

Durrant Wapshott gets it right first time with EFI-VUTEK QS3220 investment...

Having spent 15 years working together to develop a creative relationship between end-user clients and their needs for a diverse range of display work, including retail, advertising and other promotional applications, Simon Durrant and Chris Wapshott made the decision to invest in their own wide-format production instead of using third-party suppliers.



Based in Rotherhithe, south London, Durrant Wapshott concentrates still on project management and problem solving for its customer base but realised that, in order to produce consistent quality on time, the solution was to invest in its own wide-format printer.

Typical projects undertaken by Durrant Wapshott include support graphics for events, refits of existing retail environments and the design, production and installation of all display elements for major product launches. As well as providing value for money, increasing environmental pressure necessitates the use of recycled materials, the reduction of waste and the provision of greener principles in-line with many of the company's client practices.

"Because of the exacting demands of our client base, our experiences showed us that it was time to bring much of our work in-house," explains Chris Wapshott. "We work to incredibly tight deadlines, with jobs often needing to be turned round in a matter of hours, so the luxury of using external print service providers was losing its practical appeal. The only way we could guarantee the right quality standards within very short turn-round times, yet retain control over production, was to output the orders ourselves."

Durrant Wapshott started making preliminary inroads into investing in its own printer with thoughts initially towards a relatively low-cost purchase to start the company on the road to wide-format production. However, the partners wisely adopted an open-minded policy regarding the right type of technology for its needs and this was a practice which ultimately paid off. The company was all too aware of the likely future demands of the jobs which they should be able to produce themselves, with a sensible return on investment joining reliability, quality and speed on the list of priorities. Thus, finally the decision was made to choose a print option which not only would be future-proof but also took into account the move away from solvent-based printers towards UV-curable ink formulations.

"We have an excellent relationship with our clients, all of whom rely on us to bring them first-rate results. Moving our print work in-house was also certain to secure additional orders once we were able to control every aspect ourselves from pre-press through printing to finishing," comments Simon Durrant. "In addition, we decided that we wanted to be able to output onto both roll-fed media and rigid substrates suitable for interior and exterior applications using the greenest solution available."

Thus, Durrant Wapshott's quest into locating the most suitable printer took time, with first thoughts about a low-end machine swiftly evolving into a solution which would grow with the company and enhance its output options. Primary consultation with an industry guru, and discussions about concerns for fast throughput and the ability to output to exacting colour standards across all materials, was followed by an introduction to CMYUK's Robin East, UK distributor for EFI VUTEK.

As a result, the partners of Durrant Wapshott opted for a 3.2 m wide EFI VUTEK QS3220 as they believed this to be the machine which covered all the production criteria needed immediately and well into the future. The printer's second generation UV-curable inks and their ability to provide excellent adhesion and vivid colours on a broad range of rigid and flexible materials were extra benefits which influenced the purchasing decision.

As Wapshott emphasises, the full year it took to decide whether or not to buy a machine has paid off handsomely. Since the time of the company's initial investigations, UV-curable technology has improved, along with better throughput speeds and higher overall quality. Opting for the white ink option in its EFI VUTEK QS3220 has brought additional benefits to the company, allowing creativity and versatility to be realised within a single printer.



Having set out originally with the intention of printing mainly digital wall coverings, Durrant Wapshott has since moved into a wealth of complementary areas and now outputs as many jobs onto rigid substrates as it does onto flexible media. The addition of a Zünd G3 contour cutter, also purchased from CMYUK Digital, has extended the type of work and finishing services which can be produced in-house.

"This investment has opened doors to new projects and brought us the opportunity to achieve more creative results," continues Wapshott. "Since making the decision to opt for a UV-curable hybrid solution we've found an increasing number of clients requesting to print direct to a selection of different rigid substrates. We've made the right choice with the EFI VUTEK QS3200 as it has allowed us to cater for diverse requirements we didn't originally calculate into our in-house capabilities, as well as giving us the option to experiment with, and use, different materials in the future."

The purchase by Durrant Wapshott of the high-end QS3220 has also resulted in additional credibility. The company has always been renowned for problem-solving many of the projects being managed, such as those which need to be installed in difficult locations. Producing jobs in-house has increased flexibility and versatility as well as shortening turn-round times; maintaining total control over applications from start to finish is particularly beneficial. Now, even if an order is received at extremely short notice, it can be supplied quickly to strict quality standards and, often, can be ready for installation in a matter of hours rather than days.

Deciding to buy an industrial strength printer might have been considered a gamble by any company investing for the first time during a period of tight economic conditions in the UK. However, for Durrant Wapshott, the purchase of its QS3220 was designed to see the company through the tougher times being experienced generally throughout the industry into the future with a machine which would, without doubt, take it there.

The installation of the machine took place at the beginning of 2010, and was up and running immediately. Durrant Wapshott's decision to opt for white ink is proving to be advantageous when working with coloured and clear materials, enhancing the vivid colours output by the printer's high definition (HDP) capabilities and its maximum resolution of 1080 dpi. The strong vacuum bed on the QS3220 is complemented by strengthened input and output tables, and optimum throughput speeds of 84 square m/hour can be achieved on materials of thicknesses up to 5.08 cm and 3.2 m wide.

CMYUK Digital's Robin East comments: "This installation of an EFI VUTEK QS3220 at Durrant Wapshott is a perfect example of how the right machine can generate creativity alongside high throughput production requirements. Unlike many suppliers, we know how important it is that a capital investment pays dividends from the start; our installation and training procedures guarantee that the printer will be ready to earn its keep immediately."

"We are also proving time and time again that the service we provide to new investors in wide-format UV-curable printers is second-to-none," emphasises Jon Price of CMYUK Digital. "Moving across to digital technology doesn't just involve buying a machine – it also requires correct set-up, colour calibration and profiling plus intelligent, customised training to minimise maintenance procedures and unnecessary down-time. If our users aren't happy, then nor are we; Durrant Wapshott is testimony to the added value we provide to first time buyers as well as to users adding to, or upgrading, their existing wide-format capacity."



Printer showcased in this study:
EFI VUTEK QS3220

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