

User Report

GEI Graphics, Bensenville, IL, USA

A family business in transition: with roots in flexographic prepress, this company is growing and prospering thanks to diversification into digital printing. The Njala large format printer boosts business and helps access new markets.



Can things go well when seven family members work in the same company? You bet it can! GEI Graphics is living proof. Three brothers, their wives and a fourth sister-in-law are part of the 25-strong workforce. Each and every one has their own clearly defined area. David Zidek, for instance, is the flexoprinting operations manager, John Zidek takes care of sales, and Ken Zidek is president. So, on the one side, there is a division of responsibilities that favours harmonious interaction. And on the other, the Zideks and their team are down-to-earth, honest folk. Which makes GEI Graphics a pleasant outfit to do business with.

Digital overtakes flexo

GEI Graphics is an established flexographic prepress specialist. This is where the business has had its roots since 1946. It has diversified over the years as digital printing entered the company's repertoire. That has grown to include prepress in both areas, digital proofing, large format printing including digital finishing, all the way to assembling signage and advertising materials. Digital printing has meanwhile overtaken flexo and accounts for a hefty 60 percent of business.

Greater sales freedom

John Zidek's work in sales has changed since the introduction of digital printing.

"It has grown more varied," he says. Especially since the swissQprint Njala flatbed printer started making its mark. It replaced a Fuji Aquity HS XL printer in 2013. Hesitant at the outset, John with his sales team are now confident when it comes to landing all manner of jobs. Because they know that the Njala can deliver on everything they promise. For example, that the ink will adhere to practically any media. John adds: "It's also remarkably tolerant of fingerprints. That was a real problem with the previous solution."

New markets

GEI Graphics has even entered new markets with their Njala: first, backlit applications thanks to the high print quality. And second, super wide banners because the Njala is 3.2 m (126") wide and capable of handling heavy 180 kg (397 lbs) rolls. John explains: "Roll jobs have basically gained share," adding: "the Njala has a roll to roll option that really works!" At GEI graphics, it helps to process media such as magnetic films for temporary auto and in-store signage, and large format banner material for sporting and other events. Static cling films are a further popular item for restaurant window and shop front signage: these films adhere using static charge, so application and removal is a breeze.

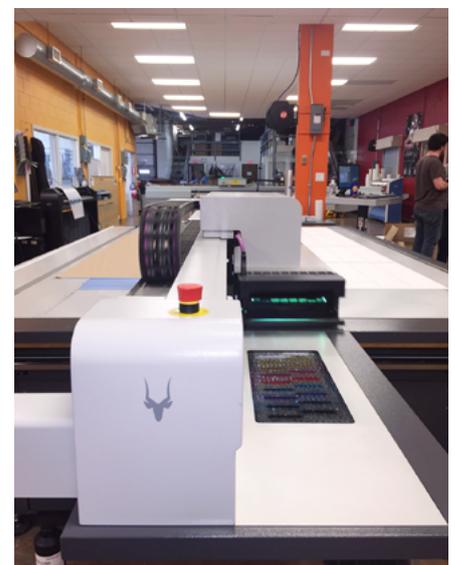
Worthwhile options

The roll to roll option has thus long since paid for itself. The Njala's nine colour channels, each individually configurable, are also fully decked out. The decision-makers at GEI Graphics opted for a maximum configuration: quadruple CMYK for greater productivity, and the ninth channel is filled with white ink.

Twelve-hour shifts

A regular customer says: "Regardless of what time I drop by GEI Graphics, this Swiss printer is always running." By that he means the Njala. Ken Zidek confirms it: "The team is at work twelve hours a day as a rule - and the Njala is part of the action for practically all of that time."

Kevin Carney, the operator, adds: "And the printer never lets us down." If the aforesaid roll jobs are not waiting in line, then it is signage of all types and sizes: high quality wooden store signs, circular signage for tire stores, and any number of items made from commonplace plastic and board materials. For jobs like these, the registra-



The Njala takes care of all digital printing jobs.



For president Ken Zidek (left) and Kevin Carney, the operator, the Nyala large format printer is practically one of the team: "You can rely on the Nyala."

tion pins provide an invaluable service. They allow full use of the print bed width as well as precise alignment of individual panels.

Operator-friendly

Kevin finds it pleasant working with the Nyala. The print bed is just the right height. He appreciates even more the little helpers provided by the Amber output software. It is possible to crop and print sections of images after the RIP process is done. Kevin can repeat subjects with just a few mouse clicks, and sending a number of different images to the printer is as easy as that. "The hardware is also well thought out," he finds. Because the vacuum is steplessly adjustable along the width and divided into two zones, there is hardly any

masking to do. Kevin saves a huge amount of time that way. Ken puts it into numbers: "Compared to our previous solution, we are gaining three production hours every day."

Fair, full service

Some printed materials are liquid laminated to extend their life. A Kongsberg cutter is responsible for the digital cutting process. The cutting paths go in already during the RIP process, so printing and cutting interlink seamlessly. An assembly team delivers finished items directly to customer premises if desired. Customers appreciate this full service, not least because the team brings the positive GEI spirit along with them. It is welcome everywhere. And if, despite everyone's

best efforts, there is the occasional defect, then it is generously and promptly fixed. The management makes sure of that.

Growth through connections with good partners

The Zideks are well connected thanks to membership of various regional industry associations. They are in regular dialogue with specialist colleagues, occasionally concerning growth strategies. This is where Ken Zidek relies on good partners like swissQprint, who make growth possible in the first place. "Because they are as reliable as the products they offer." With a wink he concludes: "And bigger is always better." Which is why the next investment is likely to be the current top-performing model from swissQprint: the Nyala 2.

Info Box

GEI Graphics, Bensenville, IL, USA
www.gegraphics.com
 Segment: flexo prepress, digital printing
 Established: 1946
 Employees: 25
 References:
 - Fortune 100 ice cream company (banners, static clings)
 - Fortune 500 automotive parts supplier (tire advertising materials, in-store signage)
 - Fortune 500 tool manufacturing company (store displays of all kinds)
 - Fortune 100 cell phone company (complete store signage across 300 outlets, static clings, banners, counter displays, wall signage)