What does an engineer have to do with cat food?

That's how Silvan Rohner got into digital printing over twenty years ago.

ComRo, Rothenburg, Switzerland.
This digital printing business bas been doing its own thing for over 20 years. Advertising technology and big posters were left behind long ago. Displays and furniture making are today's specialities, with joiners and printers working hand in hand.

What does an engineer have to do with cat food? Quite simple: that is how Silvan Rohner got into digital printing over twenty years ago. Well, not the cat food itself but rather its marketer, Masterfoods, was the one responsible: in 1996, they hatched plans to change the Whiskas logo and, however fresh the new design, it could no longer be implemented by conventional printing methods in certain applications. If Silvan Rohner had not purchased a NovaJet 50 in order to save the project, the logo designers could well have been pushed back to square one.

Lateral thinker with vision

Digital printing was then in its infancy. Silvan Rohner stayed on the ball and was among those who rode out the technology's developmental highs and lows: as a one-man operation to begin with, then with the first employee in 2000. ComRo has relocated four times, with Rohner twice planning and building his own business premises – he is, after all, a trained draughtsman and engineer. The present headquarters is also one of his designs, conceived for 50 years of service and readily repurposable.

Display and furniture specialist

ComRo specialises in constructing displays and furniture. Items destined for short-term use at the POS or at trade shows are made of honeycomb cardboard or sandwich materials. ComRo builds long-lasting pieces for shop fittings out of wood: coated chipboard, coloured MDF and solid timber. High-density particle board looks extra-classy and is popular with architects. Working all these materials plainly calls for solid craftsmanship, which Rohner brought on board with joiners working in-house. Thus, the top floor of the operation is a fully equipped joinery workshop that boasts a five-axis CNC milling machine and a fully automatic edgebander.

Wood was the reason for purchasing the Nyala 2.

Under one roof

The printing department is housed on the ground floor. The team here has some impressive machinery to draw on: a Durst 750 UV printer for corrugated cardboard, a swissQprint Nyala 2 for all other kinds of board material, additional large-format printers for paper, foils

and films, a Durst 320 and an MTex sublimation printer for large textile items. Also on hand are a Bürkle coating system, two Kongsberg cutters and a Biesse Rover Plast CNC machining centre. Printing, construction, painting, milling, cutting and laminating all take place under one roof, through two or three daily shifts. ComRo only leaves delivery and assembly to a partner operation. It is a clear business model.

Full utilisation

Silvan Rohner explains: “Wood was the main reason for purchasing the Nyala 2.” ComRo uses it to meet design wishes in high-end shop and booth construction. But the Nyala 2 can do much more besides: in cooperation with a glazing company, ComRo supplies printed glass partitions for offices and bathrooms, as well as glass panels for kitchens. Acrylic glass is used to make displays with a 3D effect; the Nyala 2 prints the design and lenses. It also prints floor coverings, window and floor films. At night, the machine regularly processes poster jobs on roll stock. “The Nyala 2 has been busy starting from day one, working multiple shifts”, Silvan Rohner sums up.

Configured for versatility

To cope with all these tasks, ComRo had the Nyala 2 configured for versatility: CMYK, light magenta, light cyan, white and effect varnish fill eight of the nine colour channels — doubled up for high productivity. The light colours help to increase fine detail, the roll to roll option supplements flatbed printing.

Core business at CVS is booth fabrication for trade shows, open house and experiential events.

The Nyala 2 has been busy starting from day one.

High-quality flatbed printing

“The Nyala 2 has increased our productivity”, asserts Silvan Rohner, “and we have been able to position ourselves in high-quality flatbed printing.” Moreover, thanks to white printing capability, ComRo has accessed new markets: window and floor foils for vehicle importers, printing onto acrylic and glass for advertising and interior design. “What’s nice is that the white works,” emphasises Rohner, “swissQprint has got white printing under control.” He has had other experiences. The engineer appreciates a further detail: “Thanks to the registration pins, we deliver print jobs with absolute registration accuracy.” Laughing, he concludes: “I like Swiss machinery.”

Constant change

ComRo has steadily morphed over the years. A Turbojet successfully got the company into advertising technology. In 2007, Rohner purchased his company’s first flatbed printer, an Inca Spider, and a Kongsberg cutter. The team began working with cardboard. Samples became series. As a result, ComRo got out of advertising technology and big posters to concentrate on cardboard. A HP ScitexCorJet entered the premises in 2011. ComRo rapidly grew into the small-run niche and developed into the operation it is today. Capability to offer wooden displays alone represents two years of development.

Silvan Rohner steers his company intentionally away from the mainstream. He wants to diversify and do further work on wood applications so that they can be offered together with cardboard and interior decoration for total versatility.

Company	ComRo Rohner AG, Rothenburg, Switzerland
Website	www.comro.ch
Segment	Display & furniture construction
Established	1996
Employees	27
Printer	Nyala 2
References	Booth/shop builders: trade show items, furniture, interior design Beverage producers and retailers: displays, shop outfitting, trade show items, cardboard items, furniture Joiners, glaziers, private customers: glass panels Tobacco industry: cardboard displays Vehicle importers: display window films, textile stretcher frames, floor stickers Agencies: billboards, posters, textile stretcher frames, films