inspirepac focuses on POS production in new purpose-built facility

inspirepac, a Smurfit Kappa company, is a market leader in high quality corrugated packaging solutions for national and international customers. From basic transit boxes to high-quality retail-ready full-colour packaging, the company provides an end-to-end service from design to prefilling and delivery. Its new plant in Markham Vale is dedicated to POS/POP/RRP production using the latest flexo, offset and digital technologies.

Industry sector: POS/POP, RRP, corrugated packaging

Business name: inspirepac, a Smurfit Kappa company

Headquarters: Chesterfield, Derbyshire, UK

Testimonial from: Mark Hawkins, managing director
Ben Skelton, display business manager

HP solution: HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press

Annual turnover: £50 million

Website: inspirepac.com

Challenge

"People tended to think of us as a box company with a POS display operation bolted on. Our investment in the Markham Vale facility demonstrates our commitment to the provision of a comprehensive range of POS products to our customers using all the latest technologies."

Mark Hawkins, managing director, inspirepac

Responding to change in the POS display market

"We were producing POS materials at three of our sites," says Mark Hawkins, managing director, inspirepac. "Two of those plants were landlocked, so no further expansion was possible, so with the help of D2N2 (the local enterprise partnership) and Derbyshire County Council, we developed a 100,000ft^2 purpose-built plant at Markham Vale.

"With the increasing sophistication of POS products, it was sensible to bring our resources together and grow them," he continues. "We have increased our POS capacity, and the other plants can expand into the vacated space."

For inspirepac, the vision for Markham Vale was not only to consolidate and grow the POS business, but to further its reputation as a provider of POS materials as well as corrugated packaging among its customers.

"Our customers are blue-chip, international brand FMCG suppliers," Hawkins says. "They need to promote themselves to customers and retailers and differentiate their products, and this has led to the trend of increasing number of SKUs produced in much lower volumes.

inspirepac recognised that producing cost-effective POS displays in lower quantities couldn't be done conventionally.

"We saw that the old unit-cost business model where 40 per cent of the print would be written off couldn't work in the short-run, fast-turnaround market," Hawkins says. "We needed to address that market, and do it with the print quality our customers expect."

Solution

"Using a digital press to print POS displays changes the whole concept of value. With conventional long runs, it was all about unit-cost. With the HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press, it's about meeting immediate requirements and adding value. Digital is faster and leaner."

Mark Hawkins, managing director, inspirepac

Beginning the digital integration

"We had been watching the development of digital printing technology for packaging for a number of years," says Ben Skelton, display business manager, inspirepac. "We invested in the HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press based on a full year of research. We went to the market and tested different machines and the HP Scitex 15500 was the one that could cope with our packaging needs as well as our point of sale and display markets as well."

"We're not box-makers who print, we're printers who make boxes," says Hawkins. "That's part of our USP which is why in choosing the HP Scitex press, print quality was so important."

On June 1, 2015, inspirepac installed the UK's first HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press at Markham Vale. This meant that the company now had litho, flexo and digital capabilities under one roof.

"We chose the HP Scitex 15500 for several reasons," explains Skelton. "We liked that it was fully automated and would give steady throughput of full and multiple smaller sheets. Colour matching was also very important as brand colours had to be accurately and reliably reproduced. Finally, print quality: this had to be compatible with the output of our conventional presses."

The HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press uses High Dynamic Resolution (HDR) printing technology that produces variable dot sizes, offering offset litho quality.

"We run jobs in volumes from one to a few thousand sheets," says Skelton. "Our cross-over from conventional to digital is about 800-10,00 full-size sheets."

Result

"We installed the HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press on June 1 and sold the first job printed on it on June 10 – that's eight business days. Since then, we've printed a wide variety of work on it, and the customer response has been very good."

Ben Skelton, display business manager, inspirepac

Selling the benefits

Even in the short time inspirepac has been running the press, its customers are learning what's possible; they are also learning to think digitally.

"Unit-cost is no longer the key factor; it's, 'What do you need?' and, 'How soon do you need it?'," explains Skelton. "These factors determine what solution we use.

"Having the HP Scitex 15500 we have been able to bring in house a number of our print needs, we have now brought about 90 per cent of our outsourced work in house," he continues. "We're also migrating jobs from flexo."

inspirepac has printed on a wide range of substrate thicknesses with the digital press, from 'EB' down to 'N' flute.

"With our colour management and print capabilities our client's main priority is not to compromise their brand. And in many cases they leave us to decide their print process to match the brief and budget," says Skelton. "For example, if we see a way of adding value, we might suggest versioning to tailor a display to a region or retailer. Since no costly plate making is involved, it's easily done and cost-effective. It also opens valuable press time on the conventional presses.

"We are also doing trial runs for product testing, and have used the digital press for proof prints for customers to approve," he says.

"The installation and ramp up of the HP Scitex 15500 Corrugated Press have gone well, and we're looking forward to helping our customers use it to its full capabilities," Skelton concludes.

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