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ISSUE 2 • VOLUME 28 • APRIL / MAY 2020

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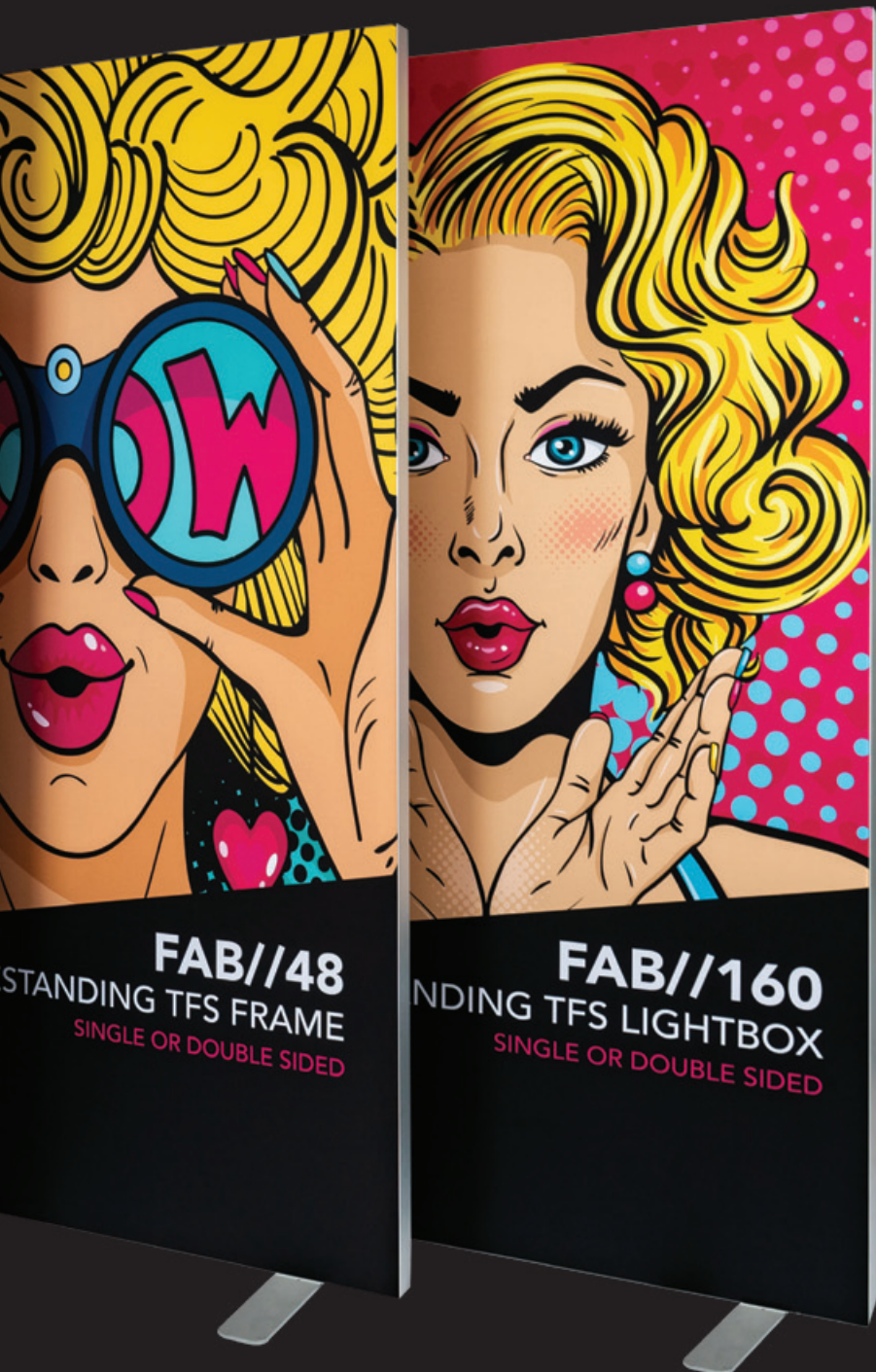
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# FABRIX.



## ...AND THE WORLD TURNS

In this issue I had planned to carry a Fespa Global review and a SDUK 2020 preview. So much for well laid plans! Yet the world turns, and despite COVID-19 developments and impacts, those would-have-been exhibitors to this season's print trade shows still need to get their newest wares in front of would-be buyers. So panic ye not - Simon Creasy has been hunting down all the relevant info on the latest technical developments within the sector so we can put all that info directly into your hands, wherever you may find yourself working (or not!).

When it comes to MIS systems, we delve a little deeper, with two features on the subject – one asking PSPs about the ongoing issues surrounding system development and deployment, the other asking manufacturers how they are addressing those issues. Have a gander at both and perhaps you'll rethink your position on MIS investment?

We also broach other hot topics - training, recruitment and staff retention are spotlighted in Talking Point with Karly Latimore, MD training, BPIF, and in Top Tips from Paula Thirkell, print and packaging recruitment specialist and business development manager at Ambitions Personnel. Then we continue our regular environmental campaign with a look at new 'green' graphics boards amid demand for more sustainable print, and we delve into the impact of the anti-OOH advertising movement on the sector... and more.

Don't be fooled - there's plenty still happening. Hope this all puts a much needed spring in your step. Happy reading.



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## COVID-19 hits print trade shows

What would have been the upcoming Drupa and Sign and Digital UK 2020 trade shows are off due to the COVID-19 situation.

Drupa, due to run 16 - 26 June this year, will now take place on 20 - 30 April 2021. Sign and Digital UK, slated for 28 - 30 April 2020, will now take place 2 - 4 March 2021.

The cancellation of the above events follows the earlier suspension of Fespa Global 2020 and of the IPIA and BAPC's joint Spring Conference - both due to have been held in March. Obviously, many other smaller events have also been cancelled since then to meet Government directives.

Drupa director Sabine Geldermann said: "We will now take every possible measure to meet the expectations of our global customers in April 2021. Drupa represents an indispensable platform for industry participants, providing orientation, impetus and, above all, satisfying the demand for face-to-face meetings and worlds of experience to a high degree. It is all about human needs, haptic experiences and running machines that fascinate participants."

## SAi launches standalone SideKick

SAi has introduced a standalone version of SideKick - a job organisation tool that helps large-format PSPs manage end-to-end production operations, from quote creation to invoicing.

A 'lite' version of SideKick was announced as part of Flexi 19 last year but this new version offers more features. It comes with a database of predefined products and finishing options, including average industry costs, to configuring pricing, while factoring in materials, labour, commissions, discounts and taxes. Users can also tailor pricing for their own business. Via an intuitive quoting system, PSPs can create personalised PDF job quotes based on size, quantity and finishing of the product.

SideKick lets users organise account contacts, convert quotes into orders with one-click and track jobs through various production stages.

Accessible via monthly or annual subscription to existing SAi users, SideKick functions as a standalone tool independent of both SAi's Flexi signmaking and EnRoute CNC CAD/CAM software solutions. Those customers accessing Flexi or EnRoute on a subscription basis can also take advantage of a preferential pricing structure when subscribing to SideKick.

Pricing for current Flexi subscribers: 49.95 Euro a month based on annual commitment, 59.95 Euro month-to-month. For traditional Flexi licenses it is 69.95 Euro a month based on annual commitment, and 79.95 Euro month-to-month.

## John E Wright in acquisitive stance

John E Wright is looking to expand in the Midlands and Yorkshire via acquisition.

"We are looking to grow our graphics business throughout our Midlands and Yorkshire regions through the acquisition of local businesses and the development of local talent," confirmed Tony Barnett, adding that it is also seeking new account managers in both the Nottingham and Hull/Yorkshire areas.

From its head office in Nottingham John E Wright has been providing copying and printing services to architects and engineers since 1900. In 2004 it set up a separate graphics operation for signage, exhibition and outdoor display graphics. The business now

has two main operations in Nottingham and one in Hull, and branches in Derby, Leicester and Oxford.

Across its six locations, John E Wright uses HP Latex printers and last October replaced two older Latex 360 machines with HP Latex 570 systems at its Hull site where Barnett said, "our flourishing vehicle wrap business needed more print capacity." He added: "Thanks to the increased speed and ease of use of these machines we can achieve tighter deadlines, and at lower production costs."

Since updating its Hull site with the new HP Latex 570 duo, the company is now looking at further growth.

## New MD for Mutoh Europe

Mitsuo Takatsu has become managing director of Mutoh Europe and Mutoh Deutschland. On 1 April he replaced 65-year-old Kenji Yasuhara who retired from the roles on 31 March.

Takatsu joined Mutoh in August 2019. Before that he worked for Panasonic for 35 years, occupying several senior sales and marketing roles, including 15 years overseas (10 years in Germany and five in Russia). As MD he will oversee all sales, sales support, logistics, marketing, product and application support as well as after-sales support activities for Mutoh throughout the EMEA business area.



## CMYUK stockpiles Pongs materials as a contingency measure

CMYUK has increased UK stocks of Pongs printable textiles as a contingency in light of the COVID-19 outbreak that is impacting the global supply chain.

"We've had several customers contact us in panic, but because of our established European supply chain, clients can be confident in consistent, continuous availability of Pongs materials," said CMYUK managing director Robin East. "Given what we know about the

Chinese ordering, manufacturing and fulfilment cycles, we anticipate the shortage of materials in the UK will start to manifest by April/May and we will be ready."

Bernd Lautenbach, CEO at Pongs said: "Our company is ideally equipped to deliver when demand increases due to the collapse of competitors' existing supply chains. Customers can expect the usual Pongs premium quality materials that are made in Germany."

## bergertextiles adds to 'green' materials offerin

bergertextiles is adding four new environmentally-friendly printable materials to its range.

be.tex Green NoWo 150 is a textile-like, non-woven synthetic fleece made from 100% recycled polyester yarn. It has a high tear strength, is light and suitable for banners, fence coverings or for sporting events. It is suitable for UV, sublimation (direct/transfer) and Latex inks.

be.tex Green NoWo Stitch 130 is very similar to the above product but a structured surface makes it particularly suitable for bags.

be.tex Green N-Flag 117 / be.tex Green

N-Flag 117 FR are suited to digital sublimation (either direct or via paper transfer) and screen printing. They offer a particularly soft grip and are antistatic.

be.tex Green G-Airtricot FR - also made from 100% recycled polyester yarn - is said to be and especially suited to beach-flag shapes as its oval hole structure makes the flag fabric more resistant and more permeable to air. The holes are invisible from a distance of a few meters. It too is suitable for digital sublimation (either direct or via paper transfer).

## Agfa and partner make leather printing solution

Agfa has entered into a strategic partnership with a company called TFL, focusing on the development of Alussa, an inkjet printing solution to decorate high-end genuine leathers.

Agfa is providing the inkjet printer and dedicated inks for Alussa, as well as the software to manage and monitor the printing process, while TFL is providing custom-developed coating chemistry for the system, which can run at up to 80m<sup>2</sup>/hr.

Alussa can print white and full-colour designs with photographic quality on diverse types of leather as used in the fashion, upholstery, automotive, aviation and nautical industries.

"Fashion Trends are changing fast and it seems like the speed of modification and the desire for individualisation is increasing year by year. This is a big challenge and opportunity for the leather industry. Hence, we are very excited about the partnership between Agfa and TFL. Together we can create countless, customised fashion effects combined with high flexing and wearing properties to meet the rapidly changing demands of today's fashion industry," said Markus Hess, global head of product marketing at TFL.

"Printing images on leather using inkjet technology, and obtaining top performance in terms of flexibility and scratch resistance, is a complex challenge," added Tom Cloots, director of industrial inkjet at Agfa. "Alussa combines the best of two worlds to provide a perfect synergy between leather and ink."

## Innotech offers new printable fabric made from plastic bottles

Innotech has introduced a dye-sub, UV-C and latex printable 100% polyester fabric made from recycled plastic bottles.

Vertex Marine - currently available in 3.2m widths (free A4 samples are available on request) - uses plastic bottles received in compacted bales and broken down via vibration. The PET is crushed into flakes that are then washed before being turned into pellets that are melted, extruded and spun into polyester yarn from which the material is then made.

Kieran Dallow, marketing manager at Innotech said: "To put this in perspective, one roll of 3.2m x 100m Vertex Marine material uses just under 4,000 plastic bottles, which otherwise could have made their way into the ocean."

A display fabric at heart, Vertex Marine is designed to be used as promotional tablecloths, tube display backdrops or other frontlit applications.

## DIS opens doors to trade work on back of h3 purchase

DIS in Wolverhampton has installed an EFI Vutek h3, enabling it to take on trade work for the first time and increasing capacity to help it reach an expected turnover hike to £5m by the end of 2022.

The arrival of the h3 - which replaces an EFI Vutek H2000 Pro and an EFI Quantum 3+ UV printer - coincides with DIS being voted 'Small Business of the Year' at the annual Black Country Chamber of Commerce Awards.

"We were really delighted with the Small Business Award win because it endorses our approach," said DIS MD Mark Bradley. "We act as partners working in collaboration with agencies and clients. Our customers have the creative vision and we guide the application. The addition of the h3 complements our values exactly."

He added: "We are looking to increase turnover and maximise profits through the new printer. It is more efficient, faster and more economical to run. We're taking our business to another level. We're very realistic about hitting £5 million turnover by late 2022."

Historically DIS works with agencies 60% of the time, and the rest directly with clients. The production speeds of (over 220m<sup>2</sup>/hr at ultra high resolution) the h3 means DIS will now add trade services.

"We've never done much trade work," said Bradley. "We've never run our machines 24/7 flat out. The EFI Vutek h3 has so much capacity we will be looking for trade work. It's opened up so much more volume, and greater flexibility as far as the wide range of materials you can run on it."

## Phil Oakley swaps HP for Kornit

Phil Oakley has moved from HP to join Kornit Digital as UK and Ireland sales manager.

Oakley - who was most recently UK and Ireland regional business manager for large-format printing at HP - said of his decision: "My new position at Kornit is a great opportunity for the next stage in my career. I have always tried to keep a start-up mentality and that will come into play at Kornit. A 'can do', dynamic attitude helps customers grow -

and that mentality has already helped Kornit build a very well-established customer base.

"Across the whole industry - textile, graphics and commercial printing - major players are adopting Web-to-print and personalisation, and of course sustainability is a massive driver for change," added Oakley. "It's where future growth in digital textile printing is happening and I'm excited to be part of it at Kornit."

## Paragon gets new CEO

Paragon Group - which recently rebranded its Service Point UK business to become Service Graphics - has appointed Sean Shine as CEO. He replaces

Patrick Crean, Paragon's principal shareholder, who will now take on the role of executive chairman.

Shine - who joined Paragon as Group COO in 2016 from Accenture - led the creation of its three business divisions (graphics, customer communications and identification), new management structures and drove its operational performance and growth. This year, Paragon expects to deliver revenues in excess of €1.2 billion across the three divisions.

A statement said Shine and his leadership team will continue to focus on the delivery of organic revenue growth allied to additional expansion through acquisitions while also driving operational profit through to the bottom line earnings performance of Paragon.

In another high ranking move John Rogers, currently head of corporate development, has been promoted to executive director. He is chair of Paragon ID SA, a quoted company on the Euronext Paris. His previous roles include senior executive at NASDAQ-listed Identiv, CEO of Sokymat Group and a number of senior roles at Delphi Automotive.

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- Canon's new UVgel ink facility comes on line
- Aurora Graphics takes Durst Rho LED 512R
- Applications to the Printing Charity's 2020 Print Futures Awards close on 26 April.
- Imageco director joins Fespa UK board
- Simian to print large-format with new Landa S10P
- YPS launches ecommerce site
- Onlineprinters makes acquisition in Spain
- Keypoint Intelligence publishes print finishing study
- Roland and Marabu develop new flatbed
- YPS becomes Epson SureColor SC-F series reseller
- Contex brings out remote scanner control app
- ATS takes on Nutec inks distribution
- British Sign Awards to return to the Athena
- SAI Flexi webinars introduced
- New Folex materials introduced
- Ruling on Nazdar/Fujifilm patent infringement
- Antalis adds live chat feature to its online product selector
- ArtSystems joins trade bodies to promote applications awareness
- SpotOn White M50 film now available worldwide
- Landa Digital Printing gets an 'active chairman'
- Bigprinter moves to meet expansion expectation
- Metsa Board emissions targets meet Paris Agreement goals
- Dryac gets new ISO certifications
- ISA-UK announces awards date





The sales and support team at their training in Switzerland: right to left: Erskine Stewart, Simon Averell, Steven Pridham, Keith Apps, Ian Maxfield, Maurus Zeller of swissQprint HQ.

# SWISSQPRINT NOW DIRECT IN THE UK

swissQprint manufactures high-end UV inkjet printers in Switzerland. The range comprises five modular large format flatbed printers with various options, and a dedicated roll to roll printer with unique features.

swissQprint has established a new subsidiary in the UK. swissQprint UK is based in Bracknell, Berkshire and provides sales, servicing and application support. The new premises include a brand-new demonstration centre featuring the latest innovations from swissQprint including the new Karibu roll to roll printer and the Nyala 3 flatbed printer, along with sales and marketing offices and a warehouse for consumables and spare parts.

The new UK subsidiary has already assembled what looks to be a successful team, headed up by managing director Erskine Stewart. Sales in the North will be handled by Ian Maxfield and Steven Pridham will look after business in the South. Service manager Simon Averell provides strong support to the installation base alongside service technician Keith Apps. Annamaria Horvath, application engineer, is responsible for the demonstration centre, application support and sampling service.

“The UK is a very important market for swissQprint,” says Mr Stewart. “Our mission is to continue to provide our customers with ongoing expert service for them to get the best out of their investment, while at the same time growing our market share in the commercial printing arena. We will also be increasing our focus on the packaging, specialist print and industrial sectors where I believe we can also be extremely successful.”

Mr Stewart says the entire team has undergone extensive training at the company’s Swiss headquarters and is now ready to offer machine demonstrations, printing tests, technical support and maintenance. “swissQprint UK will provide direct, comprehensive and fast service to the UK market while development and production remain in Switzerland,” he states.

## MODULAR AND VERSATILE FLATBED RANGE

swissQprint flatbed printers are available in a variety of different sizes and productivity levels. All of the printers

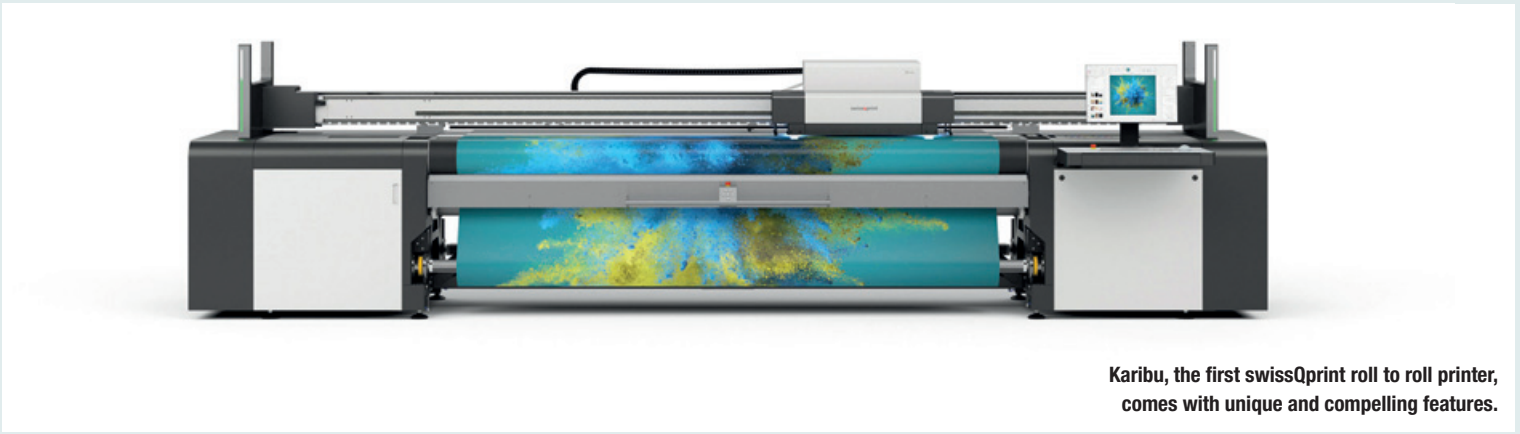
feature a modular design which enables the owner to configure their printer according to their needs. In this way, the printer can grow with the business as various options are added at later stages. These options, like nine freely configurable colour channels or the roll to roll option, contribute towards the high versatility of the Swiss made printers.

Speaking of versatility, another benefit of swissQprint’s technology is that there is hardly any substrate that cannot be processed, especially when it comes to heat-sensitive media. For example, thin films, paper, board and delicate textiles can all be handled by these printers. The recent swissQprint Creative Challenge most accurately reflected this. In this challenge, swissQprint users were asked to present their most extraordinary projects and the variety was quite stunning. They covered six application categories: signage, advertising technology, droptix (swissQprint 3D effect) & lenticular, articles of daily use, art & interior decoration, and packaging & display. What became clear from the extensive range of projects provided was that swissQprint users are offering their customers innovative and highly creative solutions that stand out from the crowd.

## UNIQUE ROLL TO ROLL PRINTER

Last year saw the company successfully introduce the Karibu, swissQprint’s first dedicated UV roll to roll printer. Karibu is 3.4 metres wide and incorporates a raft of ingenious features aimed at high efficiency and reliability as well versatility. For example, loading and changing rolls is quick and easy thanks to its cassette system that





**Karibu, the first swissQprint roll to roll printer, comes with unique and compelling features.**

enables every user to set up jobs quickly and easily.

Karibu printers feature a built-in Light Box next to the printing area for on the fly inspection of backlit prints, the unique Tip Switch vacuum for quick vacuum control, and clean and easy mesh printing without the need for a liner thanks to the integrated Mesh Kit for full bleed printing of permeable media. Finally, swissQprint also offers a dual roll option which enables the printing of two rolls at the same time.

The UV ink that swissQprint developed especially for Karibu is very flexible, particularly with textile applications where stretch frames will not cause stress whitening. Another advantage of having such flexible ink is with problem-free folding for shipping. Textiles can be cost-effectively folded for shipment and then assembled at the customer's location with no abrasion or creases from folding to be seen.

#### **BRAND NEW APPLICATION OPTIONS**

swissQprint has recently launched new options to broaden the range of applications even more. Firstly, a very vibrant orange ink has been added as an optional spot colour to expand the gamut in red and orange, enabling the user to reproduce Pantone colours more accurately. Secondly, an extra flexible varnish has been introduced for the Karibu enabling eye-catching effects to be achieved in roll to roll printing. Both options open up new possibilities for print service providers to distinguish themselves with their offerings. As usual with swissQprint, existing customers can also benefit from these new developments. Both options are retrofittable.

#### **SWISSQPRINT GREENTECH**

The importance of sustainable design and environmental manufacturing forms a major part of the company's ethos. Customer benefit and environmental compatibility remain equally high priorities during the development and production of its range of large format printers, a principle that takes its firm place in the company's mission statement.

The Swiss company calls this environmental approach to manufacturing 'swissQprint Greentech'. Four principal factors contribute to how swissQprint's large format printers leave a small ecological footprint: short shipping distances, outstanding durability, low maintenance requirements and UV LED printing technology.

Manufacturing at the headquarters in Switzerland involves mostly local suppliers, with some 80% of suppliers providing up to 90% of all machine parts used. Furthermore, the printers' outstanding durability saves on resources, with some of these printers still operating in the



**The newly launched swissQprint orange expands the colour gamut and helps with even better matching of corporate colours.**

field after twelve years, and this can be attributed to the high build quality and reliability of swissQprint machines.

Swiss precision manufacturing also minimises the need for unnecessary service calls and reduces the need for replacement consumable parts, which reduces CO<sup>2</sup> emissions as well as costs. Finally, the LED UV lamps used in swissQprint systems are economical on electricity which helps to minimise the printer's overall energy requirement.

#### **PRECISION, EFFICIENCY AND LONGEVITY**

swissQprint large format printers are engineered and produced at the headquarters in Switzerland. They are extremely precise which explains the high output quality these machines are known for. Various features and details, as well as the printers' ability to integrate into print and cut or automated workflows, contribute towards efficiency. Hence, these machines generate a high ROI, not least to the fact that they are low-maintenance and have a service life of up to 12 years. Operating costs remain low thanks to their energy efficiency as certified according to the ISO standard ISO 20690:2018.

#### **AWARD-WINNING, POPULAR PRINTERS**

Karibu received recognition from an Image Reports Angel Award earlier this year, while the Nyala flatbed printer has received several EDP awards in the past. This particular model has also been the most popular printer in its class in Western Europe for the last five years as confirmed by the market research institute Infosource, and it has remained at the top of the Western European sales statistics for five consecutive years.

#### **COVID-19, SERVICE SECURED**

swissQprint UK is providing the sales, service, sampling and application support to the greatest extent possible, following the latest government COVID-19 guidelines.

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# THE SHOW **MUST GO ON**

FESPA GLOBAL AND SDUK MAY NOT HAVE TAKEN PLACE THIS SPRING – BUT FEAR NOT, SIMON CREAMY BRINGS YOU UP TO SPEED ON KEY TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN SHOWCASED.

**Usually spring-time would be a busy period for manufacturers of large-format hardware and software. Companies would be launching or preparing to launch new products that they would unveil in a fanfare of publicity at one of the numerous European print industry trade shows scheduled throughout the year. This year it's different.**

Thanks to the Covid-19 crisis Sign UK, Fespa and Drupa have already sadly fallen by the wayside, with the events postponed until later this year or pushed back to next year. But while these gatherings may no longer be going ahead as planned there is still an impressive array of kit that is ready to be rolled out to the market. And with manufacturers not able to showcase their wares to customers in the traditional time honoured fashion, many are getting creative.

Take the example of Agfa. According to Bobby Grauf, inkjet sales manager at Agfa UK and Ireland, the company had an impressive line up of products it intended to showcase at Fespa. (PICS J1 AND J2) This included the new Oberon RTR3300 - a dedicated 3.3m wide roll-to-roll UV LED curing machine - and a four-colour version of the Jeti Tauro H3300 LED. It also planned to unveil an automatic board feeder (ABF) (PICS K1 AND K3) for the Jeti Tauro H3300 to offer three quarters automation and an integrated light RTR option for the same machine. In addition, Agfa was going to use the Madrid-based show to launch PrintTune - a cloud-based print standardisation tool that aims to standardise colour output across multiple wide-format printers and presses across multiple sites.

Despite Fespa now being pushed back to October, Agfa launched all of the products as originally planned in March and is about to start 'virtually' marketing the devices to customers.

"With severely restricted national and international travel, we are launching a series of virtual live demos, training and seminars to show these to existing and new customers," says Grauf. "The goal is to start in the weeks following Easter."

He explains that the new launches were developed to address customer demand for high quality at faster speeds, easy to use automation, maximum flexibility and quality control.

As for what the large-format print market will look for once the Covid-19 crisis starts to ease, he believes that "continuity, stability and trust will play a major roll when printing companies decide about the next investment. Buyers will be/should be looking for more than just a printer, but a partner who offers all-in support, uninterrupted supplies and financial services to futureproof their investment - a partner that continuously improves not only with new products, but that can offer enhancements on existing platforms too. We believe Agfa is exactly that partner today and in future," says Grauf.

Increased automation is an area Fujifilm is also focusing on. According to Nils Gottfried, product marketing manager, wide-format inkjet systems at Fujifilm Graphic Systems Europe, it was going to be the major focus of the company's presence at Drupa this year.

"Customers are constantly looking for ways to reduce the need for operator intervention and to improve lead times. Robotics are a large part of this and the Onset range from Inca Digital and Fujifilm has some of the most advanced and intelligent robotics systems on the market," says Gottfried.

**Visitors to Fespa 2020 would have seen the new Oberon RTR3300 - a 3.3m roll-to-roll UV LED machine**







He stresses that one of the key challenges in integrating robotics into wide-format print is the short-run nature of the work. Frequent job changeovers create bottlenecks and that's where he claims the Onset X HS range, which launched last summer, truly comes into its own.

(PIC M) "The new Onset X HS range is a prime example of a fully digitally integrated robotics and printer system," says Gottfried. "The programming of the robots is straightforward for operators, and once connected to the printer, a fully automated printing process is created - the printer and the robotics become one and the same machine. The robot can learn the performance of the printer, understand how long print jobs take and when to load or unload the next media. In fact, the job set up time on the Onset X HS is only 30 seconds - a big reduction from the industry standard 15 minutes. This means far less operator intervention and a substantial boost in uptime and productivity."

He adds that when you combine this technology with remote and preventative diagnostics such as the company's IncaConnect it frees up operator time, reduces human error and increases "speed and reliability across the board".

Some of the same trends dictating the future shape of new product development at Fujifilm are also influencing the direction of travel at Canon. Duncan Smith, country director, production printing products at Canon UK, says one of the big things the company's customers are demanding from equipment providers at the moment is fast turnaround times.

"Up to 60% of print orders are now delivered within 24-hours," says Smith. "As a result, businesses are increasingly looking for products that are easy-to-use and can print quickly and efficiently. We're helping businesses to achieve this through the extremely successful Arizona Flatbed printers that have been the PSP's popular choice for over 10 years and the recently introduced Colorado series with Canon UVgel technology, which delivers high-quality robust output that can be finished and shipped



**Agfa planned to unveil an automatic board feeder and an integrated light RTR option for the Jeti Tauro H3300**

immediately. We've also launched products that are developed for ease of use, and improved productivity, which means that customers can get their prints to market much faster."

Sustainability is also front of mind for many PSPs and whereas previously sustainable product choices may have been viewed as a 'nice to have' he thinks this is now a business critical issue. That's why Canon is offering customers the option of buying remanufactured Arizona printers.

"Not only do these products help businesses to opt for environmentally friendly devices, they also provide great value for smaller businesses with tighter budgets," says Smith. "Throughout the next five years, we anticipate that the demand for print will continue to grow, as new product designs that help both customers and the environment, rise in popularity."

Another area where Canon sees plenty of scope for future growth over the coming years is interior design printing.

"Traditionally, analogue printing methods would have incurred expensive set up charges and printers would have needed to produce in bulk to break-even," says Smith. "However, thanks to a rise in new technologies, bespoke prints can now be easily produced in smaller quantities at a much lower cost. For example, both Canon's Arizona and Colorado series offer robust, odourless output, that can be used for small or large quality printing in a range of environments. Through these developments, we have seen the market for both domestic and corporate prints grow dramatically, and we predict this industry will continue to expand in the future."

While some companies decided to push ahead with new product launches despite the widespread cancellation of print trade shows, others are adopting a watching brief for the time being at least.

According to Phil McMullin, UK sales manager pro-graphics at Epson, the company was poised to launch some "exciting" new products at Fespa, but when the show was postponed it was decided these products



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should be unveiled at Drupa instead. With that show also now postponed the company is currently working towards launching the new products at the end of May, although the situation could change in the interim.

"In a couple of months we hope to start getting back to normal and continue the raft of new releases that were scheduled for 2020," says McMullin. "It is going to be an exciting year for us in the large-format commercial industrial print section of Epson and we don't want this to derail us anymore than absolutely necessary."

Although McMullin says he is unable to divulge specific details about the new products he hints as to what we can expect to see from the company.

"If you look at [Epson's NPD] trends over last few years it has been about plugging the holes in our portfolio," he explains. "So there is now a full range of dye-sublimation printers, there is now a full range of CAD printers for architects and designers and we have extended our range of photo printers, so that is all about refreshing proven ranges and filling in any gaps. The announcements that I hope will see the light of day at the end of May will be new and exciting and take us into different arenas. We do already have the full bandwidth of ink types out there for different applications - you just don't see them across all platforms. That's about as much detail as I can give you at the moment. What I can say is it is going to be exciting times [for the business] and it will definitely be worth tuning into."

(PIC L) Mimaki is also expanding its scope, with a large-scale 3D printer aimed at those in the sign and display manufacturing markets. The company says its 3DGD-1800 3D printer facilitates large-scale production up to three times faster than with conventional Fused Filament Fabrication (FFF) type 3D printers. It is capable

#### The Onset X HS offers fully digitally integrated robotics

of producing objects up to 1.8m tall in seven hours. Its assembly-based design allows for the creation of larger designs too, and its dual-head configuration enables the simultaneous output of two structures. The 3DGD-1800 also allows the production of support-free hollowed structures, further streamlining production whilst allowing for increased portability and the possible addition of interior illuminations.

"Part of what makes our approach unique here at Mimaki is our dedication to being a total solutions provider, and as such we have ensured that even beyond the 3D printing stage, our Mimaki inkjet printers can then be utilised to add colour and decor, making created objects even more impressive and immensely versatile," says Bert Benckhuysen, senior product manager at Mimaki Europe. "We intend to lead the sign graphics industry in both two- and three-dimensional signage - and the introduction of the new Mimaki 3DGD-1800 is a fantastic step forward in achieving this goal."

With Mimaki's new 3D printing system designs can be visualised as a finished product just based on the 3D data, and then produced in various sizes from a single data set. The 3DGD-1800 employs gel dispensing printing technology, extruding gel-type UV curable resin lineally and utilising LED UV light to instantly cure the resin, enabling lamination speeds of up to 350mm in height per hour.

The situation we currently find ourselves in is unprecedented not just for the printing industry, but for every industry sector. While we face an uncertain period in the months ahead the one certainty based on feedback from some of the leading print equipment manufacturers is they are busy beavering away and working up plans to deliver a pipeline of products that meet customer needs in the short, medium and longer term.



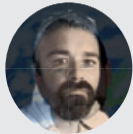
The new 3DGD-1800 3D printer from Mimaki



## Why are you still not happy with off-the-shelf MIS options?

	 <b>Anthony Wyville</b> Commercial director, Platinum HPL	 <b>Mark Gerrard</b> Director, Simpsons Group
<b>What do you want/expect a management information system to cover?</b>	Visibility on all areas of the business from estimating to invoicing. Quick, simple and accurate estimating to achieve our target of 24hr turnaround of quotes. Real time data from production and scheduling to be as efficient as possible. Faster turnarounds, with the ability of producing a job same day.	All aspects of a job's lifecycle, from prospecting and estimating enquiries, through to shop floor data capture, job delivery and invoicing. We were really looking for a system that would provide a comprehensive overview of all work in production, track all job actual times, control purchasing and stock levels and help to automate repetitive tasks.
<b>How do you currently attain this information?</b>	We had an old MIS system which was updated at the start of the year to a much more modern one.	Through our recently purchased MIS!
<b>Have you investigated MIS solutions – and what is your current thinking on their viability for your company?</b>  <b>Are there specific 'gaps' that 'off-the-shelf' type MIS packages fail to address – if so what are they?</b>	We researched a few solutions when looking at our upgrade. I think they do pay a very valuable role in a company of medium to large size producing a decent amount of jobs per day.	We went through an extensive tendering process of the available options, to decide which of the systems on offer was best geared up for both the range of work we produce, and the range of print and finishing machines we have. All of the systems we viewed had different strengths and weaknesses - they all require varying degrees of configuration to replicate our in-house setup and meet our future vision.
<b>How would you measure the ROI on an MIS?</b>	A solution that works well with different types of print. We are a litho, digital and large-format printer with in-house mailing, so finding a system which works well in all those areas is difficult.	I'd say we went into the process knowing that no "off-the-shelf" system would be perfect for us. We have various other internal systems (Web-to-print, pre-press etc) that we needed our MIS to integrate with, to achieve the levels of automation were striving for, so we were fully prepared for the development hours that were required.
	Being more efficient to reduce lead times and therefore producing more with our current workforce and equipment,	I'd say an MIS system is a necessary evil to do the job in this day and age. You could measure jobs per month, estimated/artwork files collected etc from KPIs

**Are you ploughing big sums of money into developing end-to-end management information systems in-house because you can't find anything off-the-shelf that works for your business? If so, you're not alone.**



## Nathan Swanson-Bullough

MD, ImageCo

This is the golden question - a fully automated system from enquiry to delivery but unfortunately with the bespoke nature of our workload the systems out there that do this are no good for us.

It is important that our workflow is streamlined and produced in a way that is both efficient and accurate. If we were just printing banners and wallcoverings all day this would be easy but we aren't.

Our work is extremely varied and can contain many processes from print to lighting, even floristry, so there is a lot of information we need to input and monitor. I'm not a fan of creating work for people so we are on a quest to find a solution that is easy to use - from start to finish - and that gives us accurate reporting on all our work.

At ImageCo we are almost there with a solution but it will be very tailored to our requirements. We have used Tharstern for years now and the new version of Estimate Pro combined with the tradition MIS software we have is the best solution I have come across so far.

As I have mentioned, we use Tharstern and have done for as long as I can remember - our problem is that our work is getting that little bit more bespoke. Getting everyone to sing from the same hymn sheet and enter all information correctly is the key. We have streamlined our operations recently and really nailed down getting this done religiously. As with any software out there it is only as good as the information put in and everyone has to do this correctly every day on every job. We are at that stage now, but it has taken a long time to get there and when we took over ImageCo this was pretty much non-existent.

Having a team in place who not only use Tharstern well but influence others to do so has been key. It's quite easy to take short cuts, especially when work load is crazy so we need to be disciplined and efficient in our operations otherwise there is no point and any financial reporting will be wrong. A lot of the bespoke data is currently input manually which is why we are looking at things such Estimate Pro to aid us in the future.

Yes - we have looked at every solution out there. I am no expert and I have called colleagues, friends in the industry for their input and ideas. I get mixed reports which makes things even more difficult. It's like anything - what works great for one person may not be suitable for another so hopefully we end up making the correct decision. It's not easy but a solution will present itself.

There are some good ones out there, and I'm sure there is a solution for most companies in what they do. I know a lot of friends in the industry have built their own software to tailor their specific needs. There is good and bad to most MIS packages so it's about shopping around for the right one and having the solution suited to the business. Excel still does a job and I know people that just use this. Like I say I am no expert but I know what I want to achieve - it's just making the right decision to enable us to do that.

Any good MIS system would enable us to generate accurate quotes with accurate reporting and not have to employ more staff to run the thing. If an MIS were to streamline operations and help reduce time, waste, labour then it would pay for itself in no time. I would be a no brainer, but only if the criteria is met and works well.



## Rebecca Caldicott

Projects and installations  
co-ordinator, MX Display

We would like a system that could take the information from our estimate and then automate our file set-ups, automate our proofing, and provide us with a production plan based on the initial information provided

We currently use independent systems - one for estimating/creating job bags, one for proofing, one for Ripping of files and one for production planning. None of the systems integrate, thus double entry is needed, which is very time consuming

We have started to look at whether anyone is able to provide a system that joins up some of these tasks, however, this is proving to be a challenge. The first is that the estimating systems do not enable us to manage the proofing process as part of its functionality, and when looking at machine manufacturers MIS systems, they seem to fall down if you are also running machines other than theirs as the MIS information (such as ink use/print time etc.) cannot get this information from these other machines.

There are one or two suppliers that suggest they can provide an all in one package, but even they are talking about different systems being joined together to achieve this, which does not feel as though it will work as required.

The joining up of information and the restrictions that this has by not having the data in one place when trying to do analysis.

The main one would be the time saved on any double entry. The others would be a judgement call on efficiencies gained in studio/production by things being more visible.

# SPREADING MIS INFORMATION

WHEN IT COMES TO INSTALLING MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS, ALL SORTS OF HORROR STORIES CIRCULATE IN THE LARGE-FORMAT PRINT SPACE. PRINT COMPANY CHIEFS TALK AT LENGTH ABOUT THE LACK OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC SYSTEMS/MODULES, WASTED TIME AND MONEY. SO WHAT'S BEING DONE TO LAY THESE CONCERNS TO REST?



“OUR MIS ALLOWS PRINTERS TO MANAGE MULTI-JOB CAMPAIGNS THROUGHOUT A WORKFLOW.

*Lee Ward, Tharstern*”

If there's a name that crops up more than any other when it comes to talking about MIS to those running a large-format orientated PSP it's Tharstern – so an obvious starting point for a feature like this. According to the company's chief business development officer Lee Ward, the company has identified a number of key concerns when it comes to the purchase and deployment of MIS in this sector. “Wide-format printers need a solution that can easily cope with complex campaigns and quote for different stores and different store profiles. They need an MIS that can easily create complex multi-element estimates, that gangs jobs together for production and then delivers the separate elements as one order. Estimates need to be able to include things such as installation services, travel, vehicle and machinery hire and subsistence,” he says. Yup, that sounds about right, so what is Tharstern - and other players - doing about it?

“We are addressing those needs by ensuring that our MIS allows printers to manage multi-job campaigns throughout a workflow, that it can group multiple estimates into a project and manage them as a whole, so a single quote letter can

be produced, which will combine the details and pricing for all products in the project. We have also worked hard to implement advanced imposition techniques that provide production efficiencies for this sector,” says Ward.

“The latest version of Tharstern contains even more functionality for wide-format users - we've been working on the estimates that our clients can create for their multi-job, multi-site campaigns. Users can now quote for campaigns that include a number of different packs, with unique configurations for each. The quotes can include project level services such as artworking and design, installation services such as accommodation and mileage, and include print estimates in that too. The new functionality also allows user to assign unidentified goods received into a wide-format job, so users can deal with client supplied items that have been received without knowledge of which job they have been supplied for.”

According to Ward, Tharstern is ideal for printers who work with more than one type of print, claiming “they'll only ever need one MIS to quote for and manage all their print jobs”. He adds: “Our MIS has had to evolve with the changing needs of our customers, a good number of





**THE LF PRINTER NEEDS A SYSTEM THAT ISN'T CONFINED BY THE NUMBER OF INPUT TOUCH POINTS THAT MIGHT BE REQUIRED IN A TRADITIONAL SYSTEM.**

*Pete Horwood, Imprint*



**BUSINESS OWNERS AND PRODUCTION MANAGERS NEED TO SEE REAL-TIME, HISTORIC AND TREND DATA FROM THEIR ENTIRE PRODUCTION SITE.**

*Jonathan Rogers, Onyx*

example, the ability to be able to quickly generate quotes and easily modify them with out starting all over again.

“We realise that a lot of the concerns that affect traditional printers such as which machine to choose to produce a particular product, based on volume or the speed of the machine doesn't really apply to wide-format. The wide-format printer will generally already know what machine they will be using to print and cut and they will want their material costs in square metres for example. Basically, the LF printer needs a system that isn't confined by the number of input touch points that might be required in a traditional system.”

To that end Horwood points out that Imprint has “produced a quick estimating module that is more tailored for projects like kitting, with a multi-picker function that is less rigid than traditional print estimating modules. Cost centres are set up in the background for processes that need material and cost rates assigned to them, but for more straightforward items such as external contract labour for example, a standard cost and selling rate can be applied.”

But many large-format PSPs are looking way beyond that kind of functionality, with MIS and workflow integration a priority. Jonathan Rogers, international marketing manager, Onyx Graphics, puts it simply: “Speaking solely as a software provider for digital inkjet wide-format printing to PSPs, a trend we've seen grow tremendously in recent years is the need for data. PSPs are concerned about human input error or job estimation, costs and are seeking print production business tools to make data driven business decisions. Vendors are seeking new ways to provide the kind of tools that help PSPs gain access to such data that could help them answer questions such as ‘Did I make money on that job?’ and ‘Did I estimate that correctly?’ or ‘What is my media waste?’.”

“Business owners and production managers need to see real-time, historic and trend data from their entire production site in one central hub location. Typically, this process requires people to manually gather data or rely on manual input, which wastes time and isn't accurate. They need a system to easily see actual data that helps them make better business decisions.”

To this end Rogers points to the Onyx Hub, saying: “Onyx Hub 2.0 the first business intelligence tool designed specifically for wide-format print. It is a business intelligence tool that provides real-time, historic and trend print production data across an entire production environment in a browser-based dashboard. Users can see and report on actual data and actual job costs to help establish the right print production workflows that help eliminate bottlenecks and identify areas of waste.”

Over at Agfa, Bobby Grauf, sales manager UK and Ireland, says the company brings its “extensive MIS integration knowledge from litho and cut-sheet digital printing to wide-format in the latest release of Asanti Production.”

There are three different business models: hotfolder based automation; XML driven; full JDF/JMF integration. Each model reduces the amount of everyday tasks. With a fully integrated JDF link, the Asanti Production workflow is a processing and automation ‘black box’ that receives, executes and delivers job information and content to all connected printers, and feeds its results back to the MIS system.

“The first reaction when talking to large-format PSPs about MIS is that there is simply too much variation from job to job to automate print production workflows and MIS. Just looking at the order book can put people off thinking of MIS integration because it looks too big to

which have diversified into other types of print.”

It's diversification that is having a key impact on how Imprint is developing its offering – but here it's more about targeting those print companies newly breaking into digital large-format than about established players within the sector extending their services.

MIS project manager Pete Horwood says: “We continue to monitor the trends in the large-format sector and are at present looking at ways of presenting wide-format solutions to customers that are introducing wide-format into their business model and ensuring our systems integrate and work with any existing systems in place.”

Asked what Imprint takes the main concerns of the large-format sector to be in relation to MIS, and how the company is addressing that, Horwood says: “One of the biggest concerns that we hear when speaking to wide-format customers is they want to talk to suppliers that have an understanding of how a large-format printing business differs from a more conventional printers. They want to talk technical and in depth to someone who has a sound understanding of large format production - for



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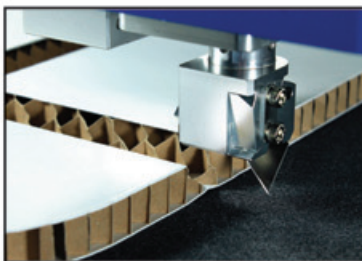
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**JUST LOOKING AT THE ORDER BOOK CAN PUT PEOPLE OFF THINKING OF MIS INTEGRATION BECAUSE IT LOOKS TOO BIG TO HANDLE.**

*Bobby Grauf, Agfa*



**OUR INDUSTRY HAS STRIVED TO MAKE THE LINK BETWEEN MIS SYSTEMS AND PRODUCTION POSSIBLE VIA THE USE OF JDF CONNECTIVITY.**

*John Davies, Fujifilm*

handle. It's why we always aim to start small and build up to full integration over time. Quick and intermediate wins will give the feeling of achievement. It also proves to every stakeholder in the business that automation is an improvement over more labour-intensive manual steps.

Fujifilm Graphic Systems Europe workflow product management and support manager John Davies also flags up the extent of the MIS/workflow solution ask.

"Our industry has strived to make the link between MIS systems and production possible via the use of JDF connectivity, this however is far from a simple plug and play approach to integrating products, as it often requires software changes to be made by both the MIS vendor and the production software vendor to make the integration really flow. What can be achieved is automated production initiated from the MIS system with communication of time taken, media use and other information fed back from the print process. The price however, for undertaking such a project, is probably too high for the typical mid to small wide-format print supplier."

Fuji is addressing the issue by focussing on making improvements to production layout and planning using tilia Griffin products for smaller production needs, and tilia Phoenix for more demanding production requirements. These products assist with efficient layout of jobs to be printed, and can be optimised for either the fastest way to print, the most efficient use of media space, or the overall cheapest way to print a selection of jobs.

"We are seeing more demand for systems to automatically plan incoming work and for this we are using Enfocus Switch which has very good integration with both tilia Griffin and tilia Phoenix," says Davies, pointing out that both products are scalable and offer a solution for managing production flow and managing cost together within one product.

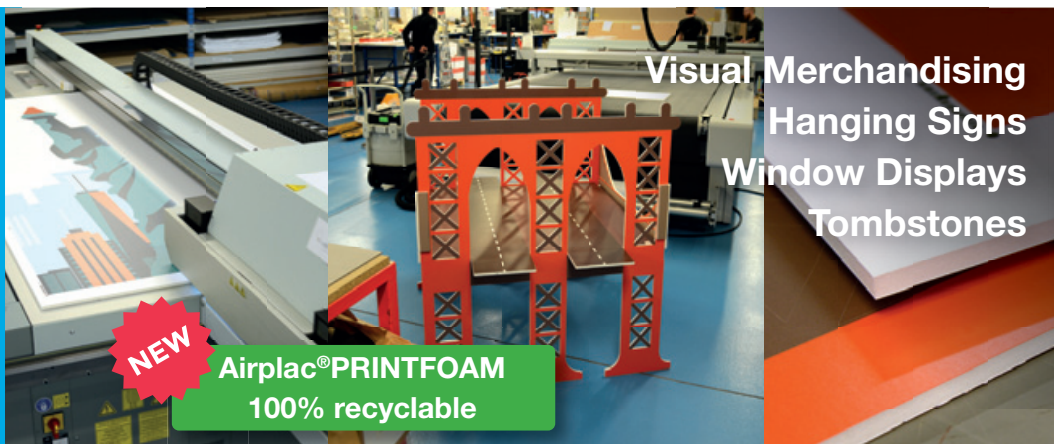
He adds: "Typically, equipment suppliers provide a front end workflow for their kit. Our aim with products such as Enfocus Switch, tilia Griffin and tilia Phoenix is create a job planning platform that can be applied to all the printing equipment a company uses so that any investment will bring efficiency and cost management benefit to the whole business."

How far off is the day when large-format PSPs feel MIS delivers the kind of ROI they continue to seek in this rapidly evolving technological landscape?



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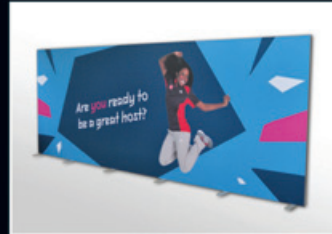
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# TAX DOESN'T HAVE TO BE TAXING

OR DOES IT? IF YOU USE CONTRACTORS YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE FROM 6 APRIL REGARDING IR35. LUKE MENZIES, DIRECTOR OF MENZIES LAW, EXPLAINS.

**Know what IR35 is? If not, you're hardly alone. But if you use contractors you most definitely need to wise up. Here's why.**

Firstly, you need to understand what IR35 is. It refers to HMRC's policy on how to tax the earnings of individuals who work as a contractor for an organisation, providing their services via their own limited company - which we tend to call a personal services company (PSC). HMRC has an 'employment status' test which helps it determine whether a contractor is really an employee in disguise. If so, the employer must deduct tax and NI at source - just like a PAYE employee.

IR35 itself is hardly new - it came into force in 2000 following a period in the 1990s when it became fashionable within the IT industry for self-employed contractors to work via a PSC. IR35 was HMRC's response to this trend. It says that if HMRC looks at the contractor situation and, apart from the existence of the PSC, the contractor would otherwise meet their 'employee in disguise' test, then the contractor must have tax and NI deducted from their pay.

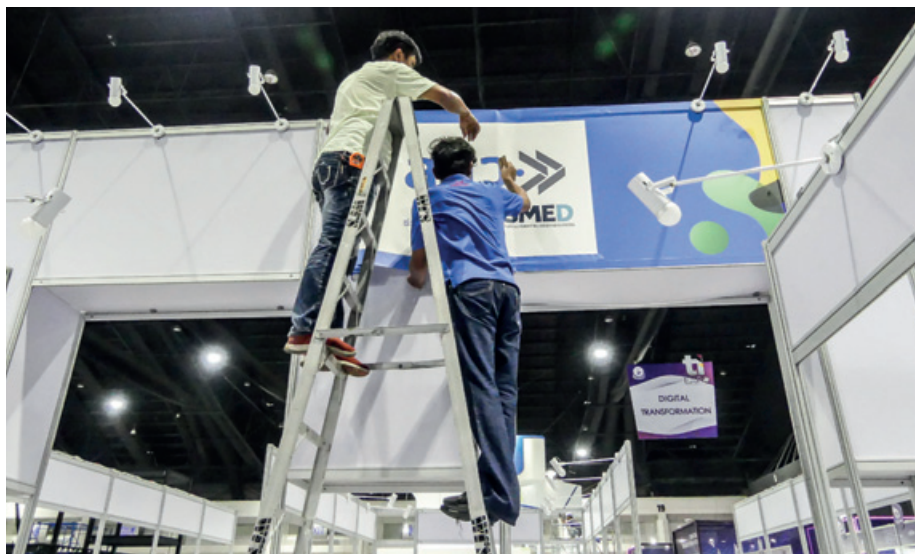
Nowadays, there are tens of thousands of contractors working through PSCs, and they have had 20 years to come up with clever ways of putting terms into their B2B contracts with their 'employers' to try to out-manoeuvre IR35. HMRC is missing out on several billions in lost tax. Many of these contractors are in roles that most reasonable people would see as really being employee roles. There isn't room here to explore the various legal tests for whether a contractor is an employee in disguise, but in my experience, around 75% of contractors working through a PSC within someone else's business are probably employees in disguise. However, HMRC has simply not had the resources to check and challenge all these relationships, so many have got away with a situation that may be really stretching the notion of self-employment to the very limit of honesty and good sense - and beyond.

## WHAT'S CHANGED?

As of 6 April 2020 the 'employer' (i.e. the client of the contractor) in larger businesses became responsible for scrutinising in detail each of its contractor relationships where there is a PSC, and liable for deducting tax and NI at source if it thinks the relationship does actually come within IR35.

The way that the new rules and liabilities are set up, the 'employer' becomes the tax inspector.

'Employers' now need to be cautious about the risk of making a wrong assessment. The low-risk option is to assume that the contractor is within IR35, and so to deduct tax and NI. At this point, it becomes fairly



THE WAY THAT THE NEW RULES AND LIABILITIES ARE SET UP, THE 'EMPLOYER' BECOMES THE TAX INSPECTOR.

pointless for the contractor to continue working as a contractor - they may as well become an employee and benefit from pension, employment rights, etc. Many employers can see this, and so are cutting to the chase by insisting that those who look like they are within IR35 must in fact become employees, whether they like it or not. From the employer's point of view, this then normalises the relationship, de-risking it.

This new tax inspector role will not apply to small businesses that have at least two of the following characteristics: an annual turnover not exceeding £10.2m; a balance sheet total not exceeding £5.1m; and/or an average of not more than 50 employees over a year.

If you don't fall within that small employer exemption, then it's time to immediately check whether you have any contractors who might come within IR35.

The good news is that HMRC has recently announced that the new 'tax inspector' rule will only apply to new contractor relationships that started on 6 April 2020 or after, so your contractors from before that will not technically be covered. However, it's still very much worthwhile looking at all your contractors now and being clear on where your risks may lie.

As with many developments in law and tax, this change is likely to have some mission-creep, and I suspect HMRC is going to be looking in greater scrutiny at all your existing self-employed contractors, whether or not IR35 could apply to them and whether or not they operate via a PSC. The tectonic plates are clearly shifting. My strong advice is that it's time to review your contractor relationships and assess your risks.





# Karly Lattimore

**Training is a bugbear to many a large-format print provider - many companies citing issues such as irrelevant apprenticeship schemes as problematic for the sector. So, with the BPIF the largest supplier of apprenticeships to the UK printing industry, I went to talk with Karly Lattimore, the federation's managing director of training, on how this sector can be better served.**

**By Lesley Simpson**

**First up, can you just clarify where the BPIF stands on training? What exactly is its role?**

The BPIF is proud to be a grade 2 Ofsted provider - the biggest provider of print and print related apprenticeships in England. Currently it offers apprenticeships across two sectors. Of course we offer the print apprenticeships, and these are at level 2 and level 3. At level 2 we currently offer the apprenticeship frameworks in machine print, pre-press, print finishing and print administration, and at level 3 we have the newly approved print technician standard with the option of three pathways - pre-press, press and post press.

We also offer apprenticeships to support other areas of print businesses, including customer service and business administration at level 2 and 3, and our highly valued management programmes at level 3 and 5.

We have almost 600 apprentices who are currently undertaking one of our apprenticeship programmes. Since 2015 we have enrolled over 1,200 individuals to one of our schemes and we have over 700 apprentices who have successfully completed their programme. We are proud that of the learners who have achieved their apprenticeship, 95% of them have sustained their employment and a further 2% using the apprenticeship as a springboard into further and higher education.

As well as apprenticeship provision the BPIF also offers short training courses to meet the needs of the industry, including health and safety training, HR training and team leading workshops. Whilst these are currently not fully funded we are exploring opportunities to support the industry in subsidising this training.

**Does the BPIF work with other print industry/training bodies to define training course requirements and course content? I'm wondering what happened with the GPMA for instance?**

The priority of the BPIF at the moment is ensuring that we can have continuance of apprenticeships designed specifically for the print industry.

The BPIF, in conjunction with a consortium of industry including The Print Charity, BCQ Group, Unite the Union, De La Rue, Leeds College, Learn to Print, Reach PLC and the Rydale group amongst others defined the level 3 employee owned print standard which is current for the industry. Despite the recent approval of this, this is now under review so the BPIF and the consortium are again working to ensure that we protect the industry standard.

Alongside this we are working with industry to develop a level 2, entry-level standard into the industry to replace the discontinuation of the current apprenticeship framework in July 2020.

We are always looking to progress relationships with the sector to ensure that we are able to offer appropriate and high quality courses.

**My readers are owners/directors of large-format digital inkjet print companies. Now I understand that the BPIF wants to get closer to companies in this sector so how involved are you in talking to them about sector specific training needs - and do you think you should be the body to deliver?**

Currently we offer apprenticeships across the two sectors, technical print and the business skills sectors however our aim is to be able to support any training need in the industry. We recognise the way the industry is changing and in responding to feedback from the industry we are close to introducing the digital skills technician standard which will help organisations to maximise the use of digital technologies and adapt to and exploit changes in technology to meet organisational objectives.

As well as this we are looking at further training





MD training, BPIF

opportunities to support both long and short-term training needs of our industry.

**The BPIF offers a number of bursaries. Do you have many from within the large-format sector applying for them - and should they?**

We can help employers of any size access funding for apprenticeship provision. If you are a small business either hire an apprentice or choose to upskill an existing member of your workforce the Education and Skills Funding Agency will fund 95% of the apprenticeship with the employer paying the remaining 5% contribution. For example, for a printer with an apprentice on the print technician apprenticeship, which is costed at £12,000, the employer will contribute £600 with the ESFA funding the remaining 95%.

If you are a large employer and contribute to the apprenticeship levy the funding for the apprenticeship will come directly from your levy pot. If the levy pot cannot fund the full cost of the apprenticeship then the difference will be paid using the methodology above. The BPIF can support both apprenticeship levy paying organisations and the smaller printers in accessing funding.

Other bursaries are available to support individuals to upskill toward their career aspirations. Individuals looking to undertake the BPIF MSc in Management can apply to have a significant amount of their fees paid, thanks to a £6000 bursary from The Stationers Foundation funded by The Printing Charity.

The Printing Charity also fund the Print Futures Award which has supported more than 400 people across the print, paper and packaging industries. Those ages 18-30 years are eligible to apply to us for a grant of up to £1,500 to support their personal and workplace skills development. Applications for both grants are now open and further information can be found on the BPIF website.

**What does the BPIF do to get print industry career/training options in front of 'new blood' – and does the message represent all areas?**

The BPIF School Engagement Programme is actively being created to help bridge the much publicised skills and age gap, along with addressing diversity and social inclusion in the industry.

The programme will ensure the future generations are informed of the print, media, digital and graphics industry as an exciting career path. We are starting the conversation with the industry to raise awareness of what their federation is doing to help them educate future generations. The BPIF is starting the conversation with members to make them aware of what their federation is doing to help them educate future generations about print and career opportunities in print.

We also have a fantastic new area on our website detailing information for employers, schools and individuals about the benefits of being in the industry.

**How does the BPIF ensure its training offer is current and relevant to all within the print industry?**

We value feedback we receive and we are responsive in reviewing our provision in line with employer and industry needs.

Whilst we offer apprenticeships and work within a clear curriculum, employers benefit from the flexibility we allow in apprenticeships to enhance any aspects to meet their specific needs, and also the opportunity to extend the curriculum by adding bespoke industry and organisation training. In fact, in our most recent employer survey commissioned by the DFE, 95% of our employers with an apprentice commented that our training reflects up to date practices in their industry, and 97% are feeding back that the BPIF understand the training needs of their industry well.

WE ARE CLOSE TO  
INTRODUCING THE  
DIGITAL SKILLS  
TECHNICIAN  
STANDARD

# Welcome to my world

'Skills shortage' is something we're hearing a lot about – the blame frequently blamed on Brexit.

But with this shortage applying to mainstream job roles - such as electricians and mechanics - where does that leave an industry that requires a more niche skillset? Paula Thirkell of Ambitions personnel steers you in the right direction.

RECRUITING IS ONE THING. STAFF RETENTION IS ANOTHER. IF YOU HAVE TROUBLE WITH EITHER THESE TIPS - FROM PAULA THIRKELL, PRINT AND PACKAGING RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT MANAGER AT AMBITIONS PERSONNEL - COULD PROVE VERY HANDY!

## 1.

### INSIDER DEALING

Business-critical roles that need filling quickly and recruiting into higher-tier, niche roles can be time-consuming. But often, with a little bit of cross-training, you can fill the gaps internally – and perhaps do so without having an ambitious member of staff leaving a damaging hole in the business to boot.

The more multi-skilled your workforce is the better contingency you have for coping with leavers.

## 2.

### ATTRACTING FRESH TALENT

This has to start from the ground up - including how job adverts are written to appeal to the right audience. The big brands/names may be able to simply post a job advert and get candidates flocking, but with the print and packaging industry being so niche you need to be more creative and thoughtful of how you attract candidates. Something like: "Does the prospect of abseiling down skyscrapers for a living excite you? You could be our new graphics Installer. Apply now." It's punchy, interesting, and challenges the idea of what it means to work in the print sector!

There is also a need to get into local schools to promote print as a career option. I worked in this sector and didn't have a clue about what the role was all about until I attended my first interview. That's bad practice, and it's the job of the recruiter and employer to make sure that job adverts are clear and easy to understand.

## 3.

### LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION...

You know it - if you're in a geographical area saturated with competitors searching for staff in similar roles you're going to have to do something to get an edge. So, is it worth considering looking outside your area to bring untapped talent in? If so, think about what you need to do to entice them. Of course an attractive salary and benefits package is usually enough to catch the eyes of the best of the best.

## 4.

### HAVE STRUCTURED AND TRANSPARENT PAY GRADES

Try not to get into a bargaining war on salary or hourly pay. If you feel that you need to pay more to attract talent, try to keep consistency with your existing staff. Don't be tempted to offer a knee-jerk package to a favoured person to get them to start - chances are they will leave you when a higher offer comes along from somewhere else.

“THERE IS A NEED TO GET INTO LOCAL SCHOOLS TO PROMOTE PRINT AS A CAREER OPTION.”

“ JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE JOINS YOUR COMPANY IN A SMALL ROLE, THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT THEY WANT TO STAY THERE. ”

5.

**INVEST IN TRAINING**

Training is often overlooked, yet it can be key to good staff retention. Look at professional bodies offering accredited courses that carry some weight within the industry.

Employers often worry about the time lost to training but employees who are developed and feel that they have these opportunities will be more inclined to stay with a company. Many training providers can build a bespoke course around your own business to ensure it's relevant and much of the content can be achieved on-site.

6.

**HELP REALISE DREAMS**

Through the use of regular reviews, you can quickly identify those employees who want to progress. If they feel there is a natural route through the company, they will strive to exceed expectations. It might be that they join you as a print finisher but are keen to understand the product in its entirety from artwork to printed product down to their own interests. This person may further down the line become your technical salesperson who will win you the big business because of their ability to know what works and what doesn't for your clients.

The worst thing you can do is see your employees as expendable. Just because someone joins your company in a small role, that doesn't mean that they want to stay there. Everyone has ambitions, and it's the employer's role to help people realise those ambitions.

7.

**THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX**

Advances in areas like textile print has led to something of a skills gap - especially on the finishing side. It can be easy to look at the industry and see a lack of new talent, but not if you 'think outside the box' and consider transferable skills from beyond the print sector.

What matters is how the skills learned in one sector may apply to another. For example, if the print role is client-facing, a previous role in a retail position could have transferable skills. Need a keen eye on detail? A previous job working with complex numbers and figures could fit well. It's all about keeping an open mind.

9.

**CULTURE, PERKS AND BENEFITS**

Hiring costs money, so staff retention should be right at the top of any company's agenda. Know then that many job candidates we see are no longer just interested in salary - they want to know what else their employer can offer them.

One of the easiest ways to retain staff is to create and nurture a positive company culture. People should be proud to work for you and be happy to stay. If that culture is backed up by a strong set of work perks, for example, a paid gym membership, free fruit Fridays or flexible working, it becomes much easier to retain staff.

8.

**BE BRAND AWARE**

Especially important for lesser-known companies, brand awareness can make a big difference in your recruiting fortunes. It's a simple fact that people want to work for companies and brands that are household names. While that isn't an easy feat for every business to achieve, spending time promoting your brand goes a long way. Or indeed, promoting the brands you work with/for.

Attendance at trade shows often focus on winning new business but they should be used as a networking opportunity too. Meeting your competitors and your customers face to face in the same room is invaluable. You get a hint into what the competition is doing, while also learning how customers react. If you can make sure that your brand stands out amongst the rest, you'll have a good chance of attracting the best talent.

10.

**TELL IT AS IT IS**

There are those who think that print is dying. You need to challenge that understanding and show that it is a thriving sector that is constantly evolving. Use your most impressive case studies and name-drop big brand names where you can to prove it!



# DRIVING GREENER BOARD POSSIBILITIES

WANT A 100% RECYCLABLE LARGE-FORMAT BOARD THAT IS FSC CERTIFIED, AS LITTLE AS 1MM THICK, AND THAT DOESN'T CRACK IN ANY DIRECTION WHEN BENT? COULD NEW SWEDBOARD PRODUCTS BE THE ANSWER?



A 3D car made from Swedboard



Swedboard comes in a number of options



Swedboard founder Kurt Alden showing off one of the grades

**So, you know Re-board. Well, entrepreneur Kurt Alden, a man synonymous with that product, is back with a new rigid board offering - Swedboard. And the focus is as much on its green credentials as on its printability and product capability, for as he says: "Greta Thunberg is telling us all to be more sustainable and we agree. It's the very soul of what we're doing".**

Alden founded Swedboard in 2018. The board-making operation, based in Katrineholm in central Sweden, started running last summer. By this summer it is expected to be in full production, providing an expected six million m<sup>2</sup>/yr. That's a lot of board - and the company intends to sell it direct in Europe, where the target is for 300 customers by the end of his year (It will go through distributors in Panama for Latin America, the Caribbean and South America, with talks underway with distributors for Asia, the Middle East, Australia and South Africa, and plans being worked through for how to best handle the US market.)

There are three ranges available - SB Fibre, SB

Composite Premium and SB Solid - all of which come in 1220mm, 1600mm, 2030mm, 2400mm and 2500mm widths as standard. The maximum length of each sheet 4200mm.

The FSC certified, 100% recyclable SB Fibre is a rigid, dust free paperboard that does not crack (in any direction) on bending. The surface is waterproof and can take heat and cold. It comes as SB Fibre Premium 10mm and 16mm, SB Fibre Brown 10mm and 16mm, and as SB Fibre WhiteCore 16mm. SB Fibre FireRetardant (16mm) is launching this spring.

SB Solid Premium is a 100% recyclable paper material 1mm thick.

SB Composite Premium is PVC free - though not yet recyclable - and is also FSC certified, has a waterproof surface, and can take heat and cold. It comes as SB Composite Premium 3mm, 5mm, 10mm, 16mm, 20mm and 40mm.

Sales have begun in the UK, where key customer Data Image is hosting Swedboard storage at its site in Narborough, Leicestershire. "We are starting with small

storage, but when volumes get much bigger we will find a logistic hub to take care of our storage and also to handle transportation to the UK market,” says Swedboard sales and marketing manager Tommy Andersson. “We will then also put a storage in Ireland.”

Swedboard will only take orders from PSPs of one pallet (105 10mm sheets on a pallet, 65 16mm sheets, 50 20mm sheets, 25 40mm sheets) or more to keep costs as well as environmental impact down to the minimum.

“We have chosen to not work with any distributors in the European market - we sell directly to the big volume customers in each country. We can therefore give a very good price on our materials to the market. There are always going to be materials that are cheaper, but our materials are very competitive for what they deliver,” says Andersson.

Rob Farfort, founder and CEO of Data Image, said at a recent event at his company that brought together Swedboard and a number of potential UK customers: “For years we’ve been trying to ‘sell’ sustainable materials to our print customers - now they’re starting to demand it. The message that paper-based products are not all bad is starting to get through. Everyone in this room can actively promote that message - especially when products like Swedboard are available.”

He went on to say: “We want to be at the leading edge of educating the market about sustainable print options. I’d like to think that in two years we won’t be printing on any PVC at all. We are suggesting ‘green’ alternatives wherever we can.”

He isn’t the only one excited by the Swedboard development. Imaginators MD Matt Tydeman, who was at the event, says: “I’m very enthusiastic about it. It’s genuinely versatile as well as green, and I think we’ll be taking some pallets and experimenting. I don’t think we can eliminate foamex just yet, but this is the first viable alternative we’ve seen. We do a lot of events-based print, where they’re becoming very environmentally conscious. We need to check what the print possibilities are [for Swedboard], but the price certainly allows us to offer it as an alternative.”

“The fire-retardency plus the green credentials certainly have us interested,” adds Onward Display directors Michael Brighty and Luke Roberts, also at the Data Image event. “It seems a really good option and suited to our Arizona printers and Zund cutters.”

Alden points out that Swedboard is working with various kit manufacturers on certification. “And we work actively with our customers to understand their needs and to inspire them. Plus, we can also help our customers to talk with big brand about our innovative and environmentally friendly materials, to help them get more jobs,” concludes Andersson. What’s not to like?

“**GRETA THUNBERG**  
IS TELLING US  
ALL TO BE MORE  
SUSTAINABLE, AND  
WE AGREE.”

## A CHARITY CASE



Quarmby swaps PVC Foamex for greener Triaprint at Crufts

Quarmby Colour recently turned to a greener alternative to PVC foamex for a job in support of the charity ‘Say No To Dogmeat’.

“As a family company with pet loving directors and employees we were shocked to hear about the cruelty and suffering taking place and now coming to light,” says he PSPs director, Damian Quarmby. “As specialists within the display exhibition graphics industry the least we could do to support the charity was to offer our services for the recent 2020 Crufts Exhibition.

“Originally the shopping list and spec for the stand was multi-use rigid 5mm PVC foamex panels. Having recently seen and tested a new greener alternative to foam PVC - Triaprint from Antalis - there unfolded an opportunity to switch the graphics panels from the original spec to 5.6mm Triaprint. Momentum gathered and Antalis after hearing about the charity and proposal kindly donated the Triaprint material for their stand free of charge!”

Quarmby adds: “Triaprint not only provided a greener solution but a better solution than traditional foam PVC for this application. It’s stronger, lighter and less prone to shattering externally. The panels will be used for a number of events after Crufts finishes and the charity can rest assure that at the end of graphic life they can be re-cycled.

“Directly printed on our new EFI Vutek H5 cool cure LED printer we feel that we are providing a more sustainable solution. Our sights and efforts are now firmly set on converting existing customers who repeatedly use PVC foamex to the Triaprint alternative. To echo others mentioned in Image Reports, it’s time PSP providers to start pushing harder!”





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# THINKBIGGER: PRIZE PROMISE

**“We will help winners work out where and how to distribute information on their win to make the most noise and create a buzz around the creativity of large-format print projects.” That’s the promise of Dan Tyler, managing director of Vism and instigator of the new UK Graphic Awards running in association with Fespa UK this year, the aim of which is to celebrate those companies delivering the most impactful jobs and, crucially, to get the work noticed by those who really matter - customers.**

“Creativity is the focus of these awards - not the technical aspects of the nominated projects but the impact they make on the market they’re meant for,” Tyler explains. “We are looking for companies to nominate their most impactful work - the jobs that really catch people’s attention. We’ll then help the winners make noise in the markets they serve.”

Tyler, fed-up with the lack of large-format print specific awards schemes available in the UK, specifically approached Fespa UK association to back his idea “because it’s the leading body for the sector and the awards will carry more weight in the industries/markets where winners want to show they are doing something of real merit if it is backed by them,” he says.

Naming the scheme the UK Graphic Awards was a carefully considered choice too. “It is about focussing on the graphic and creative aspect of the jobs, says Tyler, a one-time recruiter for large-format PSPs.

“One of my biggest challenges as a recruiter was that this industry can be so inward looking. There’s a need to expand knowledge of, and knowledge into, the vertical markets it serves. There’s a real need for print companies to get their best options in front of those who may buy from them.” And it’s a lot to do with that recruitment history that the marketing campaign around the UK Graphic Awards is so social media centric.

“I know that those in markets like retail design and exhibitions are very heavily involved in social media. LinkedIn especially. That’s why we are focussing so much on social platforms, LinkedIn in particular,” says Tyler. “That is a valuable education tool - one where PSPs can show off what print can do. The awards will feed the buzz.”

This feeding programme begins as soon as a PSP has submitted an entry. The organiser will send the nominee an email making them aware of the various hashtags associated with the awards - #ukgraphicawards, #ukga2020, #bebold - and encourage them to shout about being involved. When the shortlist is announced in the summer, the awards team will also use social media as well as its website and traditional press release routes to flag up the projects. That will of course happen again when the winners are announced, but as Tyler points out, the organisers will also help the winning PSPs pull together bespoke marketing surrounding their achievement.

“We want the winners to get real value out of these awards,” says Tyler. “We also want to be able to say in 2021, ‘look what an impact winning an award mean to last year’s winners’. And that’s about getting their creativity in front of customers.”

IF YOU ARE A WINNER IN THE NEW UK GRAPHIC AWARDS THIS YEAR, THE ORGANISERS WILL HELP YOU GET YOURSELF NOTICED - AND ENSURE POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS UNDERSTAND THE POSSIBILITIES OF WIDE-FORMAT PRINT.

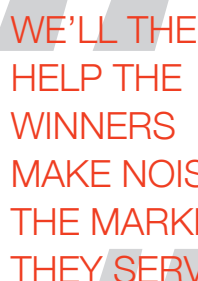



#### SO YOU WANT TO ENTER:

Nominations are sought for the categories set out below for projects undertaken between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020. The closing date is 3 July. The shortlist will be announced in the last week of July and presentations made at a gala event 15 September 2020 at Oulton Hall in Leeds following the associated Thrive in Print conference.

The categories are:

- Retail Graphics Project of the Year
- Event and Exhibition Graphics Project of the Year
- Museums and Galleries Graphics Project of the Year
- Branded Interiors Project of the Year
- Leisure and Hospitality Graphics Project of the Year
- Graphics Roll-Out of the Year
- Best In Show
- The Green Award (Sustainability and Environmental Achievement)
- The Innovation Award
- The Rising Star Award
- Large Format Print Company of the Year (under 30 employees)
- Large Format Print Company of the Year (30+ employees)



WE’LL THEN  
HELP THE  
WINNERS  
MAKE NOISE IN  
THE MARKETS  
THEY SERVE.



**a. Touching story**

Italian-based ABS group has introduced dynamic interactive lightboxes that change according to the way the user touches the covering fabric. The products - which ABS said fits in perfectly with 'phygital' display proposals - are the result of the fusion of aluminium and fabric structures and sensor technology. Users/'viewers' can modify the animations by touching the display surfaces. The backlighting is created with LED modules placed inside the structures and programmable according to the visual effects sought and according to the graphics on the fabric. The programming of the animations can also be managed remotely.

**b. Thinking outside the boxes**

Leach, has produced a gigantic mural in New York as part of its work with Brooklyn Museum. Situated in Domino Park, Williamsburg, the 24m tall x 16m wide canvas has been created to honour the 20-year career of French photographer JR, a mysterious figure who started out as a teenage graffiti artist on the streets of Paris. The installation - which features images of more than 1,000 of the city's residents, portrayed in JR's trademark monochrome - coincides with the seven-month 'JR: Chronicles' open to visitors at Brooklyn Museum until 3 May 2020.

**c. Food for thought**

The new Diablo's Cantina restaurant at The Mirage hotel and casino complex in Las Vegas features Mexican-inspired fiery skeleton design wall murals printed by Screaming Images.

**d. Sweet**

A Fujifilm Acuity B1 inkjet printer has been used on a short-run of hot chocolate tins for a promotion at the iconic Fortnum and Mason London store. A demo Acuity at Fujifilm's Broadstairs facility was used to print the metal sheets required for the hot chocolate tins before can maker William Say manufactured them using solar power at its Bermondsey factory.

**e. All to play for**

Animation fans can now eat, sleep, play and swim surrounded by their favourite characters at the Cartoon Network Hotel in Pennsylvania, USA, where Graphik Masters worked with amusement park brand Dutch Wonderland to produce graphics for the walls and windows, both indoors and out. In total, the project spans 155 standard hotel rooms and four master suites, plus retail, dining and lobby areas.

**f. In newsprint**

Grant Graphics has completed a newspaper-themed wall graphics project for a new cafe and craft brewery housed in the former offices for a Saratogian newspaper.

**g. Off the wall...**

...and onto the ceiling with graphics produced by Canadian company Branded Wraps for the Sixteen Mile Sports Complex in Oakville, Ontario.







b.



c.



d.



f.



e.



g.



# DIGGING BELOW THE SURFACE WITH **INDUSTRY MOLE**

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**“It’s quiet. Too quiet.” That stock phrase from the Westerns my dad binge-watched - before the term had been invented - sprang to mind when I contemplated the speed with which the coronavirus was emptying my diary. Obviously, there’s the trade shows. More than 440 of them have been cancelled or postponed globally, including Fespa, which I had pencilled in as the perfect excuse to visit Madrid in springtime and Sign UK, which I hadn’t pencilled in at all. Then there’s the meetings which metamorphosed into telephone calls which later metamorphosed into nothing at all. I’m not accusing people of panicking - pandemics are not the time for macho posturing - it’s that they are completely distracted by the uncertainty of it all.**

A lot of my fellow printers blame the media for whipping up hysteria - and then spend half an hour describing precisely how bad things can get. I’ve not met anybody who thinks the virus is a hoax although the tattooed barman at my local insists it was a population control scheme by the Chinese government that got out of hand. Quite a few people have told me

it’s no worse than the flu which is obviously rubbish because it’s what Donald Trump believes. What the coronavirus has shown is that, as a species, we are absolutely hopeless at coping with uncertainty and just as bad at understanding probability.

The American science writer Michael Shermer calls our failure to grasp probability “folk numeracy”, describing it as “our natural tendency to misperceive and miscalculate probabilities, to think anecdotally instead of statistically and to focus on and remember short-term trends and small-number runs.” With the coronavirus, the short-term trends vary wildly - not just in terms of the number of cases but in its impact on the world’s stock markets - and, with the daily infection count, we are encouraged to dwell on small-number runs. It doesn’t help that the information we have is incomplete - we are often told how many people have caught the coronavirus and how many people have died from it but not how many have recovered from it.

All of which makes it a) very hard for us to get on with business as usual and b) imperative that we try to do so.

EVENTS	SIGN AND DIGITAL 2020	DRUPA 2020	THRIVE IN PRINT	THE PRINT SHOW
	<b>When?</b> 28 - 30 April, 2020	<b>When?</b> 16 - 26 June, 2020	<b>When?</b> 15 September, 2020	<b>When?</b> 27 - 29 September, 2020
	<b>Where?</b> NEC, Birmingham	<b>Where?</b> Düsseldorf Messe, Germany	<b>Where?</b> Oulton Hall, Leeds	<b>Where?</b> NEC, Birmingham
	<b>Cost?</b> Various packages – go to <a href="https://ukgraphicawards.com/tickets/">https://ukgraphicawards.com/tickets/</a>	<b>Cost?</b> TBA	<b>Who will be there?</b> This is a new event organised by Fespa UK and Vism MD Dan Tyler. The conference is aimed at owners/senior managers of wide-format PSPs, with talks on how to exploit business, technical and marketing opportunities. He new UK Graphic Awards presentations will take place the same evening.	<b>Who will be there?</b> The organiser puts the onus on this being a UK specific show that doesn’t over-extend itself, so best check out the exhibitor list closer to the time - there’s usually a broad range of manufacturers and suppliers exhibiting.
	<b>Who will be there?</b> Too early to talk about the exhibitor line-up, and as it is sandwiched between Fespa Global and Drupa you may not see the same amount of large-format exhibitors as in other years	<b>Who will be there?</b> Good question! We need to wait until closer to the event to see which companies of relevance to large-format will be exhibiting. It’s likely that those who do so will have already launched any new products at the preceding Fespa Global 2020	<b>Should you go?</b> Definitely worth attending.	<b>Should you go?</b> If you want to see a smattering of all different types of print wares in one easy reach location.
<b>Should you go?</b> Given this is the UK show most orientated towards this sector - though the plans are to broaden its appeal - it’s probably still worth a look-see	<b>Should you go?</b> Depends what you want from attending. If you want to see new large-format kit and you’ve attended Fespa Global 2020, you’ll probably not see many more introductions. If you want to see how the industry as a whole is progressing, then it’s a big tick			
<b>Rating</b> 7/10	<b>Rating</b> 9/10	<b>Rating</b> 9/10	<b>Rating</b> 5/10	

# OVER TO YOU...

**SCOTT MEADER**, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, SUSTAINAPRINT  
WWW.SUSTAINAPRINT.CO.UK

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

Putting aside the impending economic impact from the coronavirus, particularly in the events space, latex printing technology has had a really positive impact on our processes and printing capabilities.

## Where do you see the greatest wide-format opportunities?

Experiential marketing. There is a real interest in wider format being used to enhance experiences, with many one-off projects.

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

We are exploring an interface to take clients step-by-step through the artwork process, particularly what needs to happen with artwork files to make them print ready and offer the best quality print.

## Your favourite bit of kit is..?

A great bit of kit is a dual guage knife - simple but amazing. It takes a slither of the release liner of any digital print and enables you to position the prints perfectly before installing the complete sheet.

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

People are central to your success - recognising your own strengths and weaknesses helps to build the right team around you, and a happy team is often the most creative, successful team.

## What are you most proud of achieving?

Our continuity of service. We have been delivering eye catching graphics over many years now. We have taken the company forward by embracing new technology and exploring more environmentally friendly printing offers for our clients.

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

There is a danger of being left behind with the sustainability agenda. There have been some great advances in media, such as a printable fabric made from recycled water bottles, but we still have a long way to go. We need to think differently. It's not okay to think that just because a banner material is PVC-free it makes it sustainable. Material suppliers need to move quickly in this arena to develop more sustainable printing products that our clients expect and demand.



## VITAL STATISTICS

THE LATEST PRINTING OUTLOOK SURVEY FROM THE BPIF REVEALS THE UK PRINTING SECTOR EXPERIENCED A MARGINALLY BETTER THAN EXPECTED FOURTH QUARTER OF 2019. FOLLOWING A SUBDUED FORECAST FOR THE PERIOD BOTH OUTPUT AND ORDERS JUST OUTPERFORMED EXPECTATIONS. ORDERS AND OUTPUT WERE EXPECTED TO RECOVER FURTHER IN Q1 2020.

"THE UK PRINTING INDUSTRY IS NOT ALONE IN HAVING HAD A DIFFICULT 2019. HOWEVER, THE LATEST PRINTING OUTLOOK SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS THAT 2020 STARTED WITH A BIT MORE CERTAINTY AND SOME SIGNS OF RETURNING CONFIDENCE. ORDERS, OUTPUT AND CONFIDENCE ARE ALL FORECAST TO IMPROVE. NOTABLY, THE BREXIT LANDSCAPE HAS CHANGED AND SENTIMENT HAS BECOME MUCH LESS NEGATIVE. IT IS ALSO VERY ENCOURAGING TO SEE THAT THE PRINTING INDUSTRY HAS POSITIVE INVESTMENT INTENTIONS FOR 2020," SAID BPIF CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CHARLES JARROLD.

### 34%

of printers polled increased output levels in the fourth quarter of 2019.

### 39%

of companies surveyed forecast output growth would increase in Q1 2020. 37% predicted that they would be able to hold output levels steady, and 24% expected output levels to fall.

### 75%

of respondents said maintaining a reliable and secure supply chain was their key concern.

### 40%

of respondents said general cost inflation was an issue.

### 26%

said access to skilled labour was a problem.

# Taking the RAP

IS THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AGAINST BILLBOARD ADVERTISING GAINING MOMENTUM – AND WILL YOU BE IMPACTED BY THE UPRISING?

**Revolutions don't always start in the obvious places. Six years ago, a global rebellion against outdoor advertising was ignited in the affluent French city of Grenoble, when new Green Party mayor Éric Piolle cancelled the council's contract for 326 outdoor advertisements, including 64 large billboards. Since then, 29 groups belonging to a movement known as Resistance to Advertising Aggression (the French acronym is RAP) have sprung up across France.**

RAP argues that billboards spoil the view, damage the environment and are bad for the viewing public who become depressed by their inability to buy luxuries they don't need. In a typically French way, one protester said: "Advertising is like an iceberg, the biggest impact is below the surface. Adverts colonise our imagination."

That resistance is being echoed elsewhere. In 2008, Gilberto Kassab, then the mayor of Sao Paolo, banned outdoor advertising on the grounds that it was a form of "visual pollution". Within a year, 15,000 billboards had been taken down across South America's largest megacity. Yet five years after the ban was passed, outdoor advertising began to creep back into Sao Paolo.

Elsewhere, billboards are banned completely in four American states famed for their outstanding natural beauty: Alaska, Hawaii, Maine and Vermont. They are taxed in Toronto and largely absent from the Australian capital Canberra under a ban first passed in 1927. In 2017, after a public consultation, the city decided not to relax the ban. In the UK, the Adblock campaign is calling for restrictions or outright bans and plans for new digital billboards in Bristol are meeting with fierce local opposition.

The British trade association, the Outdoor Media Centre, told 'The Guardian' that: "People love outdoor media because of the way it entertains and amuses, because it brings a smile to the dreariest of Tube journeys between Cockfosters and Piccadilly." The evidence for such a claim is far from conclusive and, with the exponential increase in digital billboards, such amusement has been qualified by concern over what these ads are doing to the environment. It's not just the carbon they emit when they are in place, it is the fact that recycling them remains a challenge.

IN THE UK,  
THE ADBLOCK  
CAMPAIGN IS  
CALLING FOR  
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OR OUTRIGHT  
BANS.

The environmental debate could exert more influence in future, especially as Coca Cola, McDonald's, Sainsbury's and Unilever, four of the biggest outdoor advertisers in the UK, have all made ambitious public pledges about their carbon footprint.

There is also a vocal minority of the public who share advertising legend David Ogilvy's belief that: "Man is at his vilest when he erects a billboard." He once threatened that, in retirement, he would found a "secret society of masked vigilantes who will travel the world on silent motorcycles, chopping down posters at the dark of the moon." For many ordinary people, billboards are a psychological issue, not an aesthetic one. As one campaigner in Lille complained: "How can you be happy if you're constantly being reminded of what you don't have? Advertising breaks your spirit."

Ogilvy never quite got his vigilantes together but if they had chopped posters down would they have improved the view? In Sao Paolo, some citizens felt that all the culling of billboards achieved was to make the Brazilian metropolis look greyer, sadder and more dominated by concrete.

The issue is also complicated by the fact that, particularly in the UK, local councils have become increasingly reliant on outdoor advertising revenue to offset the shrinkage in funds from central government. Advertising bible 'Campaign' estimates that outdoor ads raise £400m a year for communities across the UK chiefly in rents to councils and transport authorities. This is why, for example, the Barking and Dagenham council, where Labour has all 51 seats, has outlined an ambitious new strategy to generate more income from advertising in general and outdoor advertising in particular.

Councils need money but they also need the community they are elected to serve to feel good about itself. One way of ameliorating public pressure for bans or tougher regulations is for the industry to clean up its act a bit - stop erecting billboards without permission, consider the aesthetic impact on a skyline and also ask itself if the stampede to digital billboards is really in the long-term interest of the industry - and the planet. If they don't do any of that, they will only have themselves to blame when the regulators step in.





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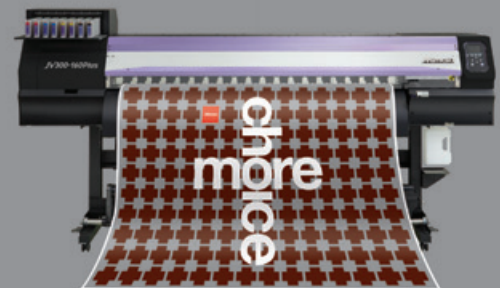
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