

## User Report

### Stiefel Digitalprint GmbH, Lenting, Germany

Make a virtue out of necessity: at the end of the 1990s, that was the motto of the Stiefel printing and publishing house. As far-reaching changes impacted this map specialist's existing core business, Stiefel ventured into new business areas and adopted alternative production methods. Nowadays, Stiefel Digitalprint is one of Germany's largest digital printing companies, and far more than a mere supplier of maps.



In the 1980s and 1990s, every child was familiar with Stiefel maps because they were hung in thousands of schoolrooms. But then the face of Eastern Europe began to change, and many maps were pulped instead of being hung on walls. Profitability vanished without trace. On joining the firm, Bernhard Stiefel (son of founder Heinrich Stiefel) chalked up a milestone by introducing digital printing. This bold step propelled the company into the fast lane: of the group's 250 employees, 70 now focus on digital printing. Stiefel is one of Germany's leading digital printing companies, if not the market leader.

### High-performance machines

Bernhard Stiefel aims for 'lean production'. He maintains and expands his machinery in keeping with this philosophy – always striving for the leanest, most rational production methods possible. It is not so long since about 20 different digital printing machines stood in the production hall, but now there is more space because only the most efficient machines earn the right to a place here. Alongside two Durst

roll-to-roll printers (width: 5 m), the top performers include two swissQprint systems: an Impala and a Nyala. Stiefel bought the latter directly at swissQprint's Drupa fair stand in May 2012 because this pure flatbed machine offers such convincing advantages for board processing. The high-performance machine shows its true colours on large jobs – it is fitted with 4 x CMYK and a roll option.

Impala is the universal machine for day-to-day business. Its 9 colour channels are equipped with CMYK, light cyan, light magenta, white, varnish and primer for



Bernhard Stiefel, CEO of Stiefel Digitalprint GmbH, aims for lean production.

printing on glass – and the Impala also has a roll option. The board option is installed for precision printing on large formats with dimensions of up to 2.5 x 4 meters and weights of up to 100 kg, with no conveyor belt.

Machine operator Oliver Neigenfind uses the Impala for various smaller orders, e.g. POS materials, fence advertising and election posters. High-quality roll orders are often processed on the late shift; with less staff, the ability to handle print jobs with minimal supervision is critical – and swissQprint systems ensure that this requirement is met.



Neigenfind is «lord and master» of both swissQprint machines. But since the Nyala has been equipped with the new tandem function, he often needs assistance – because in tandem mode the machine operates non-stop, with the substrates placed on both sides of the printing table. In other words, printing takes place on one side as the operator unloads and loads on the other side. And that calls for action!

Both machines fit into the lean production concept because they enable rational working. Operation is simple, and the systems are ready to run within a few minutes. One small, but highly practical detail: registration pins. The operator uses them to define the utilisation of the

printing table area in seconds. There is no need for trial runs, and bled-off printing on flatbed printers is handled without problems. Earlier systems printed onto large boards which then became fragmented.

### Everything under one roof

Efficient printing is one thing, but upstream and downstream processes are another. Stiefel Digitalprint offers a full service: printing is generally carried out directly on the substrates, and then the printed products are refined and finished on the premises, with processes such as varnishing, lamination, cutting, milling, fluting and stitching.

### Unrivalled quality

Customers include German automobile manufacturers Audi and Mercedes, who only accept high-calibre printed materials for their showrooms and fair stands. Bernhard Stiefel comments: «Especially on larger jobs where price differentials with our competitors are marginal, we win out thanks to the quality we can offer.»

### Gigantic orders

Stiefel is also in demand as a provider of POS materials for the retail trade. The focus here is on efficient performance: for the Christmas business, department store operator Kaufhof ordered a total of 14,000 m<sup>2</sup> of advertising media. 30 different subjects – mainly roll media – were delivered to 100 branches throughout Germany. As well as Kaufhof, Stiefel's regular customers include Mediamarkt and Saturn.

### Special materials

Stiefel notes that conventional substrates such as PP and PVC boards, corrugated plastic boards, Forex, Dibond and similar products are still in demand, but there is also a growing requirement for special materials: direct printing on wood, for instance, creates thrilling effects. «We achieve superb quality and good adhe-



The Nyala flatbed machine offers convincing advantages for board processing.

sion on Plexiglas®», Stiefel adds. As white printing is now possible thanks to the Impala, there has been a noticeable increase in demand for acrylic glass and backlit applications. Printing on glass would also be possible, but is rarely requested, whereas small packaging series (200–300 pcs) are on the increase.

### Finger on the pulse

Stiefel keeps close track of market developments. He believes that print media will become increasingly personalised. «So more speed and greater efficiency will be called for», he stresses. In terms of applications, enquiries for special colours such as silver or fluorescent effects have been arriving and, as far as machine users are concerned, it has become more important to be able to calculate job costs. Many machine manufacturers needed to do their homework here so that the performance of their machines could be evaluated. swissQprint already supplies various statistics.

Bernhard Stiefel likes discussing requirements and exchanging ideas on these aspects with Horst Ebener of Kabuco, his long-standing professional adviser who acts as the interface with swissQprint in his

capacity as distribution partner. Stiefel knows that swissQprint takes customer feedback seriously. Kabuco also guarantees impeccable service, although this is rarely needed because there are virtually no downtimes with the Impala and the Nyala. «These machines feature high-quality design, and production costs are kept low», Bernhard Stiefel notes with satisfaction.

### Info Box

Stiefel Digitalprint GmbH, Lenting, Germany  
[www.stiefel-online.de](http://www.stiefel-online.de)  
 Segment: digital printing  
 Established: 1982  
 Employees: 70  
 References:  
 – Audi  
 – Mercedes  
 – Kaufhof  
 – Mediamarkt  
 – Saturn  
 POS and advertising materials