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Spotlight Graphic Solutions' Big Ideas Made Real With Versatile Durst Rho 800 Presto UV Inkjet Printer

K&M's Subsidiary Specializes in Creative Large-Format Apps

April 2009 – Founded 35 years ago as a traditional offset print shop, K&M Printing is a mainstay of Chicago's printing community with a slate of high-profile corporate and



commercial clients. But recently the three brothers who own and operate K&M – Richard, Kenneth and Michael Stobart – have been developing some decidedly non-traditional capabilities that deliver bigger, brighter, more creative options to more buyers of printing services.

First K&M built a new state-of-the-art facility featuring an open shop environment. Then it pursued, and was awarded, Forest Stewardship Council certification – which means K&M's internal practices and paper offerings aid in the responsible management of the world's forests. Then the company established a subsidiary, Spotlight Graphic Solutions, to offer new digital printing services for retail and commercial display applications. And just this month, K&M President Ken Stobart says, Spotlight acquired a state-of-the-art large-format UV-curable inkjet printer "to take us to the next level."



That step up is happening quickly. Just days after the printer – a 98"-wide, 8-color Durst Rho 800 Presto – was installed and its testing completed, Spotlight used it to produce some 20,000 square feet of decorative wallpaper for a major client. What's interesting about the job is that

the Rho 800 is designed as a flatbed printer, but it successfully handled this major assignment printing on roll media. That's just the kind of capability K&M was after.

"We're aiming Spotlight into the specialty market, so we needed more versatility and the



ability to handle bigger jobs," Ken Stobart says.

"We get into some pretty creative stuff for our clients, and so we print on a lot of different substrates. The equipment we have now is easily meeting our expectations for the business."

'All About Ideas'

Chris Hogan, division manager for Spotlight, recalls a print job for a major food company – a series of large-format Gatorboard panels on the walls of the corporate cafeteria. "The design had a lot of food-related words in it, like 'tasty' and 'delicious,' in a lot of different languages," he says. "There were a lot of color variations and the panels looked great. But if some of the words had been highlighted with varnish, there would've been that additional 'wow' factor."

It's that kind of thinking that has helped establish Spotlight as an innovator, both for its clients and for the development and make-up of the business itself. Now the company has the ability to print varnish in ways that previously weren't possible. "Varnish itself isn't new," Hogan notes. "But to be able to offer it in wide format and at production speeds – that's a nice creative feature for our clients and it's helping our business grow."

The decision to purchase the Durst printer was made after a three-month evaluation of platforms from four different manufacturers. It was based on image quality, overall engineering, and on the printer's ability to take on a remarkable array of jobs – big, small, unusual – using a wide variety of inks on a range of substrates and surfaces. In other words, it can transform Spotlight's most innovative ideas for commercial images into eye-catching

reality. "I've been in and around this business for over 30 years and one of the most important lessons I've learned is that it's all about ideas, it's all about applications," Hogan says. "The ability to come up with the ideas for interesting new applications, and then to be able to implement, is what helps differentiate both us and our clients in this competitive economy."

The Spotlight team spends a lot of time researching new media and substrates in support of an "apps-centered" business strategy – a strategy that relies on the Rho's industry-leading white ink printing, plus special-effect varnish, light colors and spot colors. These inks can be applied to roll or rigid materials up to 1.58 inches thick. "What we really like about the Rho 800 is that you can do so many more types of specialized printing because it offers so many ink choices and can handle so many different and unusual substrates," Hogan says. "I don't think there's another printer at this production level that offers the combination of inks that this one does."

Bigger and Better

Spotlight found its initial work in a predictable way – visiting K&M's client base and relying on the strong printing reputation the company had developed to win digital imaging jobs. "We'd talk to them about POP displays, banners, that kind of printing. They would say, 'Oh, I didn't realize you did that.'" Hogan says. "So we got a lot of our initial business that way. We would go in based on relationships, and then we would stay because of our performance. Now we have non-K&M clients."

The Rho 800, which has a top production speed of nearly 1,300 s.f./hr., is the first commercial printer with uninterrupted continuous board printing. Thanks to a proprietary Durst transport system, materials are registered at the leading edge using mechanical front stops, which also enables side-by-side loading. Subsequent boards (up to 2.75 inches thick on an industrial version of the printer) are brought up against the first, ensuring continuous printing without interruption. "Now we compete for bigger jobs that we wouldn't bid on before, because now we can fulfill them on time," Hogan says. "We've been able to take on jobs covering 50 stores, but now we can provide graphic displays and distribution for any mid-size retail company with 500-1,000 stores."

Spotlight doesn't just want to get bigger, however – it wants to get better. The subsidiary has been emphasizing the same environmental integrity that earned parent K&M its prestigious FSC certification for its "green" policies and practices. For its part, Spotlight is identifying media and substrates that are both "green" and appropriate for client applications. In addition, the UV-curable inks for the Rho 800 are VOC-free, and the printer can print on both recycled and recyclable materials.

The result: a creative, competitive, caring and decidedly non-traditional company that is attracting new clients on a regular basis with the ability to turn the biggest ideas into innovative graphic displays. "We are very satisfied with the way Spotlight is progressing, and with the products it is able to create for our customers," Ken Stobart says.

Pricing and other information for the Durst Rho 800 Presto, as well as for other Durst products and services are available by contacting Durst U.S. by phone at 1-888-480-3588, or by e-mail at info@durst.com.

About Spotlight Graphics

Spotlight Graphics specializes in wide format printing and they produce larger than life graphics for any project or idea. Spotlight delivers creative approaches to interior and exterior signage, P.O.P. displays, wall graphics, window graphics as well as large scale projects, including exhibits and murals. Spotlight designers can work with your ideas in any stage of completion, to produce a creation that is truly larger than life. For more information, contact Spotlight Graphics by phone at 847-944-9600, or visit: www.spotlightgraphicsolutions.com

About Durst

Durst Phototechnik AG is a leading manufacturer of digital imaging systems for graphic, pre-press, signage, commercial/retail display, packaging, industrial and photographic applications. Headquartered in Brixen, Italy, the company operates manufacturing facilities in Brixen and Lienz, Austria; has major offices in the U.S., France, United Kingdom, Germany and Mexico; and partners with exclusive agents in 120 countries. Durst's reputation for quality, precision and reliability spans more than 70 years. Durst Image Technology U.S., LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Durst Phototechnik Group, is the exclusive distributor and service provider for all Durst professional digital imaging equipment in the United States and Canada. Durst's professional imaging products include the renowned Lambda laser imagers, Rho large-format UV inkjet printers, Theta roll-to-cut print photo imagers, Sigma high-speed film scanners, photo album creation systems, and other products.

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