

PrintWeek



Duhig:

Me & my... MGI Meteor DP8700 XL

By Jenny Roper Thursday, 21 February 2013

Having become a digital printer almost by chance, TG Print has since fully embraced inkjet with the purchase of this flexible workhorse

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All of a sudden we were digital printer." So says David Duhig, managing director at Woolwich-based commercial printer TG Print, of the fateful moment back in 2008 when his firm unexpectedly came to be the proud owners of an HP Indigo 3050.

You may be wondering how someone can unexpectedly come to own a very expensive press; well, TG Print secured the machine – along with an operator who had already been working on Indigos for 10 years – through the acquisition of a company that had gone into administration and owed TG Print money.

Duhig admits that TG Print had not been considering digital at the time, but is very grateful to have been pushed in this direction. "Up to that point, we'd been shying away from digital, and all of a sudden we could do it because we had a really good machine," he says. "And we found our customer base linked quite nicely with it."

While being in the right place at the right time certainly heralded the start of a successful digital operation for TG, it was careful analysis of the market and a shrewd investment strategy that have ensured this offering has prospered.

TG Print, in fact, started life 20 years ago as a repro house, but expanded into a commercial print operation as the traditional repro work diminished, adding a line-up of Heidelberg presses. And once the new Indigo was bedded in, it decided to fully embrace digital, acquiring a Xerox 1000, a Zünd digital cutting table and a laminator.

The latest addition to this digital line-up has been an MGI Meteor DP8700 XL, installed December 2011 to support the Xerox, in the event of the firm's aging Indigo 3050 "beginning to creak".

Love at first sight

It was apparently a case of love at first sight when Duhig first clapped eyes on the Meteor at Ipex. "I just looked at it and thought that it was a great machine," he reports. "The fact that it did large-format, which means it can do the big six- or eight-page A4 jobs, and the fact it does envelopes and plastics, is just very impressive."

Expanding the range of short-run products was the main reason for investing in the new press. Adding digital technology complemented TG Print's client base nicely, back when it first branched into this in 2008, because much of the firm's business was trade work from other printers outsourcing short-run jobs. But three years down the line, Duhig found he needed to bring something new to the table.

"The trade work was starting to dry up as other printers were getting their own little digital presses and didn't need us anymore," reports Duhig. "But now we're back with their six-page A4s, their roll folds, their belly wraps – so it's generating a nice amount of trade work. Because everybody's running SRA3 these days, everyone's charging the same price. But because there are so few Meteors around, you can virtually name your price."

No click charge

Duhig was also very attracted to the fact that the MGI Meteor, unlike most other digital machines, isn't paid for on a click-charge basis.

"You buy the consumables and there's a recommendation that you replace certain consumables once you have printed a certain number of sheets, and the toner just runs out when it runs out," reports Duhig. "So you can run on a bit longer if your work hasn't got quite so much coverage on it. It gives you much more flexibility."

"A click charge can also preclude you from running envelopes because they're so much smaller and use so little ink," he adds.

It was these factors that persuaded TG Print to opt for the Meteor in favour of the other digital machine it was considering, a Xerox iGen.

"You can't do envelopes on a Xerox, because, at four or five pence per click, once you go over a couple of hundred units, you're not viable price-wise anymore," says Duhig. "Also, plastic films that might cause a problem for a Xerox or Indigo – the MGI just runs them."

Duhig does concede, however, that, depending on what's wanted from a digital machine, the Xerox might suit some companies better. "Any Xerox machine is a good shout," he says, "for those wanting more of a photocopier-type set-up."

The MGI machine, meanwhile, is more flexible, as Duhig explains: "The reason the Meteor can process envelopes and plastics, is because it's a kind of hybrid machine. It has some of the technology you'd expect from the photocopying boxes, but also incorporates some Indigo-type technology, where you've got charged ions going onto a blanket and then dropping onto the sheet when you discharge the electrics."

"But that does mean the operator needs to be on the ball," he warns. "You can't just stick it in a corner and abuse it, you need to be a little bit gentle with it like you would with a conventional press. We do the same kind of maintenance on it as we would on our Heidelbergs, otherwise it would soon stop producing jobs at the quality we want."

That said, the Meteor has performed very well for the company, reports Duhig, with only a few service issues at the start of its life, which Duhig puts down to his original operator not being as conscientious as he'd have liked.

In terms of the service support offered, there are both pluses and minuses to MGI being a relatively small manufacturer, he says. "Because there are only a few MGI machines installed in the country, to start with MGI were also finding their feet a bit," he says. "There were some teething problems in terms of them deciding who was going to respond to what."

David Evans, managing director at MGI Technology, concurs. "TG Print were one of the first companies to install a Meteor DP8700 XL and we have been very fortunate that they have been a true partner in working with us on our service delivery model and infrastructure," he says. "We have deliberately made sure that we have not pushed ahead on sales before we have built up our own experience and ability to support anything we put in to the market. We have established a core team of engineers and consultants based in the UK, supported by our colleagues in France."

Quick learners

The company has indeed been a quick learner and eager to please, qualifies Duhig. And the beauty of MGI being relatively small is that the team can make up for lack of experience with flexibility and a close working relationship with clients. "The infrastructure of the company is on the money now," says Duhig. "They're very receptive to batting ideas around with us- for example we've suggested that a few more preventative maintenance visits would help us."

MGI was also very helpful when it came to training. "Initially, we had one operator given three days' training at MGI's UK base in Hemel Hempstead," says Duhig. "But when we said we needed to train someone else, MGI gave us another three days of training for free."

In analysing the success of any installation, the key metric for TG Print is the impact the investment has had on the bottom line, and, along with the other new kit, the Meteor has helped TG Print double its size over the past four years, to become a £3m-turnover business.

And testament to the success of the TG Print-MGI relationship, is the fact that key to the printer's future growth plan is the purchase, in a few months' time, of an MGI JETvarnish coater for spot UV work. "That will allow us to carry out spot varnish work to a totally different level," enthuses Duhig. "It's very thick and rich looking. If you were to compare the MGI result and that from a conventional silk screen device as a customer, you'd think 'I want the MGI next time'."

"We know with MGI that the back-up is good and that the service is excellent, so we trust buying another machine from them even though it's just been released and there's only a few hundred in the world," he adds. "We're just very happy with what we've seen of MGI and very confident with the technology."

SPECIFICATIONS

Max speed A4: 4,260sph

Max sheet size 330x1,020mm

Min sheet size 100x150mm

Stock weight range 70-350gsm

Film handling 100-400 microns; PVC (210-400 micron, coated/uncoated), polyester, polycarbonate, polypropylene, PET, vinyl, synthetics, styrene, vinyl/static cling, canvas, magnets

Also handles Offset papers, matt, coated, Kromekote, art paper, textured, bond, labels, CS1, CS2 and envelopes

Resolution 2,400dpi

Feed tray capacity 500 sheets per tray (three trays in total)

RIP Fiery Pro80

Price £165,000

Contact MGI Technology 01442 446446 www.mgitechnology.co.uk

COMPANY PROFILE

TG Print started life as a repro business, but, like many such firms, decided to branch out into print to insulate itself from a decline in demand for traditional repro services. Eight years after setting up shop, this £3m-turnover, Woolwich-based company today boasts a kit list including a Heidelberg SM 74, a Heidelberg XL 75, a Xerox 1000 and a Zünd digital cutting table.

Why it was bought...

TG Print decided to go for an MGI Meteor DP8700 XL to boost its digital offering, because of the new formats this would allow it to offer. The machine's maximum sheet size of 1,020mm enables the company to compete with the SRA3 market and beyond, reports managing director David Duhig, which means it can process B1 work and also short runs of six- and eight-page A4 jobs. The Meteor was also chosen for its envelope and plastic printing capabilities, and because no click charge applies to working with this machine.

How it has performed...

TG Print has been very impressed with the quality of the print the Meteor turns out, and with the service support offered by MGI. "MGI are very flexible, very helpful, and the Meteor is a really good product," says Duhig.

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