

Twelve good reasons

Craft Printing has taken another major step in production capability with the installation of a 12-colour KBA Rapida 105. Steve Crowe talked to Lindsay Hannan about this major investment.



Craft Printing's Lindsay Hannan: "If you stagnate you're going backwards. You have to continue moving forward."

The appetite for long perfecting presses continues in Australia, and it's not difficult to understand the reasoning behind those investment decisions by printers who count longer duplex print runs in their work base.

It's also for these presses that many of the new developments from their manufacturers have been targeted, to push their efficiency rates even higher.

An excellent example of this is Craft Printing, in Sydney's inner south, which installed a KBA Rapida 105 12-colour perfecting press with four interdeck UV drying units, and a range of automated features including feed pile changeover system, inking unit temperature control, washing system for different inks, and a wash and print system for the interdeck UV units.

"Craft Printing was put together with the remains of the old Craft Printing industries, which changed structure back in 1997, Champion Communications and a mailing house called Promail," said Lindsay Hannan, general manager at Craft Printing. "We kept the Craft name because it was fresh on everyone's minds at the time. It describes the industry perfectly – it is the last craft industry left."

Hannan is circumspect about the current print market, and is under no illusions about maintaining a competitive operation.

"Running a commercial operation is very different from running a large-scale web operation," he told *ProPrint*. "We have a team of sales representatives out

there in what I call the 'daily auction yard', trying to win work. We're very price conscious and quality is a given, as well as service and delivery on time. It doesn't matter what business you're in, it's tougher than ever now. Business has never been harder, certainly in the last year or two. Everyone now is looking for some advantage, for that extra saving. We're continually looking at systems, projects, how we're doing things, and always looking for a better way.

"We've seen the clientele change quite dramatically since 1997, and Craft has grown quite substantially. We've put new technology in over the last three years, which has increased our output and obviously increased our sales, and assisted us in producing a better product.

"A substantial amount of research was undertaken before we proceeded with this new technology. We've watched the marketplace experiment with what could be called first-generation equipment. It's always a big decision, whether it's a press or a folder or a stitcher.

"We've seen dramatic changes in the bindery. The bindery hadn't changed in 30 years, but it has changed completely in the last five years. For us to compete now on the world stage, particularly with countries like China biting into this market, we have to be more effective in the way we make out products.

"This competition breeds efficiency, and also opportunities. Smart companies see the opportunities and look for the efficiencies and usually come out far ahead."



The list of options

on the press brings operational efficiencies that will have long term impacts on profitability, according to Hannan.

Craft Printing's 12-colour KBA Rapida 105: new technology brings real dividends.



Going with KBA

The choice of the KBA Rapida 105 was a conscious step in a technology direction that would cement Craft Printing's future aspirations, through the ability to offer unique services in this market.

"We saw some very impressive customised presses in Europe for specialised applications. The first one I saw that really impressed me was the four-over-four Rapida 105 running at 18,000ipm at drupa 2004. That's what got me looking at KBA.

"We did a lot of hard work in research – it was a long, hard, well thought out decision. There's a lot of choice between press manufacturers and they all produce very good products.

"The things we really looked at included the fact that we wanted a six-over-six press – we do a lot of five and six-colour work. Plus, we wanted extra firepower – and we got that with the Rapida 105."

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"One of the advantages we found with the KBA was that it didn't run jackets, so we don't have to change jackets during the life of the press as they're laser etched cylinders. As a result we have no issues with running UV inks and drying.

Fine tuning the shopfloor

KBA was given a tough brief by Craft Printing, said Hannan, but they have delivered on everything asked of

them.

"We haven't reached the ceiling in capacity yet for the press. It should meet and even exceed our benchmark for its performance for the first 12 months. We're currently undertaking a three-monthly audit.

"I have to say the installation was one of the neatest and most professional installations I have ever seen. We set very high goals for KBA to meet and they agreed to meet them, and they got there. We were very critical about what we expected, and they met our expectations all the way. The team that came out from Germany was exceptional."

It's Craft's penchant for standing out from the crowd and its willingness to take on new ideas that Hannan thinks makes the difference to clients.

"We're not always doing the same four or five-colour work – we're always looking to do things differently, such as lenticular printing, which is one technology we got involved with years ago, and for which we won a gold medal for innovation at the National Print Awards.

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"I think there's been more focus by clients on demographics and target audiences, making sure they're getting the best value for what they're doing. We're seeing a lot of embellishments of late as clients strive to produce a more noticeable product designed to really stand out in the marketplace." §