



GMG Colour Management for 'Press on Digital'

Mix & Match with supreme confidence for Top Brands

Machine Operator Glenn Smith with one of 4 HP Scitex printers handling display and POS production for firms such as Karen Millen, Hugo Boss, Harrods, Gucci and Prada.

Edited by Ton Rombout

A dedicated provider of large format digital printing and installation services is making substantial time and ink savings in the production of accurately colour-matched display and branding materials using a wide range of printers and substrates, thanks to GMG colour management.

Many print service providers offering large-format digital production nowadays have backgrounds in older analogue techniques such as photographic or screen printing and have added new technologies as they have arrived or as their customers have demanded them. Not so Press On Digital Imaging, a Rochester, Kent-based production house founded in 2000.

Right from the start

"We were digital right from the start", says managing director Andy Wilson, "which in the early days meant we had to educate the market about digital technology. Now, digital print has arrived and the market knows all about what it can do. Designers and architects build it in to their briefs and demand new things – can we stick self-adhesive vinyl to stone, to floors, to glass or to carpets, can we wrap a plane, train or car?"

This long-standing familiarity with digital printing meant that Press On was well-positioned to take advantage of new technological developments as they arrived and the company built a solid business serving clients in the luxury goods sector, handling display and POS production for high-end brands such as

Karen Millen, Hugo Boss, Harrods, Gucci and Prada.

Press On currently has a comprehensive selection of HP Scitex roll-fed printers, including two 60-inch L25500 latex ink models, a 3.2 m LX850 and a 2.6 m LX66550. These are complemented by two flatbed Chromaprint UV-curing printers, adding the ability to image onto rigid media.

Core business

A core part of Press On's business involves printing onto self-adhesive vinyls for applications such as window or floor graphics and vehicle wraps, but a wide range of other media is also used to meet increasingly sophisticated client requirements, including clear vinyl and foils as well as plastics and PVCs. Complex installations can require images or even parts of one image produced by different printers on different substrates to be mounted in close proximity, so that colour continuity between them is critical.

"We might have to produce a window graphic on ContraVision that is to be installed right next to a wall graphic printed on solid self-adhesive vinyl", says Wilson, "so it's vital that the colour matches."

Achieving colour consistency between supplied artwork and

proofs and in-house proofs was already an issue without the complications of matching different printers using different ink types on different media. It was not uncommon for initial proofs generated at Press On to require further work for colour editing and matching.

Colour management

Clearly there was a requirement for some form of comprehensive colour management system that could support all the different print technologies in use at Press On. Market research during 2010 produced a number of possible contenders but Wilson reports that “some had their own workflows attached to them, but we didn’t need that as we already had our own bespoke workflow system, and nothing ticked all of the boxes.” When Press On approached GMG they found that the recently-extended large format digital printer support in GMG ColorServer with GMG SmartProfiler did tick all the boxes. The system was installed early in 2011 and while Wilson admits that it took a few months to get it fully integrated with the in-house workflow, it was time well-spent.

“We’ve been bowled over by the results”, he says. “We now get the same correct colour this week as we got last week, on multiple printing platforms and across different media.”

Matching on different materials

As proof of how well this works, Wilson cites an example where a three-part vehicle wrap had to match across the bodywork, the rubber window seal and the glass window. The three segments were printed respectively by the HP LX850 on Metamark MD5, by one of the HP L25500s on FusionTack Cast Vinyl and by one of the Chromaprint UV22s on ContraVision and when installed, all matched perfectly.

Part of the reason for this colour accuracy across such varied media and printing technologies is that GMG SmartProfiler allows Press On to profile each printer and media combination, and then regular re-calibration of the printers ensures that they remain within tolerance for those profiles to continue to be accurate.

“We control temperature and humidity and we re-calibrate the printers approximately every two weeks or whenever there’s a change of print heads. It takes about 45 minutes, and corrects the inherent variability in printer and media behaviour”, says Wilson, adding, “the profiling process takes around a couple of hours but the time investment pays dividends.”

Press On works to the Fogra 39L colour standard as this ensures matching between its large format printer output and offset print, which is vital for supporting client campaigns with press advertising elements. Built-in Pantone support within GMG ColorServer and GMG SmartProfiler has also been very valuable. Wilson reports, “We have to match Pantones for various clients but we don’t have to do any special profiling to achieve it. The results are limited only by the printer’s gamut and are usually closer to the solid Pantone colours than to their process equivalents.”



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Saving ink by 20 to 50 percent

Press On also benefited from GMG’s EcoSave Option and found it to be so effective in reducing the ink consumption of the Chromaprint UV printers that it has not only paid for itself but effectively extended the life of these older printers.

“We originally took GMG’s EcoSave’s claims with a pinch of salt”, reflects Wilson, “but with the Chromaprints, it has reduced the ink usage by half in certain applications requiring large areas of intense solid colour. I would support GMG’s claim of saving up to 20 per cent across the board, but on the older machines using more dated RIPs, the ink saving has sometimes been as much as 50 per cent, extending their life and making them more profitable again.”

The colour management capability also means that Press On is getting much better results matching clients’ supplied proofs, with the majority now getting a ‘clean pass’ first time.

“This saves us a lot of time and builds confidence all round”, says Wilson. “Clients want reassurance that the job will be on time and that the colours will be right. They are happy to know that we have GMG ColorServer and SmartProfiler – it’s becoming essential and I think will soon be expected as a given; it’s become something of a sales point for us as it means we can often cut out the proofing stage altogether.”



Press On works to the Fogra 39L colour standard to ensure matching between its digital large format and offset print output.

Press On, UK: Digital right from the start

