



VIRTUAL BECOMES REALITY for 'dream' print business

G.A.E Makes Sense in Darlington

A print business started three years ago in his bedroom by a young entrepreneur with little more than a photocopier and a website is on target for £1m annual turnover following a £250,000-plus investment package in new printing and finishing equipment from G.A.E.

And, at a time when many printers are seeking to add digital capabilities to their conventional print rooms, upstart commercial digital printer Sense Creative in Darlington, perhaps typically, has run counter-trend by stepping from digital straight up to full-colour litho.

Sense creates websites for designers so their customers can order print direct - with Sense Creative fulfilling the majority of the orders. It was the success of this that prompted MD Tim Thompson to look at litho. He explains: "People were ordering jobs through these sites but designers wanted longer runs and we couldn't match litho prices. We couldn't get away from the fact that there was a finite limit to our earning capacity printing digitally, so we went to Ipex to look at litho. Initially we were put off by the learning curve and felt more at home with the DI systems, but then we got in touch with G.A.E and their press was far less expensive. That got us thinking. What was really impressive was the training. I knew nothing about litho printing but now I can confidently run the press. I am amazed that I am able to do it."



Sense Creative MD Tim Thompson with the Horizon VAC/SPF/FC-200A booklet production line



The Sense Creative investment package included a Mitsubishi SDP-EcoIII CTP B3 polyester Platesetter, B3 four colour convertible-to-perfecting Shinohara 52IVP press, Horizon 10 station VAC-Turbo PowerCollator with SPF/FC-200A booklet production line and Perfecta 92TVC heavy-duty CIP4 guillotine with colour touch-screen and intelligent programming.

Sense really is a family firm; not only is it staffed by Tim's dad, John, Mum, Jo, and brother, James – it spilled out of Tim's bedroom and took over the family home before moving to an industrial unit on the outskirts of Darlington last year. Now the addition of the Shinohara press has led to

Billy Forrest with the Shinohara 52IVP four-colour convertible-to-perfecting B3 press





G.A.E Makes Sense in Darlington... continued

another milestone... the employment of the first non-family member of staff, time-served press minder Billy Forrest. "With all the risks and hard work, this was probably the scariest part of growing the business. People are so important," says Tim, "whether its staff or suppliers, you have to build partnerships and we've been very fortunate in that respect."

Tim Thompson talked to a number of manufacturers before deciding on G.A.E. and, once again, he turned convention on its head: "I considered there were a lot of arguments for putting all

our eggs in one basket. I thought we'd get better service along the line and it's true... we have been really impressed. We chose G.A.E because they were able to supply us a press and a really good guillotine as well as the Horizon equipment. We really started the company on a shoestring and have ploughed all the profits back in which is why we have been able to make this investment."

As for the finishing equipment Mr Thompson says: "The Horizon booklet system is running like a dream and the Perfecta guillotine is brilliant. There is no way on earth we could have introduced a litho press and kept the old equipment."

Sense Creative also runs a DocuColor 6060 and produces a wide variety of commercial print, including booklets, brochures, leaflets and business cards. Following the new investment package monthly turnover has doubled to £70,000... and is still rising.

“There were a lot of arguments for putting all our eggs in one basket... I thought we'd get better service along the line and it's true – we have been really impressed**”**



James Thompson with the Perfecta 92TVC programmatic heavy-duty guillotine



Tim with the Mitsubishi SDP-Eco 1630III CtP B3 polyester platesetter

