customers and the business unit will be controlled from the Durst headquarters in Brixen, northern Italy," said a statement.

The LFP/fabric division is now being led by Christian Harder as global sales director, and Andrea Riccardi, head of product management. Both are based at Brixen.

Harder has cross-segment know-how and has been responsible for worldwide sales management for ceramics printing in recent years. Prior to that, he was responsible for sales in Eastern Europe and Latin America in the LFP segment. Riccardi has worked for many years in direct sales in the LFP market in Italy, and since the end of 2016 has been responsible for the product portfolio in LFP web printing and the development in soft signage/fabrics printing.

Product manufacturing will remain as is - with webfed machines made in Brixen and flatbeds in Lienz



- P5 machines being made at the latter, bar the P5 320 hybrid model which is built at Brixen. Durst has also confirmed that the P5 200HS and P5 320 printers - expected to hit the market before the end of 2018 - are still in development.

"The new dual leadership has my fullest confidence and the best prerequisites for further developing the segment and consolidating our position as market leader," said Gamper. "By concentrating the management function in the group, we are also paving the way for optimal networking and integration with the relevant areas in development, software and services."

He added: "The Lienz location will also benefit from the cross-segment technology transfer, with the focus on corrugated printing and new technology developments in new business areas."

Meanwhile, Durst has entered into a 50/50 joint venture with press manufacturer Koenig and Bauer for the joint development and marketing of single-pass digital printing systems for the folding carton and cartonboard corrugated industry.

New ownership for InPrint and Pure Digital shows

Reed Exhibitions is buying Mack Brooks Exhibitions, the company that owns InPrint and Pure Digital event organiser FM Brooks. The transaction is expected to be finalised during the first half of 2019.

Marcus Timson, who with Frazer Chesterman founded the InPrint show for the industrial print sector in 2014, said they will both continue to be

involved with the event - slated to take place in Munich 12 - 14 November 2019 - "on a consultancy basis".

At the time of going to press, Reed had yet to comment on the continuation of Pure Digital, scheduled to take place in Eindhoven on 23-24 October.

Contract and staff wins for Leach

Leach has been appointed 'official venue dressing sponsor' for the 2019 ICF Canoe Slalom World Cup and 2020 ECA Canoe Slalom European Championships.

The Huddersfield-based company will supply the venue dressing requirements for both international slalom events at Lee Valley White Water Centre, the London 2012 Games legacy venue based on the Hertfordshire/Essex border. The job will include creating a range of bespoke materials for the main entrance and buildings, wayfinding around the venue, course side branding, podium back drop and the 'kiss and cry' area on the finish line.

Meanwhile, Leach has appointed a new client services director as it aims for further growth in 2019. Suzanne Pitcher - previously business development manager at Service Graphics - brings more than 15 years of design, print, brand marketing and project management experience to the Huddersfield-based firm.

With £500,000 of additional investment and 20% expansion forecast for Leach over the next 12 months, Pitcher will work alongside the sales and account management team to offer a wider range of products and services to clients, and aim for greater penetration of markets including sports, property and retail.

CMYUK to build digital textile development facility at Shrewsbury site

CMYUK is to build a digital textile development facility as an extension of its existing demonstration and training centre in Shrewsbury and in line with its aims for growth in the textile digital print market, both on production equipment and on the development of new textile materials for the décor, design and fashion markets

The news follows the announcement that the company had appointed Brett Platt to the new role of digital textile manager, a position created to reflect the significant investment CMYUK is making in the

The new facility, which will showcase digital textile printing equipment and associated technologies, will also enable CMYUK to evaluate new products for a wide range of textile printing technologies.

Platt will work closely with commercial director Michael Crook, and textile material business development specialist Joel Willcock in establishing the research and development infrastructure to bring new fabrics to market.

CMYUK group director Robin East said of the latest

development: "We're really excited to announce this further investment into our infrastructure. setting out our stall to become the UK's marketleading supplier for digital textile production equipment and materials."

Platt added: "Our objective will be to develop a comprehensive range of natural and man-made fabrics from cottons, linens, and polyesters. We will be a one-stop supplier for equipment and material for companies of all

CMYUK will be developing and proving coatings to support its expanding range of natural fabrics, working closely with chemical companies to formulate solutions.

East concluded: "We will also be partnering with designers and production companies to showcase solutions for textile market sectors including contemporary wall and ceiling systems, décor and fashion, hosting many innovation days for customers within the business and educational sectors."

DIS makes key strategic move with Pongs

DIS is targeting an extra £500,000 worth of business from architects, interior designers and entertainment venues on the back of it becoming an official supplier and installer of Pongs printable acoustic fabrics.

The Midlands-based print and digital imaging specialist has partnered with the German firm to print colour, imagery and special designs on to its acoustic fabric wall and ceiling graphic systems.

DIS - which employs which employs 19 people at its studio - has sent a number of installers to the Pongs headquarters in Gladbach to learn about the materials, which have 'A' or 'B' acoustic absorption ratings. The Descor range can also be used at hospitals or leisure facilities thanks to an anti-bacterial coating.

"Trying to make large open spaces and rooms aesthetically pleasing, whilst achieving the right acoustic performance, has been a massive challenge for our customers...this new agreement offers them a perfect solution," said DIS managing director Mark Bradley.

"We are the first approved UK supplier and installer of Pongs acoustic fabrics and this will give us a massive advantage over our rivals. Talks have already begun with marketing agencies, interior designers, architects and local authorities about using the walls and ceiling systems. There are no limitations with size either, as



we can print - using 3M inks - huge unlimited tiled sections. We can even integrate LED lighting into the systems to create ever-changing moods and stunning visual displays."

DIS has already secured its first win using the Pongs technology, with a new 35m-long wall system being installed at Virgin Active's Mayfair site. It forms part of the multi-million pound contract that has seen the company become the official supplier of graphics and signage for all of its 46 gyms and health clubs. It is the largest contract the company has been awarded to date and will play an important role in helping it move from its existing £2.5m turnover to anticipated £5m annual sales by 2021.

Antalis brings sustainable Xanita board to the UK

Antalis has become the exclusive distributor in the UK for Cape Town-based Xanita, and has added the South Africa company's ultra-lightweight and sustainable composite fibre-board Xanita to its range.

This is a 100% repulpable engineered, closed-cell fibre-board, manufactured with a corrugated kraft core made of recycled cardboard boxes. Said to be suitable for decorative and structural applications, Xanita is plastic-free and has a number of other environmental benefits, including the use of VOCfree adhesives. FSC sourced liners and is ECF certified - meaning all the materials are non-toxic.

InkTec kicks off new year with new printers

InkTec has introduced two new printers - the Jetrix LXi6 and Jetrix LXi7 - and will bring the Jetrix LX190 to market this month (February).

The Jetrix LXi6 and LXi7 are both 8-channel printers with a top speed of 78m²/hr and with a maximum resolution of 1080dpi. The LXi6 has takes media up to 2500 x 1280mm and the LXi7 up to 2500 x 3060mm.

The 6-colour, 1.9m edge-to-edge roll-to-roll Jetrix LX190 builds on the LXiR320 but has the narrower width. It has a top speed of 45m²/hr and offers top resolutions of 720 x 1440dpo (8pass), 720 x 1080dpi (6pass), 720 x 720dpi (4pass) and 720 x 720dpi (2pass).

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- Sun Chemical and Siegwerk raise ink prices
- swissQprint piques interest with Karibu announcement
- ColorGate brings out new colour performance booster for embedded Rips
- 'Explosion of Possibilities' unveiled as Fespa 2019 campaign strapline
- PSPs asked to help shape Sign and Digital UK 2019
- Significant portion of print companies 'bewildered' in current landscape says BPIF
- Gudrun Bonte promoted to VP product management at SAi
- OKI creates massive media profile database
- Simpson Group invests £250,000 in Tharstern MIS
- Ultima Displays introduces Modulate
- PressOn takes HP LX 3600 latex printer
- Nominations sought for BAPC awards
- Industry 4.0 focus of 2019 Print4All Conference
- Visitor figures positive for Viscom reloaded
- Symbol goes all digital
- GMG sets out 2019 Academy workshop dates
- Josero joins Hybrid's partner programme
- **FSB maps UK business population**
- 3M makes Wrap Cube a Select Gold Partner
- Massivit opens demo centre in Belgium
- Antalis introduces new retroreflective film
- UPM issues biodiversity commitment
- John E Wright to combine Instaprint operation
- Xaar 1201 printheads key to new printer series
- Hop-Syn media meets new environmental standard
- Hop Industries 'Go' grade now suitable for LED inkjet printers
- Speakers sought for new Printing United show
- Pyramid Display Materials looks north

RICOH imagine. change.



THE POWER OF OPPORTUNITY

The sign and display market is full of favourable business indicators, not least with potential new markets such as textiles, garments and décor opening up to digital print technology. Ricoh's portfolio of products, allied to its partnership approach and service excellence, make those new opportunities more gettable than ever.

Printing businesses with ambition for growth are looking for new markets and new applications to diversify into. In doing so, they are generally responding to the demands of their customers, who are increasingly looking to rationalise their supplier base, and utilise existing print suppliers to provide them with the complete range of their print needs, quickly and cost-effectively.

A FESPA Print Census by InfoTrends illustrates these trends clearly. It found great confidence among printers in the sign and display sector: 80% of them were optimistic, buoyed by a doubling of average revenues in the eight years from 2007; 45% of them were investing in technology to move into new markets.

The research discovered an evolving product mix, because although the old favourites of banners, billboards, signs and posters still led the way, some 80% of printers reported that they were doing more textiles, garments, décor and packaging. And the research identified four key trends in customer relationships that 70% of those printers expected to rise: point of need, personalisation, just in time production and faster turnarounds.

All of this suggests a market that is buoyant, and teeming with opportunity for the sign and display printer that has an eye for branching out and building

New Ricoh products for Sign & Digital UK 2019

Wide format latex:

Ricoh Pro L5130/5160 – reliability and segment-leading print speeds to meet fast turnaround demands

UV flatbed:

Ricoh Pro TF6250 – high quality, fast turnaround allied to substrate flexibility and automated daily maintenance

Direct to Garment:

Ricoh Ri 1000 - high quality, high margin prints at an affordable price

the business. There are a number of printing technologies that can help them achieve this. While most of the industry has long used various solvent and aqueous digital inkjet systems, printers can now also take advantage of the unique characteristics of UV-curable and latex printing technologies.

Indeed, when the 2017 InfoTrends-FESPA World Wide Survey asked printers whether they planned to invest in a new wide format printer in the next 12 months, 31% said that they would invest in UV-curable inkjet, 16% in eco-solvent inkjet, and 13% in latex inkjet – the three largest categories.

Both UV-curable and latex stand out for the large range

of applications and materials that they each can bring in-house to a printer, saving on outsourcing and helping to tie customers in. Because the technology is digital, the print can be personalised and delivered quickly, thereby meeting those rising customer demands that the research identified.

With the rise of textile printing, digital direct to garment (DTG) printing systems are also starting to gain traction in the market, making the production of personalised items such as t-shirts, cloth bags and cushion covers another avenue that is potentially lucrative for printers looking to grow.

PARTNERS IN SUCCESS

All of this opportunity, were a printer to grasp at it, requires careful decision making, not least in the choice of technology that can make the opportunity a reality. There are a great many manufacturers selling excellent digital printing systems in all of the above fields, and Ricoh is now applying in earnest its 40 years of research in inkjet technology, its commitment to working in partnership with printers, and its service excellence, to the sign and display market.

At Sign & Digital UK in 2019, Ricoh will for the first time exhibit a full portfolio of wide format printing systems, including new UV flatbed, latex and DTG systems.

"As with our hugely successful approach to the commercial print market, we're looking to help wide

Case study - Beepag in Italy

When you claim that you can print onto any material, you need to back that claim up with the right technology investments.

Italian graphic design and print specialist Beepag is proud to make such a claim, and has invested in several Ricoh systems to back it up. Ricoh's Pro T7210 UV flatbed printer, for example, is allowing Beepag to explore new market opportunities through its ability to print onto a vast array of materials, including wood, aluminium and glass. It is printing industrial decoration such as customised doors and interior furnishings, as well as Point of Purchase display material.

The company also uses a Ricoh Pro L4100 large format latex printer to produce wallpaper for the retail sector, which is a flourishing application area.

Matteo Pinzauti, owner and chief executive of Beepag, commented: "The Pro T7210 is more flexible than other flatbed printers. It handles media of up to 110 mm in thickness, including wood, aluminium and glass, as well as printing onto cardboard and Forex."

format sign and display printers to increase their margins, keep ahead of the competition, and improve customer satisfaction," said Simon Isaacs, National Sales Director, Commercial & Industrial Print Group, Ricoh UK. "Our customers value us as a partner throughout their digital journey, and we will be there to support them all the way, advising and guiding as required, and applauding their successes.

"We're looking forward to translating that to the Sign & Digital audience, for whom we're sure we can make a difference. There are lots of opportunities out there for sign and display printers, and we believe we can help them make the most of those opportunities."











SIGN & DIGITAL 2019

Ricoh will be exhibiting at Sign & Digital 2019 at the NEC in Birmingham.

Visitors can expect to see a range of new large format solutions, including latex printers and UV flatbeds as well as new direct to garment printers.

The exhibition will be held on 2-4 April and Ricoh's stand will be J30.

www.ricoh.co.uk

NEWEST AND NEXT

ROLL-TO-ROLL. FLATBED AND HYBRID LARGE-FORMAT INKJET PRINTERS – WE BRING YOU UP TO SPEED WITH THE LATEST OFFERINGS AND ASK MANUFACTURERS WHAT'S IN THE DEVELOPMENT PIPELINE.

InkTec and Ricoh have nailed their colours to the mast and already announced new printers being introduced in 2019. SwissQprint and HP are teasing us with promises of launches at Fespa Global in May but for now keeping their cards close to their chests, while many other manufacturers are saying even less about specific plans but promise ongoing development and launches as you'd expect. So if you're in the market for a new large-format printer here's what we can tell you about the latest models on the market, and what the manufacturers are telling us about things to come.

At Roland DG, as Rob Goleniowski, head of sales UK and Ireland, points out: "It's not just about developing premium quality hardware. It's also important to invest in developing powerful software that opens the capabilities of the hardware and increases efficiency. For example, Roland DG has recently released an update to the VersaWorks Rip package. Aside from quality and productivity, VersaWorks 6 controls ink usage to get the best results without wastage, which in turn improves the profitability of the entire system."

Petra Fetting at SwissQprint also talks of nonhardware R+D areas that to make its printers more versatile as well as efficient: "Generally speaking, we see that certain markets require specific features, e.g. automation for operations with high throughput, or fixation systems for the corrugated packaging market. In addition, workflow and data flow are getting more and more important - smooth and comprehensive workflow from the customer data to the machine user interface. And of course also providing data (JDF) for the MIS system, e.g. production status, cost information (machine uptime, ink consumption) etc."

Talking about the 2019 launch of its Pro TF6210 and the Pro L5100 series printers, Simon Isaacs, national sales director at Ricoh UK, says the company's focus "is to develop our current commercial large-format business with a new Latex solution and expand into new Industrial inkjet sectors with the ProT7210 and ProTF6210," pointing out too that it will "also increase the synergy with our new acquisition, ColorGate. We will prepare bundle solutions with Ricoh hardware and ColorGate's Rip Platform for flatbed and large-format applications."

According to Ken Hanulec, VP marketing EFI Inkjet Solutions: "PSPs care about two things: lowering their cost per square metre and doing things they can't currently do today to drive high value applications. With EFI LED UV technology for example, printers need less power consumption, ink usage volume is optimised, and users can print on a broader range of substrates. At Fespa we will be focusing on customer innovations

WORKFLOW AND DATAFLOW **ARF GFTTING** MORE AND MORE **IMPORTANT**





that solve those two market asks "

Tudor Morgan, sign and display segment manager, Fujifilm Graphic Systems Europe says: "We're not able to comment on upcoming printer hardware announcements at this point, but, our focus will continue to be on delivering solutions that give our customers an edge. Our core technologies of printhead development and ink chemistry, and our combined expertise in these areas is driving hardware development, boosting quality and performance across the board. In 2019 this will remain our core focus, as we continue to drive the market forward."

Phil McMullin of Epson points out that the company spends around £1.5m per day on R&D focusing on printing for textile, signage, POS, décor, photo, label and a raft of other applications. "Over the next two years we intend to significantly expand our production print portfolio in all these areas utilising our own piezo printhead technology and own ink chemistry covering aqueous, eco-solvent, resin, UV, dye sub, DTG and DTF." Watch this space.

NEWEST OFFERINGS

We asked each manufacturer for the name, launch date and basic spec of each of their latest respective roll-toroll, flatbed and/or hybrid large-format inkjet printers the details of which follow. Please note that prices refer to the 'from' UK price ex VAT.

ANAPURNA H1650I LED

- Max speed: 63m²/hr
- Max resolution: 720 x 140dpi
- Uses Agfa-made Anapurna 1500 LED inks
- Driven by Agfa Asanti Workflow
- KM1024i printheads
- Price: £82,000

JETI TAURO H3300 LED

- Launched 2018
- 3.3m wide hybrid
- Roll-to-roll option: 3.3m wide single roll and 2x1.6m double roll
- Anuvia 1550 LED inks
- Colours: 6-colour (48 heads), 6-colour (48 heads) plus white (12 heads), 6-colour (48 heads) plus white (8 heads) and primer (4 heads)
- Max speed: 453m²/hr
- Max resolution: 635 x 1200dpi
- Driven by Agfa Asanti Workflow
- Various automation options
- Price: £500,000



PSPS CARE ABOUT TWO THINGS: LOWERING THEIR COST PER SQUARE METRE AND DOING THINGS THEY CAN'T CURRENTLY DO TODAY TO DRIVE HIGH VALUE APPLICATIONS

OCÉ COLORADO 1640

- Launched May 2017
- LED-UV roll-to-roll
- Piezo-electric inkjet with UVgel ink
- Max media width: 164cm
- Max print width: 163cm
- Max media thickness: 0.8mm
- Ink drop size: 10 picolitres (binary)
- Colours: CMYK
- Max resolution: 1,800 x 600dpi
- Max speed: 159m²/hr
- Price: £48,000

DURST

P5 250 HS

- Launched February 2018
- Durst printhead arrays built with Fujifilm Mems nozzle plates
- Max speed: 240m²/hr in two-pass mode
- Max resolution: 1200dpi
- Media transport system
- Durst Symphony comprising touchscreen user interface, workflow suite and analytics platform for pre-emptive maintenance and consumption data.

EFI

PRO 24F

- Launched October 2018
- LED UV curable, 1.2 m x 2.4 m flatbed with moving carriage and
- Max print width: 245cm
- Max speed: 107m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1200 x 1200dpi
- Colours: CMYK + two white channels
- Vacuum media system

PRO 32R

- Launched October 2018
- LED UV curable roll-to-roll
- Max print width: 320cm
- Max speed: 207m²/hr
- Max resolution: 635dpi
- Colours: CMYK, white option



VUTEK H3/H5

- Launched May 2018
- LED UV curable hybrid
- Max print width: 320cm
- Max speed: 74 boards/hr (109 on the h5)
- Max resolution: 1200dpi
- Colours: 4 (optional) or 8-colour modes + white

FPSON



SURECOLOR SC-F9300

- Launched 2017
- 1.6m dye-sub
- Max Speed: 108.6m²/hr
- Colours: CMYK
- Max resolution: 720 x 1440dpi
- Epson Edge Print Rip software and Control Dashboard
- LFP accounting tool
- Price: £16,595

FUJIFILM



ACUITY LED 1600R

- Launched February 2018
- Uvijet RL LED UV curable ink
- Max print width: 161cm
- Max media thickness: 1mm
- Colours: CMYK, optional CMYKLcLm, CMYKW, CMYKLcLmW
- Max speed: 33m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1200 x 1200dpi
- Price: £25,000

ACUITY ULTRA (5000 AND 3200 SERIES)

- Launched May 2018
- Uvijet GS series
- Max print width: 500cm (320cm for 3.2m model)
- Media thickness: 0.1-2mm
- Colours: CMYK, Lc, Lm with option for additional two white channels
- Max speed: 236m²/hr (181m2/hr for 3.2m model)
- Max resolution: 1200 x 1200dpi
- Price: 3.2m
- £295,000,5m
- £325,000

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HP

LATEX R2000

- Launched May 2018
- Latex
- Max speed: 88m²/hr
- Colours: 9 (CMYK, White, Lc, Lm, Latex Optimiser, Latex Overcoat)
- Max rigid media size: 250 x 120cm (up to 250 x 305cm with two sets of extension tables)
- Max roll size: 2.49m
- Price: £242.000

LATEX R1000

- Launched July 2018
- Latex
- Max speed: 57m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1200 x 1200dpi
- Colours: 9 (CMYK, White, Lc, Lm, Latex Optimiser, Latex Overcoat)
- Max rigid media size: 162 x 122cm (up to 162 x 305cm with two sets of optional extension tables)
- Max roll size: 1.63m
- Max thickness: 50.8mm
- Price £180,000.

INKTEC

JETRIX LXI6/I7

- Launched January 2019
- UV LED curable flatbeds
- Max media size:
- 2500 x 1280 / 2500 x 3060
- Max speed 78m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1080 dpi
- Colours: 8 ink channels with white, varnish and primer channels available

JETRIX LXIR190

- Launching February 2019
- 1.9m edge-to-edge roll-to-roll printer
- Max speed: 45m²/hr
- Max resolution: 720 x 1440 (8 pass) / 720 x 720 (2 pass)
- Colours: Max 6 with CMYK + white



MIMAKI

T555-1800

- Launched November 2018
- Roll-to-roll dye-sub
- Max print width: 194cm
- Max speed: 140m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1200dpi Colours: 9
- (BI,M,Y,K,LbI,L,Lk,Fy,Fp)
- Price: £24.995



TIGER-1800B MKII

- Launched May 2018
- Roll-to-roll dye-sub or reactive
- Max print width: 185cm
- Max speed: 385m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1200dpi
- Colours: 4 or 8



UCJV SERIES

- Launched September 2017
- LED UV curable
- Max print width: 160cm
- Max speed: 25.8m²/hr
- Max resolution: 1200dpi
- Colours: 8 (CMYK,Lc,Lm,W,Cl)
- Price: UCJV300-75
- £14.995, UCJV300-107
- ■£15,995, UCJV300-160
- ■£23,995, UCJV150-160
- £15.995

митон



VALUEJET 1638UR

- Launched April 2018
- UV LED roll-to-roll
- Max media width: 162cm
- Max speed: 13.5m²/hr (CMYK)
- Max resolution: 1440 x 1440dpi
- Colours: CMYK, white, varnish
- Dual head, dual lamp
- Price: £19,995

PJ-2508UF

- Launched May 2018
- LED UV flatbed
- Max media width: 125 x 254cm
- Max speed: 20m²/hr
- Max resolution: 600 x 1200dpi
- Colours: CMYK, white, varnish
- Price: £71.425



VALUEJET 1627MH

- Launched November 2018
- Resin-based hybrid
- Max media width: 162cm
- Max speed: 12.1m²/hr (CMYK)
- Max resolution: 1440dpi
- Colours: CMYK, white
- Price: £23,795

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IT'S A MATERIAL WORLD

YOU'VE SEEN THE FIGURES - TEXTILE PRINT IS HAVING A HEYDAY, PRINTER MANUFACTURERS ARE POURING R+D FUNDS INTO THE SECTOR AS SIMON CREASY DISCOVERS, BUT ARE THE NEW MACHINES ONES FOR YOUR PURCHASING LIST?

Few print sectors have seen as much innovation and new product development (NPD) brought forward by major equipment manufacturers as textiles over the last few years. The reason for this focus becomes apparent when you look at the market stats. Inkjet printing of textiles is one of the fastest growing print segments, with the worldwide market value rising to \$1.88bn in 2018 - more than double its value in 2013, according to Smithers Pira's 'The Future of Digital Textile Printing to 2023' report, which was published late last year. Over the same five-year period the volume of fabric printed digitally has grown from 548m square metres to 1.16bn square metres. And with Smithers Pira projecting values will continue to grow over the next few years, with the market reaching \$3.75bn in 2023 - and 2.70bn square metres of fabric consumed - it's little wonder that manufacturers are lining up to unleash further innovation on the market over the coming months.

So what machinery can we expect to see hitting the exhibition halls of print shows in 2019 - bearing in mind that it won't by any means be all directed at large-format PSPs - and what clues do recent launches give us about the direction of travel when it comes to future NPD?

One of the busiest manufacturers over the last year or so has been EFI. According to Adele Genoni, EFI Reggiani vice president and general manager, the company has launched a new print model every quarter over the last 15 months. The latest iteration to roll off the production line was the single-pass EFI Reggiani Bolt textile digital printer, which debuted at an open house in Italy last year. The company claims the "ultra-high speed" machine is a "revolution to

the textile printing market, providing users with high uptime and reliability, outstanding performance, superior printing uniformity and accuracy, long printhead life, and minimal maintenance needs".



EFI also launched a new dye-sublimation printer at Fespa 2018 - the EFI Vutek FabriVu 340i, a 3.4m aqueous soft-signage machine - to add to the 1.8m Reggiani ReNoir Flexy, which has a production speed of nearly 200m²/hr; the EFI Reggiani Vogue, capable of printing a resolution of up to 2,400dpi with 16 printheads and eight colours; the EFI Reggiani Colors, which boasts 12 colours and can print at speeds of up to 560m2/hr; and the EFI Reggiani Bolt, with throughput speeds of up to 90m/min at 600 x 600dpi.

Genoni says the company has a "solid product development roadmap" for 2019, which will include the introduction of new printers and inks. "One of our main goals is to provide cutting-edge technologies and green solutions to the textile printing industry so that businesses can optimise their printing processes and consequently, generate more profits and reduce their environmental footprint," she says. "We expect future R&D efforts in the textile digital

printing sector to focus on technologies that enhance the productivity, reliability and eco-friendliness of machines and inks. In dye-sub for example, the next technical opportunities we are seeing is increased performances of direct printing with sublimation inks, increased penetration and printing uniformity, and enhanced dye sub performances on new, recycled materials that are now gaining momentum among several apparel brands."



HP has also been busy on the NPD front, launching the HP Latex 3800 Jumbo roll product at Fespa in May last year. Javier Laraz, HP large-format production director, GSB EMEA, claims it is the "first real jumbo roll solution for flexible sign and textile printing in one device," which allows users to "expand their offering into new, high-value applications while also opening fresh creative ideas and concepts for sign and display".

As for future NPD Laraz says: "HP is always looking at new markets and although we're not able to comment at this point, HP will have a significant presence at Fespa 2019. The R&D efforts of our company are not discussed, but we can say that in the last years we have brought innovation, speed and colour to the market and we will continue to do so."



One of the more recent textile print device launches is Mimaki's TS55-1800 dye-sublimation printer, which was unveiled in late 2018. The 1.9m printer, which can print at speeds of up to 140m²/hr, is designed to print to transfer paper, prior to pressing onto polyester for the production of sportswear, apparel and fabric graphics, according to Brett Newman, Hybrid's chief operations manager.

"The Mimaki TS55-1800 addresses the demands of bringing garment and sportswear manufacturing closer to home," says Newman. "With its inbuilt expansion, companies can add in the ability to respond to increasing demand without investing in a new printer - yet when the time comes to truly add capacity, the capital costs of the TS55 are sufficiently competitive that it becomes even less of a challenge."

THERE IS A NEW TREND TOWARDS DIRECT PRINTING ON NATURAL FIBRES LIKE **COTTON USING** WATER-BASED **PIGMENTED INKS FOR APPLICATIONS** SUCH AS HOME FURNISHINGS. **UPHOLSTERY AND** FAST FASHION

He adds that the significance of the introduction of the TS55 should not be underestimated. "It sits at a very keen price point in a sector that's rapidly expanding thanks to increasing demand for short- to medium-runs of quality fashion, sportswear and retail graphics," says Newman. "With the new TS55, we're very well placed to answer that need and deliver a solution that can both grow with businesses as their requirement expands and at the same time, lower their running costs - it's a winning formula and one to watch for 2019."

Another company with high hopes for 2019 is Kornit Digital. Last year Kornit launched its high definition (HD) technology in the form of the Avalanche HD6 in January and the Storm HD6 in October, and just last month it announced the Atlas heavy-duty direct-togarment printer designed to deliver a typical annual production capacity of up to 350,000 impressions.

"After adding recirculating printheads to the systems, HD reduces the drop size from 85pl to 35pl," says Oliver Luedtke, director of marketing EMEA at Kornit Digital. "In combination with a new ink that has more concentrated and brighter pigments, the overall ink consumption is reduced by more than 20% compared to the previous product generation - directly translating into 20% lower cost per print and a refined hand feel. In 2019, Kornit will continue to improve the retail quality of Kornit-printed garments and will keep making the process more robust and faster."

These are similar areas of focus for Mutoh, for which the textile print sector is a growing business according to Dirk Devroye, marketing coordinator Mutoh Europe. He says the company - like many others - has detected a shift from "centralised production and stocking of prints made with analogue equipment towards local and on-demand production of digitally printed textiles, specifically linked to the key benefits of digital inkjet technology. There is also a new trend towards direct printing on natural fibres like cotton using water based pigmented inks for applications such as home furnishings, upholstery and fast fashion".

The latest additions to Mutoh's textile printer portfolio are the dye-sub ValueJet 1948WX capable of printing at up to 194m², and the direct-to-textile ValueJet 1938TX.



At Durst, the focus of innovation is very much on the dye-sublimation market and its Rhotex 325 fabrics dye-sub printer. Peter Bray, managing director of Durst UK and Ireland, says that the company has recently



though there is very little odour from our Rho FLT ink."

He adds that, had you walked down London's Oxford Street of Regent Street a couple of years ago around 80% of soft signage in retail stores would have been produced UV, but the balance has now shifted towards dye-sublimation. As a result, he says the market can expect to see the company launching new products that tap into this rapidly growing part of the market.

"There will be other products from Durst that come out in the dye-sublimation market, but I don't know if these will be launched in time for Fespa," says Bray. "Moving forward we will potentially look at dye-sublimation products that allow customers who have lower volumes to enter into that market as well."

Also targeting the dye-sub space is Epson. In late

noticed a significant increase in UK customers requesting dye-sub applications and he expects this trend to continue to gather momentum.

"What we have seen in the last couple of years is our customer's customers specifying that if they're producing in-store retail [work] it has to be dye-sublimation," explains Bray. "The demand is coming from the print specifiers, and they're asking for dye-sublimation because of the odour on UV print, even

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2017, it launched its new 'flagship' dye-sublimation textile printer, the SureColor SC-F9300 and a few months later, in January 2018, it unveiled the direct to garment SureColor SC-F2100, which replaced the SC-F2000 model. The latter featured a host of enhancements, including "improved speed and reliability" and offered printers the ability to create their own print designs using Epson's Garment Creator software, according to Heather Kendle market development manager Epson Europe. She says the company is "gradually adding to the range we've got in this sector" with Epson spending circa 1.5m Euro per day on research and development.

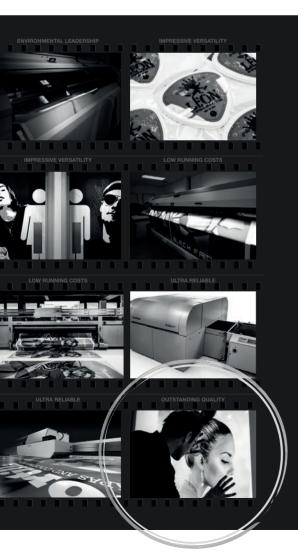
In terms of future innovation Kendle thinks some of this will be driven by 'industry 4.0' and a growing desire from PSPs for greater levels of interaction with their machines. "We are seeing a lot of development going on that will help improve productivity and enable people to see what's going on with their devices so that they predict failures and improve uptime, for example," says Kendle.

And as per the bullish projections for growth in the textile sector over the next few years that have been made by the likes of Smithers Pira, Kendle sees a healthy future ahead both for end users and for suppliers of textile printing equipment.

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"You are seeing some people who traditionally were not in the textiles market who are now starting to look at it as a new opportunity because some of the more traditional markets have slowed down a lot. Take the signage and graphics, which is currently running at around 0.5% compound annual growth, whereas textiles is running at 7% [compound annual growth] and is predicted to continue to do so until about 2023," says Kendle. "We are also seeing people who were doing screenprinting who are adopting the technology and also there has been quite a lot of online activity driving growth as well with companies like Amazon moving into textile production."

Thanks to a combination of factors you can expect to see a raft of innovative new textile printing equipment hitting the market to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and evolving customer base - some of which could well be deployed by PSPs, but plenty of others that will be used by other textile print specialists and newcomers. It's clear that keeping abreast of technological development across the whole textile print gamut is going to become increasingly challenging, yet increasingly important for PSPs to understand their strategic positioning in a rapidly evolving marketplace.



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Dye-sub: where are technical issues and opportunities?



Cosmin Vlad print production manager, **Insite Graphics**



James Birch director. ColourGraphics

First up, from a technical perspective, do you think dye-sub is the best option for a large-format PSP wanting to print textiles?

What can be better than a specially designed for fabric dyesublimation printer? There are obviously many alternatives, such as UV or latex, that can print fabric at a similar print quality, but dye-sub has its own advantages. It will always be able print on the softest and most premium materials on the market, which other types of printers will never be able to do because of the tension in the substrate mainly but due to the surface treatment as well. The speed of the dye-sub printers, especially on the inline curing ones, will always be a plus. The dye-sub prints are crease-free without big efforts thanks to the fabric's softness mentioned above. This is something that helps every step of the process. The print is scratch and rub resistant and also washable, as the ink is cured deep inside the thread.

I think dye-sub is definitely the best option if you are serious about tapping into this area of the industry. The process of dye-sub gives the finished product longevity and make the product easier to work with.

What do you think has been the most significant technical development in terms of dye-sub over the last couple of years?

It has to be machines that can print and cure. Keeping the curing process at top quality and gaining speed has always been a challenge but we can see a few very good machines on the market at the moment that are doing the job really well, and very fast.

Speed vs quality. There's always been a trade off with quality the faster you go.

What do you think of dye-sub printers with inline drying? Are they proving a technical triumph?

As mentioned above. I think it is truly a technical triumph for our industry and the main manufacturers are pushing their limits and proving it can be done better and better

We had one at the start of our dye-sub journey. It got us into the market but we wouldn't buy another one. Having offline curing gives us more versatility and I still don't know if there are any machines out there that can properly cure inline with the current print speeds that bigger machines are running. There are inherent issues with inline curing that we found caused us big problems like ghosting and offsetting issues - problems that we don't get with a traditional calendar.

What do you consider to be the most annoying technical issue with dye-sub right now - and how would you like to see that managed/resolved?

I think there is nothing worth mentioning as a general dye-sub technical issue - it's more like things that various printers do better than others. Of course, the most frequent one is something I have mentioned above, regarding getting sharp prints and clean or proper curing while printing at very high speeds.

I think the most annoying issue it the two-part process printing and sublimation. The only way to solve this is by having inline drying which takes us back to the previous question.

We've all heard the arguments as to why large-format PSPs should get into textile printing. But is dye-sub the best way to go and where do you feel there is room for technical improvement? Here's what five print companies have to say on the topic.



Stuart Maclaren group managing director, YPP



Brett Collins print manager, **Rocket Graphics**



lain Clasper-Cotte managing director, **FaberExposize**

I still think dye-sub offers the best flexibility - certainly more so than printing textiles with latex. Also you have lots of amazing fabrics and can get some really nicely printed products using dye-sub. It's by far the best route in my opinion.

You can print with UV, latex and solvent for polyester, but these can produce less effective results than dye-sublimation with colours not being as vibrant. Dyesub yields beautiful and permanent colours that are embedded in the substrate or fabric, rather than printed on the surface. Images on fabric won't fade or crack. Rub resistance, life-span and weather resistance are all better when using dve-sub.

The challenge with UV and latex can be in the distribution as they can be damaged in transit - so distribution costs can be higher for the customer. UV can however allow you to deliver greater density of ink which for certain artwork is essential. Dye-sub is far more durable so is great for distribution and storage - the challenge is that while colour vibrancy is fairly straightforward for frontlit it can be a really challenge to deliver the depth of colour for backlit. The fabrics are usually more expensive and then there is also the additional cost of paper. We have tested over 30 different fabrics 'til we narrowed it down to a range and custom profiles for our printers that delivered the results.

The machines are always developing, but it's the fabric manufacturers that I think really deserve praise. There has been a real growth in breadth of choice and in what textile print can now be used for. We're printing dye-sub for hotels etc. because the materials we can use now meet the look/feel demands of that type of end market.

In the last five years dve-sublimation printing has changed for a couple of reasons -

there are a lot more materials on the market now for dye-sub, and machines have become much faster and more consistent and controllable.

The print quality with the new machines gets better and better as do the speeds. Colour consistency and vibrancy have also improved due to the advancement in ink technology.

I'm against this idea for a few reasons, though I understand that it gives newcomers to textile print perhaps those transitioning from PVC print - a complete solution. But we started out fabric printing and I think having separate printers and ovens is the best way. In a combined unit, if the oven or printer stops working production comes to a halt.

Also, you don't always need the same amount of driers as printers. We have 13 printers and just two ovens. We run them all in a way that maximises efficiency - in terms of production workflow, energy usage and manpower. Because the printers don't have an on-board heater we can leave those running unattended. I'd not risk that with a combined unit.

My biggest technical problem has just been fixed! We've always wanted a good variable data software, so that if say a garage client wants a banner for each of its different forecourts with their site name on it, we can do that without having to create individual pieces of artwork. Now there's a solution that will do that - not before time because it's been possible in paper-based print for years. It will be a real boon to us.

I myself don't like inline drying machines. I believe that inline drying gives you less control with the printing and also slows down the process. Using an independent dryer is faster with most of the them able to dry up to three times the speed of printing and it gives you control to adjust speed and temp after the printing is done.

No! We started our UK print operation with two inline fixation machines. You do not have the accuracy of heat during sublimation nor the flexibility of speed. We had two of the same machines but the colour consistency between machines was very poor. We disposed of both of these machines after only 18 months use. They offer an entry level route to the market, but

The main problems with dye-sublimation printing is sizing. Every material stretches differently. We print on eight different material and every one has completely different X and Y sizing.

The biggest issue we have to deal with are the different tolerances for different materials. As materials are calendered in the sublimation process, stretching and shrinkage can occur with the heat and tension applied. Materials can then change dimensions when they 'settle' after this process. The only way around this is to extensively test each material through the process. This could be better managed by media manufacturers providing more information on the properties of the material to the printers.



Adam Kene ...

Money talks. So what have you been hearing about R&D Tax Credits? That it's an incentive out of your reach? Don't be too dismissive. Innovation can and does pay, as the likes of Signbox and Augustus Martin will testify. So can you too get a tax rebate on your development work, or is it too much hassle for the pay-back? I met with Adam Kene, MD of London-based R&D tax incentive advisory Kene Partners for the heads-up.

By Lesley Simpson

Your company specialises in R+D tax advice, so I'm assuming you see that there are plenty of companies out there that are yet to make proper use of this relief?

Yes there are plenty of businesses that could have a share of what's effectively free money, but apathy is a dangerous thing! And businesses are so used to seeing money just go in one direction when it comes to HMRC that they can't believe in the possibility of it flowing the other way. Plus, companies rely quite heavily of their accountants, and tend to think 'well, if this was a real opportunity they'd have told me about it'. But, it sits in this really awkward area that is quite tricky to navigate.

R+D tax relief has been around now for 18 years in the UK. Last year there were 42,000 claims made and HMRC paid £3.5bn, the majority going to large companies. But that doesn't mean smaller companies can't claim. This is a Government incentive scheme designed to encourage innovation in the UK, and they've worked out that if they spend £1 on R+D then it has a £2.65 knock-on effect on the economy, so they see it as an overarching good thing if businesses claim!

At a recent Round Table discussion among print business owners, Signbox MD Mark Bartlett was talking about the use his business has made of R&D Tax Credits. There was some confusion as to who could claim for what, and whether it was worth the effort. Is there a short answer to that?

There is a short answer. If you're a limited company then you are eligible to make a claim. If you are liable to corporation tax then you are eligible to make a claim. You don't have to profitable - indeed a loss making SME gets cash from a successful claim.

Of course you also need to be undertaking 'innovation' as per the definition set out. And this is probably the most confusing part as it's spread across 700 pages of guidelines.

So can you precis those?

Firstly, ask yourself if you're employing technical professionals or contracting/subcontracting them to solve technically challenging projects within your company.

So, say you wanted to check-out printing a new type of design onto a substrate that you don't normally use and that it was beyond the normal specifications of the printer so you needed to go through an experimental phase to find out if it would be possible to get the quality you wanted and meet other requisite criteria - does it wash as it needs to etc. - this would qualify as R+D.

The big question to ask yourself is: 'Is the answer to the issue I'm trying to solve available in the public domain?' If not, then ask yourself: 'Is it available if I speak to other people in my business?' If not, you're probably doing R+D.

People think that if they know of another company doing something that is perhaps more technically challenging, then that means they won't qualify. That's not the case. Even if another company can do what you're trying to do - they've worked out a way of doing it but they haven't told you how to do it and you're having to work it out for yourself - then you are doing R+D.

In most technologies - not just printing specifically - what happens is that current knowledge and theory takes you so far, then there's 10 - 30% of the job process that's yet to be solved. It's that last bit that's considered R+D activity.

What if you're doing that for one specific job for one specific client? I know some PSPs think that won't count when it comes to making a claim.

It's a common misconception that if you're being paid for the job that needs you to experiment then you won't qualify. Or that you won't because you know of other companies that could do it. Or that you tried to work it out and failed, so you didn't get paid because the job went in the bin. These are all really common misconceptions. If you've spent time and effort working something out, even if it failed, then it's still R+D.



...MD, Kene Partners

Naturally there are fees for tailored advice. Can you give some kind of indication of what services a printer would get from a company like yours, for what sort of money?

So, our results pretty much match the national average. On average companies receive £80,000 a year from making an R+D tax claim. We work across various industries, but print clients of ours include Augustus Martin, Bluetree Design and Print, Signbox and go down to really quite small companies. We work with one on the south coast with a £500,000 turnover, and yet they still receive about £20,000 a year from their R+D tax claim.

Obviously, what you get back depends on your company size and the type of work you're doing, so if you're doing lots of bespoke projects - which of course many in large-format are - then you'll probably be doing more R+D. It's actually often the smaller businesses that have more scope to claim because their processes are less well refined so they're pushing their own boundaries quite frequently - pushing for solutions within their own constraints.

Also, a lot of companies are now much more price sensitive and are looking to minimise waste and maximise efficiencies. And a lot have green ambitions, or want to carve out a specialist niche etc., so there's a lot of R+D going on.

So where's the starting point for a new claimant?

We have a team of specialists on the road that go out to make assessments on eligibility. We do a really open and transparent initial company survey whereby we review a company's activities - it's all done retrospectively, so we'll look at the past two financial years. Then we basically tell them where we think they'll fall, ballpark. We tell them how much time we think it will take to work through the claim, and explain our fee structure.

That's all done in a no obligation meeting, which is as much for us as them because we work on a success fee basis and invest a lot in the process, so we need to be sure it's going to be worth the work too!

I assume they can go it alone?

They can. But it's complicated and, I should say, there's plenty of opportunity to make errors and you don't want to do that with HMRC. What we've found is that companies confident of going it alone, when they come to a marginal in or out point - be it a question over a cost or whatever - they'll often take the less risky route because they don't want to get into murky waters. Of course we not only know the legislation inside out but, through all of our interactions on the topic with HMRC, understand how they interpret that legislation and which battles are worth fighting and which aren't.

We charge a percentage fee of what a claimant gets back - 6-20% depending on the size of the company. It's more likely to be a higher net benefit working with a specialist than going it alone because of course you don't have to all the preparing of reports etc.

We had a company say we were there with them for three hours and three weeks later £60,000 landed in their bank account. It's not always like that and we recommend an average expectation of 14 hours of time.

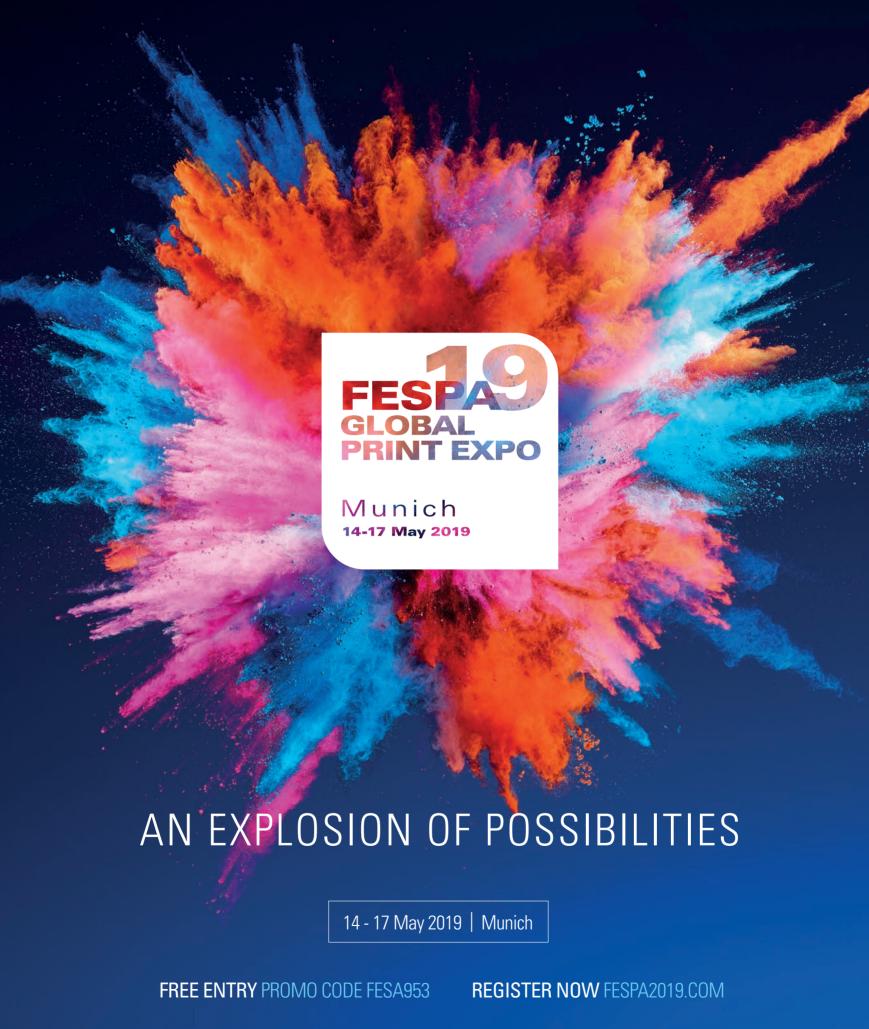
You can make a claim on an annual basis, so it should become part of your normal working practices. You just need to show how you continue to develop vour processes.

We have a relationship with Fespa, so members get a discount on our services. Even if they're not members when they start working with us, if they sign up by the time our invoice goes out, they get the reduced rate.

So why do you think there's such a reticent among PSPs when it comes to doing this?

I think it's simply that the term 'R+D' is one that companies think is beyond their reach - that it only applies to the big blue-chips. When you break down the definition it's really about expanding knowledge and capability, and print companies are doing that all the time.

ON AVERAGE **COMPANIES** RECEIVE £80,000 A YEAR FROM MAKING AN R+D TAX CLAIM



Platinum Partners





Gold Partners

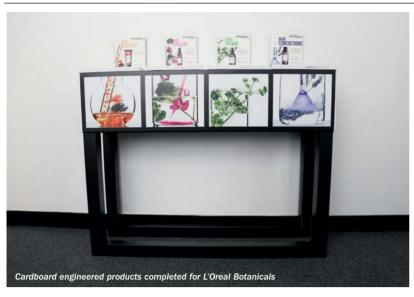






Digital Textile Partner:





GETTING CREATIVE **CARDBOARD**

SHOWCARD IS ON THE SCENT OF SOMETHING GOOD ACCORDING TO MD MARK SMITH. HERE'S HOW THE COMPANY IS REFOCUSING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF STRUCTURAL PRINT OPPORTUNITIES.

Two years ago Mark Smith became MD of Showcard. His thinking then, and his thinking now, is that "something needs to change" following what he describes as an "annus horribilis' from mid 2016 to mid 2017 due to "a challenging high street situation and competitor activity [aka price cutting] affecting some major clients". His response? To refocus the Letchworth-based business with an onus on strengthening its structural print capability.

At the end of 2018, structural print - or cardboard engineering as it's so oft called - accounted for $30\mbox{-}35\%$ of the company's digital, screen and litho total £18m turnover. By the end of 2020 Smith expects it to be 50% of a larger £22-23m turnover, a strategic plan that has seen Showcard form a specialist structural design team and significant kit and software investment as well as undergoing something of a rebrand.

"I've been part of Showcard for many years, and was part of the MBO team in 2012 at which time I was sales and marketing director. For a long time we had a great track record retaining blue-chip clients, and we didn't have the capacity anyway to take on new ones. But our annus horribilis proved we needed to increase and reshape our customer-base," says Smith, pointing out that "when you've got clients who have been customers for a decade things run like clockwork. But we realised that to reach new ones we had to have a much more proactive approach."

That approach has involved a £3m spend that will help Showcard build on its structural print capability. "We've been involved in this type of work for years, but realised we should focus on it more, believing there is significant new business to be won if we embrace the opportunity. Not everyone can do it so there's more value in it. And brands are beginning to see the value in things like constructed POS," says Smith, who oversaw the installation in May 2018 of an Onset X3 with robotic arm - to replace an Onset S70 - and which joined an Onset S50 and Durst Rho 512R. The company also installed an Elitron TAV cutter last autumn, has doubled its mounting capacity, upgraded its Tharstern MIS system and improved its workflows and structural design capabilities.

Money too has been spent by Showcard on getting the right people in the right places to advance its structural print development programme. In November last year Dona Escandell was appointed head of structural

BRANDS ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THE VALUE IN THINGS LIKE **CONSTRUCTED** design, a new position with a remit, as Smith explains, "to integrate the structural design function and capability into Showcard's manufacturing workflow to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and to deliver class leading, award winning, structural designs to a bigger base of brand and retail clients".

Escandell - previously of Delta and DS Smith - "is really the first piece in our new structure jigsaw. She has a dedicated team of structural designers, some of whom were already here but others who came in at the start of 2019, and she instantly upped our game," says Smith. In terms of customer reach, he points out that "a team of account directors together with the business development director and myself will maintain existing client relationships and look to develop new ones."

Another relatively new hire, Chris Burniston, who joined Showcard as marketing and communications manager in April 2018, also has his part to play in this strategy. "His remit is to get the message out about what we can now do, and grow our profile," says Smith. "Key retailers didn't really know what we did before, even though we have great capability.

"Since becoming MD the strategy has been to refocus Showcard. As well as investing in structural print that has included rebranding, undertaking marketing for the first time in our history, developing our website, moving our sales office to a more modern set-up that is more engaging for clients to visit, and where we'll have a proper applications display of what we can deliver.

"2019 will see us continue to invest in key additional large-format digital print kit - a continuing process - as we embrace new opportunities."





How to hire a

So you've stopped recruiting 'print reps' and are instead seeking 'business builders' to promote your diversified services offering. But how do you find the right people - those conversant with printing, consulting, design, installation and everything else that your business does? Brandon Stapper has ten questions you can use to vet potential candidates.

BRANDON STAPPER, FOUNDER OF 858 GRAPHICS, KNOWS A THING OR TWO ABOUT HOW TO HIRE A BUSINESS BUILDER WHO WILL HELP YOUR COMPANY GROW ACROSS ALL ITS SERVICE OFFERINGS - AND HE'S WILLING TO SHARE. SO HERE GOES ...

WHAT IS YOUR **VISION FOR THIS COMPANY?**

This is one of the most important questions you can ask a candidate for a position that is as dynamic as 'business builder'. He role requires more than just a technical sales person or a consultant. They are in many ways an extension of yourself as an owner, and it is important they share your vision for the company's future because few other people in your organisation will need to have such a broad understanding of the company or be able to make such dramatic impact on your bottom line.

At the same time, a person who will be successful in this position will by definition be a self-starter and high-level thinker. That means they will have ideas of their own - and that is a good thing. You want this person to feel ownership of the vision of the company so that this empowerment comes through when they approach customers. As a result, it is very important to have a conversation with candidates about what their goals are and how it plays into the overall direction you are trying to take your company in.

WHAT CAN YOU ADD THAT NO ONE **ELSE CAN?**

One of the major opportunities in hiring for a dynamic position is the opportunity to add valuable skills and experience to your team. At the level where someone can delve deeply into the technical side discussions on the shop floor as well as handle on site consulting visits with top executives at client firms, a successful candidate will have a lot to offer in terms of experience and skills, whether that be management skills, quality assurance training, or sales experience. Look for a candidate that brings something new to your team so that you are not just bolstering a weak point in your business but expanding into new territory. The opportunity that business leaders often miss when hiring a growth expert is the chance to diversify your team and open new channels of business growth by bringing on someone who can offer something truly novel to the company.



OK, so maybe Rolodex's are somewhat outmoded, but you get the idea. Ask for a few examples of the applicant's contacts within the industry that they feel is representative of the calibre of their business

When you ask this question, you are looking for a few things. Obviously, you want to get a sense for the breadth and scope of their connections within the industry. If you send them to a conference on the opposite coast, are they going to know anyone and if so, who would they be most likely to sit down with at a post-conference dinner table? Are they bringing executive level contacts or are they opening doors to technical experts that you could add to your shop?

This question will also give you a sense of how quickly they will hit the ground running. One advantage that a good candidate will offer you is that they will often have a few loyal customers who stick with them no matter where they are working. When they walk in the door, will they be able to guarantee any sales right off of the bat due to relationships they have already built?

HOW DOES INKJET PRINTING WORK?

You know it - one of the most important aspects of a high level position is that whoever is in it has a broad understanding of your printing services so that they can help customers find the right solutions for their specific needs. When a customer asks about inks and media possibilities are they going to know? Certain kinds of questions might not come up that often, but when they do, the right candidate should be able to field them well if not answer off pat. So, when you ask a candidate a technical question during the interview that they do not know the answer to, watch how they respond. A skilful response is one that is honest but solution oriented and demonstrates a thorough understanding of why the answer to the question matters.

THE RIGHT CANDIDATE SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIELD **QUESTIONS** WELL IF NOT ANSWER OFF PAT

business builder

CHOOSE A CUSTOMER YOU KNOW WELL AND ASK POTENTIAL CANDIDATES TO DESIGN A MOCK SOLUTION

ARE YOU WILLING TO TRAVEL?

Finding a candidate who has good interpersonal skills - and is willing to travel - is key given site visits are likely to be included in the job description to meet client expectation of face-to-face meetings. This does not mean the successful applicant needs to be charming - often the best people are more introverted. Instead look for someone who is straightforward, presentable, and highly knowledgeable about your business. And if they are willing to travel, ask them how far and with what frequency.

DO YOU HAVE A BACKGROUND IN DESIGN?

Not every successful business builder of the sort you are looking for needs to have training in design, but a thorough understanding of the factors that a design team is going to be dealing with will be important for a 'business builder' to understand so that they set reasonable expectations with customers. Fluency in design concepts will also help them communicate customer expectations to the design team and send feedback from the customer on completed projects. That feedback loop can be a total game changer in terms of boosting customer satisfaction.

WHAT TYPES OF INSTALLATIONS HAVE YOU WORKED ON?

The more experience with installations at scale that a person has, the better they will be able to guide customers through the process and work with the installation team to pull off the project smoothly. Simple as that! So find out if they've ever worked on multi-storey banners on skyscrapers for instance.

DO YOU HAVE ANY MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE?

Speaking of installation teams, one thing a good candidate should have is management training. As a high level contributor to your company and a relationship builder for your brand, the person usually needs to be able to manage teams and individuals to meet growth goals and complete jobs. That is often true even if you do not plan to put them directly in charge of other employees. As a result, a candidate who has some management training will be an asset. Additionally, you will be able to keep them in mind for future management opportunities as the need arises.

WHAT IS YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A CONSULTANT FOR OTHER PRINT SHOPS?

Consulting is often one of the most demanding aspects of working in the commercial printing industry, but it can also be one of the most rewarding. That is due to the fact that consultants are often able to offer deeper guidance and help to clients than anyone else, and that means the effects they have on the world are often direct and personal. When you ask about a candidate's consulting background, look for an answer that gives you a sense of their motivations and effectiveness in navigating uncomfortable situations. Often, consulting demands that a person be able to offer guidance and manage a client's expectations during uncertain situations and without access to complete information. The best consultants are those who are genuinely trying to help their client's find the best solution for their projects, so look for a genuine response to these questions.

HOW WOULD YOU DESIGN A SOLUTION FOR ONE OF OUR CUSTOMERS?

Choose a customer you know well and ask potential candidates to design a mock solution package for them based on what they know about your company and the client. Think of this like a mini-pop quiz to get a sense of how the candidate thinks and also to get a feel for what they see as good solutions to specific problems. If you have already designed a plan for the customer you use in the test, compare the candidate's answers with what you are already doing for the customer. This questions will also give you a sense of how deeply a candidate understands the processes behind the services you offer and what it would take to bring them up to speed during the onboarding process if you were to hire them.



ANOTHER HEAVEN SENT OPPORTUNITY

VERONICA HEAVEN - MD OF THE COMPANY THAT RUNS THE BRIEF CASES INDUSTRY-INTO-EDUCATION PROGRAMME - WANTS YOU TO GET INVOLVED IN SHAPING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMMES FOR PRINT. SHOULD YOU?

Are enough young people getting into print? Do young people understand the possibilities and sustainability aspects of wide-format? Bringing talent to the attention of industry is a key aspect of Brief Cases - a model for co-operation between education and the world of work, and an initiative from sustainability communications consultancy The Heaven Company. Ring any bells? It should. This time last year we ran an article flagging up an invitation from its MD Veronica Heaven for largeformat PSPs to get involved. Shamefully few did. If it didn't grab your attention in 2018, maybe it will in 2019.

Brief Cases projects are underpinned by a message of sustainability with themes that strongly resonate for millennials and tomorrow's designers - many of them expressing a sincere commitment to play a part in 'saving the world'. As Heaven points out: "'More plastic than fish' is a haunting headline from the widely acclaimed 'Blue Planet II' TV series that has entered the psyche of households and businesses across Britain and further afield and new thinking is needed to find more sustainable ways forward for a whole raft of everyday products, including large-format printing options and substrates."

Up to 1,000 students each year take on a Brief Cases project embedded as taught content in fulfilment of their degrees in graphic design and print related pathways.

Brief Cases university projects are identified to address skills gaps, business needs and areas where THE SCHEME IS LOOKING TO ATTRACT AT I FAST THREE **WIDE-FORMAT PRINTERS** AS PROJECT SPONSORS TO HELP DEFINE **STUDENT** LEARNING

wider sustainability issues are emerging. Working with industry partners - which Heaven hopes will include large-format orientated PSPs - Brief Cases works with universities and their students to tackle a wide range of topics that include the use of print and printed substrates, such as:

- How to help consumers and households use less plastic by designing environmentally friendly bio-based alternatives
- Sustainable manufacturing in the drinks industry
- Entrepreneurial skills that will encourage start-ups to thrive and grow, and to play a part in supporting social good
- Exploring opportunities for young people as physical and digital realms converge with technological advances (3D printing, digital technologies, artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual reality etc).

"Print, paper and packaging are at the forefront of many environmental improvements. The industry statistics regarding the value of the print, pulp, paper and publishing as the UK's fourth largest industry and its importance to the wider economy are well known, which makes it even more vital for printers with a pioneering spirit to play a part in educating the next generation of workers and in strengthening the role of print in an increasingly sustainability-focused world," savs Heaven.

"There is a growing belief that only businesses and manufacturing have the clout to make a difference and impact on many of the environmental challenges that the wider world is tackling today. COP24, the Climate Change conference in Katowice, Poland, at which David

Attenborough spoke, has expressed that the greatest threat in thousands of years is climate change. The pertinent message is clear - global CO2 emissions reached an all-time high in 2018."

Heaven continues: "Mediocrity is the enemy of ingenuity. Material choice and the processes used have a significant impact on lowering carbon impact and there needs to be a generation shift in ideas around materials and machinery."

So, why should large-format PSPs get involved with Brief Cases, and what difference can they make to students considering the big issues of the day?

"Well much of it boils down to a simple theme - educating the young ones for more sustainable industries and businesses in the future." argues Heaven. "Brand owners, end-users, retailers, local authorities, and other leading decision makers are plugged into the sustainability agenda whether for legislative, regulatory or personal conscience reasons and most want responsible supply lines and companies aligned with the ethos to make a change for the better.

"In the past year, these decision makers have become increasingly aware of Brief Cases and the societal and environmental values applied to every Brief Cases student project - and they recognise the industry partners who support positive environmental and social action."

She adds: "Many brand-owners have underlined their interest in the unfettered thinking of students and are keen to find new ways to use print technology to business benefit as viewed through the lens of a younger demographic.

"Brief Cases students are problem solvers, learning their craft, and understanding what is possible with the technology available to realise their aims. Within a year of completing Brief Cases, students enter

the world of work and are positioned in roles within or related to the industry. What they learn during their time at university is what they take with them into business.

"With foresight, and by helping shape tomorrow's designers, workers and leaders can cultivate future customers and deliver advocates for the companies that support them during students' learning years prior to their careers."

In the year since Image Reports published its first piece on Brief Cases (http://bit.ly/2BG8VSt) to encourage wide-format PSP involvement, Heaven has taken the programme's sustainable futures focus message out to a bigger audience, presenting at the likes of Ipex and Packaging Innovations shows. And winners and guests at The Solutions Awards were given first sight of the newest crop of talent and their innovative concepts, underscoring Brief Cases and The Heaven Company's commitment to the print sector.

"Wide-format printing reaches the paths that some other print technologies dare not tread.

"Brief Cases industry engagement programme is there to support businesses that believe in the future of their industry and want to play a part in shaping it. The scheme is looking to attract at least three wide-format printers as project sponsors to help define student learning at universities across the UK," stresses Heaven.

"Supporters are also welcome as an army of people that are positive about sustainability and the print sector could help Brief Cases programmes and modules at universities across the UK and encourage students to see the industry as a career path and sustainable sector for the future."

If you are interested in talking about possible participation in Brief Cases as a project sponsor or supporter please make initial contact by email: veronica@theheavencompany.com

Work from Brief Cases students





THINKBIGGER

a. French fancy

Leach - part of the French-based Chargeurs Group - provided pyramid venue at the Louvre. The project saw four doublesided, free standing, 4.5m x 2.5m, lightwalls make the evening aiming to draw young people into the world of art. The Société des Amis du Louvre handpicked the paintings that would feature on the lightwalls for maximum visual effect. The displays were also designed to direct the flow of traffic during the evening.

b. Heroic turnaround

Five days from a site visit Ontario-based Global Printing Enterprises created this 76m hoarding to promote the superhero blockbuster film 'Aquaman' in Canada. It used an HP 3000 Latex printer running two rolls of Drytac ReTac Smooth 150 concurrently.

C. Cheers DIS

Taking over a house in Shoreditch and turning it into a cocktail lab for Patron Tequila during London Cocktail capped 21st birthday celebrations for Wolverhampton-based print and digital imaging specialist DIS. The PSP spent three days building dividing space walls, installing LED lighting systems, specialist projectors, wall coverings and a wide range of graphics work - as well as positioning client props and stock - for the Shoreditch cocktail lab job.

d. The real thing

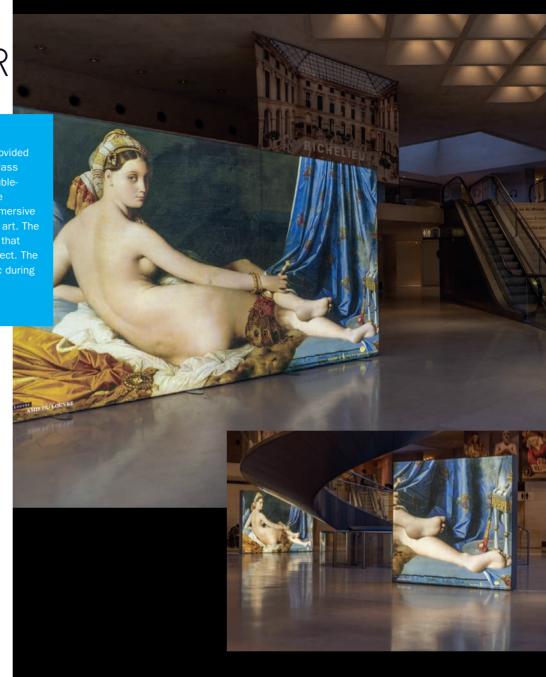
Dublin-based Vinehall Displays transformed a retail kiosk at the Europa Buscentre in Belfast into a yuletide grotto for Coca-Cola as part of its 'Holidays are Coming' campaign. Using print from its Roland DG Soljet Pro 3 and Pro 4 machines this project followed a similar ask for the same client, which saw the Europa Buscentre kiosk turned into a spooky haunted house.

Childs' play

When property company Morguard donated the use of a business suite in Ottawa, Canada, for a Salvation Army Toy Mountain charity distribution project, K6 Media installed several 6m adhesive banners across painted bulkheads, applied print-and-cut graphics on stainless steel elevators and created three 6m x 2.7m wall murals for the space.

f. One to remember

This 'Poppy Car' for the charity Mission Motorsport won the BSGA vehicle graphics of the year award. The Jaguar F-Type SVR was wrapped with a reflective vinyl printed on a Roland TrueVis SG-540 and incorporating the words of John McCrae's Poem 'In Flanders Fields'.

















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THINKBIGGER TALK, AND HE WILL LISTEN

HERE'S WHY THE LARGE-FORMAT PRINT
SECTOR SHOULD BE IN CONVERSATION WITH
CHRIS NEWTON, ORGANISER OF THE SURFACE
DESIGN SHOW. THE 2019 EVENT TAKES
PLACE THIS MONTH, DRAWING A CROWD OF
DESIGNERS AND ARCHITECTS. DIGITAL PRINT
WILL GET AN AIRING. BUT IT COULD BE A
MUCH BIGGER FOCUS IN 2020.

Want to get large-format digital print possibilities in front of designers and architects? Then go where they congregate. Like to the Surface Design Show in London. This year, only one print company is among its 150+ exhibitors - and that's Belgian. None will speak, nor are many expected to visit either. Yet printing onto various surfaces is this sector's thing. So shouldn't we be more proactive in getting the message out there? Its organiser Chris Newton agrees we should, and he's already started the ball rolling.

Heard of Jennifer Castoldi? Well, she's chief creative director of Trendease International, and at the Surface Design Show 2019 at the Business Design Centre in London this month (5-7 February) she will be delivering two presentations to an audience of creatives following conversations with Newton.

"Jennifer is a trend forecaster who I've known for a long time. She curates 'new talent' sections at many shows, and speaks on development trends. We began talking about digital print possibilities some time ago, and having seen the results of digital print around the world I could see it would have value for surface decoration.

"My question was, 'What does a designer/architect want to see and hear on the topic?" What we decided was that Jennifer would be on the 2019 speaking programme, explaining the possibilities of digital print."

So, on the afternoon of 6 February, Castoldi will be on the main stage delivering the presentation 'Disruptive Design in Digital Print Presents New Opportunities', in which she will share stories, and look at technologies and materials that will transform the way interior designers and architects approach new projects. Later the same day she will be back on stage delivering the talk 'Rocking the Boat with Innovative Surfaces' which will bring together movers and shakers to discuss how new materials and processes can break the mould of traditional design.

That's great. But large-format digital print could be so much more of a focus at future Surface Design Shows. What about having a pavilion of printed surfaces, perhaps with areas where sector 'ambassadors' could talk to designers and architects about the world of possibilities?

"I think that a print pavilion is certainly possible for the next show if we all start talking," says Newton, who has in the past had conversations with Fespa about doing something like Printeriors within The Surface Design Show. Initial talks fizzled but that's not to say there isn't mileage in the idea.



Chris Newton, organiser of The Surface Design Show

I THINK THAT A
PRINT PAVILION
IS CERTAINLY
POSSIBLE FOR
THE NEXT SHOW
IF WE ALL START
TALKING

"I looked at Printeriors at Fespa and it didn't excite me enough at the time to continue, but I can see how it could be an attraction for our visitors to have a print pavilion. I can see that they perhaps wouldn't go to a Fespa, but they come here anyway so we'd be brining the print message to them.

"We'd have to ask, what would be on show, and what would the messaging be? It's the printers who really need to be here, perhaps sponsored in some way by the print machine manufacturers and surface substrate people. But you have to remember that designers like to talk to designers, so you have to have people who hit that note. It's why I think the talks this year from Jennifer Castoldi will work - she can speak their language. If that leads to something like a pavilion of print in 2020 I'd have no problem with that.

"Take what we've done with lighting. There wasn't an architectural show that covered lighting really, yet it fits so well with surfaces, so five years ago we created Light School as part of the bigger show. The idea is that the architects and designers already coming here can learn about the relationship between light and surface. The talks - where designers and architects themselves talk about lighting - are packed. There's no reason why something focusing on print couldn't work in the same vein," says Newton.

So, should this sector be thinking bigger, and starting to seriously look at how it can capitalise on such an opportunity to get its message in front of key potential clients?

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DIGGING BELOW THE SURFACE WITH INDUSTRY MOLE



I once vowed that the word 'Brexit' would never darken this column, but with a sort of final decision - or final indecision - looming, I'm going to do what politicians do all the time and break a promise.

Whether you're Leave, Remain, Don't Know or have stopped caring, it is hard not to conclude that the UK's departure from the European Union has been so thoroughly, abysmally mismanaged - by politicians of all persuasions - that the Mad Hatter and his tea party guests could have done a better job.

Everyone is to blame: Boris Johnson, the world's worst Winston Churchill tribute act; Jeremy Corbyn, whose official policy is to respect the result of the referendum and keep the UK in the EU customs union (after he's done that, he's doing to focus on something easier, like squaring the circle) and the Remainers who perversely mounted a much more effective campaign after the referendum than they did before it.

As much as anything, it is this collective incompetence that is souring the mood at many of our customers. Some are bullish, others are bearish and many are metaphorically adopting the brace position, procrastinating when possible, identifying potential cost reductions and seeking constant reassurance about their supply chains.

One of my customers, a thoughtful Brexiteer, said he didn't care about immigration, he just wanted the UK to manage itself. One of my elderly clients was more sanguine, saying: "I can't believe that leaving the EU will make that much difference to us because it didn't make that much difference when we went in back in 1975."

Some say this sounds complacent - the global economy being very different to how it was in 1975 - but there is a case for saying that the economic, social and political consequences of Brexit, be they good or bad. will take time to manifest themselves. As Bill Gates said: "We always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next ten."

In the meantime, we - and the companies we provide print services to - have to keep on doing business. As French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery put it: "What saves a man is to take a step, and then another step."

conference, with dive deep info on core UV processes with experts from multiple fields and case studies from successful UV printers. Should you go? A good shout if you want to better A geod shout if you want to better A geod shout if you want to better expect a decent number of large-format digital print orientated suppliers. inkjet space plus those in the non-print orientated European Sign Expo running alongside. Should you go? Again, yes as I remains the main whole print spectrum Should you go? Again, yes as I remains the main	PRINT UV 19	SIGN AND DIGITAL UK 2019	FESPA 2019	THE PRINT SHOW
Cost? \$1,545pp. Cost? This will be there? This will be the 12th Print UV conference, with dive deep into on core UV processes with experts from multiple fields and case studies from successful UV printers. Should you go? A good shout if you want to better understand trends driving the growth of UV printing, hear how industry leaders have developed proprietary offerings, learn about advances in inks, coatings and equipment, oh, and network - but bear in mind it will be mostly with those in North American UV printing market. The rating below reflects the distance of the show -				
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This will be the 12th Print UV conference, with dive deep info on core UV processes with experts from multiple fields and case studies from successful UV printers. Should you go? A good shout if you want to better understand trends driving the growth of UV printing, hear how industry leaders have developed proprietary offerings, learn about advances in inks, coatings and equipment, oh, and network - but bear in mind it will be mostly with those in North American UV printing market. The rating below reflects the distance of the show -				
A good shout if you want to better understand trends driving the growth of UV printing, hear how industry leaders have developed proprietary offerings, learn about advances in inks, coatings and equipment, oh, and network - but bear in mind it will be mostly with those in North American UV printing market. The rating below reflects the distance of the show -	This will be the 12th Print UV conference, with dive deep info on core UV processes with experts from multiple fields and case studies	The lin-up is not yet complete but expect a decent number of large-format digital print orientated	Most of the key players in the digital inkjet space plus those in the non-print orientated European Sign Expo	A mixture of suppliers from
	A good shout if you want to better understand trends driving the growth of UV printing, hear how industry leaders have developed proprietary offerings, learn about advances in inks, coatings and equipment, oh, and network - but bear in mind it will be mostly with those in North American UV printing market. The rating below reflects the distance of the show -	As a UK-based show it's worth attending, though exhibitors tend to keep major launches for the following	Again, yes as I remains the main European show for the large-format	Put it on your planner and do nearer the time when the ex





OVER TO YOU...

NIC BESSENT, DIRECTOR, WRAP CUBE

HTTP://WRAPCUBE.CO.UK

What's having the greatest impact on your business

From a positive point of view-the greatest impact at the moment is the amount of people who choose the cheapest quotes for their vehicle wraps and fleet branding, and when this inevitably fails and they have issues then they come to us to get premium wraps done with 3M material and proper installation.

Where do you see the greatest wide-format opportunities?

I would say in vehicle fleet branding, hoarding, shopfront branding, and interior architectural finishes.

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

Possibly even more automation between departments. We are in an age where everything is moving towards technological advancements and implementation and essentially it results in allowing for more focus/time to be spent where it counts the most.

Your favourite bit of kit is ..?

Our production flatbed RollsRoller. It significantly reduces application time and improves productivity output.

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

It's actually from a Richard Branson quote. "....say yes - then learn how to do it later!"

What are you most proud of achieving?

Building a business that deals with some of the biggest companies in the world.

What lesson does the wide-format sector need to

It's not a race to the bottom to be the cheapest. Quality should always prevail.



NO-ONE WANTS TO THINK THEIR COMPANY HAS A PROBLEM WITH UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR, BUT IS IT WORTH JUST TAKING THE TIME TO CONSIDER THE ISSUE GIVEN THE FINDINGS OF A SURVEY FROM WARWICK **BUSINESS SCHOOL THAT SHOWS NEARLY TWO** THIRDS OF THE 1,000 WORKERS POLLED HAVE **EXPERIENCED BEHAVIOUR AT WORK THAT** WOULD "PROBABLY RESULT IN WIDESPREAD CONDEMNATION" IF THE PUBLIC FOUND OUT.

NICK CHATER, PROFESSOR OF BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE AT WARWICK BUSINESS SCHOOL SAID: "WE SEE REPORTS OF A WIDE VARIETY OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOURS IN THE WORKPLACE. THESE HAVE CLEAR NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON THE WELL-BEING OF UK WORKERS AND BUSINESSES, FROM DISENGAGEMENT AND DISILLUSION TO INCREASED STRESS AND SICKNESS. THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM SUGGESTS THAT WORKERS OFTEN FEEL UNABLE TO SPEAK OUT AGAINST UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR. ALLOWING IT TO CONTINUE UNCHALLENGED AND POTENTIALLY LEADING TO FURTHER UNETHICAL ACTIONS."



said their company made no changes as a result of unethical behaviour - such as harassment, sexism, theft and verbal abuse - being reported



said that lack of change had negatively changed their perception of their workplace



of those interviewed said they sometimes experienced unethical behaviour at work



said it happened more than half of the time



encountered unethical behaviour most of the time and 3% said it happened all the time.



Change your default setting

STICKING WITH THE STATUS QUO IS STALLING PROGRESS FOR THE WORLD'S PRINT SHOPS ACCORDING TO ERIK STRIK, CEO AT PRINTFACTORY. HERE'S WHY.

All PSPs understand the value of colour management for ensuring consistency, quality and print buyer satisfaction, yet for 21%* it remains the most significant workflow bottleneck, stalling production and damaging the bottom line. Why?

While the intricacies of colour management may be well known throughout the digital print sector, recent research reveals there is more contributing to colour management issues than meets the eve. A widespread reliance on default solutions and inconsistency across traditional wide-format setups could be compounding colour-related efficiency problems on the shop floor and holding LFPs back from reaching their full potential.

SO, IS YOUR BUSINESS BEING INEFFICIENT BY **DEFAULT?**

Rip software is central to the efficiency of the entire wide-format workflow, with its role in colour profiling and converting files for output on each device essential for consistent and accurate output. Despite this, very few operators are actually relying on the Rip software of their choice - or even a single platform - to ensure absolute colour accuracy across devices. According to recent research, 60%* of PSPs rely on the Rip technology that comes with their printer, and 63%* are running two or more Rips in their shop.

This 'default' mindset is a key contributor to inconsistencies and production inefficiencies. Colour management issues can arise from the fact that a PSP's software is often dictated when they purchase their device, rather than selected as a system that suits their current workflow setup.

By relying on multiple Rips, wide-format operations could be unknowingly creating major bottlenecks in their production process. Using a different Rip for each device requires operators to switch between terminals in order to process jobs, therefore creating inconsistencies when reproducing the job across different printers, leading to wasted time, ink and media.

Furthermore, over 50%* of PSPs stated they would invest in new printing equipment to resolve any workflow issues. Although this could be effective in the shortterm, if a PSP continues to rely on multiple Rips and still defaults to existing solutions, inefficiencies, inconsistencies and colour management issues will

It is only when PSPs have effectively dealt with these demands on the Rip and/or workflow that they can hope to fully optimise their operations and their colour output. A single, centralised, end-to-end solution addresses

IF A PSP **RELIES ON MULTIPLE RIPS** AND DEFAULTS TO EXISTING **SOLUTIONS -ISSUES WILL** REMAIN

the many complex parameters involved in preserving colour fidelity and can help PSPs save money, time and

The first step to 'boosting business' and eliminating efficiency bottlenecks is identifying and stripping back these layers of additional complexity with differing capabilities

One way PSPs could challenge the status quo to deliver clean conversions, consistent colour, ink savings and accurate recalibration across devices, is by embracing the switch from traditional ICC to DeviceLink profiling.

While ICC profiles are the accepted standard across the printing industry, they come with a number of inherent issues - leading to additional bottlenecks and complexities in the workflow. Some examples are ICC's indiscriminate gamut compression, its limited control over conversion of the black channel and how profiles must be regenerated regularly to account for environmental changes.

DeviceLink profiles, on the other hand, allow for standardised printing (ISO, GraCOL) - or creating a custom common appearance - by directly converting from one colour space to another. This bypasses the need for an interim colour space, where many conversion issues occur and files are most at risk of 'breaking'.

While DeviceLink technology is a forward-thinking feature, it's important to remember that, actually, resolving colour management issues and eliminating bottlenecks is not so much an issue of staying ahead of the printing technology curve, but rather, having the foresight to question the norm.

As long as PSPs continue to rely on conventional colour management and workflow systems, it remains difficult for these print businesses to capitalise on the true benefits of next generation, automation-led technologies and print industry 4.0. Without a solid foundation of consistent colour across devices, any efficiencies created by an automated workflow are lost through time spent tweaking colour issues on jobs.

The technology to eliminate bottlenecks and deliver identical output across printers exists. Setting a new status quo for the wide-format sector with comprehensive, future-proof workflow software is integral for not only tackling today's challenges but also for leveraging tomorrow's opportunities. Wide-format can't efficiently move forward without it.

* Note: this data is from an online survey by PrintFactory that polled 86 members of the global print industry from March to October 2018. The survey findings are explored in detail as part of PrintFactory's latest white paper 'Breaking colour convention for a more productive wide-format workflow'.



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