Customers' backing

Involving customers in investment decisions can be highly beneficial.

Based on the UK South Coast, BCP Media Group specialises in providing a diverse mix of lithographic and digital printing, large format printing, and a broad range of digital marketing services spread across six specialist companies within the Group.

BCP Group was founded in 2015 when Group managing director Ian Shenton acquired the assets of Bournemouth Colour Press with the view to diversify its service offering and open up new markets. Today, BCP Media Group provides a wide array of products and services to sectors such as education, property, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, hospitality, sports & leisure, and creative services.

Early diversification

“Bournemouth Colour Press had a long history as a provider of high-quality lithographic printing,” says Mr Shenton, “but that was pretty much all it offered.” His background in printing prior to acquiring Bournemouth Colour was providing printing companies with premium quality print finishing. “This exposes you to many differing types of creative printing processes, and this is where the strategy to diversify the service offering came from,” he explains. One of the first things BCP did was acquire a couple of small sign businesses which included a small fleet of roll to roll inkjet printers. This immediately opened the door to producing interior and exterior signage products, wall graphics, corporate interiors, vehicle and fleet graphics, and retail and sports stadium fit outs.

First flatbed attempt failed

This became the foundation for BCP Signs; a move which has since become a corner stone for much of the group’s other business activities. Mr Shenton’s next move was to increase the company’s offering in the large format printing market and in 2019, in a bid to meet demand from the property development sector to produce construction site hoardings, he took the

decision to invest in a flatbed printer with which to print direct to media. It was, however, a move that would eventually prove to be unsuited to the business.

“We knew the ability to print direct to media would create further new business opportunities for us in markets outside of just the property sector - and it did. The downside was that our investment was not performing as well as we had expected for some of our key customers in the property sector. To be honest - they were not impressed with some aspects of the print quality,” states Mr Shenton.

Intermediate strategy change

To rectify the situation, the company moved some of the property hoarding production over to its fleet of roll to roll printers. “We had gone from a one-step process via direct-to-media where we were printing directly onto the hoarding, to a three-step process that involved printing on vinyl, adding a weatherproof laminate, then applying the vinyl by hand.” While this would resolve the immediate issue with image quality, it was neither a sustainable nor a cost-effective long-term solution. “Therefore, I took the decision to include a replacement flatbed printer into our budget for 2020, only this time around I was determined to find the right machine that would elevate quality and production to the next level.”

At the start of 2020, the world first became aware of COVID-19. By late spring, the UK government had initiated a strict social distancing policy and the first of three lockdowns to come throughout the year.

Challenging circumstances

The quest to find a suitable replacement flatbed printer was, according to Mr Shenton, being hampered by the onset of the Covid pandemic. “It certainly played its part in slowing down the whole search process,” he says. By early summer, increased demand for more Covid-related products had pushed workflow almost to breaking point.

Pivotal point

“It was proving to be quite a challenging year,” states Mr Shenton. “This meant that we were thinking that we might have to hold back on the flatbed investment. It wasn’t until after we had run the figures and looked at the cost benefit analysis that we recognised we still needed to move forwards with the replacement project. However, unlike when I purchased our first

flatbed printer, this time I made a point of informing our customers of our intent to purchase a new machine. Thinking back, it proved to be the pivotal point of all that followed."

The pivotal point that Mr Shenton alludes to came when the group was approached by a global retail brand with more than 800 outlets across Europe. "We were exploring ways that we could work together and I happened to mention that we were looking to upgrade our flatbed printer. The brand told me that almost all of its printing in Europe was handled by production houses that use swissQprint equipment. They were very transparent and said that after conducting many print production site inspections across Europe they believed that swissQprint machines provided the best results for their brand. While they also pointed out that this was not a prerequisite to working with them, it was clear to me that the way to take quality and production to the next level was going to mean investing in a machine that everybody had told me was like a Rolls Royce."

Finding the suitable printer

The following day Mr Shenton contacted the Swiss manufacturer of high-end large format printers at its UK subsidiary headquarters in Bracknell, Berkshire from where it provides sales, servicing and application support. After outlining the current situation and requirements, the team from BCP Media Group would eventually come down in favour of the swissQprint Impala. In this BCP Media Group had finally found a flatbed printing machine that was completely suited to its business.

Sustainable investment

Mr Shenton was thrilled when the machine was delivered in August 2020. The first thing they printed was a large amount of 1.35 m (53") hoardings for a property company. "The results were stunning. It's a solid robust piece of equipment that does everything we could ask of it. It really is the Rolls Royce of large format UV printing machines offering unrivalled quality."

Moving forward into the first quarter of 2021 and the swissQprint Impala UV printer is currently being put to good use manufacturing a broad range of new Covid-safe products.

"Covid seems to be an ongoing experience these days, and as such we have transitioned much of our product service offering to meet the needs of the market," says Mr Shenton. "Our aim is to be as varied and as diverse as possible in providing a mix of products to an ever changing and fluid market."

"A swissQprint system provides the perfect opportunity for those of us with a growing demand to upgrade to a high-performance dedicated flatbed printer that is unsurpassed in

quality, reliability, and precision. Furthermore, should we wish to upgrade to a new printer, swissQprint say they will take this one in part exchange and we would pretty much recoup much of our initial investment. It's little wonder that swissQprint systems are in currently in such high demand," he concludes.

Company	BCP Media Group Limited, Poole, Dorset, UK
Website	www.bcp.co.uk
Segment	Visual communication
Established	2015
Employees	15
Printer	Impala
References	Point of sale, signage solutions, retail graphics and exhibition stands, large format printing for hospitality, retail and exhibitions