

Carrick Signs increases revenues and throughput with two HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printers



At a glance

Industry: Sign & Display

Business name: Carrick Signs Co.

Headquarters: Manchester, UK

Website: carricksigns.co.uk



Challenge

- Carrick Signs had only been in business a few years when it realised it needed extra production capacity for rigid and flexible applications. It investigated the flatbed market for printers that could provide greater throughput, substrate versatility, print quality and reliability

Solution

- A visit to Sign UK 2010 led to the purchase of an HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer through HP Gold Preferred Partner, CWE Solutions.
- The printer ticked all the boxes for Carrick Signs, providing matte and gloss finishes, the ability to print in four colours and white and to handle a wide range of rigid and flexible substrates at greater production speeds than was not previously possible.

Results

- Carrick Signs is able to attract new business and offer additional products and services based on the HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer's ability to reproduce colours accurately and handle a wider range of substrate types and sizes.
- Production output was 50 per cent faster than with the company's previous equipment.
- Printing direct to rigid substrates like Perspex, Foamex, Correx and aluminium is faster and more cost-effective.
- Continued growth of the company's business led to the installation of a second HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer less than two years later.
- To accommodate the new printer and the additional work, Carrick Signs moved to new premises and hired three additional employees.
- Production throughput speeds increased by more than 150 per cent.

“Having the HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer meant that we could not only offer larger board sizes, but we could also output them 50 per cent faster than our original machine.”

– Mandy Roscoe-Enion, business development director, Carrick Signs Co.



A mere five years after opening its doors, large-format printing company, Carrick Signs, continues to expand its markets, increase throughput and build revenues, having survived the growing pains that can hamper the initial development of start-ups.

Offering a full range of display applications using both rigid and flexible substrates, the Manchester-based company initially invested in a digital inkjet flatbed printing capability. Soon afterwards, with a growing requirement for increased capacity and improved all-round performance, managing director Chris Palmer and business development director Mandy Roscoe-Enion, began researching the flatbed market and reviewing potential successors to the original machine.

“We went to Sign UK 2010 to get a handle on the latest options available,” says Roscoe-Enion. “In addition to the company’s need for much higher throughput, customers were increasingly asking for things that we struggled with, such as the ability to print good quality white.”

As Roscoe-Enion explains, the trip to Sign UK marked a pivotal moment for the company.

“We didn’t want to leave Birmingham empty-handed, and made sure we used the opportunity to talk to all the dealers and see the latest large-format devices in action,” she says.

Following discussions with HP dealer CWE Solutions, an HP Gold Preferred Partner, Carrick selected the 64in-wide (1.63m) HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer to provide the firepower for its capacity requirements. Printing to a wide range of rigid and flexible media at speeds of up to 398ft²/hr (37m²/hr), the HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer enables Carrick to print four colours with matt and gloss finishes, and makes it easy to use white ink¹.

“The ability to properly print white ink with brilliant vibrancy is a real bonus,” she explains. “This addition has made a dramatic difference to applications such as Perspex display panels used in corporate environments where company logos and branding need to be accurately reproduced.”

Increased productivity and versatility

According to Roscoe-Enion, the installation made an immediate impact on the business, enlarging the number of substrates that could be printed and taking productivity to new levels.

“Previously, we would have printed a graphic onto vinyl separately before applying this to the rigid substrate to ensure quality,” adds Roscoe-Enion. “However, as CWE Solutions explained, the HP Scitex FB500 allows us to print directly to the substrate, which means we’re not constantly looking at the clock, fearful of missing a deadline.

“This capability also means that we can take on new work, including the printing of wood-panelled doors, which we couldn’t do before,” she continues. “In fact, the HP Scitex FB500 prints nearly anything we feed it: wood, Perspex, Foamex, Correx and aluminium. Basically, if it’s flat, we can print on it.”

The ability to take on more work and offer new applications for customers meant that the Carrick Signs printer was soon filled to capacity.

“The HP Scitex FB500 added to our production capability and all-round versatility, but we couldn’t cope with requests and realised that a second unit would be needed to relieve the strain,” says Roscoe-Enion.

What followed was the second pivotal point in what were still the initial years of the company’s growth.

More space, another printer and greater productivity

“It wasn’t simply a question of bringing in another machine,” continues Roscoe-Enion. “At only 1,100ft² (102m²), our existing premises were too small to accommodate a second HP Scitex FB500, so given the rapid growth we were experiencing, we decided to relocate the business to larger facilities.”

Fast forward to the present and Carrick Signs has transformed itself once more, moving to new, 6,000ft² (560m²) facilities during the summer of 2012 and taking on three additional staff members. Moreover, the company’s two HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printers provide a twin-propelled large-format print capability.

Integrating the second machine, which was once again supplied by CWE Solutions, was very smooth and the printer was quickly put to work.

“Last month we printed almost 3,000 boards on the two HP Scitex printers, and our throughput now is effectively 150 per cent faster than before we invested in the HP printers,” Roscoe-Enion explains. “If we get a job for 100 boards on a Wednesday afternoon for delivery Friday morning, we can now say ‘yes,’ rather than having to turn down the job.”

Satisfied customers and sustained growth

Carrick Signs’s nationwide client base includes local councils, schools, advertising and design agencies, as well as individuals. Among recent jobs, one typifies the performance credentials of the HP Scitex FB500 Industrial Printer: a project to promote the Wigan Youth Zone, a state-of-the-art facility in Wigan town centre offering young people a place to spend their leisure time.

Carrick was asked to print striking graphics onto 90 10x5-ft aluminium boards that were installed to form one gigantic display hoarding measuring 4,500ft² (418m²).

“The project for the Wigan Youth Zone exemplifies what the HP Scitex FB500 can do,” says Roscoe-Enion. “The job came in fairly late, but we were able to output it in a very short space of time. Most importantly, the client was thrilled with the finished result, which look fantastic.”

Still in its relative infancy, Carrick Signs has built a solid production base and varied client portfolio, proving that the early years of a business can be focused on growth. As for the all-important bottom-line, according to Roscoe-Enion, the figures speak for themselves:

“Our revenue increased by around 33 per cent last year, and for the first half of 2012, it’s 41 per cent. Considering we only installed the second HP Scitex FB500 in the summer, this can primarily be attributed to just one HP printer,” says Roscoe-Enion.

1) Use of white ink requires a separate purchase of the HP Scitex FB500 White Ink Upgrade Kit.