

sign

September 2013 - No.133

directions

Moving Messages

Vehicle liveries with ulterior motives



IN THIS ISSUE

GIVE ME A SIGN OFF THE SHELF SIGN AND DISPLAY SYSTEMS UNVEILED

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September 2013

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All roads lead to LED
- The illuminator of choice

Moving Messages
- Vehicle liveries with ulterior motives

Give me a sign!
- Off the shelf sign and display systems unveiled

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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: 01623 882398** 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 issue, which will include features on Lighting.



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Introduction



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setting the scene

Okay, hands up, I'll admit it!

If you've ever rung this office to request an extra copy of Sign Directions, but not received it, it's probably – well, make that definitely – my fault!

But before I tender my heartfelt apologies, let me explain why.

I live in a small village in rural Nottinghamshire and, in common with many small villages up and down the country, our local Post Office has long been under threat. Once conveniently located in its own premises and run by a team of fearsomely efficient ladies of a certain age, it first moved into a purpose built cubby-hole in the local Nisa store, from which cramped quarters the ladies continued to preside, delivering the full range of services that Post Offices used to provide.

Unfortunately, although the ladies continued to discharge their duties with the same ruthless thoroughness that we had previously enjoyed, the same couldn't be said for the Nisa store itself, which after several changes of manager finally closed. Accordingly, the Post Office moved into the local Co-op store opposite, where, for the time being at least, it remains. In this incarnation though, there is no separate cubbyhole. An extra checkout has been created, which is sometimes manned by two of the original ladies, who provide a more limited Post Office service. At other times, regular Co-op employees, who for the most part are young and uniformly spotty-faced part-timers, do their best to puzzle their way through the intricacies of really complicated transactions – such as providing the right sticker for a special delivery – with a greater or lesser degree of success, while the queue of people waiting to pay for bread, milk, newspapers and other daily necessities gradually increases.

Conversely, when one or other of the ladies is staffing the checkout, they are reluctant to involve themselves with anything so pedestrian as food

shopping, always seeming to find some urgent paperwork to occupy them, while, once again, the increasingly irate queue snakes right around the store.

Well, I say increasingly irate queue, but what I really mean was that there was generally a fairly well-behaved queue and me fizzing quietly with pent-up rage, as I hopped from one foot to another, jiggling my car keys, while wearing an expression which plainly relayed: 'Do you know how busy I am? – serve me, serve me now, or pay the price!' That's until the terrible day, when the limits of my, admittedly, very short supply of patience were breached and I had a full blown hissy fit and stormed off in high dudgeon, an event so memorable that a dear friend assures me it is still the talk of the village several months later.

Consequently, I am now obliged to travel to the nearest small town (a 10 mile round-trip, plus a 10 minute walk from the car park!) to the Post Office there before the ridiculously early last collection (3.45pm, if you please!), or to Newark, a 25 mile round trip, with a minimum £1.30 car parking charge and, an avenue that is also now closed to me, following the fateful day when I had no change for the Pay and Display machine and I got hit with a £60.00 parking fine!

So, I'm sorry, okay?

However, if you want to order extra magazines to be sent via our usual distribution channel, there's now a facility where you can do just that, following the launch of our brand new website, www.signdirectionsonline.co.uk. If you log on to the site and click onto the tab marked 'Magazine' you'll find the appropriate form to fill in. You can also use this to notify us of any change to your contact or address details too, or indeed to cancel your subscription to the magazine. And while you're online, I hope that you'll also take the opportunity to catch-up with the latest industry news, which we'll be updating daily. The site is also designed to serve as a useful archive for all of the articles that have featured in the magazine, plus others that I've had to omit due to space considerations, but which nonetheless deserve a wider airing. As with all websites, ours is still something of a work in progress, so if there's anything you'd like us to include, your ideas and suggestions are very welcome!

Moving on to this issue, the main focus this month is vehicle liveries, and on pages 28-39 you'll find some of the latest wraps plus information on the new generation of wrapping materials from a wide range of manufacturers and suppliers, while on pages 46-51 you'll find our second main feature, which provides information on some of the latest sign and display systems. On pages 23-24 you can discover why LEDs are now the illumination of choice for road signs and elsewhere, you'll find all of the regular news pages, while on page 54, Mark Godden explains why the past determines our future.

Next month, as the nights begin to draw in, our main feature will centre on lighting and also in next month's issue, you'll be able to see me as you've never seen me before!

And on that happy note of anticipation, I'm beginning to feel a desperate need for a large Kit-Kat and this week's copy of Grazia – dare I brave the Co-op again? What do you think!



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Another accolade for Sign 2000

Sign 2000 has won the Business of the Year Award for the South in a hotly contested competition that involved hundreds of entries from the Kent and Sussex areas. The award, which coincided with the company's 25th anniversary, was a fitting tribute to the success of Sign 2000 over that period and gave cause for a double celebration.

The Business of the Year Award is an annual business initiative created by ActionCOACH, the world's leading business coaching franchise with over 1200 business coaches strategically located throughout the world. The Sign 2000 award came via the ActionCOACH outlet in East Sussex and local Action Business Coach Lucy Cameron.

Two years ago, Sign 2000 moved to larger premises in Tonbridge, a move necessitated by the demands of its strong client base, which includes some of the UK's largest blue chip companies, such as Whitbread, Superdrug and the Post Office, and also engaged the services of Lucy Cameron of ActionCOACH to help implement some key strategies. These included leveraging technology and developing a dashboard for the company's key performance indicators, ensuring the appropriate level of manpower for each project and intercommunication between Sign 2000 and customers' teams, leading to the creation of 14 new jobs for that area of Kent.

Sign 2000 Sales Director, Neil Scott commented: "Lucy encouraged us to



Action Business Coach Lucy Cameron flanked by Steve Spackman, Sign 2000's Marketing Director (left), Sales Director Neil Scott and Managing Director Murray Crompton

ask our clients and the company's own staff what they liked about the services and in what areas improvements could be made, monitoring the responses and putting in place a programme that reflected how the company should go forward."

Managing Director, Murray Crompton added: "Employing an Action Business Coach has kept us focussed on key issues and has definitely helped push our business

forward. It is surprising how far we have come in a relatively short time and we have ambitious plans for the future. Lucy has helped us gain clarity on what we need to do to achieve our objectives. We have a fantastic team and together we will continue delivering a great service and products to our burgeoning customer base."

For further information visit: www.sign2000.co.uk and www.actioncoach.com

Full steam ahead for Trophex 2014

It may still be six months away, but Trophex 2014, the UK's only dedicated show for the trophy, awards, engraving and personalisation sectors, is already planning to unveil some major innovations, all of which are designed to enhance the visitor experience.

The show, which will take place at the NEC Pavilion in Birmingham on 19th and 20th January, 2014, will field a wide variety of exhibitors showing trophies, engraving equipment, lasers, sublimation printers and consumables, heat transfer presses, signage, doming, labels, and much more besides and, this

year, in addition to the usual live demonstrations and new product launches, it will offer new features too, such as the Industry Awareness Zone, a series of seminars that are designed to provide visitors with technical help and advice on a variety of industry related topics. Other new innovations will include The Knowledge Centre, where visitors will be able to seek advice from a panel of industry experts and The Networking Café/Bar, which will provide both exhibitors and visitors with an opportunity to network in a more informal setting.

For further information visit: www.trophex.com



Signs Express competes for Brandbuilder award

Following the introduction of its brand new corporate identity, Signs Express was named as a finalist for the BFA Express Newspapers Brand Builder of the Year Awards at the recent annual awards ceremony held the Honourary Artillery Company (HAC) London.

This British Franchise Association Awards, which are now in their 24th year, are designed to show how the UK's franchisors are driving their businesses forward and the Brandbuilder Award, which includes entries from franchisors across all industry sectors, highlights the methods franchisors are adopting to

effectively develop their brands to boost their potential for the future.

Signs Express Managing Director Craig Brown commented: "We were honoured to be named as a finalist, particularly as we recognised that there was potential risk involved with making changes to our established identity, but the feedback and results we've received following the revamp have reassured us that it was the right time for us to move forward and we're looking towards the future."

For further information visit: www.signsexpress.co.uk



From l to r: Sean Hammond Express Newspapers, Catherine Hayes HSBC, Rebecca Dack Signs Express, Craig Brown Signs Express, Brian Smart, British Sign & Graphics Association

Appointments



INNOVA Solutions has appointed Marc Kendall as Business Development Manager. As a result, Michael Thompson will become Customer and Technical Support Manager whilst retaining certain key customer accounts, as well as providing technical support to Marc until such time as he is fully conversant with the company's wide-ranging product portfolio.

Marc, who brings a wealth of experience gained in a variety of industrial markets, will be the main contact for all tapes and adhesives requirements.

Graphics Printing Technologies (GPT) has appointed Shaun Thompson as General Manager. Shaun, who was one of the founders of GPT and has been instrumental in its rapid



growth to become one of the UK's premier resellers, has served as its Sales Director since its acquisition by Amari Plastics plc in 2010.

He has more than 15 years experience in the wide format industry, gained at GPT, AIT, Andersons and Colourgen.

UK Point of Sale has appointed a new Head of e-Commerce, Simon Weigh, as part of its ongoing commitment to providing customers with innovative and creative online services.

Simon joins the UK POS team from health and beauty retailer Boots, where his roles included both General Manager of the Boots Treat Street website and Partnership Marketing Manager, a role which involved him in working with suppliers to maximise the sales of their products both in-store and online.

Epson UK has appointed Phil McMullin as UK Sales Manager of its Professional Graphics business unit. Phil first began working in the sign supplies sector over 20 years ago, first as a



production sales specialist with Kodak, followed by various roles at Xerox. He joins Epson from Spandex, where he was originally the company's Hardware Sales Manager, responsible for UK sales of solvent inkjet and thermal transfer printers, routers, cutters and software, prior to heading up its Media Sales division, a role that he held for eight years.

NAZDAR Ink Technologies has promoted James MacDonald to the position of Vice President of Marketing.



James, who previously led Nazdar's marketing team and was responsible

for advancing the marketing effort for the company's digital product lines, has over 20 years' experience in the industry. In his new role he will take responsibility for developing and implementing marketing strategies that help to expand Nazdar's presence internationally.

For further information visit: www.nazdar.com.

Following the resignation of Vincent Pilette as its Chief Financial Officer, EFI has appointed Marc Olin, Senior Vice President and General Manager of EFI Productivity Software, as interim Chief Financial Officer, while it initiates a formal search for a new CFO.

Marc was previously CEO and co-founder of Printcafe Software, a public company EFI acquired in 2003 as a part of its growth strategy. Brandy Green, EFI's Chief Accounting Officer, will assume additional responsibilities and report to Marc Olin.

BSGA fights over 140 planning battles

The British Sign and Graphics Association (BSGA) has lodged over 140 protests against proposed local planning laws over recent years in defence of its members and the sign industry as a whole.

Local authorities are now empowered to set out regulations covering planning applications within their areas and these 'Local Plans' can often carry conditions that could adversely affect the production and installation of signs.

"If these proposals are not monitored and fought against when necessary, unfair and unwarranted restrictions could slip through and cause major problems for the sign industry," explained BSGA Director David Catanach.

He continued: "Before the advent of local plans there was one set of regulations covering planning applications for signs and everyone knew where they stood, but now every planning authority in the country can produce its own regulations, resulting in a free for all and a raft of different regulations for different areas. You can even find situations where one set of rules governs one end of a street and a completely different set controls the other!"

The BSGA, together with its specialist advisors, has taken on the arduous task of monitoring every Local Plan that is published for consultation and submits formal objections where it is considered that any regulations are restrictive. David Catanach reported: "As an example, one local council, which has a

designated conservation area within its boundary, decided that all fascia signs should be hand painted on wood. It was, obviously, a clause initially formulated for the conservation area. This was not stated in the plan and because, in legal terms, there is no such thing as a conservation area, the planning policy would have prevailed throughout the council's territory. But the BSGA objected on the grounds that the clause was unnecessarily restrictive for districts outside the conservation area and the plan was modified as a result. Had we not acted, it's highly likely that the plan would have gone through in its original form and local signmakers would have had a battle to get anything other than hand-painted wooden signs past the planners anywhere in the district."

In order to highlight this and similar cases, the BSGA has now launched a new archive on its website archive where all the objections can be reviewed. The archive is organised alphabetically so people can easily find out what has happened in their local areas. The archive will now be kept up to date with all new activities.

David concluded: "The archive reveals the depth of the work that goes into looking after the interests of the industry in terms of planning regulations and it should also be a useful tool for signmakers across the country."

To access the BSGA Planning Archive visit: www.bsga.co.uk/planning-matters-archive For further information on the BSGA visit: www.bsga.co.uk ■



Every high street in the country could be governed by different planning regulations.

showtime

DIARY DATES FOR 2013/2014

Viscom Italia 2013 3rd-5th October

Fiera Milano, Pho Pera, Milan
Organiser: Reed Exhibitions
Tel: +39 02 435170-1
E-mail: visualcommunication@reedexpo.it
www.visualcommunication.it

Cross Media 2013 23rd - 24th October 2013

Business Design Centre, Islington, London
Organiser: Informa Exhibitions
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7017 7020
E-mail: nick.craigwaller@informa.com
www.informaexhibitions.com

Viscom Dusseldorf 2013 7th-9th November

Messe Dusseldorf, Germany
Organiser: Reed Exhibitions
Tel: +49 211 90191-133
E-mail: info@viscom-messe.com
www.viscom-messe.com

SGI Dubai 2014 7th-9th January

Dubai World Trade Centre
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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

DYSS X7

AG/CAD Advertorial

Cutting and Routing

Guildford based manufacturer, Digital Sign Services Ltd. specialises in products for outdoor advertising and indoor promotion for retail and exhibition centres. The innovative printer stays at the forefront of technology by investing in the latest equipment. As part of this ongoing investment, Digital Sign Services has installed a DYSS X7-3220C digital cutting machine to service the roll and board cutting requirements of their 3.2m wide VUTEK QS3200 digital printer.

"In the short period since acquiring the DYSS, we have drastically increased our capabilities."

Digital Sign Services Director, Mr Gerry Howell comments: "Visiting the AG/CAD stand at SIGN UK, we were immediately impressed by how attentive they were to our needs. They proposed a fully specified 3.2m wide, 2m long DYSS X7 conveyerised bed digital cutter which was a perfect match for our VUTEK."

The DYSS X7-3220C is configured with a highly flexible SuperHead which has a powerful 60,000rpm, high quality routing spindle plus 2 tangentially controlled (steerable) quick-change Toolslots. This gives Digital Sign Services the ability to handle a very diverse range of roll and rigid sheet materials, all cut perfectly to print register with the aid of the sophisticated K-CUT Camera Vision System fitted to the machine.



The 2 Toolslots accommodate a variety of tooling including: a KissCut Tool for thin flexibles such as adhesive backed vinyl, PVC banner material, etc.; a heavy duty Static Knife Tool capable of cutting tougher materials such as displayboard and even 5mm Foamex (rigid foamed PVC) in one pass; a Reciprocating Knife Tool capable of cutting corrugated, structural honeycomb boards, foamcore, Correx, etc.; a Creasing Wheel Tool for generating fold lines in various paper and polymer

based materials; a V Cut tool that can cut at 45°, 30°, or 22.5° to allow folding of thick structural boards like X Board,

ReBoard, Falconboard, etc.; a Powered Rotary Blade Tool that can cleanly cut flag mesh and other fabric materials that are difficult to cut otherwise without dragging and fraying.

The additional Router Spindle in the SuperHead has the power and finesse to give an excellent finish cutting tough materials that are impossible to knife cut such as acrylic, aluminium composite (DiBond, etc.), thick Foamex, wood, etc. The X7 is built on a very heavy gauge welded steel frame which combined with a thick aluminium honeycomb vacuum bed provides a very stable, flat and rigid platform, a necessity for routing applications.



Mr Howell states: "The DYSS X7 is going to be a fantastic investment for our business. It has already seen existing customers give us more work, and new customers are moving to us from our competitors because we can now provide a full in-house service for print and cut, no matter how complex. Overall we are delighted with our purchase and the service from AG/CAD. In the long term, the system will give us a tenfold increase in productivity."



For more information on how the DYSS range of highly competitively priced X7 digital cutters can revolutionise your business, go to www.dyss-uk.com, call AG/CAD on 01606 863344 or email sales@agcad.co.uk

AG/CAD

The Royal Academy Schools | Kuala Lumpur International Airport |
The Prince of Wales Theatre | The Sea Life Tower

new projects



▲ **The Royal Academy Schools** recently held its annual exhibition of final year postgraduate students' work profiling the work of 17 artists. Housed within the historic studio spaces of the Schools, several of the works on display included those produced using large-format **Epson** printers and projectors, accessible to the students in the on-site Epson Digital Media Suite. Epson provides the very latest in large-format printers and projectors to the RA Schools so students can experiment with different materials and designs

to produce their final artwork. In this year's exhibition, **James Robertson** used digital media to produce a small army of digitally-produced laser cut-outs printed onto Foamex depicting a young feminist campaigner, alongside appropriated and manipulated digital poster works and printed wet T-shirts that were repeatedly stuck to the gallery walls with water.

For further information visit: www.royalacademy.org.uk and www.epson.com ■



▲▲ **Bright Green Technology** is nearing the completion of a large scale project at **Kuala Lumpur International Airport's** new terminal, which benefits from more than 700 individual wayfinding signs, with LED backlighting specified and optimised by Bright Green Technology. The signage has been specifically designed to be 'no maintenance' when compared to traditional fluorescent tube lighting, thus better reflecting the needs of the busy, round-the-clock airport terminal.

In addition, the company has delivered an overall operating cost saving of 79 percent, thanks

to fast installation and the reduced power consumption of the LED lighting over its lifetime.

Bright Green Technology has been helping airports enjoy the benefits of using LEDs to backlight its billboards for many years, ensuring that this important revenue producing advertising consistently looks at its best, while also reducing costs and saving energy. Carrying these benefits over to airport wayfinding thus represents a natural progression.

For further information visit: www.brightgreentechnology.com ■

▲▲ **Newman Displays** has retrofitted exterior signage and light-boxes at **The Prince of Wales Theatre** with **Applelec's** newly launched, 20 percent brighter Series 2 LED Light Sheet, in order to reduce the theatre's annual energy consumption.

The decision to replace fluorescent tubes with LED Light Sheet was made both for aesthetic reasons and to improve the energy efficiency of the signage and branding system. The LED Light Sheet signage draws 1514W, in comparison to 9904W of the previous system, to deliver an annual reduction of almost 46000kWh, a drop of 85 percent, which represents an annual saving of £3,900 to the theatre's energy bill, as well reducing maintenance costs.

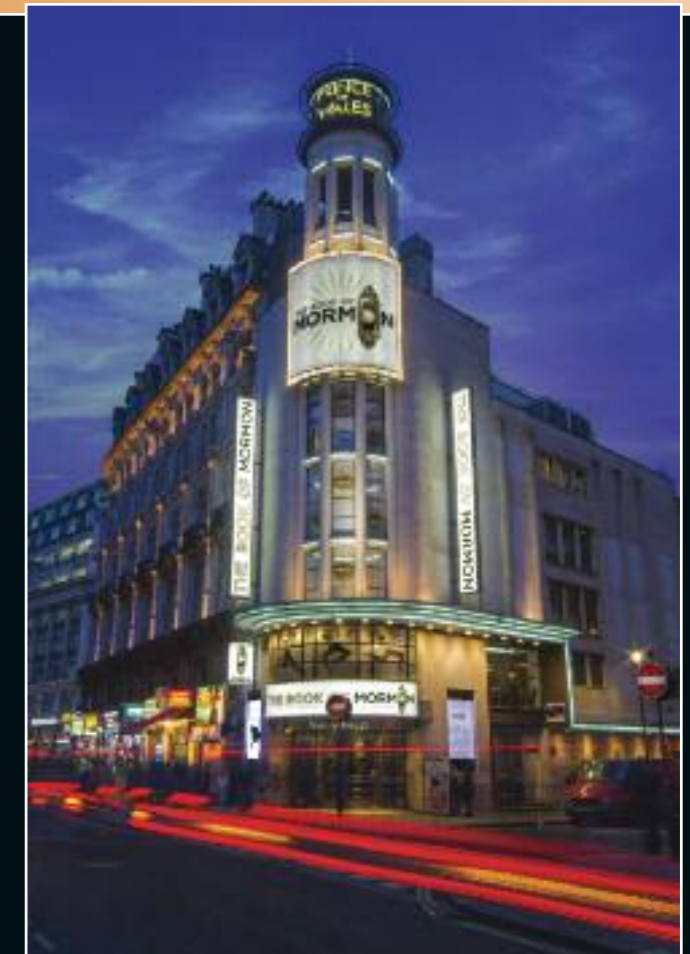
The provision of bright, even illumination to the projecting signage and light-boxes was the primary objective of the project. The venue's four metre square, light-box and entrance door-streamer are curved fixtures that have been illuminated by faceting multiple panels of LED Light Sheet;

a technique that's often employed to illuminate large curved installations.

The theatre's former fluorescent tube system, which was originally installed for the musical Mamma Mia, was replaced before the run of the controversial musical The Book of Mormon and scaffolding was installed to fit the new Led Light Sheet system which features a three year warranty and has been manufactured with an IP67 rating to ensure it is protected against exterior conditions. Future changes to graphics can be managed via the use of cherry pickers or by a fitter abseiling down the building.

In total 30 Series 2 LED Light Sheet units were used throughout the installation which includes the attention-grabbing large scale feature light-box, two 7.5 metre long double-sided light-boxes positioned vertically along the sides of the building, a curved streamer above the theatre's door, and a small double-sided projecting sign.

For further information visit: www.applelec.co.uk |



▲ When it was decided to install a new visitor attraction in Weymouth, **Merlin Entertainments**, which also owns **Weymouth Sea Life Park**, came up with the innovative idea of erecting a 174ft. high rotating observational tower, providing panoramic views across the town, the bay and beyond, which would also become a popular local landmark.

Swift Signs, which was awarded the contract to supply and install the graphic wrap for the reception building and the walkways to the tower, asked William Smith to suggest a suitable and extremely durable media, bearing in mind the building's seafront location and

difficult structure. Accordingly, William Smith recommended Arlon DPF 8000, a white satin high-tensile polyvinyl chloride film, with an extra strong permanent pressure-sensitive adhesive that offers an ideal solution for indoor and outdoor graphics on 'hard-to-stick' and low energy surfaces. Swift Signs subsequently used approximately one kilometre of the material to create the graphics, which after 12 months of exposure to wind, weather and sea-spray, have proved to be as durable as they are striking.

For further information visit: www.swiftsignsuk.com and www.williamsmith.co.uk ■

Supplier News

PaperlinX opens its doors

PaperlinX has opened the doors to its London office, thus providing a flexible space in which the Group's customers can work more effectively and more efficiently when in London.

The Mandela Way office has been given a facelift, redecorated and kitted out with a dedicated hot-desking area that customers can use as an extension of their own offices.

Open to all PaperlinX clients, Mandela Way provides use of a desk, access to a

Wi-Fi-enabled broadband connection, printing facilities and meeting rooms and there's also a brand new coffee machine too!

Explaining this innovation, Andy Buxton, Managing Director Commercial Print, said: "Many of our customers regularly find themselves in London visiting clients or attending sales appointments and need more than a cramped table in a coffee shop to answer e-mails or respond to customers' queries and, since our focus is firmly on meeting our customers'



needs, we made the creation of this resource a priority."

For bookings and further

information, contact PaperlinX on Tel: 0207 7402276 or visit: www.paperlinx.co.uk

PrintMAX complements Roland with Metamark

Authorised Roland dealer PrintMAX has now added Metamark's Sign and Digital media ranges to its portfolio of consumables.

Commenting on the appointment of PrintMAX, Metamark's CEO, Paul French, said: "We believe the way PrintMAX treats its customers and the solutions it aims to offer is a perfect reflection of our business,

here at Metamark. And as we plan to grow our business significantly in the future, this new strategic partnership will enable us to achieve our combined goals."

Michael Bolton, PrintMAX's Managing Director added: "We strive to offer the very best large format print solutions on the market, and I believe that with our knowledge and expertise, plus the

addition of high-performance products from Roland and Metamark we will be able to meet this aim."

To request a brochure, pricelist and samples, Tel: 01420 511539 or alternatively, e-mail: info@printmax.co.uk or visit: www.printmax.co.uk/consumables/metamark/.

Good times for EFI

EFI recently announced all time record revenue for the second quarter of 2013, which saw the company's takings rise by 10 percent up to \$180.3 million compared to its second quarter 2012 revenue of \$163.9 million.

For the six months ended June 30th, 2013, EFI reported revenues of \$351.7 million, up nine percent year-over-year compared to \$324.0 million for the same period in 2012.

Commenting on these encouraging figures, Guy Gecht, EFI's CEO said: "We could not have been more delighted with the record results the team delivered in the second quarter and look to maintain this momentum into the third quarter as customers increasingly turn to us to make their businesses more competitive."

For further information visit: www.efi.com

SAi opens Training and Technology Centre

SA International (SAi) a provider of software solutions for the professional signmaking and wide-format digital print sectors, has opened a dedicated training and technology centre at its new Brussels-based EMEA headquarters.

Forming part of SAi Europe's office complex, the new, multi-purpose facility will serve as a state-of-the-art demonstration, training and testing centre and will offer specialist educational sessions on key SAi software and applications to the company's extensive and growing



reseller and OEM network, as well as to end-users.

For further information visit: www.ThinkSAi.com

Pyramid Display Materials expands by acquisition

Pyramid Display Materials has recently acquired the Leeds-based self-adhesive vinyl distributor Sydney Beaumont, which has been supplying self-adhesive vinyls to the sign, display and exhibition industries since 1966.

Sydney Beaumont offers materials from the ranges supplied by German self-adhesive vinyl manufacturer X-Film, for which it recently became the UK's exclusive national distributor.

When announcing the acquisition, Dennis Morgan, Pyramid's Managing Director said: "Sydney Beaumont has a great history in the industry, being the UK's first ever distributor of the Fascal range and we believe that

following our acquisition of Gottlieb Packaging, this new move will help us to further reinforce our strategy of diversification into niche markets, while also enabling us to secure a greater presence in Yorkshire."

Geoff Leigh, who will continue as Managing Director of Sydney Beaumont, added: "This is great news for all of us at Beaumont as our customers will benefit from the support a larger company can provide, together with a greatly expanded range of digital roll and flat sheet products at the very competitive prices that increased buying power can provide."

For further information visit: www.pyramiddisplay.co.uk



THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR FLEX SYSTEM...

AVAILABLE TO YOUR EXACT REQUIREMENTS FROM THE SIGN BOX EXPERTS **NOVA**

The Ecorflex system is now easily recognized for affording the new industry feature 'back clip' lensing system. Re-design enables ease of both manufacture and maintenance with no parking springs or eye-bolts, and available in a depth of 15mm, it is ideally suited for both fluorescent and LED lighting solutions.

Ecorflex is a light weight system that has the versatility of being able to create most shapes and has no size restrictions. Also available as a double sided option with a depth of just 20mm.

Also available as the ultra slim non-illuminated fascia frame. With a depth of just 10mm and a glass cover of 2mm, it is ideal for non-illuminated signs of any size.

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Supplier News

Complete CNC Solutions to distribute Tekcel routers

For the past decade, the name Tekcel has been synonymous with one of the industry's most highly regarded routers, with users extolling the virtues of its outstanding performance, pin point precision, high productivity and above all, reliability.



maintaining, servicing and supporting all existing Tekcel and Spandex Tornado router customers, as well as welcoming potential new router and tooling customers on board".

received from CNC router owners."

In addition, Complete CNC Solutions is also offering substantial discounts on quantity purchases of tooling and is always available to lend expert help and advice for customers requiring support when choosing the correct cutter, feed rate or machining strategies for CNC routers.

The company has also implemented an expansion plan, in order to meet the continued high demand for Tekcel routers, which has included a recent move into larger premises in Somerset that feature a new router demonstration area, where customers can see Tekcel routers in action, together with an extensive range of CNC tooling and cut material samples. It has also created new positions in its technical and administration departments.

Julian concludes: These are really exciting times for Complete CNC

Solutions and I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank all of our existing customers for their continued support through this transitional period. We are truly dedicated to providing them with the same high levels of sales and aftersales support that they've enjoyed over the years and commit to offering potential new customers an equally positive purchasing experience".

For further information on Tekcel Routers or to receive Complete CNC Solutions' New 2013 Tooling and Accessories PDF, Tel: on 01934 742186, e-mail info@completecnc.co.uk or visit: www.completecnc.co.uk ■

Previously distributed by Tekcel CNC Solutions, Tekcel routers will now be sold through Complete CNC Solutions, which has been appointed as the exclusive Distributor for all Tekcel CNC router products and accessories throughout the UK and Europe.

The company's Managing Director, Julian Sage, who can draw on more than 22 years of CNC router experience said: "Along with the manufacturer of Tekcel routers, we are totally committed to supplying,

To complement its distributorship, Complete CNC Solutions has launched an exciting new online store, which offers an extensive range of high quality solid carbide CNC tooling, cutters and accessories. Julian continued: "We've developed an unbeatable range of cost effective tooling products that are specifically designed to deliver high class routed edge finishes, across a wide range of materials for the sign, display, POS, exhibition and shop fitting sectors. These products have been developed as a direct result of our own broad experience of CNC routing, together with the on-going feedback we've

Select your screen

Following the increasing interest in the use of LED screens as part of an overall signage package, Messagemaker has recently published a guide to help signmakers and their customers to make the right product choices.

The guide, which focuses on the key factors that buyers and specifiers should be aware of when evaluating solutions based on screen size and resolution, is designed to simplify the specification process and reduce risk, and answers the most commonly posed questions that buyers ask, or should be thinking about!

To download a copy of the new guide visit: <http://www.messagemaker.co.uk/full-colour-led-displays> or for further advice contact Messagemaker on Tel: 01737 774738. ■

William Smith sets the benchmark

Confirming its long involvement with the traffic signage sector, William Smith is now engaging fully with the new Tourist Gateway Signs initiative that has added a new dimension to boundary signs, which now incorporate full-colour graphics depicting a place of historic or similar public interest.



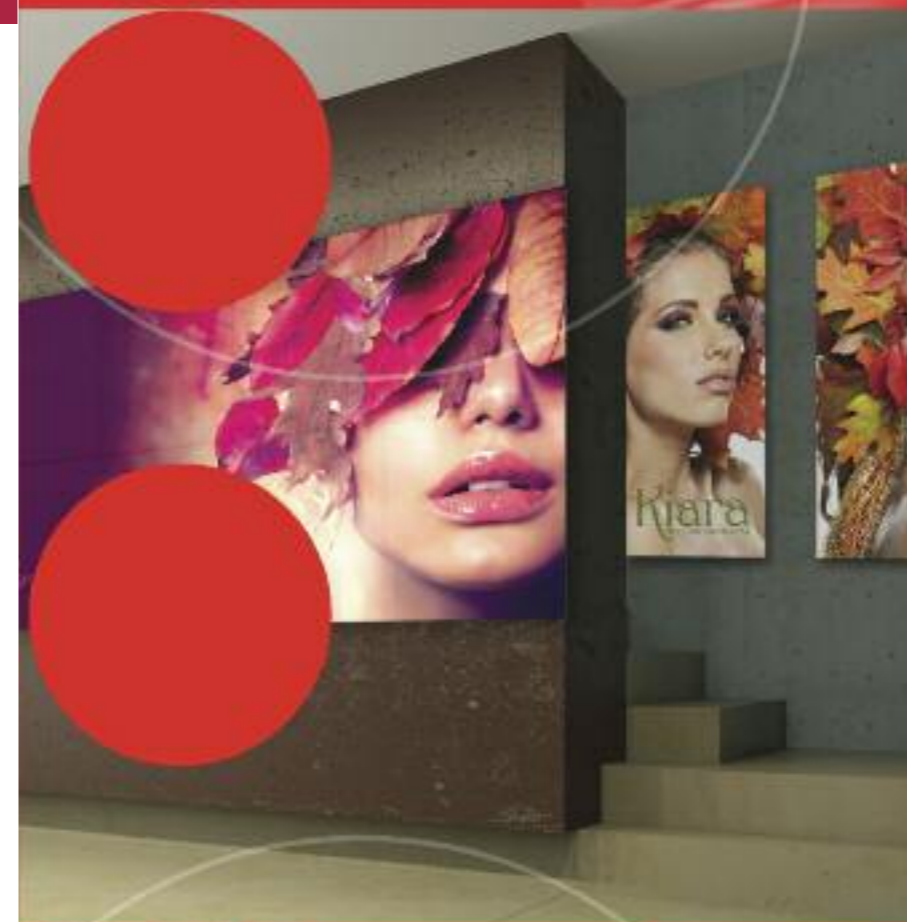
William Smith is one of the major suppliers of these new Tourist Gateway Signs, with a recent installation on behalf of South Tyneside Council being a good example of the quality of the service now provided to local authorities and town and city planning agencies. Furthermore, for sign companies wishing to participate in the new initiative, but as yet lacking the necessary accreditation, William

Smith, as a fully CE-accredited company, can act on a sub-contractual basis on their behalf.

Compliance with the new standard BS EN 12899-1 2007 covering the requirements for the manufacture and installation of road traffic signs that came into effect on 1st July of this year is just one of the key

attributes available. As such, William Smith can provide all of the necessary UK government approvals, as well as guidance on the accreditation process for Tourist Gateway Signs.

For further information visit: www.williamsmith.co.uk ■



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Asanti Workflow

Jeti TitanX

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Whatever their choice though, they can look forward to engines with the latest technology and robust build quality not to mention optimum compatibility with the new Asanti wide-format workflow plus dedicated inks.

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Equipment & Material

Applelec leads a light revolution

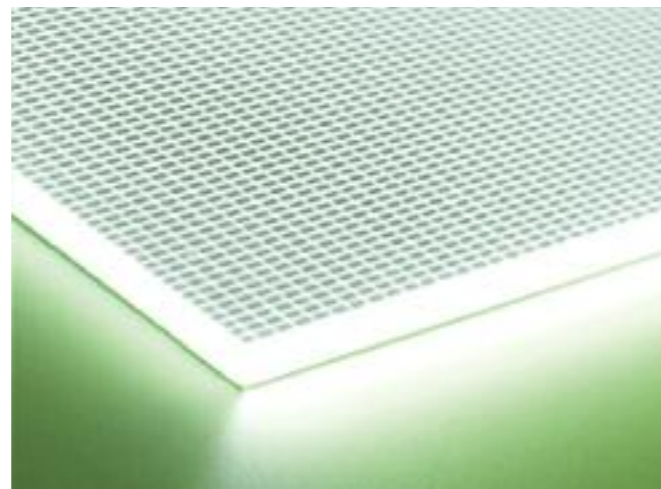
Applelec has launched the next generation of LED Light Sheet in the form of its 20 percent brighter Series 2 panels, which as the name suggests, achieves a magnificent 20 percent increase in brightness for both standard and high brightness panels.

Furthermore, due to advances in LED technology, Series 2 LED Light Sheet achieves this increased brightness without compromising the energy efficiency of the panels and as tests carried out on 300mm square, cool white panels showed, there was only a minute increase of just 0.12W, in both the standard and high brightness units, when compared to

their Series 1 counterparts.

In addition, despite their increased brightness these advanced panels are available at the same price as their predecessors and carry a three-year warranty, while the LED Strips feature a wider chip platform that reduces the dark areas to the side of each illuminated chip, thus further enhancing the performance of Series 2 LED Light Sheet.

The next generation panels are now being used in all of Applelec's LED Light Sheet fabricated signage, including projecting, totem and fascia signs, where it eliminates the need for a built-up metal back tray, which



would normally house fluorescent tubes, thus reducing both material cost and tray bulkiness. Mounted directly behind an acrylic backing-sheet, then fixed to the wall with top and bottom aluminium angle fixing rails, LED Light Sheet reduces tray depth from 100mm to a super-slim 30mm.

Manufactured in purpose-built antistatic rooms, with each LED Light Sheet unit created to customer specification, Series 2 panels provide a direct upgrade to the outgoing panels.

For further information visit: www.applelec.co.uk and www.ledlightsheet.co.uk

Greener stencils

Doro Tape UK has added three new paper alternatives, all of which are 100 percent PVC free, to its standard range of PVC paint stencil films.

Manufactured by the German company Regulus, which has recently appointed Doro as its UK distributor, the papers come in three different options; standard paper with a medium tack adhesive; special paper, which is similar to the standard paper with a higher tack adhesive; and a premium paper with a medium tack adhesive that is very resistant to solvent paints. All the films are easy to weed and have excellent lay flat properties, eliminating edge curl, even after a long drying time, thus providing perfectly crisp edges with residue free removal. Additionally, several layers can be applied at one time, something that is not possible when using PVC films.

The Regulus films have already proved to be a big hit with a European multinational retail clothing company, which uses them regularly to produce the painted graphics that grace the interior walls of its UK stores. Paper stencil films, which are ideal for the creation of small letters and fine shapes and excellent for creating very sharp edges, also offer the added benefit of being 100 percent recyclable.

For further information visit: www.dorotape.co.uk



Top quality, low price



Spandex is now stocking Avery Dennison's low cost cast films, a new range of 100 coloured films that offer conformability over rivets and corrugations, together with up to eight years durability at a price point more usually associated with a polymeric film.

The film is ideal for use in the full gamut of indoor and outdoor signmaking applications, including vehicle liveries, window graphics, POS and outdoor advertising.

For further information visit: www.spandex.com

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Equipment & Material

Clean-cut solutions

The Knifeless Tech range of knifeless tapes, which has recently been added to William Smith's Tools and Accessories portfolio, offers a faster, easier and safer option than trimming with a blade.

In addition, the risk of damage to vehicle paintwork is eliminated, as cutting of graphic and wrapping film is achieved by means of a highly visible straight filament in the centre of the tape.

The Knifeless Tech tapes are translucent and repositionable and both tape and filament can be easily stretched and turned in any direction. The range, which includes Finish Line, for basic trimming of a vehicle's panel edges, DesignLine, which gives a clean cut finish when applying stripes, Perf Line, which provides a 3mm gap from the edge of window panels when using perforated films, and Bridge Line, for bridging wide gaps between vehicle



panels, doors, seams and rubber seals, are available ex-stock from William Smith, with next day delivery on orders placed before 6.00pm.

For further information visit: www.williamsmith.co.uk

Smooth and soft for sign appeal



In line with the increasing interest in all forms of soft signage, Doro has increased its range of suitable materials with the addition of the self-adhesive fabric Digi-Fab.

Digi-Fab is a 210gsm polyester fabric, which can be digitally printed using solvent, eco solvent, latex and UV inks, which features a repositionable adhesive that will stick to any interior smooth, non porous surface and enables even the worst crinkles to be

smoothed out during application, thus making it ideal for use in retail, exhibition and display applications.

The removable adhesive makes it easily replaceable without destroying walls, paint, glass or any other surface and is especially suitable for applications where continuous changes and updates need to be made.

For further information visit: www.dorotape.co.uk

An eco-friendly alternative

Quality Print Services (QPS) has added Ilford BioMedia to its product portfolio at the same price point as comparable products, thus enabling signmakers to offer more environmentally friendly output at competitive prices.

Ilford BioMedia is fully recyclable and can be incinerated for energy production without the release of any harmful gases or chemicals, thus also enabling brand owners to save money by avoiding landfill fees, which are currently running at £64 per tonne. It can be used for all display applications that were previously the province of more traditional materials, such as PVC or polyester laminates, including indoor and outdoor poster displays, exhibition graphics, pop-ups and banners

The range from QPS includes BioMedia Display Film in a matt finish that is compatible with aqueous, solvent, eco-solvent and latex ink technology, BioMedia Display Film UV in matt finish, which can be used in conjunction with UV printers, BioMedia Rigid Board, an ultra-smooth direct-to-print board suitable for all UV platforms, and BioMedia



Laminate, a satin-finish alternative to traditional polyester laminates. BioMedia products are available in a selection of thicknesses and/or widths.

For further information visit: www.qualityprintservices.com

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Equipment & Material

A speedy solution

Despite the increasing popularity of vehicle wraps, much digitally printed media is still destined for application to flat surfaces, but these often present their own challenges, especially when users are working at speed, as any air trapped under the graphic can make an unwelcome dent in a tight deadline.

However, Metamark claims to have the solution to this and other problems in the flat-graphics arena, with the launch of its new MD3A-B vinyl, which, as its name suggests is a derivative of the popular Metamark MD3 range.

MD3A-B adds the benefit of Metamark's MetaScape air exclusion

technology to the company's Apex adhesive, thus producing high performing value-oriented MD-Class media that practically applies itself to flat application expanses.

In addition, MD3A-B adds an opaque inclusion to the adhesive that minimises substrate-induced colour-casts finding a way into the print. This makes it the perfect choice for colour-critical jobs that benefit from the classic MD-Class colour pop, as colour fidelity is assured. Early users of the product have reported that the film also easily covers unsightly repair work prior to graphic application.

As with all MD-Class media, MD3A-B has cut generous profiles with high ink



limits, thus liberating more of the printer's colour gamut and taking full advantage of the polar-white face-film surface. It produces equally good results when used in conjunction with all common ink technologies.

Sample rolls of MD3A-B are available for quality testing, by contacting sales@metamark.co.uk for same day shipment.

For further information visit: www.metamark.co.uk

Stick it up, peel it off

Drytac Europe, the Bristol-based manufacturer of products for graphics finishing and display, has launched ViziPrint SEL polyester film for use with solvent, eco-solvent and latex printers.



A printable, clear, 75µ (3 mil) polyester film, with a unique removable and repositionable adhesive, ViziPrint can be easily applied to glass, acrylic and other non-porous surfaces without the need for floating on water. As such, it is ideal for the creation of high quality graphics for use as retail storefronts, POP displays and backlit displays. It is highly versatile and can also be used for quick applications, such as affixing a menu to a restaurant window.



air bubbles with a squeegee.

Drytac's entire range of films and adhesives is exclusively distributed throughout the UK and Ireland by Antalis. For the most up-to-date pricing and availability, visit www.antalis.co.uk

The installation of a ViziPrint graphic couldn't be simpler and can easily be undertaken without any specialist training; all users need to do is simply position the graphic, remove the release liner and smooth out any

Small and smart!

Already known for creating a wow factor at airports, retail outlets, leisure venues, hospitals and public sector buildings, Tensator's Virtual Assistant Ultra is now available with an interactive button panel, which enables customers to interact with the unit for the first time, with a choice of eleven extra functions.



The buttons can be programmed to dispense a wide variety of bespoke options, depending on the setting. For example, it can supply extra information on particular products for shoppers, advise patients on basic treatments, direct air passengers around terminals, play video presentations and answer a host of frequently asked questions.

With the additional benefit of presenting in a selection of different languages, the new feature is particularly beneficial for locations with a multi-cultural population.

With a footprint of just a 50cm x 50cm, the Virtual Assistant Ultra is the

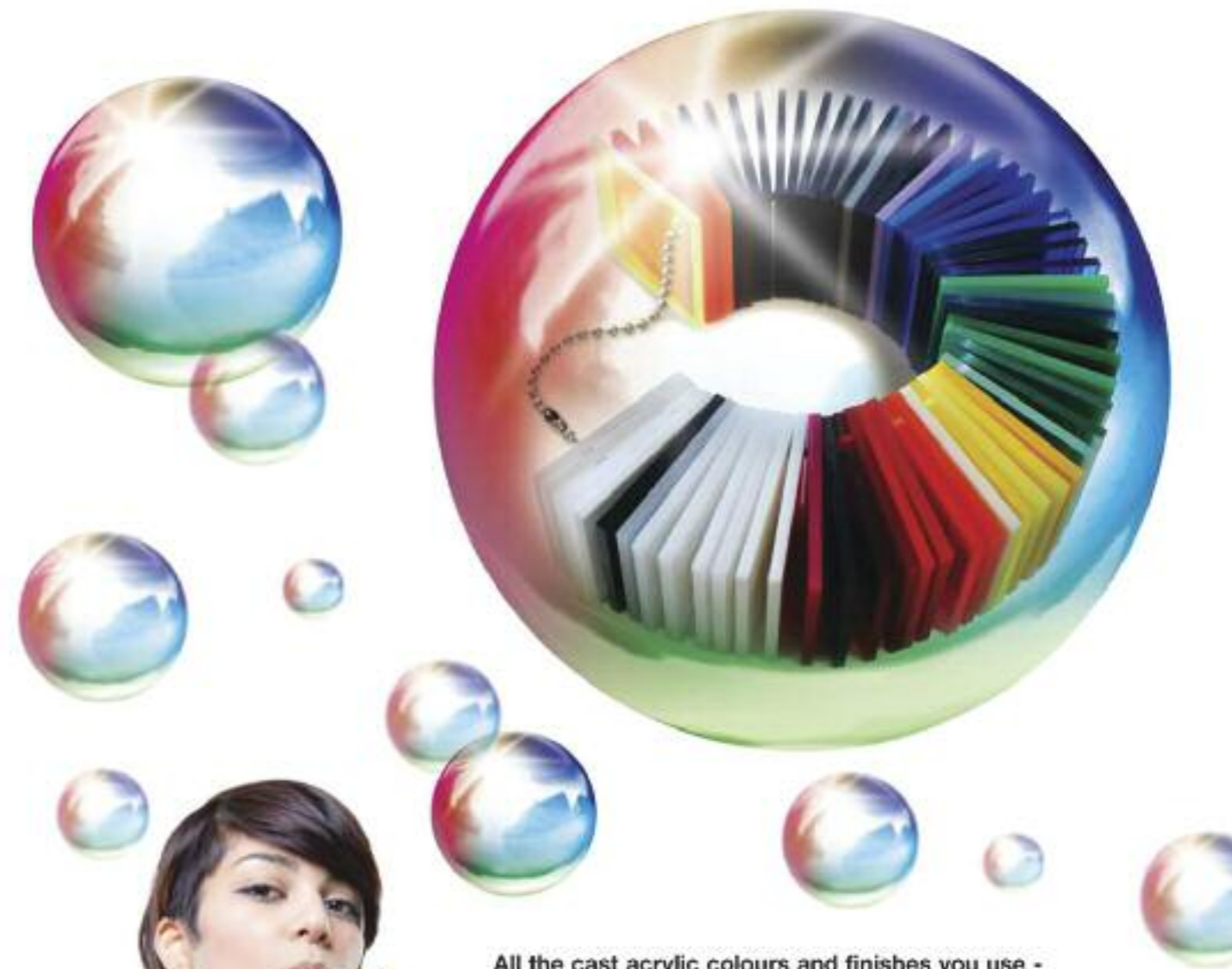
most compact version in Tensator's Virtual Assistant range, as it is designed to conveniently fit almost anywhere in a store, reception area or terminal building.

For further information visit: <http://www.tensator.com/uk/showroom/tensator-virtual-assistant.aspx>



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Cutting costs with AXYZ

An AXYZ 6010 twin head router supplied by AXYZ International has provided Surrey-based Steel the Scene with a very cost-effective solution to its CNC machining requirements by enabling it to meet these in-house rather than outsourcing.

Adding to this cost efficiency is the fact that the router was one of the many high-quality second-hand machines that AXYZ International can now supply and maintain at a particularly appealing price to companies not wishing to commit to investment in new machinery, either for budgetary or production level requirement considerations.

Steel the Scene uses the AXYZ router for machining components used primarily for the scenic solutions it provides to high-profile clients in the theatrical, TV studio, outdoor events, corporate and retail sectors, as well as for signage and product prototyping. The components are invariably panel parts based on wood and aluminium or plastic fixtures that have to be of a particularly high standard and

delivered within a tight time frame.

One of the three managing partners at the company, Barry Ashwick commented: "Prior to purchasing the router, we were outsourcing CNC machining at some expense and with the usual variables. As these machining requirements escalated to meet increased levels of business, it was decided to bring them in-house, thus enabling immediate savings in production costs, a faster response capability and minimal turnaround times to the obvious satisfaction of our customers."

The AXYZ 6010 router now installed has a three by two-metre processing table and offers the ability to handle a wide variety of materials. These include solid woods, plywood, MDF, aluminium composite sheet, laminates and plastics. The router is one of the AXYZ 6000 series renowned for their robust construction, speed of production and ultimate precision. They are supplied as standard with a host of machining enhancements that includes the latest A2MC controller for optimum smooth machine motion, a high-precision



helical rack and pinion system for exceptional machining accuracy, automatic machine squaring and direct-drive servomotors. Optional enhancements include a 21-station ATC (Automatic Tool Change) facility to accommodate multiple cutting tool requirements and AVS (XYZ Vision System), compatible with all of the cutting tools used on AXYZ routers, for unparalleled material alignment and cutting.

On the service provided by AXYZ International, Barry Ashwick concluded: "We were impressed by the all-round service, by the care demonstrated during the installation process and by the ongoing customer support. Collectively, these reassured us that we had chosen the right supplier for our CNC machining requirements."

For further information visit: www.axyz.co.uk

The cleanest cut

Following the move to a new purpose-built production facility and showroom at the Omni Business Centre in Alton, Hampshire, specialist supplier of fabrication equipment Awltech is now offering customers a new laser cutting service.



The company is well known in the sign industry for its high-quality plastic fabrication equipment that includes heat benders and both diamond edge and flame polishing systems backed by a first-class customer support facility.

The new service is based on the installation of three powerful laser-cutting systems that enables

medium to large volumes of panel processing to be handled efficiently up to a size of 2,500 x 1,500mm and a thickness of 10mm. Customers are welcome to visit the new showroom and view the range of heat benders, flame and diamond polishers and laser cutting equipment.

For further information visit: www.awltech.co.uk

The floating option

Zapcut has announced an all-new floating router head option for its ZM moving column vertical panel saw range, which will be of particular interest to those whose manufacturing process includes the grooving or edging of timber, timber-related sheet products or signmaking materials.

Switching between saw and router heads is quick and easy, enabling a single operator to swiftly size and rout sheet materials with no workpiece repositioning.

Depth of groove is set with a simple twist dial, while the router head's 'floating' design ensures a consistent depth of cut even on flimsier materials that may bow and bend. In conjunction with the the robust, precision engineering in the ZM frame, this makes accurate grooving rapid and straightforward.

The ZM moving column vertical panel saw range caters for sheet sizes ranging from 2.5m x 1.25m to 3.1m x 2.1m, offers cross, rip, plunge and bevel cutting with no workpiece repositioning and a cut depth of up to 38mm. Sheet supports are movable from the bottom of the frame to the mid-point, for work on smaller pieces. Switching from saw head to router head takes just seconds, enabling the user to precisely cut, groove and edge a workpiece in one operation.

Signmaking applications will include the V-grooving of composite materials, such as Dibond, prior to folding to create light boxes and similar products, while woodworkers will find the router head invaluable for the creation of grilles and decorative edges.

For further information visit: www.zapcut.co.uk

The next big colours have arrived.



Break into colour with four amazing new Foamalux shades: **Neon Pink, Neon Green, Black Sparkle and Raspberry.** Now with 15 vibrant matt colours to choose from, gloss colours, bright white and environmentally friendly options, Foamalux is Europe's brightest, most exciting range of foam PVC sheet.

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All roads lead to LED

Road and traffic signs have come a long way since the distances to towns and cities were simply carved into large stone slabs and stuck in the ground. As traffic volumes continue to increase, road signs are playing even more important roles in managing the flow of traffic, easing congestion, or informing motorists of impending danger.



As the UK's road networks are advancing, so too are road signs. Intelligent LED road signs are now common-place on country roads, city centres, and motorways, all with varying roles.

LED road signs might have already been installed in your local area, though you may not know it until night falls. And there are a number of reasons behind this shift towards increased road sign illumination in the UK,

namely; the increase in the amount of vehicles on the road, safety trends, and changing vehicle designs. Additionally, in the last 20 years, life expectancy in the UK has increased to 79.9 years, and because people are living longer, they're also driving longer.

Going the distance

LEDs are the illuminators of choice for this particular requirement, due to their long life, reliability and efficiency. In that respect they are perfectly designed for road signs for which these two factors are paramount.

Providing one hundred percent illumination, LED's are rapidly replacing non-illuminated and Type A (incandescent) overhead signs, which only receive up to 10 percent of a vehicle's headlamp illumination.

As well as making signs easier to see for oncoming traffic, it also reduces the amount of light pollution that occurs with Type A signs that spread light indiscriminately and may affect nearby residences and businesses. Being internally lit, LEDs

only illuminate the sign itself, and also increase sign visibility, which can help to reduce the number of accidents.

Not only are LED road signs more dependable, they are also more environmentally friendly and energy efficient, providing significant energy savings when compared to their incandescent counterparts. An LED road sign will save around 77 percent energy compared to an externally lit sign, and 68 percent compared to a conventional internally lit sign, which leads to a smaller carbon footprint.

Furthermore, a typical LED will have a life expectancy in excess of 50,000 hours, roughly five years - greatly reducing an authority or agency's maintenance schedules as well as cutting the cost of replacing bulbs on a regular basis.

One Direction

As the benefits of LED road signs become more apparent, two organisations have formed a strategic partnership to provide local authorities and contractors with a

sophisticated control and monitoring system when rolling out LED road signs.

One2See, specialist manufacturers of illuminated LED road signs, are working with Harvard Engineering PLC, a world leader in the design, development and manufacture of control products for the lighting industry.

The partnership will see Harvard's advanced wireless monitoring and control system, LeafNut, being installed alongside One2See Signs' internally illuminated LED signs, which will enable authorities and operators to totally control and monitor the signs.

LeafNut uses WiMAC wireless CMS (Central Management System) technology to remotely monitor and control the output of each individual sign.



Using a combination of GPRS and radio frequency, lighting operators can easily configure and manage the light output via LeafNut, thus enabling the dimming of individual lights to match the specific requirements of various locations throughout the night. Each lighting point is monitored so any faults are reported directly to the operators.

The new solution will also give local authorities the ability to save energy and carbon emissions through accurately timed switching on and off, as well as being able to remotely manage lighting schedules and inventory. In addition, there will be a reduction in night scouting costs due to LeafNut's unique reporting feature, which can accurately predict lamp failure.



Worldwide, LeafNut has already been installed by nearly 100 local authorities and closer to home authorities such as Surrey County Council, Richmond, and prestigious areas such as the Crown Estate and Westminster City have employed the technology in their road sign lighting

and are already making significant savings on energy costs and carbon emissions, as well as aiding road safety.

For further information visit: www.leafnut.com

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This is just a small selection of 1000's of display products available to view and buy at www.gpxgroup.com including acrylic poster holders, ticket holders, snap frames, A-boards, snowboard stands and much more.

Unleash the power of the WebShop

In recognition of the fact that many potential customers now head directly to the web when they are researching the best printing deals, Caldera has launched WebShop, a new web-to-print solution developed specifically to help sign and display printers that is designed to promote their products online, thus reducing the time spent on the sales process, while also helping to increase their overall volume of work.

Based on the popular Magento e-commerce solution, Caldera WebShop is a full-featured solution that enables users to tailor their online store to suit their individual needs. The SaaS product can also be integrated with Caldera's Flow+ and RIP solutions to provide a complete sales-to-production system.

Highlights include the ability to create multiple shops, with different products and prices for specific customers or target markets, and various product categorisation features that support an unlimited numbers of categories and

sub-categories.

The Simple Product listing is the basic format, which can be expanded with several additional options. Grouped Product enables customers to purchase a pre-defined selection of products with one click, while Configurable Product offers the ability to fix a price for a combination of Simple Product purchases. Sales of intangible services are catered for with the Virtual Product type, and sign and print companies can also offer a Downloadable Product. Lastly, the Variable Size Product, designed especially for wide-format print houses, is an option enabling the customer to choose the size of product they want, with a more complex pricing mechanism that can calculate cost according to factors such as the number of items required or the total printed area.

A Dashboard interface offers direct access to important information for production and sales teams, while a newsletter function helps businesses to keep in touch with their web customers, offering templates and subscriber



management. A number of reporting options are also available, such as sales, shopping cart, product and customer statistics.

For further information visit: www.caldera.com

Shuttleworth launches significant update



Shuttleworth has launched its latest pioneering MIS software, a development that the company describes as: 'one of the most significant updates to Shuttleworth MIS for some time!'

The new release offers improved and immediate communication across the whole Shuttleworth system, including its new mobile CRM iPhone and iPad App, an innovation that has been designed to save time and to provide the sales team with access to essential information such as company, contact and enquiry details when they are away from the office. Enquiries can

be viewed and updated in real time and addresses link into most satellite navigation systems

In addition, the new job tracking functionality Milestones, automatically updates jobs, thus making it quick and easier for system users to view the status of any project as it progresses through the business.

The new release, which was launched at the recent Shuttleworth user meetings, received an enthusiastic response from customers, so much so that Shuttleworth is also running a new webinar program and also has a 5.3 YouTube Playlist where users can view the new functionality at their leisure.

For further information visit: www.shuttleworth-uk.co.uk

Mimaki RIPs offer full support

Mimaki RasterLink Pro 5 and RasterLink 6 RIP software programs, which are packaged alongside the company's range of wide format inkjet printers, now offer full Windows 8 Operating System support.



Customers can take advantage of the latest version of the software by downloading it either from Mimaki's website, or by using the application's inbuilt 'web update function'. This simple to use feature is available for customers running RasterLink Pro 5 and all customers who have full versions of RasterLink 6 and enables users to benefit from the latest Windows operating system, along with other performance and profile updates as they become available.

For further information visit: www.hybridservices.co.uk

For more news on software visit: www.signdirectionsonline.co.uk

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Moving Messages

Vehicle liveries sporting full or partial graphic wraps represents arguably the fastest growing form of out-of-home (OOH) advertising, bringing maximum visibility and impact for businesses and brands at a cost-effective price. They allow for unlimited levels of creativity, image enhancement, customisation and personalisation whilst also enhancing a vehicle's trade-in value when it is sold. Here and overleaf, Mike Connolly reviews some of the latest applications where vehicle liveries have been used to good effect before highlighting some of the newest materials now available.

Guaranteed performance

Many of the UK's leading commercial fleet operators have consulted with and ultimately used 3M for major re-branding programmes. 3M technology has helped drive down the direct and indirect costs of a vehicle livery campaign, the long-term success of which is dependent on the quality and performance of the graphic films used and how they are applied.

Typical graphics failure seen on vehicles of all types include shrinkage, cracking and tearing of the film, lifting around rivets, an inability to conform to irregular surfaces and unsightly wrinkles and bubbles due to poor application. In association with its network of authorised vehicle wrapping partners and the availability of unbeatable performance warranties on its wide range of graphic films, 3M has eliminated these problems and in consequence has become a preferred supplier to the commercial vehicle fleet and associated industries.

For example, Autoglass has been using 3M graphic films supplied by Aura Graphics (previously SSDM) on its nationwide vehicle fleet for over 10 years. The authorised vehicle wrapping partner's preferred film for this project was Controltac Graphic Film with Comply v3 Adhesive IJ180Cv3-10, one of 3M's most popular films for bespoke printed liveries. Fully Latex printing compatible, the printed film has no

odour or required drying time, is extremely conformable, easy to handle and offers fast application without any of the aforementioned problems.

Another example of the successful application of 3M graphic films was their use by Stewart Signs on the Openreach (BT's local access network division) fleet of vehicles. Openreach Marketing Director, Rob Lee enthused: "Delivering super fast fibre at such speed to two thirds of the UK is a really exciting initiative. We needed a livery for our vans that matched that excitement and delivered a new look and feel. Designed by creative marketing agency Westhill Communications and applied by Stewart Signs, the graphics received rave reviews both internally and externally."

For such an important project, Stewart Signs was aware that the graphics would be subject to much scrutiny of the completed vehicle wraps. Any livery failure would undermine Openreach's professional approach to the roll out programme and could prove costly to remedy whilst the vans were in service. Marketing Administrator at Stewart Signs, Gary Stanley commented: "We needed to specify a graphic film that would deliver long-lasting customer satisfaction by conforming over irregular surfaces, difficult contours and indents without the risk of future failure. As a long-standing 3M partner



and having used 3M products for Openreach fleet livery applications in the past we again selected a 3M graphic film for its ultimate durability, reliability and consistency."

Competitive vehicle wrapping films were considered but 3M's flagship Controltac Graphic Film IJ380 was chosen specifically because it enables full vehicle wrapping, eliminates

problems like lifting of the film in recesses and ensures lasting adhesion even in deep contours and 3D corrugations. The film also has no curing time requirement during printing which helps minimise vehicle downtime and can be removed by heat to leave no residual adhesive.

For further information, visit www.3m.co.uk/graphicsolutions

A momentous occasion

With Sky Pro Cycling celebrating its second consecutive win in the Tour de France, Signs Express (Manchester) was on hand to lend graphic support for the momentous occasion in Paris.

Providing a wide range of car graphics and signage for the riders and team support vehicles, the company has travelled across Europe during the road cycling season for the past four years to give its support. To kick start the winner's celebrations, the team support vehicles were branded yellow to match the famous winner's jersey.

The teams' two cars and buses used to support the riders along the route were re-branded with partial vehicle wraps using Multi-fix vinyl supplied by All Print Supplies (APS) that was digitally printed and applied. After the success of the yellow vehicle branding in 2012, the Sky Pro team and vehicle manufacturer Jaguar demonstrated their appreciation of the fans by launching a competition to have silhouettes of supporters



included on the graphics.

Co-owner of Signs Express (Manchester), Lee Eaton commented: "We feel privileged to have been involved in such a prestigious event and delighted to have been able to pull out the stops as timing was crucial.

With the surplus vinyl, we even branded the team's iPhone cases which added a final touch to the whole experience!"

For further information visit: www.signsexpress.co.uk/branch60/manchestersouth



Delivering design

Surrey-based Weedoo Signs has completed the re-branding of three new delivery trucks on behalf of MWS Office Supplies. The project was part of a company-wide branding

exercise involving new designs for all elements of the business operation.

The designs, including an eye-catching and memorable frog

mascot, were applied to the side panels and rear tailgate of each vehicle to raise brand awareness of the company throughout its key areas of delivery. The job was completed in less than a day,

including a weekend in order not to disrupt delivery schedules.

For further information visit: www.weedoosigns.co.uk

Let the train take the strain

Using its HP Scitex TJ8350 Industrial Press, Aura Graphics (formerly SSDM) produced the graphics applied to two First Great Western power trains. These run daily on some of the country's most popular business routes and are part of a major experiential promotional campaign for the new HP ElitePad 900.

The six-month campaign is aimed primarily at business travellers who account for the majority of First Great Western customers. In addition to the train graphics, the campaign also included social media activity and direct customer engagement, with live demonstrations of the HP ElitePad 900 on board the wrapped trains.

The train wraps, which were printed and installed by Aura Graphics in just three days and formed the centrepiece of the campaign, will be seen by passengers and bystanders as the power cars traverse First Great Western's rail network, running from Paddington Station to South Wales via large parts of southern England and the West Country.

Regional Business Manager for HP Scitex Greater Western Europe, the UK and Ireland, Mark Rowland commented: "The campaign has many different elements but the train wraps create the first big impression on the target audience. Although the wraps were required on a fast turnaround, there could be no compromise on print quality. With the two wrapped trains operating an average of three routes a day, that equates to 12,000 people per day who will be exposed to the graphics."

"This initial impact is key to creating an immediate 'buzz' around the new product, helping the HP ElitePad 900 teams to then start direct communication with passengers during the journey. This campaign demonstrates perfectly how high-quality print can play a crucial role in



the success of an integrated campaign."

Key Accounts Manager at Aura Graphics, Andrew Pritchett added: "There are often many challenges when producing graphics for high-profile brands and print quality and turnaround time are among them. We have two HP Scitex TJ8350 Industrial Presses and their speed, reliability and print quality make them ideal to meet these challenges. The graphics for this particular project were printed in just one hour and installed over three days."

The graphics were printed on an opaque white vinyl and laminated with a clear second film. For jobs such

as the First Great Western train wraps, Aura Graphics carefully measures the train units, digitising these and creating templates specific for the train cars that were designated First Great Western's Class 43 HST power cars.

Andrew Pritchett concluded: "With First Great Western's distinctive rich blue livery, it was essential that the wraps were completely opaque, as the design of the graphics was predominantly white. The TJ8350 prints from roll-to-sheet and the wraps were assembled from panels comprising a total area of around 75 square metres for each wrap. The excellent coverage and colour reproduction achieved and the quality of the substrate used ensured that the

white background was sufficiently dense and the end result met the expectations of First Great Western and the HP ElitePad team.

"In addition to the requirement for opacity, the ink and media had to be capable of withstanding environmental effects, such as wind, rain and sunlight, as well as adherence to the train at high speeds. Print quality was of equal importance, as the text and imagery would be viewed not only from station platforms but also from distant horizons"

For further information visit: www.hp.com and/or www.auragraphics.com

Green and Smart!

When Smart of York invited local primary school children to create an eye-catching design for the next Mercedes-Benz smart car, it was inundated with entries.

The company set out to engage the local community, with entrants submitting designs that ranged from Union Jack flags to imaginative under-sea illustrations. Called 'The Next Eco Car', the winning design was submitted by Hannah Umpleby from Poppleton Primary School.

Owner of Signs Express (York), Ian Dawson commented: "We were delighted to make Hannah's eco-inspired design come to life. The team did a great job and the finished graphic will certainly attract a great deal of attention, as the car travels around the city of York."



Signs Express (York) provides a wide range of signs and graphics, including full and partial car and van wraps, fleet graphics and decals and signwriting.

For further information visit: www.signsexpress.co.uk/branch75/york



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A plethora of choice

A prolific supplier of high-quality branded solutions to the vehicle wrapping and vehicle graphics sector, William Smith has made a huge contribution to the success of some notable projects involving the use of materials from 3M, Arlon and iSee2.

3M's IJ180Cv3 and 1080 series of films were the preferred materials of Norfolk-based CIM Signs & Graphics when engaged in major fleet branding projects. These have included half-wraps using IJ180Cv3 for a fleet of 160 vehicles on behalf of RFT and a fleet of 48 vehicles for a leading housing association for which 3M's 1080 series in gloss Hotrod Red was specified.

The company's Managing Director, Mark Baker said: "These were the first major fleet projects that we had done for these clients and they were won on the strength of previous work we had done for them on smaller van projects and signage, and their confidence in us doing the job right first time. When it came to materials selection, our choice is based on quality rather than price, so we can guarantee that the materials will stay in position when applied."

He added: "The print finish on IJ180Cv3 is excellent, and we complete our work with the correct 3M overlaminates, which are pliable and flexible to use."

Ease of application has also enabled CIM Signs to achieve timesavings in production, enabling a faster turnaround.

3M IJ1080 and the flagship IJ380 films are used extensively by West Midlands-based vehicle wrapping specialist Wrap Kings. Director Will Hamblin commented: "We have had issues in the past with other materials but have always opted for the quality and reputation of 3M films supplied by William Smith, with customers specifically asking for these."

He continued: "We especially like the satin finish and choice of colours in the



1080 Series and the print quality on IJ380 is the best by far, as it takes the ink, holds its colours, and we get a perfect

job every time. In addition, the Controltac adhesive on both materials facilitates easy bubble-free positioning,

which has enabled us to speed up our install time as we can lay the film down much faster."



Product, performance and price are making Arlon's DPF 6000 series of cast graphic films a popular choice with William Smith's customers for a variety of vehicle wrapping applications.

Andy Sykes of DeSigns Signage Solutions reported: "We chose DPF 6000 Series to replace the material we had previously been using. It prints well and our fitters are very happy with it and, what's more the price is also very

favourable."

Dexie Hartis, Manager at Radecal Signs, confirmed: "We use Arlon DPF 6000XRP for both full and part wraps and the cost was what initially attracted us, especially as we had won a big contract that required a large volume of materials and were thus looking for best value. However, we've since found that it outperforms other materials that we have tried. The XRP bubble-release



iSee2 Total Wrap from William Smith offers a wide choice of gloss, matt and carbon effect colours, together with a selection of specialist effects that enable sign companies to achieve distinctive and individual looking liveries for their customers.

A hybrid and modified PVC film that is easy to apply, iSee2 Total Wrap comes with a five-year durability and is designed to conform easily around compound curves, rivets and corrugations. It can also be used for general graphics and striping.

KBS Signs & Design recently completed

full colour change wraps on three VW Jettas using the eye-popping Mandarin Orange. KBS's Mark Wray explained: "We needed a self-coloured wrap film and this was the closest to the client's colour reference and, since the price was also favourable, it 'ticked all the boxes' for us." He added: "We find the material's adhesive has a fairly strong initial stick and is considerably thicker when compared to most cast products, so we applied on an individual panel basis as it was not so easily repositionable."

Gregory Chmielewski at Prestige Customs has used several different colours and particularly likes the finish of



adhesive makes it virtually impossible to crease or bubble, as the bubbles can be pushed out easily by hand."

Andean Signs uses the Arlon DPF 6000 Series for full or part wraps, with the company's Andy Gosling confiding that he found the material's print quality to be exceptional when used in combination with an HP Latex L26500 printer. He said: "We use it mainly for vehicles with soft curves, such as Vivaro's, Renault Traffics and other light vans – in fact we've even used it on our own Andean Signs vehicle!"

Arlon DPF 6000 is available in gloss, transparent and translucent finishes,



while DPF 6000RP and DPF 6000XRP both come in gloss white. The films have been specifically designed for large format graphics and are ideal for fleet and vehicle liveries. They can be applied to flat, riveted, contoured and complex surfaces where good conformity is required.

A special lay-flat liner and permanent pressure-sensitive adhesive make Arlon DPF 6000RP easy to apply and give excellent opacity. DPF 6000XRP features X-Scape air release adhesive, which ensures a bubble-free finish.



Super Black: He said: "We have found it good to work with and easily repositionable. It's very good quality, much better than we had anticipated, and the Super Black is the best on the market – it has a good shine and looks just like a paint finish."

Jeff Cowler at Total Tinting NE, who has used iSee2 Total Wrap for all types of vehicles, declared: "It's a good product! We had previously used cast materials

and found iSee2 easy to use and manipulate. It was very easy to fit, which meant that we achieved a good speed of application."

All of the above materials are available ex-stock from William Smith and same day despatch is offered on orders received up to 6.000pm.

For further information visit: www.vehiclewrapfilms.co.uk or www.williamsmith.co.uk

Get wrapping!

The UK must have one of the most buoyant markets for vehicle livery work of any developed country. Why this might be difficult to say with any certainty but one thing is sure - the competition it creates informs the need for competitive prices, high standards of quality and creative excellence too and the sign and graphics industries have responded.

Of all the products and technologies we put in harness to participate in the market for vehicle liveries, media has probably evolved the furthest, which is why signmakers should occasionally stop and consider whether they've maintained the same pace or whether they are fighting with something sub-optimal for no reason other than that's what they've always used.

Undoubtedly, one of the biggest sticks that's been used as a spur to media developments for livery, is the advent of digital print. When inkjet printers came along, materials were already there. Some worked and some didn't; those that did were quickly assigned the 'digital' badge, and the ones that didn't met with a rapidly diminishing market.

According to Paul French, Metamark's Chief Executive Officer, most 'materials' can get past the entrance of the 'media' club, but you've only to look at the output they yield to see that they have limboed under its door.

He said: "Poorly qualified media is not very tolerant of ink in general. It may fail in the adhesion stakes or be excessively soluble in the ink. If that's the case, simply limiting the amount of ink via the material's profile may fix the symptoms. Unfortunately though, limiting the ink may also limit the quality and colour gamut too, as less ink means fewer colours."

That might be an issue in a market where the requirement is for larger-than-life impact.

Metamark has always claimed that its materials have a healthy appetite for ink and it provides a long list of performance benefits for anyone using its MD-Class media. There's obviously a correlation between the printer-hardware's performance and the media it's printed on. Then there's the arguably more important correlation with application specific performance.

Vehicle liveries create, without question, the most demanding of all application environments for printed graphics. Most vehicles live and die in the great outdoors and so the graphics applied to them see all that the weather can throw at them. Under the general heading of 'weathering,' all sorts of failure awaits poorly specified vehicle liveries.

Fading seems like an obvious one and all the more so when it's seen in the flesh. A fleet that's had liveries applied over time may look highly variable when its vehicles are viewed in the same place, at the same time. Paul French hands a share of the performance impact to the ink manufacturers, but accepts much in terms of the mitigation of the issue on the part of materials.

He observed: "Again, getting a decent amount of ink on the material is key, but there's no question that laminating the applied print has the most positive impact. Just make sure it's a matched laminate though!"

Many manufacturers, Metamark included, offer matched laminates, but it's worth making the point that this means it's matched to the print's substrate and not to the application per-se. In Metamark's case, the laminates in the MD/MG range are mechanically matched, which means that they have the same basic elongation tendencies as the substrates they protect. That makes a difference when flat materials are being coerced over curved vehicle surfaces.



Photograph courtesy S and S Signs

In terms of grails to quest for, an out-performing adhesive is there at the top of the list in response to markets' needs. Many attempts have been made to 'manage' adhesive performance, some with disastrous results. Time was that adhesive used to grab like a footballer's wife with a new Range Rover but now, thanks to market-led progress, things are more civilised. If you're having difficulty applying media and materials these days, chances are that events have overtaken what you're using. What we think of as 'glue' has actually become very smart.

Metamark distinguishes its smartest adhesive under the Apex heading, a patented formulation centred around single-component, fully-crosslinked chemistry. Put another way, it's easy to reposition, builds to a very high bond

and yet removes without leaving a trace of evidence that it was ever there.

Why should we care though? Well, anything that makes life easier in the application stakes has to be welcome. If we can make life simpler when producing staple output, such as vehicle liveries, then we probably should. End of life removal is most certainly an issue with both large fleets and those that display applied graphics for an advertising season.

Air evacuation schemes are now widely available and seem to work if the market uptake is any indication. These technologies make big demands of the adhesive system, so it pays to select a reputable brand. Opaquing inclusions that minimise substrate show-through is another feature to watch out for. Taken with a

good, high performing face-film, these really can make graphics pop.

Though Metamark counts itself among the media sector's key innovators, Paul French maintains that the market can always be counted on to find ingenious ends to its challenges. He reported: "We make a material with a black inter-layer that we call MD5-B, which we designed especially for those situations where a display printer might need a material that light can't get through. Last time I checked, light couldn't get through vehicle panels but it hasn't stopped signmakers using the material for liveries!"

Apparently some of Metamark's customers use the material as a foundation layer that they apply to vehicles that have some sort of permanent blight that's too expensive to repair. A good example would be filler, or painted markings. It seems that MD5-B doesn't just minimise the scar showing through, it eliminates it. So, when faced with the choice of an expensive paint repair job or reaching for the same thing on a roll, many car owners are choosing the roll option.

Vehicle livery is a market with many facets and one where some sectors of it drift off into the exotic. Anything that combines an element of customisation and someone's four-wheeled pride-and-joy is likely to lead to more premium pricing. To this end, signmakers could do worse than turn to a roll of carbon-fibre effect material, and see where it takes them.

They should consider also the fact that a fleet is a persistent entity. That means there's lots of rotation and churn within it. Rather than representing a single sale, they may be dealing with something that returns an annuity. However, let's never forget that livery application can be challenging and the application itself brutally applies its own standards. Compromise on quality and the job will return, but not in a good way; get it right and watch the business roll in!

For further information visit: www.metamark.co.uk

Image is key

With image the key factor, whether promoting a business or upgrading a privately owned car, Doro Tape offers a wide range of highly innovative vehicle wrapping films, primarily from the Ritrama Ri-Wrap series.

The range comprises different textured films such as carbon fibre, matt, ultra gloss, brushed effect and even a snake skin-effect format! It also features Kandy Wrap, a premium quality cast vinyl film available in four vibrant colours and with a stunning metallic finish and high-gloss surface and Cyberchrome, a similarly high-quality cast vehicle wrapping film with a chrome finish. Previously available only in silver, it is now supplied in four new colours: red, yellow, blue and green.

In addition to the special textured films from Ritrama, Doro Tape also supplies the Ri-Jet 50 air-free printable white cast vinyl that is ideal for creating unique vehicle wraps. The film can be used in conjunction with the ultra-thin Ri-Jet 30 laminate that carries a performance warranty for optimum graphics results. The films feature an air release adhesive and can be



repositioned until perfect adhesion and conformability have been achieved.

For further information visit: www.dorotape.co.uk

Get to grips with 'Wrap Essentials'

'Wrap Essentials' is the title of a complete guide for vehicle wrapping professionals published by materials specialist Spandex.

The easy-to-use guide provides an overview of the most comprehensive range of vehicle wrapping films and accessories currently available, with over 170 colours/finishes on products from 3M, Avery, Arlon and ImagePerfect. The range comprises high-quality PVC cast films featuring air release technology through to short-term promotional media and accessories, all of which are invariably available on next-day delivery. The guide also includes information on



the Spandex VW training courses.

free copy of the guide, visit www.spandex.co.uk

For further information and/or a

The winning option

The range of Automotive and Deco films, in addition to standard films in the Graficast and Grafitack series from Grafityp UK, provide outstanding options for vehicle wrapping professionals. This was demonstrated by the recent GrafiWrap Design Competition 2013 hosted by the parent company in Belgium and open to vehicle wrapping enthusiasts from around the world.

The competition criteria called for a design for the Belgium Audi Club, Team WRT, Audi R8 LMS Ultra #1 based on the GrafiWrap Automotive range of films. This comprises a wide range of fashionable colours in matt and gloss formats, in addition to various textured films, such as leather- and carbon fibre-effect, metallic, brushed aluminium and gold and even Army Bali camouflage. The range also includes Colourwave, a



film that changes colour with light and the angle of viewing, as well as a range of compatible laminates.

Excellent vehicle decals, graphics and wraps can also be produced using the range of GrafiPrint GrafiWrap print media. This is an ideal solution for owners of large-format solvent printers and/or print-and-cut machines.

Winner of the competition was Tom Deglas from Kitchonaise Graphics. The



winning design is pictured being applied to an Audi racing car.

For further information visit: www.grafityp.co.uk

A softer touch

A leading supplier of self-adhesive vinyl materials to the sign and graphics and digital printing industries, APS offers a range of quality branded products specifically developed for the vehicle wrapping sector.

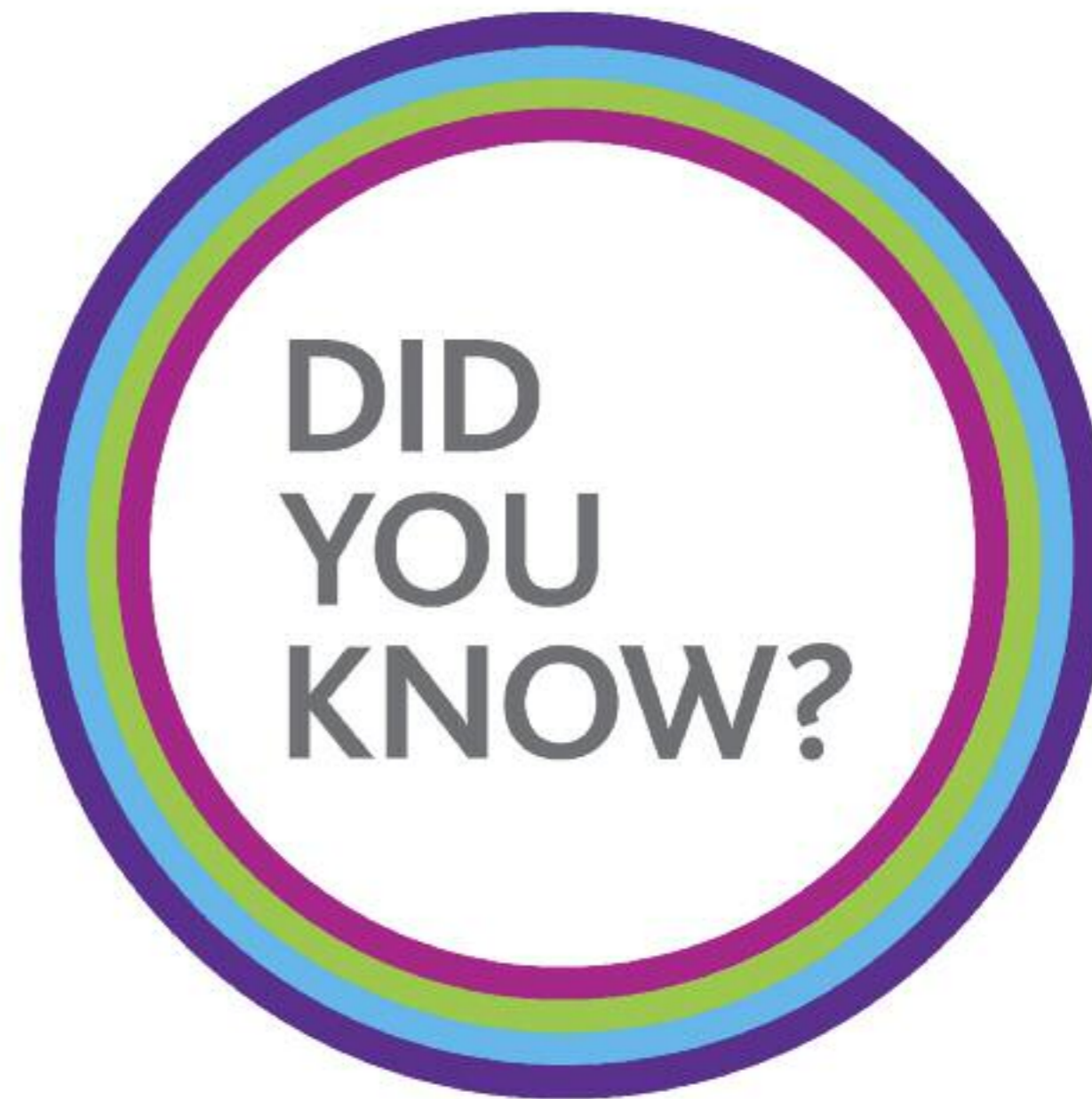
One of the most popular products is the range of tuning films from MACtac and in particular the MACtac Tuning Film Velvet option. This 170-micron cadmium-free cast film is coated with textile fibres and incorporates a clear solvent-based acrylic adhesive, the formulation of which enables the film to be repositioned liberally until perfect registration with the substrate is achieved. The film can be easily and cleanly removed by the application of heat.

For the creation of special finishes and decorative effects, APS also offers the new Conformable Chrome Easy Apply

RS film from Avery Dennison. Featuring a mirror-like finish, it is ideal for partial vehicle wraps, typically areas of a vehicle like petrol caps, wing mirrors and door handles. The film incorporates the Easy Apply RS adhesive technology that makes application and purposeful removal simple and easy and renders the film ideal for vehicle personalisation. The film has a three-year durability.

Avery Cast Supreme Wrapping Films are now available from APS in 13 new colours, including a choice of brushed finishes. The 80-micron dual-layer cast films claim outstanding conformability, with the second layer providing a high-gloss paint-like finish that also serves as a protective covering. Key features include a long-term removal capability, Easy Apply RS Technology and an outdoor durability of up to 12 years.

For further information visit: www.allprint.co.uk



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Driving vehicle customisation



Available in the UK from Antalis, the Oracal range of vinyl materials and laminates manufactured by the German company Orafol includes products specific to vehicle customisation and brand enhancement.

Orafol's Oracal 970 Premium Wrapping Cast vinyl tops the list when it comes to colour range. The material, which is offered in 96 standard colours, more than

any other wrap film on the market today, encourages endless creative possibilities and, in addition, the material comes with 'Rapid Air' construction for easy and hassle-free application without the risk of trapped air bubbles.

Meanwhile, Oracal 975 Premium Structure Cast tuning films can be applied to both the interior and exterior of cars. They are available in seven different structural formats and a range of



contrasting colours to enable exciting design details to be applied to vehicles.

The car wrapping films range includes

options for decorative effects, letters and symbols in addition to films that are more specific to applications involving difficult recesses or corrugated surfaces and



rivets. A see-through-effect vehicle window advertising and fluorescent film for application to vehicles that require extra daytime visibility are also available.

These films are supplemented with a range of clear formats used to protect original

paintwork or applied graphic creations, while sensitive surfaces can be preserved with a range of Stone Guard films.

For further information visit: www.antalis.co.uk

Super protection

Key products in the range of MACTac IMAGin vehicle wrapping films supplied by Amari Digital Supplies are JT5529MBF and JT5629PM, which share individual as well as common design features and benefits and are supported by compatible over-laminates for enhanced performance and protection.

JT5529MBF is a highly conformable 55-micron white gloss soft laminated PVC film featuring a micro-structured permanent opaque acrylic adhesive that can be re-positioned liberally to achieve perfect registration. It incorporates a PE-coated liner and can be converted using a wide range of printing processes, including Latex.

The film is described as 'dry application at its best' and can be used for long-term vehicle graphics on vehicles with

flat, curved, embossed and riveted surfaces. The film has a 10-year durability.

Sharing the same performance benefits, JT5629PM is a 50-micron film sharing the same construction features and printing capabilities as JT5529MBF, but incorporates a permanent grey adhesive and a white PE-coated Kraft liner. The film has a seven-year durability.

The films are supported by a choice of two over-laminates (LF3499 and LUV3399). The former is a ultra-clear gloss soft 40-micron cast PVC film coated on one side with an ultra-clear permanent adhesive protected by an easy to remove liner, while the latter is a 30-micron alternative solution. Both over-laminates provide outstanding protection against UV degradation and abrasion and share a four-year durability



and similar compatible printing process capabilities.

ADS also supplies a range of MACTac Tuning Films for adding special decorative effects to vehicle wraps. Like the vehicle wrapping films mentioned, they can be re-positioned liberally to

achieve perfect results. They can also be easily and purposely removed to accommodate vehicle customisation and personalisation.

For further information visit: www.amaridigitalsupplies.com



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Epson makes T-shirt printing easy!

With the garment printing market expected to be worth over €200 million by 2014, Epson has added to its textile printer line up with its first direct-to-garment T-shirt printer, the SureColor SC-F2000, which combines high performance with low maintenance and running costs, to provide businesses with the opportunity to offer a new T-shirt design and print service.



Users will appreciate the SC-F2000's, crack resistant ink, which is soft against skin and the fact that they can configure the system to suit their specific requirements by choosing from two sets of ink, CMYK for use on white garments or CMYK with up to four white inks for use on coloured garments.

Garment Creator software by Epson is bundled with the package, which includes a cost calculation function, enabling users to estimate the print cost by calculating the amount of ink used for each print job. The software also enables designers to unleash their creativity and produce customised, eye-catching designs on T-shirts, caps and bags up to 25mm thick.

Featuring Epson's durable TFP printhead, the SC-F2000 is capable of printing a single white T-shirt in 27 seconds when using dual colour mode and a dark coloured T-shirt in 111 seconds, using

white and coloured ink, thus facilitating speedy production without sacrificing print quality.

When used in conjunction with Epson's UltraChrome DG Ink, which is available in 250 or 600ml cartridges, the SureColor SC-F2000 excels on dark fabric, because the highly durable white ink is circulated within the system and has been designed to reduce clogging, enabling deadlines to be consistently met.

The SC-F2000 offers a resolution of up to 1440x1440dpi for accurate dot shape and placement, while its wide colour gamut produces vibrant colours, sharp contours and smooth gradations.

The SureColor SC-F2000 is available from November 2013.

For further information visit: www.global.epson.com

Canon enhances the ImagePROGRAF range

Canon has unveiled the two new models that are being added to its eight-colour imagePROGRAF range in order to complete its upgrade of this wide format line-up for the graphic arts market.



The new imagePROGRAF iPF6400S and iPF8400S, which replace the iPF6300S and iPF8300S respectively, are designed to support high-volume production and both now feature the same 'Hot Swap' ink capabilities and new colour density sensor found in the iPF9400S, which was launched last September.

Together, these features ensure customers in the production, proofing, photographic and design sectors receive superior image quality and uninterrupted printing across the full range of 24" - 60" eight-colour models.

The imagePROGRAF iPF6400S features an optional spectrophotometer to support high-precision colour management, along with Colour Calibration Management Console (CCMC) software, which is now supported on all models in the range.

Combined with 'Calibration Link' technology, users can manage colour consistency across multiple eight-

colour units, thus significantly simplifying administration. Additionally, in conjunction with a major third party RIP solution, users can also conduct colour verification and create colour profiles automatically using this optional spectrophotometer.

The iPF6400S also features a larger optional 300ml ink tank, in addition to the standard 130ml, and is the final model in the eight-colour range to benefit from a sub-ink tank, which allows for non-stop printing or 'Hot Swap' -during ink tank replacement.

Additional features, including automatic nozzle compensation, email error reports and consumable replacement notifications, make this printer ideal for use in production environments by supporting continued productivity where it counts most.

For further information visit: www.canon.co.uk

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Hybrid appoints CMYUK Digital

Hybrid Services, Mimaki's exclusive UK and Irish distributor, has appointed CMYUK Digital to its reseller network. The longstanding Berkshire-based equipment supplier will offer Mimaki's complete line-up of printers from its industrial products range.

Mimaki's industrial machines include the highly regarded UJF-3042 A3 and

UJF-6042 A2 flatbed LED UV-curable printers, which can be used to produce a wide range of applications, including promotional products and small format signage, as well as being integrated within manufacturing environments, plus the JFX500-2131 dedicated flatbed machine, which is ideally suited to the production of high end rigid graphics.

Welcoming CMYUK Digital into its authorised reseller network, Hybrid's

National Sales Manager, John de la Roche said: "CMYUK Digital has a team of extremely experienced print professionals, specialising in colour management and technical support and thus, new customers can be sure of receiving the requisite level of expert help and advice."

For further information visit: www.hybridservices.co.uk and www.cmyukdigital.com



Worthwhile Investments

Companies explain why they chose the equipment they use

Founded in 1996, **Image Technique**, which employs 45 people, specialises in the design, production and installation of signs, manufacturing almost everything required in-house.

Explaining the company's rationale, Director Des Kenehan, said: "Our objective is to generate iconic signs that improve the image of companies such as Debenhams, B&Q, Halfords and Pets at Home, but whilst our core business is still signmaking, nowadays there is an increasing demand for integration with all kinds of graphic elements too, which makes in-house print production a necessity if we are to control all aspects of quality and meet tight deadlines."

Accordingly, two years ago Image Technique installed a **Fujifilm Acuity Advance HS** on which to produce all of its print related jobs, an acquisition that enables the company to print directly onto rigid media while also offering the added value of a white ink option. Happily, the ROI with the Acuity Advance HS was almost instantaneous, with the demand for printed work constantly rising. Thus when Des and his fellow directors, James Dawson and Gavin Smith, decided to invest in a superwide format printer to help fill the production gap unsurprisingly, the company once again turned to Fujifilm, whose three-metre version of the **Uvistar Pro8** perfectly fit its criteria.

Des continued: "We were so pleased with the high quality we were achieving with the Acuity Advance HS that we didn't want to lower expectations. For us, the Uvistar Pro8 represented the ideal compromise between quality and productivity. The vivid colours and adhesion offered by Fujifilm's inks, together

with the perfect skin tone reproduction, are balanced with a significant throughput speed."

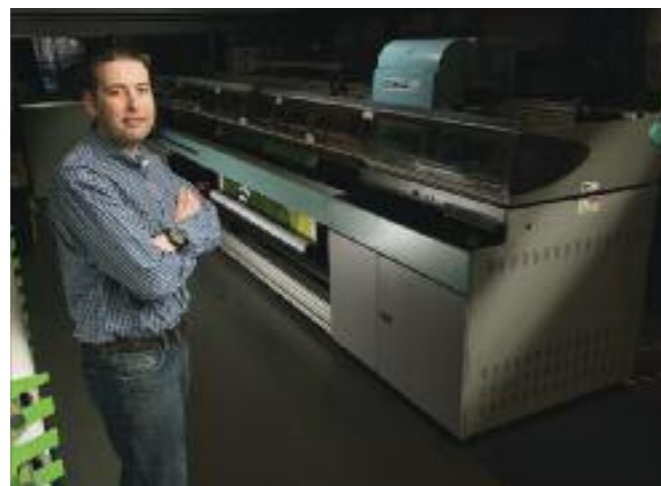
He is also keen to highlight the Uvistar's additional benefits, which include the ability to simultaneously print onto two rolls of the same material, thus significantly improving efficiency. Des also reports that the company is taking full advantage of the extensive range of **Euromedia** substrates that Fujifilm offers, such as vinyls, PVC and banners.

He added: "In terms of efficiency, a key advantage for us is the flexibility we have to allocate jobs to either the Acuity Advance or the Uvistar, secure in the knowledge that we're guaranteed consistent results, as Fujifilm's expertise in colour management has helped us to make the most of both the devices, by calibrating them to achieve uniform quality."

With the Uvistar Pro8 already having dramatically improved Image Technique's competitiveness, by boosting its productivity and enabling it to extend its range of services, the company is now embracing the digital signage market with the creation of a dedicated business unit called Vuenti.

Des concluded: "Thanks to Fujifilm's equipment coupled with our skills and technical knowledge, we're able to make use of the most appropriate methods to provide clients with both print and digital tools that can convey their marketing messages in the most effective way."

For further information visit: www.imagetechnique.co.uk and www.fujifilm.eu/eu/products/graphic-systems/ ■



Focussing on what it does best has been crucial to **Print Monkey's** success and Lucy Ratcliffe and her small team, who operate out of impressive modern premises in the Shropshire market town of Whitchurch, now provide wide format print services to customers in the North West and Midlands, making full use of an enviable line up of printing, cutting and finishing hardware that includes a **Mimaki JV5** wide format printer, a **Mimaki CJV30-160** printer/cutter, a standalone **Mimaki CG-160FX** plotter and a laminator, the latter of which will shortly be superseded by a new **RollsRoller** flatbed applicator.

Commenting on the growth of the company, Lucy, a former leisure centre manager, explained: "We've come a long way over the last few years and whilst my original plan was to supply sports teams with bespoke kits, we soon realised that we could make higher profits by offering a broader range of products and that's what propelled us into the wide format market."

Investing first in the Mimaki printer/cutter and thereafter the high end production JV5 printer, Print Monkey's product portfolio swiftly evolved and it now supplies high volumes of banners, exhibition displays and posters, as well as prints on rigid substrates, with Lucy



revealing that a retail order for 300 boards has already paid off a chunk of the company's planned investment in the RollsRoller.

When Lucy recently spotted another niche, Print Monkey developed a sub-brand in order to exclusively assist design agencies, without the requisite in-house printing capabilities, to supply wide format printed products and it has thus become a key partner for a number of high profile organisations that produce work for well known brands.

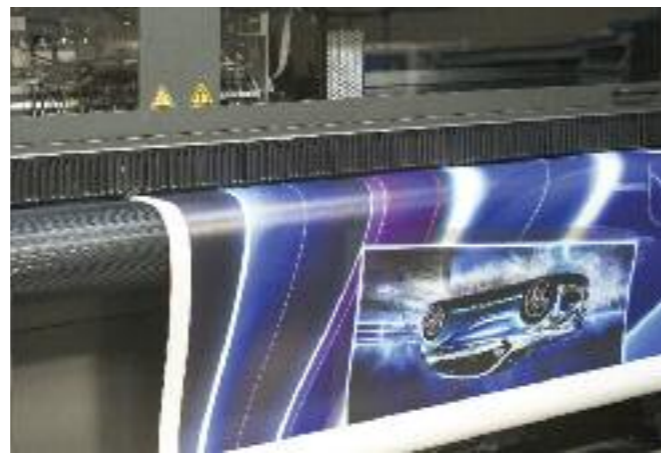
In both this new venture and its core business, it has been assisted by an investment in Clarity's workflow software, which has helped it to keep full control of the increasing



Monkey purchased its wide format hardware and which continues to provide on-going support.

Future expansion will include the recruitment of an apprentice and lots more local networking, which Lucy claims has so far proved more effective than any other form of promotion, but she concludes: "Some new key accounts have brought in regular volume business, but since our focus on popular product lines has proved to be highly beneficial so far, we'll just carry on doing what we do best!"

For further information on Print Monkey visit: www.printmonkey.co.uk, **For further information on Signmaster visit:** www.signmaster.co.uk ■



When Baz Ogle formed his new company, **Format Graphics** last March, his choice of wide-format printer was easy. As a long time user of VUTEK platforms, beginning with an early PressVu 200-600 and followed more recently by QS and GS machines, it was a straightforward decision to continue with EFI technology. And accordingly, Baz was quick to invest in the first 'cool cure' **GS3250LX 3.2m flatbed and roll-**

fed system with LED technology to be installed in the UK.

Formerly the founder of Milton Keynes-based Icon Graphics, Baz started his current company in order to concentrate on producing a broad portfolio of high quality wide-format applications for a diverse customer list. Working primarily with designers and agencies servicing blue chip clients, Format Graphics is expected

to deliver the fine standards of print and accurate colours that meet the exacting criteria set by end customers, many of which are major brand owners.

Originally considering the VUTEK QS3-Pro when he visited EFI's showroom in Brussels, Baz changed his mind when he discovered more about the opportunities available and the overall benefits of the GS3250LX.

He explained: "The idea of EFI's 'cool cure' technology appealed to me greatly, and since we use a diverse range of materials it was easy to assess the advantages that LED curing could offer. In the end, it was the machine's ability to print directly even onto the most difficult media, without compromising on either speed or quality that made me decide that the VUTEK GS3250LX was the printer we needed. In addition, it was the only one that offers a full 3.2m width for both rigid and roll materials, plus the capability to print

continuous boards, a feature that no other printer in the same class was able to provide."

Format Graphics also needed a true hybrid printer with quick changeover from rigid to flexible materials and back again. Currently, the company's throughput is split evenly between flatbed and roll-fed work, and the capabilities of the GS3250LX, along with its LED curing have proved to be ideal for handling sensitive media that reacts badly to heat.

The environmental benefits of the VUTEK GS3250LX were another key benefit for Format Graphics. Baz continues: "These days many of our clients want to work with suppliers that offer greener productivity and by using UV-curable inks, in combination with LED lamps, we can eliminate hazardous emissions, such as ozone or VOCs, while our energy requirements are also significantly lower too."

Dan Preston, an experienced VUTEK operator who joined Format Graphics at the outset, is finding the GS3250LX is a joy to use. "As well as the advantages we're finding with the LED curing, this printer gives us stronger, more vibrant colours across all materials," he reports, adding: "We use a lot of white ink, and the opacity on this machine is particularly good."

Since EFI first launched the VUTEK GS3250LX in 2011 it has steadily gained in popularity, with more and more users growing to appreciate its versatility and innovative LED curing technology. Also available as the 2m GS2000LX and, as an option, the Pro with greyscale capabilities, this printer series has gained a reputation for being able to handle difficult, heat sensitive materials and surfaces that, hitherto, have been unsuitable for use with the UV-curable production process.

Baz affirms: "Having a printer which is kinder to vinyl and other difficult materials has certainly extended our range of applications, and better still, we don't get any ruined jobs. There's nothing more disheartening than finding that a surface that should print perfectly has been damaged beyond use at the curing stage, due to the high levels of heat that have been emitted. Knowing that applications won't buckle or warp, and eliminating the possibility of head crashes, is a tremendous advantage."

The printer's speed of throughput has also impressed both Baz and Dan. The machine uses the latest version of EFI's Fiery XF RIP, which enables it to be run at 90 square m/hour, printing a 2.4 x 1.2m board in less than three minutes.

Baz concludes: "To sum up, the GS3250LX is fast, reliable, versatile and green – what more could you possibly ask for?"

For further information on Format Graphics visit: www.formatgraphics.biz

For further information on VUTEK printers visit: www.efi.com



When Lee Smith posted his availability for a print sales position on LinkedIn, he wasn't expecting to be running a completely new digital print department less than a fortnight later, but such is the pace of change at Basildon-based **Fraser Display**, that things move very quickly indeed!

The company, whose workshop is choc-o-bloc with point of sale displays packed ready for despatch to a variety of blue chip brands has as its motto: "Yes is the answer, now what's the question?" and, according to Lee, responds to requests from its clients that other suppliers would dismiss as 'crazy', as they frequently involve all-night marathons in order to deliver high volumes of output in ultra quick turnaround times. But not surprisingly, the company sees customers returning again and again.

Recently however, Fraser Display's investment in a **Mimaki JV33-160 printer** and a complementary **CG-160FXII cutter** has added a whole new dimension to its capabilities. Lee's initial role was to sell printed output, but he quickly became aware that buying in the work was costing the company dearly, and upon his recommendation Fraser Display acquired the Mimaki printer and cutter duo from Granthams, whose high level of service is only matched by its longevity.

Lee reports: "As well as teaching me everything I needed to know about the printer, Granthams' technician also went through the artwork workflow on the Mac too, and the **Mimaki FineCut** plugin software made it easy for me to pick up what I needed within Illustrator."



Having established its reputation for supplying a broad range of retail point of sale systems, bespoke branded display units and even exhibition stands, Fraser Display now has the capabilities required to exploit every facet of graphic production and is producing everything from banner stands to wallpaper, vehicle liveries to posters, all courtesy of the JV33, which has also been used to deliver its new corporate brochure, something Lee is justifiably proud of.

He said: "We wanted to create a short run of a few hundred brochures that showcased our skills, but rather than producing this traditionally, which was prohibitively expensive, our version comprises a dozen or more different materials encompassed within a cover made from a printed self adhesive vinyl laminated to thin board, which was then guillotined

into the required shape before final make up."

With a new website, an enviable contact list of FMCG brands and agencies, plus a strong combination of in-house skills and equipment, it's not surprising that the phones keep ringing, so much so, that Lee believes that the company will soon need to further increase its digital print capacity. And when that time comes, it will know precisely what it must do!

For further information on Fraser Display visit: www.fraserdigital.co.uk.

For further information on Granthams visit: www.granthams.co.uk

For further information on the complete Mimaki range visit: www.hybridservices.co.uk.



Give me a sign!

Sign and display systems, particularly those available off-the-shelf, continue to provide more cost-effective alternative solutions to expensive bespoke solutions, enabling integration with any sign and display project while also providing healthier margins for trade suppliers and increased savings for end users. Mike Connolly reports on new as well as established systems to highlight the possibilities now available.

Nova sees the light

When East Sussex-based Cyclops Signs was commissioned to provide signage at the Ashburnham Place Christian Conference Centre, it specified the popular Pole and Plank sign and display system from Nova Aluminium.

The Pole and Plank sign and display system incorporates a square pole and a bespoke double-sided panel to provide a robust, aesthetically appealing and cost-effective solution. Colour-matching the panel with the post adds a further enhancement, enabling the graphics to really stand out, as was the case in the Ashburnham Place installation.

Options within the Pole and Plank range include three standard plank panels in depths of 100, 150 and 200mm, with the availability of non-standard sizes also available to meet specific customer requirements. The system also allows for V-shaped signs and displays when using the rounded pole option.

The complementary Novahood and Novatube overhead lighting solutions can be used with the system for illumination as required.

For further information visit: www.nova-aluminium.com ■



UK POS snaps into shape



UK Point of Sale has added four new colour options to its Snap Frame range of sign and display solutions. They comprise red, white, blue and black to complement the existing colours available.

The 25mm powder-coated frames, available in a choice of sizes including A3, A2 and A1, are supplied with pre-drilled fixing holes for ease of

assembly. In addition to the range of standard sizes and finishes available, the frames can be supplied in alternative formats to meet customer requirements.

Other best selling products include the company's freestanding acrylic-based poster holders.

For further information visit: www.ukpos.com ■

New frame options from Applelec

Complementing the recently launched I-Sign sign and display frame system that incorporates a patented spring-opening mechanism, Applelec's I-Sign FLEX with I-Sign FIX and I-Sign DISPLAY provide bespoke solutions for co-ordinated schemes.

The 2.5m I-Sign FIX is an elegant frame system for both internal and external applications involving projecting and/or hanging signs. It will accommodate a wide range of sign and display materials in a thickness of either two or three millimetres, including engraved sheets and Braille embossed, wood, acrylic and ACM panels. Better

suited to smaller-sized or narrow-frame formats, the silver anodised aluminium profile matches the I-Sign FLEX frame.

The five-metre I-Sign DISPLAY system can be used for the creation of single- or double-sided large-format frames and stencil-cut light boxes. The frames accommodate five millimetre-thick printed panels, with a slim profile that makes the system perfect for edge-to-edge framing features. Illumination can be provided for the systems by Applelec's LED Light Sheet or LED modules, such as those featured in the company's SloanLED Posterbox lighting solution.

Both systems are easy to mount using

Infinite variety with Tecna's T3

The T3 display system from TecnaUK, which is both designed and engineered in the UK, notably offers a simple, patented, twist and lock mechanism that enables users to build just about any style, size and shape of structure imaginable.

The T3 system, which is the only one of its kind to offer a lifetime warranty, can incorporate lighting, shelving, doors, roof structures, stairs and more, in fact one customer even used it to build a replica of a double decker bus! In addition, the T3 Airframe and Fabframe products are flexible enough for use in a shell scheme or space only exhibition stand.

However, although the cost effectiveness argument for companies to purchase their own system that can be used several times over is already well documented, it's worth noting that all T3 developed products will retro fit for many years to come. Thus, those who invested in a T3 system five years ago can still use the new accessories and fitments that are currently being developed for the

system today and can include such innovations as shelf supports, lighting fitments, TV screens and much more besides.

T3 continues to lead the way in revolutionising customised displays: for example, by combining fabric and T3 aluminium framing, instead of using traditional wood, nails and paint, companies are shaving thousands of pounds off the build costs of their exhibition stands, saving hours of skilled labour and capitalising on reusability. What's more, as well as facilitating the creation of a seamless graphic, the fabric can easily be washed if it becomes a little grubby during the normal daily wear and tear of a trade show.

To find out how Tecna's designers and sales advisors are able to provide help and advice every step along the way to ensure that customers' objectives relating to size, scope and impact are fully achieved, visit the Tecna website.

For further information visit: www.tecna.co.uk ■



mechanical fixings or, for smaller-sized frame formats, double-sided VHB tape. A panel clip secures the printed inserts within the I-Sign FIX frame, with a vacuum cup used for their removal.

Launched earlier this year, I-Sign is a new display frame that provides a

stylish alternative to the Snap Frame system whilst still providing easy access to the graphics. It also incorporates a tamper-proof lock.

For further information visit: www.applelec.co.uk and/or www.ledlightsheet.co.uk ■

Triple echo from William Smith

Leading supplier of off-the-shelf sign and display systems to the trade and selective end users, William Smith offers a choice of three widely specified solutions.

As the name implies, Stylos is a stylish and highly adaptable multi-directional sign system that is widely specified by many local authorities for high street and boundary signage. Each unit has 'fingers' that can point in up to eight different directions and at varying heights. A key design feature of the system is a concealed inner fixing arrangement that makes it extremely difficult for the fingerposts to be vandalised. The standard system can be adapted to create town or city centre information and boundary signs, while for areas of poor or reduced lighting an illuminated version of the system is available.

The Flexfast sign box is one of the most robust, easy to assemble and maintain flexible-face sign systems available. Incorporating a simple but highly reliable sign tensioning system, it facilitates savings of up to 50 percent on installation. It can be used to create both illuminated and non-illuminated flexible-face signs and is supplied with outdoor-durable printed graphics if

required and a 10-year warranty against failure. Where weight is a major installation issue, the alternative Flexfast Light combines all of the benefits of the standard system but is 25 percent lighter in weight and commensurately cheaper in price.

Luminedge is one of the most popular illuminated sign and display solutions available. It incorporates the patented Prismex lighting technology developed by ICI Acrylics (now trading as Perspex) that combines sharp graphics definition and even distribution of light with low energy consumption. The system is available in a wide range of formats to accommodate varying sign and display requirements and can be used for both internal and external applications in a host of retail and commercial environments.

All three systems can be supplied either as finished products, complete with graphics if required, or in component form for on-site assembly and customisation in any stove-enamelled BS, RAL or Pantone colour specification.

For further information visit: www.williamsmith.co.uk



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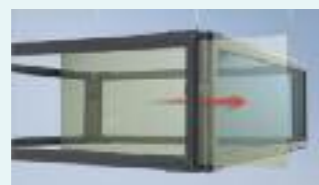
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An integrated solution from Fairfield

Signware Solutions is an integrated sign and display innovation introduced by Fairfield Displays that embraces signage, banner and graphics presentation in a single solution. It is based on aluminium profiles designed to house a wide range of commonly used substrates.

AnoFrame is a range of profiles that can be used to create flat wall-mounted or projecting (up to 300mm) box signs and displays. The profiles can be provided in customised sizes or alternatively supplied with accessories in a length of three metres for on-site assembly and customisation. Multiple profiles can also be supplied to create directories, menu displays, a variety of sign formats and decorative collages



that have become increasingly popular. The frames can be supplied with either mitred or 'push in' square corners.



AnoSky Boxes are three-dimensional frame profiles that can be suspended from a ceiling or wall-mounted. They are supplied with a range of clips that support the cables that can be easily fixed to the ceiling, particularly those with a high elevation.

Both systems will accommodate a wide range of sign and display materials.

For further information visit: www.fairfielddisplays.co.uk



A diplomatic mission

Equally enticing signage solutions can be provided with the use of off-the-shelf flat cut letters such as those supplied by Applelec to New Vision Sign and Graphics, which are now gracing the interior walls of the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur.

A key feature of the signage is a simulated ink-filled crest created by applying an intricate cut vinyl design to the front of the crest cut from two millimetre-thick stainless steel at a fraction of the cost of producing a three-dimensional built-up plaque. For all such signage, New Vision Signs and Graphics uses marine grade stainless steel, as many letter

sets are destined for hot or coastal locations where moisture and humidity could cause degradation of other grades of stainless steel.

At the Kuala Lumpur location, the lightweight lettering was mounted onto an opaque coloured glass panel using a vinyl adhesive supplied by 3M to ensure no fixings were visible. Tony Stead of New Vision Signs and Graphics explained: "We use a variety of products and assembly techniques to meet our project briefs and for the British High Commission signage the vinyl-covered crest was ideal for the interior location. We have been creating embassy signage for a number of years and regularly



choose Applelec to supply the plaques and letters for these highly prestigious projects."

Applelec Sales Director, Sam Armstrong added: "Customers often think of Applelec for unusual or difficult jobs but in reality a large part of our work involves sign manufacturing staples, such as flat-cut and built-up letters. The Kuala Lumpur project was actually a simple flat-cut letter job that used creativity to get the most from the product and

proves that less is more."

Widely used in sign and display systems and for ID branding, flat-cut letters are a solid and resilient manufacturing staple ideal for secondary lettering features and internal signage. Applelec produces these letters in a range of materials, including stainless steel, brass, aluminium and copper.

For further information visit: www.applelec.co.uk

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This month, **Mark Godden** questions the ways in which



The past determines our future

As a species, we're inclined to harbour a dewy-eyed affection for things and times past, but does such nostalgia really have anything to recommend it?

We have current frames of reference to which we can compare things past and, at the pace things develop these days, what once was, can look distinctly disadvantaged when held up against what is now, if you look closely.

I spend a lot of my time staring into a computer screen. Of late, that means a Dell XPS with one of the latest generation LCD displays boasting amazingly high resolution. Suddenly, the perfectly acceptable Mac I was using before the Dell came along looks less than average, despite it being a pretty good display in its own right. If for whatever reason I'm forced to sit at a computer without a killer-screen, I start whining.

I don't know about you, but these days, I can't sit and listen to music reproduced by a stylus dragging in a dust-filled and scratch-pocked groove pressed into a disk of vinyl. I can hear motor-rumble and all sorts of scraping noises and pops. I can hear the pre-echo of music yet to happen and I can hear all sorts of nasty speed fluctuations. Now, for me anyway, it has to be digital or CD or nothing. If you choose to bundle all the above sound aberrations up under the collective 'colourations' and otherwise romanticise snap crackle and pop, that's your business. Not trying to start a row here!

Once you've had a zingy taste of something better, you can easily live without the sour aftertaste of something that doesn't live up to today's version of events.

You know that great big printer you've got in your workshop? I'll bet it's pretty fast. I'll also bet it's so fast that you, on more occasions than not, are nowhere near exhausting its capacity. If you were to sit down and take a long, honest look at your production needs, it's likely that you'd conclude you don't

actually need a printer as fast as the one you've got much of the time. However. Could you live with a slower one? I doubt it. Once you've had a taste of whoosh-factor, nothing else will do. If something faster comes along, you'll want that too. Specmanship?

We surround ourselves with things that are over-specified. One of the credible reasons we do that is so-called redundancy. It's comforting to know that the thing that holds the wings on never gets stressed within sight of its real capacity. Just like it's nice to know that something you want to last for five years is rated to last for twice that.

This does add costs though.

Redundant capacity is, in many ways a good thing and advances in all fields deliver it. It's easier to swallow the fact you're paying for it if you sell it to yourself as 'headroom' or 'insurance'. It does mean you can quickly react if needed, whereas someone who is on the limit may have to start eating into available hours and have no alternative but to let time slip, with the inevitable result that deadlines get missed. It's better than living on the limits that were imposed in the recent past, especially as we seem to have an unbidden faculty for remembering the past, which serves to filter out all of its down sides.

Today, you switch on your printer and it works. Then, you had to practically rouse its ink-spattered carcass from a state of coma.

Today, you take the inks you use pretty much for granted in terms of quality and safety. Then, ink was pretty pungent stuff and still on the bleeding edge of development progress en-route to reliability. Today, you walk up to a large format graphic and you recognise it as such. Then, you had to be really careful about viewing

distance and make the best of the limited capability you had.

I think what I'm driving at here is, thanks to pace, and thanks to the raw talent driving it, the 'past' is actually a very recent thing in our industry. When improvements and developments come along, they tend to do so in highly compressed cycles. Then there's the magnitude of improvement to consider. You don't need a stopwatch to measure a step-function increase in speed and you know from experience how precipitous hardware price reductions can be when the new-printer-on-the block comes along and you're still paying for the old one.

It's reasonable to suppose that early adopters get a first mover's advantage and extract profit from that position. One thing's for sure though, when big improvements in any manufacturing technology do arrive, they're largely targeted at reducing production costs and that in turn creates the potential for dragging output prices lower. Does this drive us along the wrong path?

It's an inevitable condition when you're living in the midst of a fast-moving industry, that events can quickly overtake you. If you've got a business model that's predicated on your being in a position of low-cost leadership, yours is a relentless and unremitting exercise in whipping your hardware along like an Apache warhorse, getting your money out of it and buying the cheaper one that's waiting in the wings. Being the lowest cost source of anything is a transient position. Cost goes up - competition comes in. The past in your life is ever-present and events are waiting to consign you there. You have to stay current to live.

If your model transcends the cost-plus pricing imperative that drives the low-cost operators, you live in a world that recognises that, sometime, things are

worth what people are willing to pay for them and the price you can command for delivering a great customer experience might be more than someone operating costs-plus could ever comprehend. You're on a different basis of urgency in terms of your business and its currency - but why?

Maybe it's that very notion we opened with. Our affection for things past is polarised around those things' ability to endure. Good experiences are remembered and valued, so-so ones evaporate and are gone. Bad ones get hard-coded forever. If you can propel your business into the space that gets it remembered for the right reasons, you create something that endures the pace of development and in turn becomes something thought about in different terms. You're plonked in the silo with others delivering things such as 'service like it used to be', or 'good old-fashioned value', or 'an experience worth repeating'.

Carve it any way you like, we really have never had it so good in many ways. We can make coloured pictures in daylight using machines practically anyone can afford. We've access to information that we never had before and reach that would have baffled businesses only twenty years ago. Who'd want to change any of that? It has opportunity running right through it.

Despite all that though, we do hang on to the past because that's what we're coded to do. So much of what we do is judged, not for itself but for the experience it produces. So when it comes to your customers, the smart thing is to make sure that the experience of dealing with you is the very best that you can make it!

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