

sign

Anniversary issue 2015 - No.146

directions

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ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

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MOVING ON - PASTURES NEW FOR SOYANG EUROPE

A BLUEPRINT FOR DIVERSITY - THE PRINT SHOW

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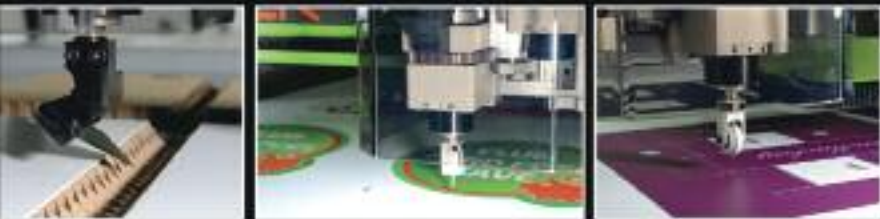
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Sign Directions Hotline:

If you would like the contact details of any of the companies featured in this issue of Sign Directions, please ring **Tel: 01636 819375** for full company information, or alternatively, e-mail signdirections@btconnect.com for a response by return.

Coming Next:

The next issue of Sign Directions will be the October/November issue, which will cover the British Sign Industry Awards and feature Sign and Lighting systems



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Introduction

setting the scene

The publication of this magazine marks an important milestone in the history of Sign Directions – the first-ever issue was published 20 years ago this month and – I have to be honest here – I never, not even in my wildest dreams, expected it to last this long.

This is largely because it was conceived in a spirit of petty spite – something I have since come to realise is a very effective, but not always a particularly efficient, motivator. I had spent the previous five years working on the now defunct Signs magazine and recognising that the company that published it was about to undergo a period of seismic change, which would jeopardise both the magazine's future and, more importantly, my role as its editor, I offered to buy it. This was a big mistake! Suddenly, something that had previously been considered untenable gained a mysterious new value. My offer was declined. Incensed with rage, I flounced off – I give excellent flounce when the occasion demands it – to start a rival publication.

Fuelled with a lethal combination of reckless abandon and steely determination that was entirely new to me then and completely alien to me now, I set about persuading both Signs' Advertising Manager, Dawn Seager and its Designer, Janet Aslan, to join me in this mad venture, before gaily promising the company that had previously printed Signs that they could print the new magazine if they let us work at their HQ. Somehow, I also enticed my bank manager – there were such people then – into providing us with a company bank account, complete with a £5000

overdraft. It helped that she was a young woman and rather tickled by idea of 'sisters doing it for themselves', although obviously, in return for this largesse I had to offer the family home as security - It's greatly to my husband's credit that he agreed to this - in addition to the requisite pound of flesh and my life's blood.

Frankly, I think everyone was so terrified by the maniacal glint in my eye that they were simply panicked into doing to whatever I asked, however barmy it sounded. Godamit, sometimes I even frightened myself!

Once we were safely ensconced in the printers' storeroom, we started to stealthily canvass Signs' advertisers and fortunately, most of them agreed to support our inaugural issue. We spent days squabbling over the new magazine's title – my plan hadn't extended as far as giving it a name – and eventually, by process of elimination, decided that Sign Directions would do as well as anything. Happily, at this point and without any effort at all from me, a mailing list of some 13,000 names miraculously turned up on my desk. As this was something else to which I had given little consideration, I have no idea what we would have done otherwise.

Janet and I then spent our nights in the empty print factory using its computers to produce the magazine, while Dawn set about securing the promised advertising revenue. Somehow, everything came together and when, finally, we were presented with the first copy of Sign Directions, fresh off the press, I think we all burst into tears. Partly these were tears of sheer relief – we'd actually done it! – but they were also due to the fact that we now had to pack the magazines ready for posting. This involved sticking labels onto plastic bags, before stuffing the magazines into them, together with inserts, and then placing them into the designated mailbags, which in turn, we had to drag down two flights of stairs to the waiting mail van. If you've never seen 6,000 odd magazines in one place, at one time, let me assure you that the gargantuan pile never seems to get any smaller, no matter how much packing you do. In all, it took two and half backbreaking days. We then enjoyed a day's respite before we embarked on the October magazine and the whole process began again.

During the two years or more that it took to get the magazine properly established, I think we all worked harder than we had ever worked in our lives before, but despite that, it was all the most terrific fun and the fact that our former employer was absolutely furious with us was, of course, the icing on the cake!

Since then, Sign Directions has taken on a life of its own, been published by three different companies and seen much in the way of staff comings and goings. Suffice it to say though, that everyone who has been involved with the magazine over the last 20 years has left their mark in one way or another. I like to think that it has evolved in precisely the same way as the industry itself and that it will continue to do so, if not for the next 20 years, then certainly for as long as it is needed.

The one thing we certainly need, are all the companies that have so generously supported us over the years, which is why we have invited some of them to share their views on how the industry has changed over the last two decades and how they think it might continue to evolve in the future. You can read about their experiences and predictions on pages 40/47.

One company that has certainly embraced rapid change is Soyang Europe, whose growth has more than matched the increasing demand for its innovative substrates, to the extent that last year, it was forced to expand into new larger premises. Learn all about it on pages 26/27.

Also take some time to read about the two important industry events due to take place during October. The first is the second edition of the BSGA British Sign Awards. Although the winners have already been selected, everyone is welcome to attend the gala luncheon and presentation ceremony that will take place on Tuesday 13th October at The East Midlands Conference Centre. For a sneak preview of what the day will offer, together with details on how to acquire a ticket to this event, visit page 18.

The second new event in the offering is the inaugural edition of The Print Show, which will take place over three days at Birmingham's NEC on 13th-15th October. Especially designed to attract and interest companies involved in all aspects of printing, the show, which is organised by Link Exhibitions, is a must attend event for any company looking to further diversify its current printing operations. We provide a preview on pages 36/37.

Elsewhere, you'll find all of our regular news sections, including Supplier Spotlight on page 18, where we introduce the latest industry supplier, plus Mark Godden's take on 'Many Happy Returns' on page 50.

And if you are wondering what form our anniversary shindig took, rather than merely celebrating the occasion with champagne – although we did crack the odd bottle or six - we also decided to mark the occasion with something much more radical too and moved offices! We are now cosily settled in our new berth in a splendid Georgian building in the Nottinghamshire market town of Southwell. Although our e-mail address, signdirections@btconnect.com remains the same, our telephone number has changed to 01636 819375, while you can find our new address details set out below.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to give heartfelt thanks to all of the companies that have provided the revenue that has helped us to keep going, everyone who has worked on, with and for the magazine, including the current team, Mike, Mark, Hina and James, and, most especially, you, for continuing to read it for all of this time. Truly, my gratitude knows no bounds!



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Gain super powers at FESPA!



Returning to Amsterdam's RAI, from 8th-11th March 2016, where it will celebrate its tenth

anniversary, FESPA Digital 2016 will occupy seven halls, covering 42,000 sqm.

This year's multi-channel campaign

features three superheroes, each of which embodies one of the show's key technologies, in the form of Digiman (digital printing), Textilewoman (textile printing) and ESEman (signage).

The FESPA Digital 2016 visitor campaign centres around the event website (www.fespadigital.com) where visitors can keep up to date with the latest show news and also access blogs from Digiman, Textilewoman and

ESEman discussing the latest industry trends and themes. Also on the website will be a full list of show features, as well as the opportunity to register.

European Sign Expo will once again take place alongside FESPA Digital 2016, showcasing innovations in non-printed signage and the newly named FESPA Textile will offer visitors a hall dedicated to digital textile printing,

including garment decoration, soft signage and interior textiles.

Following its successful launch at last year's FESPA Global Expo, Printerior will have its own space where it will highlight creative, real-life interior applications that can be achieved with digital printing. ■



Trophex 2016 is only six months away!



It may still be six months away, but it's never too early to start preparing for the next Trophex exhibition, which will take place at the NEC Pavilion in Birmingham on 17th-18th January, 2016.

The only UK show that is specifically dedicated to the trophy, awards, engraving and personalisation sectors, Trophex will feature both new and returning exhibitors, which between them represent all areas of

the industry, including trophies, engraving, lasers, sublimation equipment and consumables, heat transfer presses, signs, doming, labels, crystal and glass.

Returning for 2016 will be the popular Open Forum Seminars, which will take place during the full course of the show, with the aim of providing visitors with technical information and advice on a variety of industry related topics.

Another popular returning feature will be the Knowledge Centre, which will enable visitors to access advice, support and information from a team of industry experts, before catching up with friends and colleagues in the relaxed and informal environment provided by the Networking Café/Bar.

In addition, visitors will be invited to participate in the Trophex Awards, where they will be asked to vote for their favourite products. ■



Appointments



Papergraphics has boosted its management team with the appointment of

Michelle Dellow, who will be joining the company as Product Manager.

In her new role, Michelle, who brings a wealth of expertise in product management gained at Muraspec Wallcoverings, where she was responsible for co-ordinating products across Europe and the Middle East, will oversee the development and design of innovations that will enable customers to expand into a variety of new markets.

Xaar has appointed **Keith Smith** to



the new role of Director of Advanced Manufacturing.

Keith, who is based in the US and reports directly to Xaar CEO Doug Edwards, is now responsible for identifying and developing strategic advanced manufacturing opportunities and partnerships outside Xaar's established markets. He joins Xaar from Chinese touch sensor manufacturer Token ITO, and has 16 years' experience in direct and channel sales management and selling B2B solutions to Fortune 500 companies. His appointment marks his return to Xaar, where he was previously Sales Manager for North and South America from 2002-05.



Following **Brett Newman's** recent promotion to the role of Managing Director, **Roland**

DG has appointed **Darren Penny** as the company's new Head of Sales.

Having clocked up 25 years of industry and sales related experience, Darren previously held a variety of management roles at Paperlinx, most recently serving as General Manager for the south west. In his new role he will be responsible for Roland DG's entire product portfolio as well as its RolandCare scheme, its Creative Centre and the Roland DG Academy.



Hybrid Services has appointed **Stephen Woodall** to the role of National Sales Manager – Textile and Apparel, thus completing its sales management team across its core product ranges. Stephen now joins John de la Roche, Hybrid's National Sales Manager for Sign & Graphics and Stuart Cole, the company's National Sales Manager for Industrial Products.

Stephen, who is already familiar with Mimaki's textile line-up, brings with him a wealth of knowledge in both sales management and the textile industry and his in-depth knowledge of textile inks, their applications and the various printing techniques makes him the ideal candidate to further expand Hybrid's growth in the textile printing sector. ■

Gala hits the big time

Rotherham based print specialist, Gala Graphics, which is a subsidiary of the UK's largest marquee and gazebo distributor, Gala Tent, recently secured a major vehicle branding contract with Virgin Media.



Having started life as Gala Tent's in-house print department, when it specialised in dye-sublimation printing on to marquees and gazebos, Gala Graphics took on its own identity in 2014, when it also became a fully autonomous business in its own right and extended its repertoire to include the production of everything from

leaflets to signage.

Due to its exceptional growth over the past 12 months, during which time it has quadrupled in size, the company is planning to move into larger premises near its existing site in Rotherham. ■

Get insurance online

SignElite, which offers insurance packages that are specifically tailored to suit the needs of the sign and graphics sectors, has now launched its new online insurance offering for self-employed sign installers, contractors and erectors.



for companies seeking Public and Employers' Liability only. This cover can be purchased via the SignElite website, and, with premiums beginning at just £70.00 it is highly cost effective as well as easy to access - users can obtain full policy documentation in less than 10 minutes! ■

The policy, which comes with a choice of indemnity levels of £2,000,000 or £5,000,000, is ideal

Fate takes a hand!

Roland DG has announced that Sticky Media, a diverse advertising, sign and graphics provider based in Warwickshire, is the lucky winner of the Sign & Digital UK visitor prize draw.



Commenting on its prize of a tailor made print package, comprising a Lightbar RF-640 printer and a full set of inks, together with a Partner Solution Warranty, Sticky Media's Managing Director, Charlie Bukovets said: "We actually attended Sign & Digital UK to investigate new printing technology, so it feels as if fate took a hand! The low running cost of

the Lightbar RF-640 makes it the ideal machine for the high volume of automotive graphics that we habitually produce and we can't wait for the installation date!" ■



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Sign & Digital UK 2016 goes live!



Following a highly successful show earlier this year, Sign & Digital UK has now launched its new look website to coincide with the promotional campaign for the 2016 version of the event, which is scheduled to take place on 19th-21st April, 2016 in Halls 17-18 at Birmingham's NEC.

Designed by the Eastbourne-based design agency Ingenious Design, which has used new colours and branding to reflect the innovative nature of the show, the website provides the perfect shop window for an event that has been running for nearly 30 years.

Commenting on the new site, Jane Lewis, Marketing Manager for Sign & Digital UK, explained: "As the premier

event for the sign, display solutions and digital printing communities, Sign & Digital UK provides the industry with the chance to view and purchase the latest products and services, while also enjoying an excellent networking opportunity, thus all aspects of our 2016 marketing campaign are designed to reflect the diversity and breadth of the exhibitors who will be participating at the show."

With stand sales steaming ahead, much of the floor space is already filled, with more than 70 exhibitors having already confirmed their attendance. Hence, the 2016 show is currently on track to expand once again, with Jane Lewis confirming that the Sign & Digital UK team is looking forward to building on the exhibition's long history of growth. ■

Every picture tells a story

Display specialist Octink has recently worked with London's Air Ambulance to transform its headquarters near Bank as it campaigns for Londoners to donate towards a second emergency medical helicopter for the city.



Designed by Octink's in-house creative team, the eye-catching graphics, which adorn the shop front style windows, feature a call to action specifically arranged to attract the attention of passers-by and to create as much impact as possible. The graphics are printed on Contra Vision see through material that creates a vibrant advertisement from the outside, but also enables people inside the office to see out, while maintaining their privacy. The graphics will be continuously updated during the campaign and their progress can be

followed at #YourHelicopter.

In its largest ever fundraising drive, London's Air Ambulance is hoping to raise £6 million, of which £2 million is still needed, to acquire and sustain a second helicopter and extend its daylight flying hours for five years. **The charity is urging the 10 million people who live, work and holiday in the capital to donate at yourhelicopter.london or text HELICOPTER to 70800 to donate £5.** ■

showtime

DIARY DATES FOR 2015

The Print Show 2015

13th - 15th October

NEC, Birmingham

Organiser: Link Exhibitions

Tel: 0117 980 5049

e-mail: Page@theprintshow.co.uk

www.theprintshow.co.uk

Viscom Italia 2015

15th - 17th October

Fieramilano, Milan

Organiser: Reed Exhibitions Italia

Tel: +39 02 435 170.1

e-mail: viscomitalia@reedexpo.it

www.viscomitalia.it

Viscom Dusseldorf 2015

4th - 6th November

Messe Dusseldorf

Organiser: Reed Expo Germany

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info@viscom-messe.com

www.viscom-messe.com

InPrint 2015

10th - 12th November

Messe Munich

Organiser: FM Brooks

Tel: 01372 370 892

e-mail: stefanie.thiele@mackbrooks.com

www.inprintshow.com

If you would like your event to feature on this page, please send full information via e-mail to Val Hirst at signdirections@btconnect.com

Allen Signs expands

Following the acquisition of the printing division of Double Red, Allen Signs, which has offices in Lincoln and Nottingham, has also doubled the size of its premises.



David Allen of Allen Signs (left) with James Wright (right)

Formerly owned by Lincoln-based photographer James Wright, Double Red will in future operate independently under the slightly modified name of Double Red Print and trade from Allen Signs' newly extended premises in North Hykeham that includes an expanded workshop and a dedicated vehicle livery area.

At the same time, Allen Signs has also made a complementary investment in new digital printing equipment, having recently purchased a 2.5m wide Mimaki printer and two Canon printers that use environmentally-friendly water-based inks. ■

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new projects



◀ **3M Commercial Graphics**, working in conjunction with graphic design specialist Surface View and staff at **Bracknell's Garth Hill College**, has installed a selection of pillar wraps and floor graphics to create designs that work both individually and

collectively to present aspirational messages that express the college's values and the experiences of the students.

Extraordinary, colourful and intricate artwork was designed, printed on to hard-wearing 3M Scotchcal Graphic Film and



applied to the Inner Link, a large covered space between the college's main buildings that provided plenty of opportunity to create a more inspiring environment. A particularly

innovative design feature was a life-sized model of Doctor Who's Tardis, which pupils can enter and record feedback on teaching and learning in a video diary.

In selecting suitable materials for each design element, vinyl was considered to be the ideal choice for a number of reasons. The pillar wraps that depicted themes such as meadow flowers and whirlpool bubbles and geometrical shapes containing intricate images were particularly suited to and precisely configured for printed vinyl applications. 3M Scotchcal Graphic Film was the ideal choice for the floor graphics, due to both its hardwearing properties and the fact that it can be applied directly to brick surfaces. For enhanced safety, the 3M film also incorporated a non-slip laminated surface. ■



◀ **W&Co** has recently supplied freestanding digital signage screens to the luxury car brand **Infiniti** to display advertising videos and media slideshows in car showrooms and shopping malls around the country.

As the luxury vehicle division of Japanese automobile manufacturer Nissan, Infiniti, which is renowned for its well-designed cars ranging from executive saloons through to large 4X4s, required high quality digital screens to promote its brand at its many concessions in an eye-catching and engaging way.

The concessions are styled as pop-up car showrooms that feature

three or more cars on the stand and the screens are located in prime visual locations where they are certain to attract attention.

Infiniti asked W&Co to provide tablet style 55" inch freestanding portable screens that are USB enabled as standard, but which also offer LAN and a WiFi connection so that media can be uploaded via a dedicated advertising login on the company's signage portal. This enables a client to upload content to one or more screens, quickly change image transitions, add video and sound and programme RSS feeds directly to all of the screens running in different locations. ■



▶ Sign and point of sale specialists **Floreeda Fabrications** was recently invited by **Manchester School of Art** to create an invisible exhibit for the **RHS Tatton Flower Show**. Handpicked by BBC presenter Joe Swift, and featuring heavily on BBC2, the invisible shed scooped the top prize in the 'Shed of the Year' competition held at the show.

Having taken on the challenge to transform a plain garden shed into an amazing hideaway and using an original design conceived by Manchester School of Art Outreach Manager, **Clare Knox Bentham**, Floreeda Fabrications used Plaskolite



Mirror supplied by **Perspex Distribution**, to transform the shed into the perfect secret retreat as its mirrored exterior

cunningly reflects its surrounding environment, thus rendering it almost invisible! ■



◀ **Exaprint UK**, the exclusive online print platform for graphic designers, print professionals and marketing agencies, has delivered a 'Living Logo' to digital agency **Journey**, providing its design studio with a unique and striking example of creative signage.

The plant-based logos and signs, created using either moss or reindeer lichen, provide a striking

visual finish that emphasises creativity and originality, something that Journey, as a creative agency, was keen to embrace for both itself and as a potential opportunity for its clients.

In recent months Journey's offices have undergone a comprehensive refurbishment, and the team there was looking to add a suitably stylish finishing touch to the office décor.

Exaprint supplied Journey with a two-metre long logo, in a vibrant lime green colour, which was installed high on the wall of its

design studio. The logo was manufactured in Exaprint's specialist workshop using stabilised reindeer lichen, which needs neither water nor direct sunlight and can last for ten years. Journey opted for the lime green colouring, but Exaprint offers a variety of eight vibrant colours in its lichen range, plus a natural wood moss colour and is able to cut any shape up to 18,000cm2.

The logo was shipped out to the Journey offices, where it was wall mounted in the reception area and continues to delight everyone it greets. ■

Supplier News

Amari Plastics celebrates in style



In celebration of its 40th anniversary, Amari Plastics' hosted a gala party event for its key suppliers at the historic Oakley Court riverside hotel at Windsor at the end of June.

Attended by over 50 guests from leading manufacturers throughout the UK, America, Europe and Asia, the event included a full programme of English-themed entertainment and refreshments, beginning with a sumptuous cream tea and a game of croquet!

The afternoon beer-tasting event that

followed also proved to be a huge hit with many guests, while others enjoyed a round of golf on the hotel's course, a swim in the pool, or a cycle ride along the Thames.

In the evening, a delicious three-course dinner honoured the company's suppliers who were thanked for their support over the last 40 years, and guests were also able to enjoy entertainment provided by talented up-and-coming singer Jo Howard, who took the party into the night.

The following morning, there was trip



along the Thames on two beautiful classic river steamers, one of which was famously used to transport Her Majesty the Queen on her Diamond Jubilee River Pageant in 2012.

Jamie Manifold, Amari Plastics' Supplier Relations Manager, said: "Our relationships with suppliers are a cornerstone of our success – in fact, without them, there would be no Amari Plastics! This party was our way of saying thank you to our suppliers,

many of which have been our partners for decades. For example, Amari Plastics has been a distributor of Bayer products since the formation of the company in 1975!"

This occasion was just one of a whole series of celebrations planned for 2015, with forthcoming events designed to honour and entertain the company's other two key stakeholder groups, namely its customers and employees. ■

Shoot a video for Roland DG

Roland DG has announced details of its new #WithRoland end user competition, which will provide businesses that share their Roland DG success stories through a short video with the opportunity to win a once-in-a-lifetime prize.

This European-wide social media competition, which was launched during September, will invite Roland users to produce and submit a short video (lasting from six to 60 seconds) explaining how Roland DG has helped them to improve their businesses.

When the contest concludes on 26th October 2015, one lucky winner will be rewarded with the grand prize, a once-in-a-lifetime trip for two to Japan, the home of Roland DG,

which will include return flights, private transfers, seven nights in a luxury five star hotel, themed tours around Tokyo and Kyoto plus a trip to the Roland DG HQ.

In addition, Roland DG is also offering five runner-ups the opportunity to win either a weekend trip to a popular European destination, or an iPad Air 2s.

Customers can record their stories on any device, including phones, cameras or laptops before uploading the video file, or submitting a link on YouTube, Instagram or Vine. Roland DG is not looking for video experts and thus the videos will be judged on enthusiasm, creativity and the imaginative stories they tell. What's more, each entrant can submit up to five entries!



Any Roland DG user is eligible to enter the #WithRoland contest. To view terms and conditions, or to submit an online entry form

that includes a link to a video, visit: www.withroland.eu ■



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Supplier News

Improving efficiency with Shuttleworth

Shuttleworth, a leading supplier of management information systems to the sign and print sectors, recently hosted a series of user meetings to highlight how its customers can use their MIS software to improve efficiencies and increase profits.

Working in partnership with ROI360 and Heidelberg, the 2015 User Meetings primarily demonstrated how the use of the latest MIS technology can help businesses by reducing admin time, increasing profitability, creating new sales,

integrating systems and improving overall efficiency.

Attendees were also able to take full advantage of the free advice on offer, and to discover how they could use their software to win new business using the Web to Print Marketing Portal via ROI360 option. In addition, Shuttleworth also provided attendees with a great networking opportunity where they were able to exchange views and ideas on the usage of MIS.

At the same time, attendees were able to catch up with all of the latest



developments, including the CRM App, Mobile Stock, Scheduling updates, the Milestones Job Tracking functionality and the brand new System Search and to discover how 'Shuttleworth Plus', a team of highly specialist software developers, has helped customers to save time and

reduce administration and errors by providing carefully considered bespoke solutions.

The events have proved so popular that anyone who missed out can access them on line at <https://youtu.be/GZ3GEYNqlwo> ■

Onwards and upwards for Applelec

Due to its continued growth over the past five years, during which time it has seen its workflow, turnover and staff numbers all double, Applelec has announced the completion of phase one of its planned multi-million pound expansion programme, following its purchase of the 6.3-acre Wharfedale Business Park at the end of last year.

With the new sign factory now open, the complex will eventually see all of the company's sign, display and lighting divisions conveniently consolidated on one site, together with a warehousing facility.

The sign factory and company stores will be linked by modern, purpose-built offices designed by NJ+Architects, to which all staff will be relocated following the final phase of the work.

Commenting on the move, Ian Drinkwater, Applelec's Managing

Director, said: "After 17 years at our current premises, it's no exaggeration to say that we've outgrown both our offices and factories. We've spent 18 months looking for a new site and the Wharfedale Business Park finally provides us with the space we need to meet our expanding workload, whilst also ensuring that we have room to grow in the future."

He added that he anticipates that the development will be completed within a year.

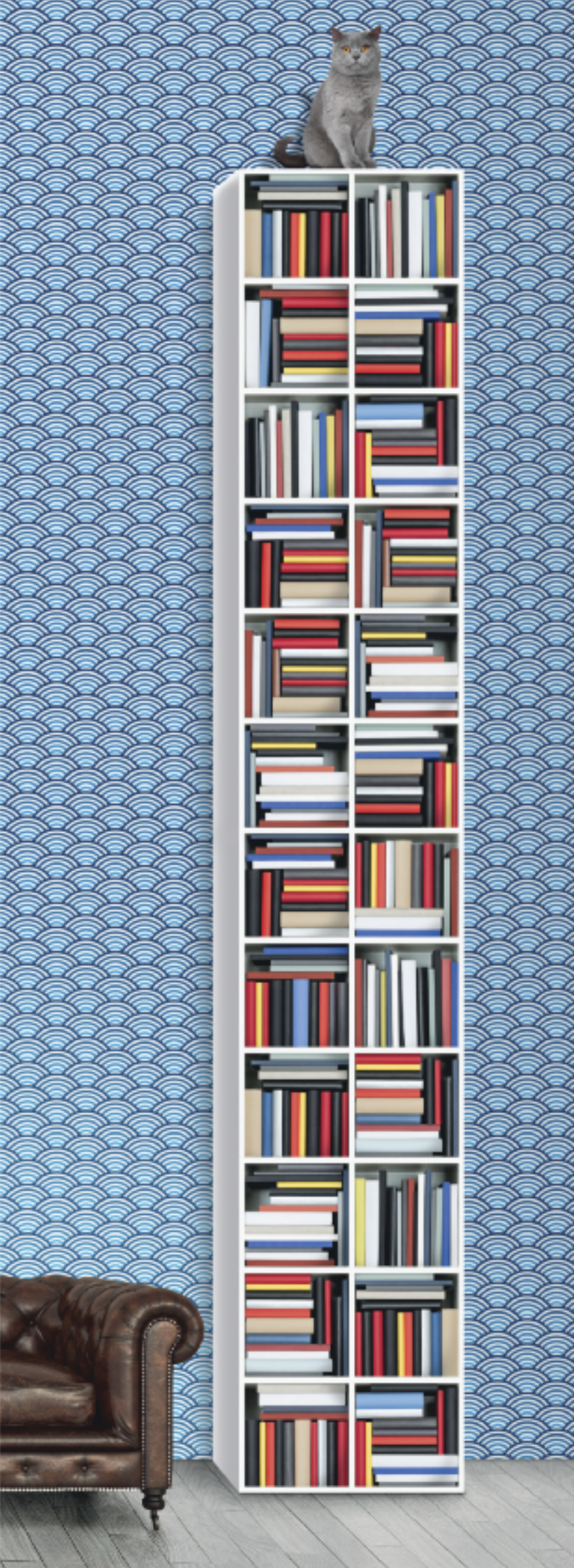
The sign factory, which opened earlier this summer, is now home to 22 members of staff, three CNC machines and Applelec's letter making machinery, including an automated return shaper and laser welder. The layout of the new factory has been especially developed to prioritise workflow based on historic sales and features additional height to accommodate the manufacture of architectural signs, including large



scale fabricated totems and monoliths.

Planning for site accessibility was a priority at Wharfedale, as architectural signage has been a growth area for Applelec during the last year following the appointment of design engineer Matty Bullough. The business park features an off-road entrance with a dedicated goods-in area that helps to streamline transportation to and from the complex and ensures that Applelec can now easily accommodate HGVs with

Gary Middlemiss, Applelec's Operations Manager, reported: "Sign production is already running smoothly at the new factory, with an average of 14 jobs per day leaving the site. We have worked hard to ensure that there has been no disruption to workflow during the moving period and are now planning the second phase of work, which will culminate in the opening of our new lighting factory." ■



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Supplier News

Antalis supports climate change event

Antalis has become an official partner of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) and will supply all of the paper used for printed documents during the course of this major international event.



In keeping with the event's theme and Antalis' commitment to eco-responsibility, the paper used for stationary, posters, handouts and all other documentation, will have a five-star rating under the Green Star System, which means that it will be both be recycled and carry the EU Ecolabel.

The 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change (COP21/CMP11), otherwise known as "Paris 2015", which will be held in France from November 30th to December 11th, will seek to agree the adoption of a binding universal climate agreement to limit the increase in global temperature to below two degrees Celsius.

Hervé Poncin, Chief Operating Officer of Antalis International said: "Antalis and the paper industry in general must lead by example and

continue the efforts already made to reduce their environmental impact through the increased use of cogeneration and renewable energy sources, and further more to promote recycled paper which has a lower impact on the environment."

He added: "Environmental responsibility is an ongoing commitment that needs to be part of the DNA of every company if we are to make a lasting contribution to the preservation of the planet and reduce global warming and Antalis is proud to support COP21 and its ambitious objective." ■

Neschen announces new sales structure

Neschen AG has begun to devolve its direct sales in Germany, the Benelux countries, Italy and Austria, prior to running its end-user business under the Filmolux brand.

Shortly thereafter, these sales will be managed by independent trading companies, whose operations will be modeled on the French Filmolux branch, and trade under the auspices of the Filmolux Group.

The company has stated that In future, it intends to focus more intensively on the development of new products and will thus be introducing a new beta tester program in order to better tailor its offerings to suit the individual requirements of its customers. To that end, it will be further strengthening both its research and development department in Bueckeberg, as well as its intelligence gathering resources.

Henrik Felbier, CEO and Board Spokesman of Neschen explained: "Even after hiving off direct sales, we will still be retaining our close ties with customers. We want to expand our proven strengths and believe that this new modus operandi will deliver positive results for both the Neschen and Filmolux companies, while also enabling them to collaborate closely and keep pace with the level of innovation required to service an industry that is constantly demanding new, better and more precisely customised solutions." ■

XYZ International relocates to Telford

XYZ International has relocated from its former main UK and Continental Europe facility in Wolverhampton to a much larger and more strategically located site on the Telford T54 Business Park. The move was completed by the July target date in what was described as a 'fairly fast-track process'.



President of the Canadian parent company, Alf Zeuner stated that the one million pound investment demonstrated the confidence that XYZ International had in its expanding UK and Continental Europe operations and the predicted future growth in these areas of the company's global activities.

Endorsing this confidence, UK Managing Director Mark Sweeney commented: "Having outgrown the capacity of our premises in Wolverhampton, both in terms of volume of output and the size of the machines being supplied, we recognised the need to relocate to a

larger, more technically advanced and strategically located site. Situated on the T54 Business Park in Telford adjacent to the M54 motorway with links to other major road networks, the new facility will facilitate a 100 per cent increase in our assembly, supply and demonstration capabilities, with the latter now featuring a continually expanding range of machines within a much larger showroom."

The extended demonstration facility can now house up to four of the larger machines in XYZ International's portfolio of XYZ, including the recently launched Trident integrated cutting and finishing solution, Pacer and Z machines, while a radically enlarged workshop also allows for greater machine building, refurbishment and storage capabilities. ■

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The **Summa F Series** is a completely new cutting product line based on 25 years of expertise building the worlds very best cutting plotters.

These advanced engineered flatbed cutting tables are capable of cutting sheet and rigid materials as well as roll stock. Up to three tools can be inserted at one time on the multi-module tool holder. Changing tools is quick and easy. Automatic tool recognition, combined with digital and mechanical depth and / or pressure control, ensures precision cutting on a wide variety of materials.

Multi-function Head

The multi-function head holds up to three modules at one time. The central unit houses a LED pointer and an integrated camera system for fast and accurate contour cutting mark recognition.

Tangential Module

The powerful tangential module offers a vertical force of 12kg and corresponds to a wide range of matching tools. Each of the many and varied tools have a barcode ID that ensures automatic recognition and parameter settings.

Routing Module

The router module is capable of milling most widely used solid boards in the graphic and sign industry, such as hard foam PVC, acrylic and aluminum covered boards. The router also includes a vacuum cleaning kit to take away the chips and dust (vacuum cleaner is an optional accessory).

Drag Module

The drag module is a superfast module for making notations with pens or kiss cutting a wide range of materials with a pressure of 600 grams of down force using a drag knife.

Vacuum Pump and Selector

The vacuum pump with sound absorber holds the material in place during the job while the selector adjusts the vacuum automatically to match the working area.

Conveyor System

This optional conveyor system and media support rollers allow the cutting / creasing / annotating of large lengths of flexible material to large production runs.

Pneumatic Pack

Optional pneumatically-driven media advance clamps hold the material down while pulling it forward in order to work continuously in panels or multiple jobs.



Summa®

The new kid on the block

Sign and print companies that aren't already familiar with the range of materials offered by PPB will be tempted by the scope of both the company's product portfolio and its complementary ancillary services. Val Hirst reports.

When John Proctor first set up Proctor Paper & Board 37 years ago he could never have imagined how the company would grow and develop into the £25m turnover business it is today. However, following the addition of a sister company, in the form of Buchanan Paper & Board in 1994, which was headed up by Jason Buchanan, and the acquisition of A&R Board Sales in 2010, it established a strong position within London and the surrounding regions. And this September the company marked a further milestone in its evolution, when it became a new entity - PPB - Service on Display.

PPB remains an independently owned distributor and converter of point of purchase materials and substrates to the screen and digital large format markets, but it has now further increased the scope of its range to appeal to signmakers and fabricators too.



Explaining this most recent change, the current MD of PPB, Richard Proctor, said:

"We have now integrated three geographically separate businesses under one brand, so that we can supply our sign and display products nationally, while retaining the initials of the original companies in order to both preserve the heritage of the group, and to represent what we are offering - namely, paper, plastics and board!

He added that the letters of the company's new logo have been formed to resemble material going through rollers, in order to reflect the printing process. He observed: "We feel that this design strongly re-



enforces our reputation for converting material and providing bespoke sheeting and re-reeling, especially as our Leeds facility uses state of the art sheeting and rewinding equipment, including a Schelling Saw, to cut industrial plastics and aluminium composites. We will also be making an increased commitment to further improve warehousing and logistics to fully service the UK."

Having originated as a paper and board merchant, PPB has invested heavily to provide the widest range of relevant materials and finishing services for the sign, screen and digital markets, while additional expenditure in machinery and stock will also enable it to provide a high value service. Its new product offering now includes industrial plastics, graphical products, digital display materials, and those signmaking staples, Pripalak and aluminium composites.

Richard Proctor continued: "Our new identity will help to re-enforce our key business principles regarding speed and service, as well as promoting our enhanced selection of press ready display materials, but further, we are also hoping to help create new business opportunities for our customers too."

He added: "With the recent demise of PaperlinX, the landscape of the sign and display sector has radically changed, as its collapse left many highly qualified people and a host of



fantastic products relatively uncatered for. The up side of this is that it has provided us with an ideal opportunity to use our skills and experience to deliver an even better service to a sector that we already know and understand."

To this end, PPB has recently appointed several key industry specialists, including Joanne Smeeton and Glenn Crowley who will be working in its digital sales department, Paul Neale its ACM Manager, Darren Raistrick, who will be looking after industrial plastics and Simon

Balderson, who is the company's Group Product Manager.

Commenting on the new regime, Richard Proctor concluded: " Our existing customers will benefit from the addition of new products, such as Pripalak and aluminium composite to our portfolio, while new customers can enjoy the benefits that come from dealing with a long established company with proven credentials, which is also determined to continue to evolve in line with all of the exciting new developments in the sign and print sectors. ■



Top Tip from Sam

To create a more unique finish, our made to measure I-Sign frames can now be painted in any RAL colour. So if you're struggling to find glamorous gold or racy red display frames, get in touch with Applelec.

Give me a call
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Signs | Display | Lighting | Components

Images: Contour Sign (Ballbridge) and I-Sign Displays (The Bridge Centre)



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Equipment & Material

Tactile textiles

The new range of digitally printable textiles now available from Amari Digital Supplies (ADS), are manufactured in Germany by JM Technical Textiles and carry the Mediatex trademark brand.

All of the textiles are PVC-free and have individual, as well as common design characteristics, to enhance their performance capabilities as well as broadening the range of sign and graphic applications that can be accommodated. Key attributes of the products include, according to their specific applications, certified flame resistance to recognised international standards, low ink consumption for

enhanced cost efficiency, water, stain and tear resistance and lay flat properties when in use. The textiles can also be processed using all of the main ink technologies, including solvent, eco-solvent, UV-curable and Latex and most of the popular printers. Selected products also incorporate a multi-layer polymer coating that imparts a high degree of whiteness to ensure optimum print quality.

Key products in the range include the 200gsm Presto FR for backdrops, trade show graphics and tensioning and framing systems, the 180gsm Light Fabric FR for light banners and trade show graphics and the 140gsm



Illuminance FR that incorporates a special micro-porous polymer coating and can be used for indoor backlit displays, light boxes and tensioning and framing systems.

Completing the Mediatex range are the 290gsm Grey Back Textile and the 370gsm Botticelli Textile that has been developed primarily for canvas prints, but can also be used in tensioning and framing systems. ■

Innotech unveils TEXstyle

Following the successful launch of its new visual identity, Innotech has now added a completely new selection of textile materials to its already extensive inkjet media range.

The Innotech TEXstyle range is

divided into two categories; the TEXstyle Classic series, a core range of popular textiles for everyday use, while the TEXstyle Premium series is more suited to those looking for textiles that meet the most exacting standards in terms of print quality, specification and longevity.



With widths of up to five metres wide, there are solutions available for both direct and dye sublimation printing methods, and all media in the TEXstyle range is

PVC free, lightweight, crease resistant and easy to transport and store. ■

The perfect MissPrint

An exclusive partnership between The Window Film Company and the design house MissPrint, brings six of the latter's iconic designs to window film for the first time.

The designs, Ditto, Little Trees, Muscat, Saplings, Ditsy Dandelion and Figs, are offered in a choice of finishes and are printed and cut to order at The Window Film Company's in-house print and design studio.

The contemporary nature of the

designs, which are available in white print or cut from frost, makes them equally suitable for use in both residential and retail environments. Further, there is also a choice of finishes to suit the specific aesthetic needs of different premises or projects.

The first six designs are now available to order from The Window Film Company's website, where they have already attracted so much attention that a fresh set is already being developed. ■



Going for gold

APA has further enhanced its reputation for innovation with the addition of a gold option to its Chrome series of vinyls.

This latest very high-quality, vinyl cast film, which is already available in dual glossy and matt versions, is specifically designed for the decoration of surfaces that are flat, corrugated and shaped and also for graphic details that require gold chrome finishing.

Further, due to its exclusive Over-Lam-Chrome-Surface (OLCHS) protection, the film offers an enhanced resistance to abrasion, while its Air Free FTX System technology, which features specially designed micro channels to facilitate air ejection, ensures that it is



quick and easy to apply, with perfect results thus guaranteed every time.

The new Gold series, in common with all of the films within the Chrome range

can be digitally printed using solvent, eco-solvent or UV inks, to facilitate the creation of stunning and eye-catching vehicle graphics that can be used to provide premium personalisation. ■

The next generation

Avery Dennison has further expanded its Digital Cast Films range with the introduction of its new MPI 1104 Cast Films Series, which has been designed to meet the growing demand for quick-change graphics and messaging for both vehicles and architectural signage.

The films offer outstanding printability, with consistently high image 'pop' when used in conjunction with UV, solvent, eco-solvent and latex inks, together with more vibrant colours, plus an outstanding gloss level. They also feature a grey adhesive for optimal opacity.

Application times for the MPI 1104 are typically up to 10 percent shorter than similar products and up to 15 percent shorter for MPI 1104 Easy Apply, with the special Easy Apply technology facilitating incision-free and primer-free application on deep corrugations.

A further notable feature is the films' excellent 3D conformability, which



enables users to cover many different 3D shapes and curves across demanding fleet graphics, customised private vehicles and architectural signing solutions.

In common with all of Avery's vinyl range, the company's ICS Performance Guarantee supports the new MP Cast Films. ■

Going dotty



Neschen has expanded its portfolio of UVprint PP easy dot materials with the addition of a silk-matt white film made of environmentally friendly polypropylene (PP), which retains its smooth surface after mounting, despite the adhesive dot coating.

Specifically designed for use with UV-curing inks, it is suitable for indoor use for exhibitions or retail areas and features a stable polyethylene (PE)-paper cover to help ensure that the material remains flat.

The special Neschen adhesive dot coating, which combines acrylate adhesive dots and air ducts, facilitates easy repositioning and residue-free removal, to the extent that even novice users can eliminate folds and bubbles and ensure successful application. ■

Equipment & Material

Super Chrome is here!



HEXIS UK's new range of cast films, branded HX30000 Super Chrome, is available in seven colours, including red, purple, green, blue, titanium, silver and gold.

A 90µm high performance film, it features a high gloss surface finish with a mirror effect and has been specifically developed for use in temporary vehicle wrapping applications.

The films, which comprise a multi-layered cast, a clear surface protection liner for a perfect clarity finish and a structured HEX'Press silicone liner, also feature the HEX'Press solvent acrylic adhesive technology that enables the user to apply the film quickly and easily for a perfect bubble free finish.

Super Chrome can be used on the curved or textured surfaces of almost all types of vehicles and will also cover weldings and rivets. Under standard



Central European outdoor vertical exposure conditions, it is durable for one to two years, depending upon colour and location.

It is now available in all stock colours in 1370mm wide rolls. ■

Make mine metallic



Aslan now offers a range of nearly 30 different self-adhesive metal effect films, which include high-quality and scratch-resistant films in a wide variety of colours and effects, such as glossy and brushed surfaces in different metallic shades, plus a



number of coloured metal finishes too.

There are also a number of user-friendly products available. For projects that require ease of application, there are metal effect films that feature the ASLAN dry apply technology, where air release channels help to facilitate bubble-free and quick dry application, even



when working on larger than average surfaces.

For those that require a printable metal effect film, a special top-coating ensures that the films are suitable for use in conjunction with digital printing technology, enabling users to create a host of stunning metallic effects

Aslan also provides the optimal solution for designs applied onto transparent surfaces, such as glass or mirrors, where the metallic effect is identical from both sides of the film, thus enabling the object to be viewed from any angle.

Samples are available from Aslan on request. ■

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The die is cast!

The die is cast. The judges have met, the decisions have been made and the entrants who made the shortlist have been informed.

Now it's the tense wait for the final few days up to October 13th when all the award winners will be unveiled at the BSGA's Gala Awards Presentation at the East Midlands Conference Centre located on the campus at Nottingham University.

"The judging panel had a hugely difficult task," said David Catanach, Director of the BSGA. "Across the 12 signmaker categories, we had over 290 entries and there were some fairly heated debates during the course of the extended judging session.

"The entries represented the best of British signmaking and it's giving nothing away to say that we have some extraordinary winners and runners-up, representing the full spectrum of the signmaking activities in the UK, from those carried out by small businesses to the acknowledged industry leaders.

"Between them they have demonstrated in spades the myriad range of sign related skills, ranging from creative hand crafts to heavy engineering, that go to make up modern signmaking."

An additional category introduced this year for the first time and supported by Roland DG, is 'The Apprentice of the Year'. "It was probably the most difficult of all to judge because the standard of all the entries was so high," continued David. "What the award - and the entries - does is highlight is the potential of modern apprenticeships to provide the highly qualified and committed staff and leaders our industry



needs for the future."

One other award that will be presented is the Sign Industry Product of the Year. A database of BSGA signmaker members was asked to award points to each product. The top three will be announced at the event on October 13th, with the trophy going to the product that received the top score.



"The occasion at East Midlands Conference Centre is a celebration of the best in British signmaking," added David. "It will also be a great social and networking event. All our sponsors, who include 3M, William Smith, Epson, Spandex, Roland DG, Vink Lighting, Amari, Blackburns, Atlantic Tech, Soyang, Trade Etching Direct, Nationwide Platforms and Sign Directions, will be staging mini-displays so there will be lots to see and talk about.

"In addition, William Smith is running a wrapping demonstration, Roland DG is bringing in one of its latest printers and Nationwide Platforms will have one of its hi-lifts in action."



The event kicks off with a reception starting at midday, followed by a three-course lunch and then the awards presentation. The host will, by popular request, once again be Bob 'The Cat' Bevan, who promises that anyone who takes to the stage is fair game.

His promise to BSGA President David Dyke that he would buy his jacket if he ever won the lottery - "I'll need three numbers" - will live long in the memory!

"Tickets for the event are still available for those who are interested. If you're in the sign industry and want a great day out where you can see the best the industry has to offer and meet old friends and colleagues in a convivial atmosphere, you should be there," concluded David. ■



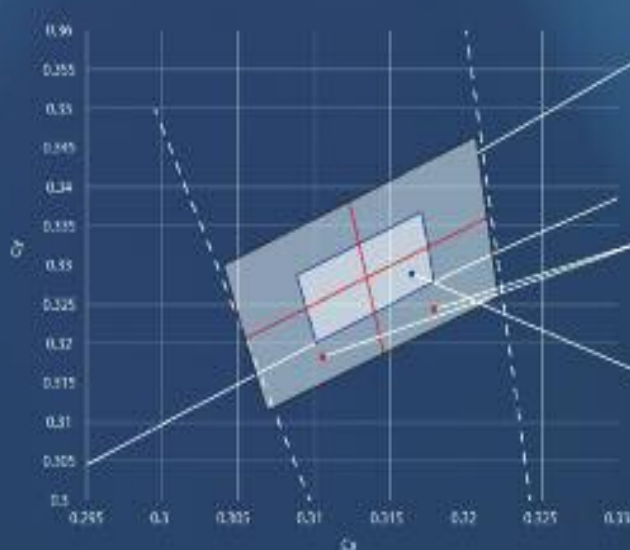
Tickets are available online at www.britishsignawards.org



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ST 601 STARLIGHT

feature



MOVING ON

A year ago, when Soyang Europe first relocated into swish new premises in Lancashire's scenically stunning Calder valley, its primary concern was to provide more warehousing capacity for its vast range of premium substrates, as well as a pleasant working environment for its staff, but as Val Hirst discovers, the move has paid dividends in more ways than one.

Visitors to Soyang's new gaff can't help but be impressed. Instead of the usual grim industrial estate surroundings, the 68,500sq.ft purpose-built facility, which has been the company's nerve centre since July last year, boasts views to die for, with the front of the building overlooking miles of undulating Lancashire countryside, including, in the far distance, the majestic Pendle Hill.

The move was necessitated by the fact that the company was bursting out of its previous premises in Bury,



which was literally stocked from floor to rafters with the eclectic range of printable substrates on which Soyang has built its reputation. However, as well as gaining much needed space to breathe and a working environment that surpasses all others, Soyang has also enjoyed a

23 percent increase in business since relocating. It's no wonder Manager Director, Mark Mashiter is looking so happy!



Explaining the company's gratifying level of growth, Mark espouses the view that while banner material remains its biggest selling product, it has also benefitted hugely from the enthusiasm engendered by G-Floor, the remarkable printable flooring product that it first introduced at the

beginning of 2014, since when it has sold what Mark describes as: "20 containers; worth!" Made from a high-density clear flexible PVC substrate that can be printed on the underside so that the graphic is completely protected, G-Floor is highly durable, slip resistant and an excellent noise dampener. And the fact that it is also easy to install and reposition has ensured that it is fast becoming the flooring of choice for applications in retail, corporate and public spaces. Even more importantly, it has opened up myriad new opportunities for sign and print



companies equipped with super-wide format printers.

Mark observes: "It's no exaggeration to say that G-Floor has been a game changer for some of our customers, particularly those with retail clients who appreciate the fact that it can be easily installed without causing major disruption - an important consideration when you are talking about costly selling space. What's more, it can be printed to convincingly simulate any traditional flooring finish or to replicate any design, pattern, or promotional message required, while also offering our customers the opportunity to make very healthy profits."

Mark, who has been joined by Sales Director Andrew Simmons illustrates his point by taking me to the company's smart new showroom and providing a diverse range of samples that resemble everything from rich dark wood to striking zebra stripes and even a novel 'pebble' floor with a convincing 3D effect.

He adds that since flooring is traditionally an expensive element of any interior design project, price is not generally an end-users' first consideration, saying: "It's a whole new way of selling, which majors on the benefits rather than the cost and for print companies that can get their heads around that, it's providing some very lucrative opportunities indeed."

Mark goes on to suggest that another reason behind the company's growth is the rising popularity of digital textile printing, which is increasingly being used for all categories of signs and banners and is being further fuelled by the fact that very creditable results can now be achieved on standard digital printers. Citing his best sellers in this area to be textiles for backlit lightboxes, he opines: "Once again, retailers have helped to pioneer the use of textile based graphics, partly due to their ease of installation and transportation, plus the fact that they are a greener option, but also because of the wonderful subtle effects that can be achieved. At the same time, the advent of latex inks, plus the new

generation of ultra flexible inks has brought digital textile printing within the reach of most sign and print companies. A little experimentation with different materials enables them to build enough of a market to help fund the purchase of a dedicated textile printer as and when demand dictates."

Once again a host of samples are proffered and I admire the vibrant graphics adorning fabrics that have an attractive silky finish and are a dream to drape.

However, despite these new industry favourites, once we enter the mammoth warehouse, it is easy to see that at least some of Soyang's recent success is down to the sheer scope of its stockholding. The warehouse is divided into two cavernous areas both equipped with copious amounts of racking with enough space leftover to accommodate an HGV so that new substrate deliveries can be safely unloaded inside. An adjoining space, which is currently tenanted, will provide the extra room required as the company continues to grow.

Mark cheerfully confides that the warehouse contains a mind boggling 1.4 million sq.metres of stock, which is why Soyang can guarantee next-day delivery on UK orders placed before 5.00pm with goods arriving in Holland and Belgium within two to three days and elsewhere in Europe within a week of ordering.



But it doesn't take a genius to work out that this sort of stockholding requires an enormous capital investment, which is where new recruit Jill Maude comes in. Jill previously worked for Mark's bank and proved to be so helpful during the time that Mark was negotiating to purchase the new property, that he promptly invited her to join the Soyang team! Now Jill is using her considerable skills and knowledge of the finance sector to secure the best currency deals for the company when trading with Soyang International, its Chinese partner and



its plethora of European suppliers, while also thoroughly investigating and assessing the various money saving options that will enable it to become even more efficient in terms of stock control and energy conservation.

With regard to the latter, Soyang is already enjoying a considerable saving on electricity, which will amount to some £7,000 a year, following its substitution of the traditional fluorescent tubes in the warehouse with more energy efficient - and much brighter - LEDs. While agreeing that these were initially more expensive, Mark offers that their increased longevity also means less maintenance, and adds: "We have also installed a sensor so the lights are operated by movement and automatically go off when the warehouse is unoccupied."

One area where Soyang won't be stinting though, is in the refitting of its kitchen, which is destined for a revamp of Gordon Ramseyesque proportions. Mark explains that he is keen for the company's 15-strong staff, many of which have been with Soyang Europe since its inception, to have somewhere pleasant to sit during breaks, and also to provide a facility to informally entertain customers and suppliers. While he and Andrew enjoyed a low-key celebration of their first year in the new premises, he is hoping that there will be many repetitions of a recent jolly occasion that brought together several of Soyang's biggest customers. Although technically speaking, these are companies that are competing against each other, it seems that they all thoroughly enjoyed swapping news and banter and empathising over the various

difficulties that arise when dealing with exacting clients!

Looking to the future, Mark predicts that in the world of materials there will be an increasing demand for both printable textiles and other non-PVC substrates as the demand for greener alternatives once again starts to gather momentum.

He goes on to remark that this is a demand that Soyang International, which operates from a 666,000sq.ft state of the art factory in HangZhou which includes its own in-house weaving, stitching and laminating facilities is well primed to satisfy. He says: "One of the joys of working with the Chinese company, apart from the fact that it produces really top notch materials, is that it is always eager to provide just the right products for the European market and encourages us to provide it with as much customer feedback and information about all of the latest trends in visual communication as we can." He adds that the company's partnerships with its European suppliers are similarly collaborative, with all parties keen to keep tabs on the increasingly diverse activities of sign and print companies.

Closer to home, Mark and Andrew are planning to make it even easier for customers to order everything they need from Soyang, while also inspiring them to work smarter rather than harder. Mark concludes: "With so many material options now available, there has never been a better time for sign and print companies to use their creativity and ingenuity to establish new areas of application and when they do, we are more than happy to help them in their quest to ensure that they have every surface covered!" ■

Relishing a challenge

Uxbridge based Display Signs styles itself as a sign manufacturing company that's able to undertake practically any sign production challenge that comes its way.



It's a role that suits its capabilities very well, as the company has been around long enough to have ridden every epoch making technical advance the market has seen since the days before computerisation and is now driven by a simple and compelling goal - making quality signs that arrive on time.

Display Signs has some notable blue-chip clients, both in its own locality, as well as further afield and has spent over thirty years accumulating them. Serving the needs of such a client base and maintaining standards of quality, service and creative momentum has dictated ambitious investment planning. Among Display Signs' latest acquisitions is a Tekcel EXR computerised production routing and knife cutting system, supplied by Complete CNC Solutions.

Display Signs is no stranger to routing technology and in fact, was one of the very first sign and graphic production companies in the UK to install and use such a system. Its new Tekcel hardware helps it supplement capacity and deliver signs and graphics to a market with a growing appetite for products that combine both printing and routing.

The company has already completed some notable projects with the Tekcel EXR and has used it to pioneer the development of Indicia, its own wayfinding sign system, which uses the Tekcel OptiCAM to closely register printed matter to cutting paths. This enables Display Signs to produce the printed panels the system features to the very close tolerances it requires.

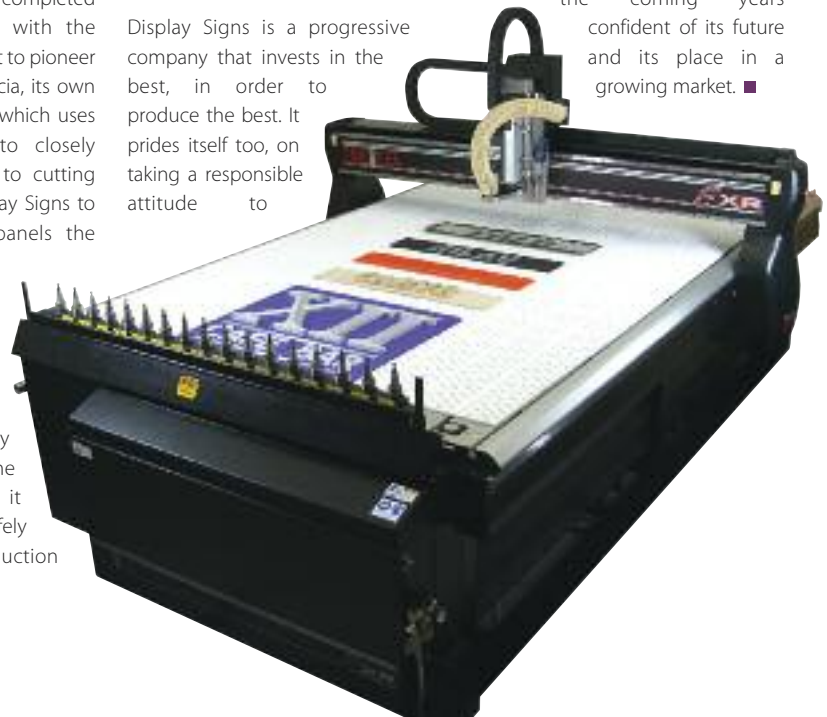
In addition to handling the fine detail, the Tekcel EXR also helps Display Signs with its volume production needs as it enables operators to safely handle complex production



cutting work as part of a clean and efficient process. Consistency over time is important when dealing with the needs of key accounts and the Tekcel EXR delivers the goods.

Display Signs is a progressive company that invests in the best, in order to produce the best. It prides itself too, on taking a responsible attitude to

manufacturing, maximising yields from the materials and resources it uses and minimising waste through recycling and management initiatives. Equipped as it is, it looks to the coming years confident of its future and its place in a growing market. ■



Don't suffer burn out

The UK sign sector is increasingly facing diminishing tool life and fluctuating productivity levels in routing and engraving operations, but according to Sally Hunt, Industrial Tooling Corporation (ITC) has an innovative solution as well as the capabilities and capacity required to limit the impact and cost implications for its customers.

The poor tool life signmakers using routing and engraving tools on materials such as Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) or DiBond experience, could. Sally believes, be caused by one of two problems.

She explains: "At present, the UK sign industry is being flooded with low cost and low quality material from Asia, which is increasingly wreaking havoc with engraving tools and routing bits. In a business environment, it's a natural reaction to look for cheaper materials and cutting tool suppliers, but this is a false economy, especially if low cost material is burning through cutting tools, generating poor surface

finishes and resulting in secondary hand finishing operations."

The low cost aluminium composite materials from foreign shores tend to be impregnated with impurities that can instantly burn out or chip the cutting edges and flutes of a cutting tool, so she urges signmakers to check the quality of the materials they are using.

She continues: "Tool burn-out effectively only impacts the bottom 2-3mm of the tool. As a UK manufacturer, our engineers and extremely precise CNC machines can cut the damaged edge from the tool and re-grind to an as-new condition at a fraction of the price of a new tool. Increasingly, our customers are supplying us with a box of worn-out tools so that our Tamworth manufacturing facility can cut and re-grind them – an operation that can be completed within a matter of days, thus effectively providing the end user with a box of 'as-new' tools for a minimal outlay."

She goes on to add that what sets ITC apart from its competitors is both



its technical expertise and its R&D department. ITC has built a reputation for developing tooling solutions for high-tech sectors, such as the aerospace and F1 industries and, by working with the leading names in these areas, it has an established history of developing solutions for cutting some of the most difficult industrial materials. Sally maintains that it is this industry know-how that enables ITC to provide its fast-turnaround, cost effective tool servicing solution,

which is beyond the scope of other cutting tool vendors.

She concluded: "We have a line up of over 21 CNC controlled machines at our headquarters, which enables us to produce tools that combine quality with consistency and precision and offer a lifespan that exceeds anything else currently available. This means that our customers are assured that they will gain the best possible results on even low cost materials!" ■



Open House at Axyz

AXYZ International is to hold two further Open House events on 21st October and 19th November, which will build on the success of the two similar events held last year and the initial single-day event that took place in 2013.

The October event, which will be open to both existing and potential customers, as well as members of the trade press, will be held at AXYZ International's recently opened new UK and Continental Europe headquarters on Telford's T54 Business Park. It is designed to enable attendees to evaluate not only the radically improved assembly and service facilities now installed, but also selected new or recently launched machine hardware and software solutions.

This event, which will accommodate customers from the North and Midlands areas, will also mark the first public showing of the AXYZ Trident hybrid integrated digital finishing solution that combines CNC routing and knife-cutting capabilities. This powerful production workhorse now facilitates the processing of both rigid and flexible materials as diverse as aluminium and other non-ferrous metals, aluminium composites (ACM), acrylics and plastics, foamed and corrugated board, vinyl and cardboard that might prove challenging for conventional routers, at speeds of up to 50 per cent faster than other AXYZ routers.

To mark the launch of Trident, a special discounted purchase price will be available for a short period both during and immediately after the Open House events.

Also available for demonstration will be other machines from the AXYZ range, supported by routers from AXYZ International's Pacer and Z series of machines. In addition, the



event will mark the first public showing of Version 16 of the AXYZ PANELBuilder system's software. The combined router and software solution is used primarily for the processing of the large-format ACM panels used extensively in the sign and building cladding industries.

The AXYZ CNCRouterShop division will also be represented. This recently expanded business can now provide a 24-hour online supply facility for tooling, spare parts and accessories not only for AXYZ International CNC routers but also for virtually any other make of router regardless of type and country of origin.

The 19th November event will take place for the second time at the Royal Air Force Museum in North London and will feature the same product demonstrations and technical support facilities. The choice of this site to accommodate



primarily customers in the South East proved an extremely popular one for visitors to previous Open House events, not only because of its regional accessibility, but also because it enabled them to view a galaxy of interesting RAF aircraft and artefacts whilst evaluating the AXYZ

technology on display.

Refreshments will be provided at both Open House events, with a team of AXYZ International management and technical support personnel in attendance to provide additional customer support. ■

Big brother is here

Following its global launch at FESPA earlier this year, ArtSystems is now supplying the heavyweight Summa F-Series F2630 Flatbed cutter to UK signmakers.

A companion machine to the renowned Summa F1612 cutter, the F2630, which has been specifically developed in line with market demand for a larger version of the F1612 cutter, enables sign and print companies to easily process larger media, as well as providing them with the capability to process two media rolls at once on the roll support system.

With a working area of 2650mm x 3050mm, it offers a wide set of tools and modules, together with those already featured on the

F1612. Thus, operators can use the kiss cutting tools to cut fine details in thin films, the cut-out tools when processing plastics and thin cardboards and the oscillating tools, in combination with creasing wheels and v-cut knives, when working on cardboard and foamboards. In addition, a 1kW router is available for use in conjunction with hard board material, such as PVC, acrylic, wood or aluminium boards with a thickness up to 25mm.

The F2630 has been developed in response to market demands for a larger version of the popular F1612 cutter whilst keeping the flexibility and diversity of the unit.

The cutter's working surface of more than eight square metres is



split up into 12 vacuum zones, each of which can be automatically switched on or off individually to facilitate the processing of small and large boards, sheets or rolls. Further, by using the front and rear zones in an alternating pattern, users can enjoy significant increases in productivity.

Commenting on the new machine, Andrew Edwards Art Systems' Sign

& Display Divisional Manager said: "The original F1612 has helped many traditional signmakers to move into new markets and also enabled them to boost their print finishing workflow too. We're confident that the new F2630 will do the same, while also providing them with the opportunity to capitalise on the lucrative packaging, textile and leather markets in a more direct way." ■

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Agfa revamps its Leeds showroom

Agfa Graphics has recently upgraded its Leeds-based showroom, which now features the company's latest printers and software.

The completely refurbished showroom now includes two of the newest Anapurna inkjet printing systems, the Anapurna M2050i, which features hybrid flatbed technology for direct-to-substrate printing onto both rigid and flexible media, and the Anapurna M3200i, which is designed for industrial roll-to-roll UV printing up to 3.2 metres in width.

Both systems use the latest Konica Minolta 1024i printheads to deliver stunning print quality and reach maximum speeds of 123 sq/m per hour. The combination of the small droplet size



and the wide colour gamut of the Agfa UV inks facilitates delivery of a thin layer of ink, thus ensuring very low ink consumption and reducing printing costs. The Anapurna M2050i also comes with a white ink option, making it the ideal solution for printing onto coloured and transparent substrates.

Visitors to the showroom will also be able to see Agfa's workflow suite of software that includes Asanti for the sign and display market and Storefront, its web-to-print software, whilst experiencing a complete demonstration from job creation through to final production on a wide range of applications. ■

Be enticed by Perfect Colours!

HP reseller Perfect Colours is adding the HP Latex 360 and 310 series printers to its Try and Buy scheme, thus offering sign and print companies the opportunity to trial these versatile wide-format machines for two weeks with free delivery and installation.

There is no obligation to buy after the demonstration period and Perfect Colours will even take the machine away, without charge, if required, effectively enabling companies to discover if it is

right for them without incurring any risk.

At 1.5 metres and 1.4 metres wide respectively, the HP Latex 360 and 310 are entry-level machines perfect for printing onto standard sign and display materials, as well as some porous media, including textiles and apparel, with the larger model even producing jobs at full bleed. They create scratch-resistant output that can be left unlaminated and displayed outdoors for up to three years when used in conjunction with third-generation Latex inks.



Owners of the discontinued HP Designjet L25500 and HP Latex 260 printers are especially encouraged to take advantage of this offer to upgrade and unlock new vertical markets for their businesses. Some users may also require a RIP update, which Perfect Colours is also able to provide. ■

Papergraphics to sell HP's Latex printers

Following its appointment as an HP Gold Graphics Specialist Papergraphics will now be distributing HP's Latex 300 series printers within the UK.

This appointment, which is the latest step in Papergraphic's growth strategy, further complements the company's recruitment of the former Paperlinx UK digital solutions team that has already amassed extensive knowledge of HP's Latex printer range.

Nathan Atkins, Managing Director of Papergraphics, commented: "HP's Latex technology is perfectly compatible with much of the material that we also supply, especially our popular wall covering range and also offers the same level of versatility,

environmental benefits and competitive pricing that runs through the rest of our hardware portfolio." ■



CSL becomes a Roland dealer



Roland DG has appointed CSL to its dealer network, in a move that enables the Marlow-based company to add a plethora of Roland DG's wide-format eco-solvent technology to its product portfolio.

The new products available from CSL will include Roland DG's flagship eight-colour print and print and cut machines the SOLJET PRO 4 XF-640 and XR-640, plus the Roland VersaEXPRESS RF-640 four colour printer, the best-selling print and cut VersaCAMM VS-i series, the economical print and cut VersaCAMM SP-i Series, and finally, the versatile desktop VersaSTUDIO BN-20 printer and cutter.

This move follows the already successful relationship the two companies have forged via the Partner Solutions programme, which involves Roland DG actively supporting companies with specialist knowledge of their particular market sectors in the development of new production solutions that are based on existing Roland DG print engines.

Within this programme, CSL has co-created the Partner Solutions Lightbar that uses the latest solvent-UV ink chemistry and a stationary UV lamp unit. ■

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Worthwhile Investments

Companies explain why they chose the equipment they use



The Bristol Hippodrome recently announced the imminent arrival of the new

'Mary Poppins' stage musical with a fanfare of colourful signs and banners produced by Frenzy Designs on its new **Lightbar RF-640** printer.

To complement the large format banners that adorn the front of house, Frenzy Designs also applied Lightbar print to the three square metre flex face illuminated signs and the 15 metre long sign panel that crowns the top of this historic theatre. The company, which has been supplying theatres such as the Bristol Hippodrome with signs and banners for over 30 years, is used to changing the promotional graphics regularly as one show comes to an end and another begins its run and, with the inevitably tight deadlines involved, it is frequently required to convert fresh artwork into new signs over the course of a weekend.

Conveniently located between Bristol and Bath and with easy access to the motorway network, Frenzy Designs was originally established in 1981 by Val Bryant, a traditionally trained signwriter whose hand painted lettering skills and illustrative artistry are still greatly in demand today. That said, Val has always moved with the times in order to offer his impressive list of local and national clients a comprehensive range of sign services, including everything from traditional hand signwriting to full colour digital printing and in doing so, has enabled Frenzy Designs to earn a well-deserved reputation for creativity and quality workmanship.

It was quite by chance that Val and his business partner, Matt Pope, happened upon the solvent-UV ink technology that has helped to further



evolve their business. As Val explained: "We were visiting a trade show when we first came across the Lightbar printer but, as we already owned an excellent 10 year old Roland printer/cutter, we weren't really in the market for another, at least not until we were handed a sample of Lightbar print straight off the new machine. However, the colours were so bright and glossy and the print was so completely dry that we were instantly attracted and, more importantly, when I took out a key and scratched at the ink, it didn't leave so much as a mark on the image!"

The Lightbar RF-640 printer is a Partner Solution that combines the latest solvent-UV ink chemistry with the quality and reliability of Roland DG print technology. This new ink formulation is odour free and cures the instant it passes through a low energy UV lamp unit, resulting in vibrant, colour rich output that's dry, durable and ready to use the moment it leaves the printer.



Val and Matt immediately saw the potential benefits, including all the time and floor space they could save by not having to leave print on drying racks to out gas before applying, mounting or laminating and happily, within days of having its Lightbar RF-640 printer installed, Frenzy Designs completed both its latest Hippodrome theatre project and a full van wrap for another of its valued customers, Upham Brewery, the south of England's fastest growing pub and brewery company.

Matt continued "We'd already wrapped two Upham delivery vans with vinyl printed on our old Roland machine, so, it was important to get the right colours from the new Lightbar printer. In the end, all it took was a few tweaks of our VersaWorks RIP and a couple of test prints to produce a perfect colour match!"

With the additional speed of the Lightbar RF-640, Frenzy was also able to print the van wrap in half the time it had previously taken, but the real game changer was that it could immediately progress to lamination

without having to allow gassing out time. There was though a slight hitch. Matt admitted: "Having printed and laminated the vinyl in record time, we then discovered that the van was a 'face lift' model that differed very slightly from its predecessors. The print for the bonnet thus needed to be 150mm wider, but thanks to the Lightbar printer, we were able to re-print, laminate and fit the replacement panel within an hour, which enabled us to meet our customer's deadline!"

Following the acquisition of the Lightbar printer, Frenzy Designs has dramatically improved the workflow within its business, thus reducing both its production times and operational costs while also improving its profitability. The company's next step will be to field test the impressive durability of unlaminated Lightbar print to establish its suitability for an even wider range of outdoor applications. Val concludes: "Impressive as its performance has been so far, I think that our new Lightbar still has a lot of untapped potential and we are looking forward to discovering all of the many ways it can help us to further improve our business!" ■



Essex-based **Access360**, a specialist exhibition, experiential marketing and interiors company, which has recently acquired a new **HP Latex 370** from **City and West End Solutions**, reported that the new printer provides it with triple the production capacity of its old machine.

Commenting on this new purchase, Director **Dave Pimlott** explained: "Our main focus is the provision of

interior decoration, including window manifestations and the production of digital wallpaper, for both individual stores and retail chains across the UK and Europe, and with the volume of this business increasing week on week, we needed to invest in a new fast and reliable printer in order to meet the growing demand."

He continued: "When I spoke to Graham De Kock at **CWE Solutions** and explained what we required, he suggested the **HP Latex 370**, which as well as providing the speed and reliability we needed, also offers the extra advantage of environmentally-friendly Latex printing as stipulated by many of our clients. This and the machine's competitive price not only ensured that it ticked all of the right boxes; it also meant that we had some money left over to invest in a specialist **Onyx Thrive RIP** too. This has provided us with more control over the image output and colour, while also helping to achieve higher speed printing. For example,

with our old **RIP**, a typical bespoke wallpaper would probably take around 20 minutes to process, but with the **Onyx**, it only takes a couple of minutes!"

The speed of the **Onyx RIP** is backed up by the print speed and reliability of the **HP Latex 370** itself, and since the printer was installed in July, **Access360** has enjoyed 100 percent reliability with no colour issues or spoilage.

Dave observed: "In the past we would have issues such as colour inconsistencies on a daily basis, but we've had no such problems with the new **HP**. You don't realise quite how much time you're losing and how much that impacts on the bottom line, but with its improved speed and reliability the **HP** has tripled the production capacity of our old solvent printer."

The **HP Latex 370** is a 64-inch wide, six colour machine that offers low running costs and facilitates both

unattended printing and the ability to change cartridges on the fly. Printing at up to 1200 dpi, it uses water-based inks to deliver sharp, consistent, repeatable image quality with high-efficiency curing, and can print onto traditional signmaking substrates such as vinyl and banners, as well as temporary textiles, canvas and wallpapers. Quality is maintained at high speed, and output is instantly dry, offering the level of scratch resistance associated with third generation Latex inks.

Dave concluded: "In today's corporate world the focus is on brightening up the workplace by making it more inviting and comfortable for staff. The **HP Latex 370** is perfect for this sort of work, as it produces top quality, robust output and is great at matching pantone colours with incredible accuracy. I have to say that it is the first printer we've bought that lives up to its spec – and that really is saying something!" ■

Close to historic Cookstown in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, the innovative **Food Technology and Packaging Centre of the College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE's) Loughry Campus** is facilitating a unique learning experience for its students with the assistance of its newly acquired **Mimaki CF2** flatbed cutter and **JV300-160** solvent printer.

Loughry plays host to students studying qualifications up to degree level that incorporate modules in food production, product development, food testing and packaging performance, which, according to Ron Gardiner, CAFRE lecturer of 15 years standing is what necessitated its recent Mimaki purchases.

He explained: "All the qualifications we provide have a strong industry

element, as our aim is to prepare our students for work in the food industry and to help them to develop their skills through projects that provide them with direct work and life experience. Thus, the arrival of the flatbed cutter and printer is enabling them to experience the complete workflow, from design through to creation of a prototype, and assisted by partnerships with local businesses, they are often working to a live brief, making their projects all the more valid."

The investment was made through Belfast-based authorised Mimaki reseller **Dennis D Evans**, where Sales Manager, Frank Wilson, said: "It is always rewarding to be involved in a project that assists young people and a particular pleasure to support students learning about both the structural design of packaging as well as the machines' performance."



Mimaki's **JV300-160** is a roll-fed solvent printer providing both high speed and stunning quality. Frank Wilson enthused: "It delivers on every level: price, performance, quality and reliability and by combining this with Mimaki's

cutting heritage in the trusty **CF2-1218RC** flatbed cutter, the potential for creating live packaging proofs is vast. I've no doubt that CAFRE will now produce even more highly qualified and uniquely experienced candidates for the food industry." ■

A man in a dark blue suit and yellow tie is holding a target with a pink bullseye and a blueprint. The target is in the foreground, and the blueprint is held up to the right. The background is a blurred cityscape at dusk.

A blueprint for diversity

A brand new show is due to take place at Birmingham's NEC on 13th-15th October, which according to the organiser, Link Exhibitions, offers signmakers the opportunity to discover how they can diversify into profitable new areas. Val Hirst explains why a visit to The Print Show is worthwhile.

With many sign and print companies now actively looking to broaden the scope of their product and service offerings, some might decide that having already enjoyed the versatility that wide format digital printing has provided, they would like to further investigate the additional options that a foray into what is commonly known as the 'commercial print sector' could bring. If so, The Print Show provides the perfect platform for them to learn more about the full gamut of complementary printing technologies and to meet some of the manufacturers and suppliers who operate within this area.



In addition, they will also have the opportunity to reconnect with some familiar names and faces too, since the show has also attracted numerous exhibitors from the wide format area. And this, according to Event Director Chris Davies, is just as it should be. He explained: "The show is designed to represent the print industry as a

whole, rather than simply focussing on one area. We know from our pre-show research that nowadays, in the same way that a lot of commercial printers are being asked to provide digitally printed items, such as signs and banners, sign and digital print providers are also being asked for printed marketing collateral, including letterheads, leaflets and business cards. Gradually, more and more companies are broadening their repertoire so that they can offer their clients a full service and effectively become their number one choice whenever new print-related work is in the offing."

Thus, visitors to the event will be able to see amongst the 100 or so exhibitors, companies such as **EFI**, which will be using the show to promote its wide selection of integrated printing solutions that includes everything from software to printers.

At the same time, **PrintMAX** will be presenting products from its range of wide format inkjet printers and cutters, including an array of **Mimaki** technologies. Machines on display will include the UJF-6042



small format UV flatbed printer for direct to substrate output that can also be used in conjunction with solid items such as pens photoblocks and other promotional products. This will be shown as part of Mimaki's integrated packaging proofing system that features the new CFL-605RT compact flatbed-cutting table. In addition, visitors will be able to road test the roll-to-roll, print & cut Mimaki CJV150 that can be used to digitally produce die-cut decals and labels.

Signmaster will also be showing a selection of **Mimaki** printers as well as machines from **Roland** and **Seiko**, whilst **Colorbyte** will be



pairing up with **Epson** to showcase a host of wide-format printers, RIPs and consumables, including the Epson SureColor SC-T5200 with scanner option and UltraChrome XD inks, the Epson SureColor SC-S70600 eco-solvent printer with simultaneous white and metallic ink support, plus the Epson Stylus Pro 9890. The printers will be shown running **EFI Fiery XF**, **Colorgate** and **Wasatch RIP** software. Visitors will also have the opportunity to explore a huge range of substrates that range from photo and proofing papers to canvas and wall coverings.

For visitors in the market for a management information system, **Clarity, Shuttleworth** and **Accura**, will all be showing their latest MIS innovations, all of which are specially designed to suit the needs of companies operating within the sign and print sectors.

The **D&K Group**, which has over 35 years of experience in the manufacture of equipment and films for laminating and encapsulation, will be on hand to offer a variety of finishing options, and **Vivid Laminating** will also be presenting its own range of laminating equipment and materials.

Novachrome UK will be inviting visitors to acquaint themselves with equipment and materials for the creation of personalised and promotional items and **OKI** will be showcasing its award winning ES9541 five colour printer, which offers CMYK



plus white ink, enabling it to print vibrant colours onto dark backgrounds. It can be successfully used for transfer garment decoration, short-run packaging and window graphics, plus a variety of paper-based applications.

Global Erecting Sign Services (GESS) a leading UK banner and sign erection company will be demonstrating its flexibility with regard to installation projects and **Exaprint**, whose innovative product range is epitomised by the novel yet stunning **Journey** project highlighted on pages 10/11, will be using the show to demonstrate how its online sign and print service can be



used to enhance visitors' own offerings. **Ultima Displays** will also be exhibiting its plethora of off-the-shelf sign and display products, while also alerting visitors to the efficacy of its printing services.

Antalis and **Grafityp** will be representing the materials supply arm of the sign and print sectors, with the former offering over 13,000 products, including papers, plus packaging, promotional and visual communication materials and the latter displaying its peerless range of self-adhesive products, in addition to a diverse selection of ancillary equipment.



Big names from the commercial print arena will include **Manroland, KBA, Konica Minolta, Ricoh** and **Inktec** and the show is also being endorsed by all of the major print associations, such as the **BPIF, BAPC, IPIA, St Brides Foundation, PICON, ProSkills**, and **The Printing Charity**.

Entrance is free and the show runs from 10.00am to 5.00pm on Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th October and from 10.00am to 4.00pm on Thursday 16th October.

For further information and to register visit: www.theprintshow.co.uk

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Get Kitting!



Shuttleworth MIS has unveiled its exciting new software functionality, Kitting, which enables users to easily create estimates and quote for several items on an order.

Especially designed to suit the needs of sign and print companies that need to manage projects that include multiple entities, such as vehicle

liveries for example, it enables them to add separate items and quantities to a single enquiry. The Shuttleworth MIS then calculates a price for the entire 'kit' and helps to manage the enquiry throughout the production process and right up to delivery and invoicing.

Commenting on the software's efficacy, Dawn Safford, Marketing Executive at Shuttleworth, said: "Managing multiple items for one quote can be a costly process, however the Kitting feature delivers easy traceability, reduced administration and cost, and ultimately, increased profits. It is just another example of how Shuttleworth is leading the MIS market by delivering powerful technical solutions to very specific customer needs." ■

Faster performance

Onyx Graphics has introduced Onyx12 software, the next generation of the company's wide format workflow and RIP products.

Built on the proven platform of Onyx 11 RIP software and Onyx Thrive workflow software, Onyx12 software delivers faster RIP performance, a simplified user interface and advanced finishing tools to do more in less time.

Specifically developed to make printing more predictable, Onyx 12



software enables operators to print jobs right the first time. Onyx 12 software is available for the full Onyx software product line including Onyx Thrive workflow software, and Onyx ProductionHouse, Onyx PosterShop and Onyx RIPCenter RIP software. ■

New Flexi benefits

The new and extensively upgraded Flexi 12 software program from leading international provider SA International is now available from Graphtec GB.

It will add a host of new design and production capabilities to existing Flexi offerings and has been introduced to coincide with the recent release of Microsoft Windows 10, whilst remaining fully compatible with Microsoft Windows 7 and 8. Of special significance is that Flexi 12 is available free to all existing Flexi subscribers, thus providing access to arguably the most comprehensive and versatile software program currently available to professional signmakers, wide-format digital print businesses and CNC machining operatives without the need for new investment.

As with all earlier Flexi packages, the new flagship Flexi 12 offering will support a large number of the most popular



printers and cutters via a raft of additional design and production tools that will accommodate every conceivable manufacturing requirement in these sectors. Collectively, the new tools will greatly enhance and streamline workflow capabilities on key issues, such as artwork management and approval, printing and cutting accuracy, colour management and end product finishing.

Among the many significant upgrade features of Flexi 12 are the Contour Cut

True Nesting Tool that can, it is claimed, save up to 50 per cent in media wastage on print & cut work and the improved Colour Management Tool that enables easier and more efficient printing with metallic and white inks. These advanced features are supplemented with the new Artwork Approval Tool that greatly assists and simplifies artwork changes and the new Cut Order and Animated Cut Viewer Tools that greatly reduce otherwise time-consuming cutting requirements whilst enabling users of the software to see how a particular design will be cut before

commencement of the cutting process. Other important production tool enhancements include Banner and Canvas Finishing, an Auto Serialisation facility that will save production time whilst ensuring greater accuracy and QR and Data Matrix Code Generation that will make it faster and easier to add interactive elements to signage.

For existing Flexi subscription-based customers, the entire family of Flexi packages (FlexiSIGN, FlexiPRINT, FlexiSIGN & Print and FlexiDESIGNER) will automatically be upgraded to Flexi 12. ■

Powerful products in Paris

Caldera showed a stylish selection of solutions for sign and print professionals at the recent Viscom Paris exhibition, where it also demonstrated the latest version of its powerful wide-format RIP suite, as well as on-trend solutions for workflow and bespoke integration.



enhance ongoing product development.

In keeping with its customers' ambitions, Caldera also used the event to launch a slender version of its Dynamic Totem product, a simple but highly effective combination of print

and digital signage. The VariableDisplay DigitalTotem (Slim version), which is fabricated entirely in France in collaboration with MBS Manufacturing, reduces the depth of the all-in-one unit to 69 x 180cm, thus making it simpler to install within higher-traffic areas. Combining Caldera Variable Display with a popular screen and a robust aluminium frame, DigitalTotem Slim, like its larger variant,



enables the speedy changeover of printed panels to accommodate seasonal and time-limited advertising transitions. ■

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Back to the future

During the past 20 years the sign and display sectors have changed almost beyond recognition. With this in mind, Val Hirst invited some of the industry's most prominent suppliers to share their recollections of times past, their view of the current crop of challenges that sign and print companies face and their predictions for the future – this is how they responded!

Peter Mitchell co-founder and Director at **Hybrid Services**, Mimaki's exclusive UK and Ireland distributor, believes that the wide format print sector has changed in many ways, but that the biggest impact it has made is the way in which it has succeeded in opening up the market. He observes: The attainable nature of the machinery we're now seeing has made it much easier

for new entrants to the market to establish viable businesses, with smaller, often family-run, or owner managed operations having access to tools that enable them to service much larger and more profitable clients. Thus, the sector is no longer the preserve of the bigger players. Indeed, we have many customers who punch well above their weight and that's typically down to their

hands-on approach and their ability to combine small business tenacity and service with big business technology."

He goes on to say that the greater automation of equipment has meant that there is less need for human intervention and this too has favoured smaller, leaner business operations, adding: "Similarly, the speed and quality

of output has developed to such an extent that even 'entry-level' machines can compete at the highest levels and satisfy the needs of even the most demanding corporate clients, while also enabling greater creativity and versatility of output, which in itself has been necessary to combat the challenge of new mediums, such as electronic and digital signage."





When it comes to the most influential products of the last two decades, Peter opines: "We've experienced some real standout products that have made huge advances in how signmakers operate; for example, the Gerber Edge and the first of the Roland printer/cutters pioneered a whole new way of working and helped pave the way for the adoption of digital print. Mimaki enjoyed a ground-breaking product in the JV3, which, thanks to an entirely different approach to solvent printing, delivered a machine totally built for purpose, featuring automated cleaning and offering a markedly improved ease of use, coupled with incredible quality and speed – which still stands the test of time today!"

He adds that aside from the incredible developments in the running speeds and print quality of wide format printers, new ink technologies have also played their part in revolutionising the industry pointing out that: "Mimaki has led a number of advances – products such as its low solvent inks have addressed many environmental concerns and dye sublimation inks have fuelled developments in printed textiles, which in turn has impacted on the demand from the exhibition and retail graphic sectors where an increasing number of clients are seeing the benefits of textiles over more traditional rigid board and vinyl substrates."

He continued: "Likewise, Mimaki has been at the forefront of LED UV printing since the mid 2000s and this technology has also considerably speeded up production processes with reduced ink drying times aiding productivity and profitability. This technology has become particularly prevalent on flatbed printers where direct to substrate (or object) has become the norm, without the need for multiple additional production processes, such as bonding and lamination, while innovations in inks and substrates have also fuelled the unprecedented growth in the vehicle wrapping sector, which was almost unheard of 20 years ago and yet now we see examples all around us."

Peter agrees that these days, both sign and print companies and industry suppliers are facing significant challenges, espousing the view that: "As machines become more technologically advanced; traditional sign and graphic providers have to embrace change and learn to adapt to new ways of working. Large corporates, particularly in the retail sector,

demand higher quality, faster turnaround times and short-run, personalised print – all with increasingly competitive pricing and sound environmental credentials. Thus, the whole of the wide format sector is having to respond with necessary equipment, consumables and workflows that satisfy these requirements."

As to what the future holds for Hybrid, he muses: "Whilst not forgetting our long heritage in solvent printing, we're still anticipating a continued increase in uptake of UV and textile printing over the next few years. More broadly speaking though, the main focus is likely to be on ensuring that businesses are able to offer exactly what their customers want – and also to lead their customers in new directions through their creative use of technology. Our original inspiration nearly 20 years ago was to assist signmakers in combining creativity and technology and that remains true to this day.

"There also continues to be a shift in the wider print industry where traditional commercial litho and

web-offset printers are diversifying into wide format digital print to meet the ever-changing demands of their customers, which is why all of the major manufacturers need to combine technological development and innovation, with support and education, all of which are pivotal to the industry's continued growth.

One of Mimaki's great strengths has been its ability to respond to its customers' diverse needs, by consistently innovating and delivering products that reflect their requirements, but Peter believes that in addition to offering solutions that enable Hybrid's customers to maximise their use of technology, traditional values still have their part to play. He concludes: "Quality offerings, that are 'right first time, every time', a key focus on skills and creativity and the provision of the best products will secure the future of businesses right across our industry, but the ability to not only use technology, but also to get the very most out of it, is the factor that will ultimately prevail." ■



As a leading distributor of wide-format digital printing and finishing solutions, **Colourgen**

can look back on over 20 years of experience in the industry. As Managing Director **Jeff Biggs** recalls, back in 1995 there were just a small number of manufacturers producing only water-based solutions and further development by both pioneering manufacturers, such as ENCAD, and end users was very much a case of trial and error. Experimentation was the order of the day and applications were very limited and based largely on available inks and media.

He remembers: "In 1995, very few people had access to the internet and so communicating a message and being able to change it frequently, particularly in the retail environment, became a very appealing prospect. This and the reduced costs now possible drove the industry forward at a frantic rate."

A veteran supplier of sign and graphics and digital printing media solutions, **James Carpenter**, Managing Director of **Doro Tape** is well qualified to comment on the changes that have taken place within the industry from a personal perspective. He said: "One of the biggest changes has been the diversification into new markets that has taken place by our customers and the different businesses that are now engaging with the industry. Affordable wide-format printers and compatible ink technologies have led us to continually source even more innovative materials from many of the leading European materials manufacturers.

"In addition there have been major advances in adhesives technology

According to Jeff, the most notable innovation would have to be the development of outdoor-durable ink and media sets. He added: "Being able to print on to untreated substrates that required no finishing was a notable advancement, for both end users, in terms of the wider range of applications possible and manufacturers, on the basis of the new business opportunities that consequently emerged. This led inevitably to an increased demand for the latest technology and further stimulation of the wide-format market."

At the same time, there have been significant improvements in software solutions that have been driven by the technological advancements in the hardware they support. Jeff adds: "The entire compass of digital printing and

and it is now possible to supply materials that can be applied directly to virtually any substrate. This has enabled the industry to make further entry into additional key markets, such as the retail, hospitality, architectural and interior décor sectors. The advent



finishing, including peripherals such as cutters and laminators, is no longer the exclusive domain of dedicated print houses and the technology is now freely available to any company with the wherewithal in terms of equipment, materials and software and the right business plan in place."

As to the challenges facing the industry and its future development, Jeff observes: "Probably the biggest challenge will be to ensure sufficient margins, particularly for end users, and the need to make further improvements in ink technology, with the latter being the only way forward if brand loyalty and

market status are to be retained".

As to the future of the industry, he concluded: "It is difficult to make predictions for the short term but there probably will be further collaboration, consolidation of mutual interests and re-badging of equipment by manufacturers. In the longer term, and judging by ongoing developments, there will always be a demand for wide-format digital printing and the future seems secure. There will also be continued growth in the textile-printing sector. In the UK this has yet to match that of other European countries, but there are now positive signs of progress, with more manufacturers engaging with the technology." ■



of lower-cost wide-format digital printers has also brought about change in the type of company that can now produce signs and graphics and opportunities now exist for all companies, regardless of size and technological status.

"The predicted demise in the use of plain self-coloured vinyl has not

happened and there will still be a place in the industry for the small sign maker. However, with interactive digital signage now making an impact and with greater levels of creativity and innovation being harnessed overall, there is no telling what the future will hold." ■

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20th anniversary feature

Ian Simister, Sales Director at the materials company **Metamark** provided an interesting insight into the changes that have taken place, the notable innovations that have occurred, and both the challenges facing the industry and its future prospects.

As to the changes, he said: "If you look at working practices, the most noticeable change has to be the advent of reliable and durable digital print. This is due to the fact that sign manufacturers now undertake work they would hitherto have sub-contracted to other specialist businesses. For example, work that would have once put money into the screenprinting industry has now found its way into the sign industry instead. Furthermore, technology has enabled sign companies to explore areas that they would not have been able to tackle in the past and this has helped to create a much bigger, though admittedly more diffused market."

On the question of influential innovations, he reflected: "From a Metamark perspective, it has been the development and commercialisation of materials that are expressly designed to function in a digital workflow

environment. Much so-called digital media was simply old offerings revamped, which luckily, just happened to work, but as hardware became faster and print resolution higher, the deficiencies began to show."

As regards the biggest challenges facing the industry, he identified the need to keep pace with market growth as one, although not necessarily the biggest, of these. That was reserved for the need to square up to the sheer scale of the opportunities that exist. He commented: "Modern hardware and materials make so many things possible. New markets and applications are there, ready and waiting to be developed, but getting this message over to the market is actually the real challenge."

With regard to the future, Ian suggested: "In the short term, we are going to see a buoyant market



that will continue to outstrip the general economy in terms of growth. In the longer term, we can rely on new material innovations that will open up fresh markets for those companies with the appetite to pursue them. With hardware being such a levelling influence in terms of capability, it is surely design and quality that will distinguish the exemplary operators in the industry. Standards are on the rise and the market will not put up with, or pay for, indifferent products."

He concluded: "The sign and



display industry has done a good job of steering a safe path through a period of disruptive change. It has also proved itself to be open minded, flexible and of course extremely creative. Occasionally, it needs to be reminded of how talented the people working in it are and how much added value they bring to the output produced." ■



According to **Paul Vickery**, Director of **Nova Aluminium**, a leading supplier of quality aluminium extrusions and complete sign systems, the industry has changed by necessity rather than through natural evolution. He suggests: "The technological advances that have taken place have

resulted in designers and architects taking signage far more seriously than hitherto and due to closer engagement with signmakers some truly iconic and landmark signage projects have been achieved."

In terms of innovation, Paul considers the wider use of vinyl to be among the most significant. He commented: "The impact of vinyl on fascia signage, for example, has been huge and has contributed to a significant reduction in the time required to apply alternative cut out acrylic

letters and logos to sign panels. Similarly, LED technology has had a positive influence on sign lighting and is fast replacing alternative, more expensive and less environmentally aware fluorescent technology."

On the challenges facing the industry and its future, Paul added: "Primarily these relate to being able to keep up with all of the new technology now emerging. The future of the sign industry appears to be very encouraging, with a much more professional approach to the manufacture of even



standard signage. The saying 'A business with a good sign is the sign of a good business' has never struck a more fitting note. Whilst we have seen the demise of some fairly large companies and witnessed the impact of the sign franchise organisations, overall, the industry appears to be in a fairly happy and healthy condition." ■

Director of **Graphtec GB**, **Phil Kneale** considers the greatest change in the industry to have been its gradual evolution from traditional sign making to visual identity specialisation. He said: "Today's signmaker now produces not only signs, but also vehicle and building wraps, exhibition, theatre and related backdrops, POS displays, printwear and promotional products and much more besides. This transformation has been driven by the rapid development of wide-format digital printing technology, which has enabled signmakers to engage fully with these activities."

He added: "There has been a noticeable migration by signmakers to the print wear and promotional products industry where equipment already installed for core sign manufacturing activities has been adapted to



produce a vast range of branded sports and leisure wear, fashion accessories and other forms of corporate ID material. Working in conjunction with all popular printers, Graphtec cutters, particular the CE series, have excelled not only in vinyl cutting applications that remain a major part of any sign business but also in new applications involving the heat transfer materials used widely in the print wear and promotional products sector.

"A notable innovation has been the proprietary ARMS (Advanced Registration Mark System) facility that is now incorporated into all



Graphtec cutters. The system uses four-point rather than traditional three-point media registration that ensures higher than normal plotting/cutting accuracy and enables a much wider range of materials including, for example flex, flock and rhinestone templates, that might otherwise have proved problematical to process."

As to the future of the industry, Phil feels that as technology continues to develop, the cost of entry into

the sign industry will be commensurately higher. He said: I believe we will not see so many start-up companies emerging and this is a shame. We will also see an increasing number of sign companies, particularly smaller two- and three-person operations, moving into the print wear and promotional products market on the basis that 90 per cent of the equipment already installed for sign and graphics work can be used to tap into this potentially lucrative additional business sector." ■

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Not working on 50W PCB	170	120	170	170	150
Lumen life (hours)	50,000 hours	50,000 hours	50,000 hours	Not Known	Not Known
Lumens per foot at 10,000 hours	80-90	35-40	Not Known	Not Known	Not Known
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20th anniversary feature

According to **Julian Sage**, Managing Director of **Complete CNC Solutions**, a leading supplier of CNC routing and cutting solutions, change in the industry has occurred primarily as a result of the convergence that has, in turn, been driven by technology.

He commented: "Today, any company with the right hardware, for example a router, can routinely undertake work that would have once been the exclusive province of another and entirely different industry, thus sign manufacturers have also become their own display fabricators and print finishers."

As to notable innovations, Julian added: "When I see the work undertaken by our customers I am amazed at how they flex the muscles of our systems. Pro-Cut is a significant innovation that is



enabling those companies with the right hardware to add enormous value to the output they produce. This powerful print & cut solution has released unfathomable potential in this sector of the sign industry."

As to the challenges facing the industry, Julian added: "Anything that presents a barrier to growth is a challenge and without doubt, the biggest is that the buying sector simply does not know the potential of the manufacturing side. It is a situation that needs to be addressed and a bigger market will result."

As to the future, he opined: "In the short term, we are going to see an



increased demand for attendant hardware that makes it possible to add greater value to the printed output generated by the industry. In the longer term, wider and more creative applications will result in new market opportunities and increased profitability for those companies that have wisely invested in the right kit."

In conclusion, he observed: "The

industry has been good to Complete CNC Solutions and we are lucky to be operating in interesting times and with gifted people who have deep creative capabilities. When you observe the pace at which new innovations are adopted and put to work, it is obvious that the industry has a positive future with huge potential for growth." ■



According to **Chris Bradley**, Marketing Manager at leading materials stockist and distributor **William Smith**, the most important change is the impact on the materials sector made by the huge advancements in digital

printing technology, both in terms of hardware and inks. He commented: "Signmaking has taken on an entirely different form since the early 1990's. Apart from manufacturing traditional signage involving primarily vinyl, acrylic,

composite materials, aluminium and other non-ferrous metals, today's signmaker is engaging heavily with all forms of visual communication and in particular areas such as vehicle branding, exhibition backdrops and interior décor, to name but a few of the most important."

In terms of notable innovations, Chris considers the advances made in vehicle wrapping technology and the introduction of the Rollscroller flatbed media applicator to be among the most significant. He said: "The range of 3M inkjet-printable and solid-colour films have become industry favourites, along with alternative solutions from Arlon and VION. In particular, 3M IJ380 has assumed virtual benchmark status as arguably the ultimate vehicle wrapping solution in terms of outstanding conformability and longevity, particularly when applied to vehicles with deep corrugations or three-dimensional graphics found typically in the commercial transport sector.

"With the Rollscroller, we have brought to market one of the most innovative machines for the fast and effective application of self-adhesive vinyl, cut vinyl graphics, digital prints and application tapes to many different substrates and it has provided sign and graphic producers with massive time and cost savings when compared with traditional labour-intensive application methods."

As to the challenges now facing signmakers and the future of the sign industry, Chris concluded: "With stricter controls over health and safety issues affecting manufacturing procedures, there will need to be further advances in the development of materials that meet new international standards, in terms of safety in usage and the environment. There are also likely to be further advances in the nascent textile printing industry and the need to match these with the most appropriate materials to complement the hardware and ink technologies used by this sector." ■



Robert Marshall, Vice President (Market Development) at **XYZ International** reports that the most significant change in the industry from a routing perspective is the degree to which CNC machines have been adapted for the developing print & cut sector. He offers: "There have also been major machine upgrades that now enable a much wider range of both flexible and rigid materials to be processed, including those as diverse as aluminium sheet and other non-ferrous metals, aluminium composites (ACM), stainless steel, brass, acrylic and plastics, foamed and corrugated board, vinyl and cardboard."

He adds: "A major innovation has been the recent launch of a hybrid digital finishing solution that is said to be the most versatile combined CNC routing and knife-cutting system currently available. Called the XYZ Trident, it provides a three-pronged processing capability comprising a router spindle, plus oscillating and tangential knife units, within a single powerful production workhorse.

"Trident was developed to resolve issues frequently encountered by digital print finishers and in particular, those that relate to the need to process an ever-increasing variety of flexible and rigid substrates requiring wider, longer and deeper



processing capabilities. It also obviates the need to purchase a second machine to carry out all of the routing and cutting requirements of digital print finishing, as well as handling materials that might prove too challenging for conventional routers.

As to the challenges facing the industry and its future, Robert concluded: "Advances in CAD/CAM software have influenced the development of CNC routers and it can be argued that advances in routing technology have had a corresponding effect on the development of CAD/CAM software. Neither could exist without the other and therefore developments in both have tended to go hand in hand. This trend will continue and will help open up new market opportunities for router owners whilst reducing the cost of total





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This month, **Mark Godden** argues the case for



Many happy returns!

I can't let the twentieth birthday of Sign Directions pass without comment or congratulations. After all, Sign Directions is a business much like any other and keeping it flying for twenty years is an accomplishment.

More than that though, keeping a magazine motoring for a couple of decades means that it has to change to reflect its times and that too takes very deliberate effort, and powers of foresight and perception.

That presents me with a challenge. For some reason I'm not aware of, perhaps in part payment for the alleged qualities and talents I've been gifted in other quarters, the clock-logic in my head has never been enabled. I am useless, no, worse than that, I have a total blind spot where dates are concerned.

There are some who may question the tenure of print on its very existence but none that I know who'd call time on great content. Unless Sign Directions had between its covers matter that was worth reading or worth broadcasting, its readers would just go away. Clearly, Sign Directions is worth visiting otherwise it would simply cease to be. Here's to you Val, and the others in your team. A great job done.

More home-spun philosophy has been written concerning time and its passing than about love or the meaning of life. I don't think I can add anything novel in the way of great thinking to that brew. I can though reflect. I've been in this industry since it took its first steps with computerisation and I've witnessed all the epoch making events that have shaped it since - including the birth of Sign Directions.

My version of the beginning finds its Genesis with the UK launch of an odd-looking blue box. It had a cutting plotter on top of it and a rather uncomfortable and clattery keyboard at the sharp end. It was called the Graphix 3 and it did a few things the

sign industry seemed to like. It accurately kiss-cut self-adhesive vinyl, it could draw and it could make pounce patterns too.

With one of these things in the back of an Escort Estate, I toured the UK demonstrating how vinyl signs were made, to people who, at the time, had never seen anything vaguely robotic making signs. We, Spandex that is, sold thousands of these devices. Perhaps you had one? Maybe we met?

The Graphix 3 as launched had no concept of data storage. It could only manage one line of text at a time and the only feedback it gave when entering text was via a four character LED display. Letter spacing was dire. It didn't know about kerning, and the letter shapes themselves were pretty poor. The industry got its head and arms around the device though and it very quickly established itself. Fonts? Oh yes, fonts. It came with one, had capacity for a further eight and each, in the early eighties, would cost £245.

We advertised the Graphix 3 in Signs Magazine. It was edited by one Val Hirst and was the forerunner of Sign Directions. In those days, there was no internet, responses to adverts came in via a reader response card or a phone call. We generated literally hundreds. Without Signs Magazine, traction on the market would have been much slower.

The industry regarded the Graphix signmaking computer with a mixture of fascination, awe and suspicion. Much was made about how easy it made signmaking and dark prognostications were cast about a blighted future devoid of art and artists. I presided over enough data then and experience now to put that matter straight.

I saw businesses crash and burn, sucked down by the cost of the unit and the fact that, despite being able to operate it, they couldn't make it work. The ones who made a success of things had a common quality; they had an eye for lettering and layout. They made very pleasing signs, but did so much faster. The rate that one pair of hands could work at was no longer a limiting factor.

Graftyp surfaced around this time with a competing product. Our sales didn't seem to slow and I imagine they were doing okay as well. Roland then popped out its CAMM 1. That was a real game changer and arguably defined the winning formula that most of today's printers and plotters employ for moving materials. Despite Roland's origins in the music business though, its plotter could muster no more than some odd sounding grunts and whirs. The Graphix system was a more melodious affair. One signmaker put to me the notion that it was "a song about great signs and money being made."

The next epoch in signmaking is arguably defined by the advent of durable print - direct to vinyl. Lots of false dawns and scorched fingers predated the first systems, but no doubt about it, print is here. Cut and applied graphics are now as likely to be printed as not - but they, cut and applied graphics that is, still persist and coloured vinyl sales are still very buoyant I am told.

In the twenty years that Sign Directions has been around, printers have really come of age and the market dynamic is much changed. Today's signmaker is probably more expert in colour management than he or she is in typography. Design skills, in many cases, define the cut, colour and

calibre of a signmaker and the market the company addresses is now diffused among once discrete sectors including screenprinting.

Sign Directions has had to move with the times because it reflects the times. It can't be in the least sentimental about times past because its future is upon it practically before ink dries on paper. You might describe the phase we, the industry that is, finds itself in now as 'the cruise.' Ever-faster hardware printing, ever sharper output at ever lower prices. Where and what is the next big thing that's going to ask the industry to rethink its current situation and maybe even look at current hardware and what it does as being overtaken?

I don't know.

One thing's for sure though. The skills, hardware and materials that are at the very centre of the industry today have a market way beyond the boundary line where large format print ceases to look like anything you might call a sign. Our last issue reported one such area, decor. Sign Directions may have lit a spark there and inspired some of you to explore this opportunity. And so the market evolves and grows.

Today Sign Directions competes for the eyes that consume it with other media and of course the material delivered by the internet. Despite that, it's still the safe haven it always has been. Come to it and you'll find a well-reasoned point of view, backed by many years of experience and, an easily digested consolidation of what's keeping our world turning.

Here's to the next twenty years!

Mark Godden
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