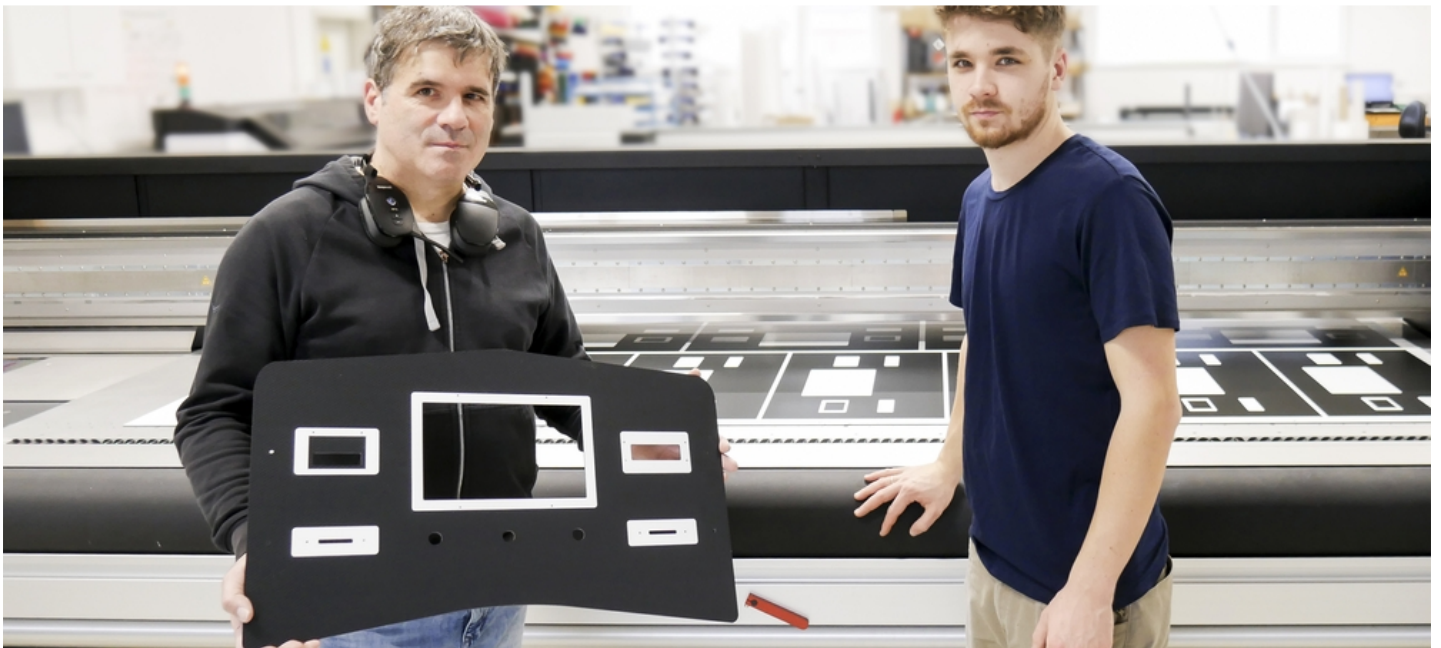


Fewer machines, greater output

A Kudu creates space and capacity.

Ort & Kolb KG, a committed swissQprint user since 2010, has now installed its sixth flatbed printer. The latest addition for the moment is the high-end Kudu model. It replaces two older printers, resulting in more production capacity despite occupying less space.



The company was still an exclusively screen printing operation when Winfried Kolb came on board in 2010. It was he who took the business in a digital direction. The new machine for that would have to be a flatbed printer, and certainly one from swissQprint. "There weren't really any alternatives," he says. High precision and output quality, the modular machine concept and the fact of being headquartered close by were all points in favour of swissQprint.

Introducing flatbed printing also paved the way for the company's diversification: In addition to industrial printing, Ort & Kolb has since been servicing the sign & display market as well.

Successful in a niche market

Ort & Kolb has a speciality: contract printing, where customers provide the printable material. "We develop the optimum printing solution for every project," explains Winfried Kolb. "At the same time, we are always learning and other customers also benefit from our insights."

He tells of a decoration project in a drugstore chain for which polystyrene sheets were printed and then thermoformed. "We didn't need to do a lot of trialling; swissQprint ink can handle the deformation." Kolb also confirms that the is durable: "I've seen 10-year-old outdoor signs that were still perfectly fine."

Another special project involved a hollow wooden panel four metres long. "We printed this using the ," says Winfried Kolb. Indeed, Ort & Kolb regularly produces prints on wood for trade fairs and museums, as well as for personalised items of furniture. "Sometimes we print a different wood grain on to the wood," he adds. He notes that sheet plywood is often less than perfectly flat, making a powerful vacuum essential. Then again, since the advent of UV printing with LED lamps, heat-related problems have been eliminated.

Screen and digital printing combined

Sometimes the ideal solution is to combine screen printing with digital printing. Ort & Kolb has the expertise to join the two worlds. Particularly helpful here are the swissQprint registration pins and the precision of the printer itself, which together ensure that media stays in accurate register.

For an automotive manufacturer, Ort & Kolb has screen printed stickers with a silver-metallised base layer and then digitally printed the text information. "For tiny fonts and fine gradients, we always print digitally," emphasises Winfried Kolb and adds: "With Kudu, we achieve even better results, and much faster than before."

Savings across the board

The Kudu's promise of increased productivity was a significant factor in deciding the purchase. "As a small company, we have a constant space problem. So we are glad of the Kudu replacing two other machines," says Winfried Kolb. The printer has proved its worth particularly in the Christmas business. "Having become much more efficient, we were able to save two temporary workers," confirms the production manager. The also helped by reducing setup times.

Besides increased efficiency in daily operation, Winfried Kolb expects even lower maintenance costs, especially as Kudu does away with belts in favour of low-wear linear drives.

Modularity a plus point

Ort & Kolb appreciates the swissQprint machines' modular design, having taken advantage of it several times already. "It makes the investment spreadable," says Winfried Kolb. In the case of an Impala flatbed printer, he had a second row of print heads added after a while, thus obtaining a faster printer without having to buy a new one.

The Kudu is likewise put together for meeting current needs: The colour configuration has six inks, supplemented by white and varnish, leaving two free colour channels for future expansion. Beyond this, it was decided to have the roll to roll option and the drizzle elevation – this little extra helps protect against stray light when processing thick materials.

Material and application diversity

"swissQprint makes us very flexible when it comes to applications," says Winfried Kolb. Special media does occasionally land on the flatbed: 4 cm (1.6") thick perforated sheets, making a total of 120 ceiling elements, which a customer used to create a decorative ceiling design. Or melamine board for presentation pillars at an upmarket POS, and leather-look labels for jeans. Ort & Kolb even prints digitally on powder-coated metals.

Customers increasingly ask for textures and haptic prints, be these for carbon-feel operating controls on wellness equipment or signposts with haptic effects. "We aim to do even more with tactile printing in the future," says Winfried Kolb, whereby he and his team always keep their eyes open for new applications they can offer to customers. "We've had the tools it takes since 2010," he concludes with a wink.

And another thing: The two machines that needed displacing from Ort & Kolb are far from obsolete. They are into their second life after rehoming with new owners – swissQprint machines easily last ten years and more.



Company	Ort & Kolb KG
Website	www.siebdruck-isny.de
Segment	Industrial printing, sign & display
Established	1972
Employees	12
Printers	Kudu, Nyala
References	A well-known Upper Swabian game manufacturer: personalised games Hymer Group: information stickers used throughout motorhomes Klaus Kunststoffe: thermoformable decorative PVC panels Medike Landes: faux leather labels for limited-edition jeans Franconian OpenAir Museum, Bad Windsheim: information pillars, signboards, etc.