



When Mike Hitchman started his company in 1992, the experienced screenprinter initially focused upon working with an industry sector that was familiar to him. From its humble beginnings that started with printing estate agents sales boards, SignsDisplay.com has evolved to become the most successful supplier of signs to the estate agent industry in the North East.

The 10-employee company has evolved with its technology, which has seen the business move from printing and erecting boards for estate agents to the design, print and the cutting of media for local government agencies, councils, estate agents, hospitals, theme parks and also Point of Sale displays. SignsDisplay.com has reached this point by investing in digital roll-to-roll printers, routing machines and more recently an AGFA 3020 Titan UV flatbed printer and a DYSS X7 2230C CNC digital die cutting table.

Managing Director Mike Hitchman says: "We are always looking for innovations to improve our business and at Sign & Digital UK 2012 we were looking for a flatbed digital printer and a compatible cutting table with a similar bed size to the printer. The arrival of the AGFA Titan in July 2012 enabled us to process faster and higher quality with a 3 X 2m bed capacity, so we could move existing work from screen to digital printing with a capacity of 200m² per hour. The market review for a compatible cutting table led us to acquiring the DYSS X7 CNC die-less cutting table that was delivered a month after the AGFA printer. The DYSS complements the printer perfectly with working area of 2.25m X 3m (89 X 120inch) with a maximum sheet size of 2.35m X 3.4m (93 X 134inch)."

Improved accuracy

Mike continues: "We were in a position whereby more estate agent boards required platen cutting and with typical batch sizes of 50 to 100 and some batches up to 400,

SignsDisplay.com makes signs for success

the cost of the platen was adding up to £3 to the cost of each board. In a cost-competitive market customers were reluctant to accept this. The arrival of the DYSS allows us to produce these complex Correx boards on the cutting table without the cost of platens. Furthermore, with the KASEMAKE K-Cut workstation and variable look-ahead vector control, we can improve accuracy beyond that of platens while optimising our processing speed. This enables us to pass our efficiencies on to the customer and be more price competitive than our rivals while still providing precision and quality that is far superior."

He recalled: "In one instance, we were asked to produce a Correx board shaped like a frog. Previously we wouldn't have offered this service due to shape complexity that wouldn't have made the project cost-effective. With the DYSS, we accepted the Illustrator file, exported it to the KASEMAKE software and completed the project. Additionally, we could tweak and alter the forms for this job without the cost of altering platens."

One negative element of the old style, labour intensive, inaccurate board production was the hand drilling of holes. This has become a thing of the past as the DYSS X7, notches out holes with an accuracy of +/-150 microns (0.0059inch), consistent repeatability of +/-20microns (0.0008inch) and superb edge finishes. This is a credit to the rigid machine construction with a heavy duty base and honeycomb vacuum design that gives the boards a rigid base with a high clamping force. This quality and consistency has become a major selling point for SignsDisplay.com, and that's not all, Mike continues: "The DYSS has increased our productivity by a massive 20% whilst simultaneously freeing an employee from hand cutting boards to alternate tasks."



Opening new markets

The production of frog shaped boards for a letting agent is just one example of how the

DYSS has opened new market opportunities, it has also has recently been employed for cutting BeeLite up to 16mm thick for a screenprint manufacturer. With three cutting heads on the DYSS, SignsDisplay.com utilises one fixed knife and one reciprocating knife and a routing tool for processing the thick corrugated card that would have been impossible to cut to the required accuracy or quantity by hand. However, the DYSS has comfortably processed the material and the Hull company has also used V-shaped routers to create accurate folding lines.



Highlighting this situation Mike said: "We now have screen printers and competitors coming to us for our cutting capabilities. The DYSS has developed new business from local companies and has enabled us to diversify into new market sectors. We are now creating a lot of prototypes and small batch production of cardboard boxes, and more packaging and toy manufacturers are becoming aware of us. The KASEMAKE software gives us the potential to provide a complete graphic illustration and design service to complement the cutting and creasing. We have only touched on the possibilities of the software at present as we are so busy, but at the first opportunity we'll be spending more time developing our skills with the software as the possibilities are endless.

"We are using the KASEMAKE package in its simplest form at present. Despite our relative inexperience with the package, we have already designed wrap-around covers to protect tree stems for Hull County Council. Using the 3D rendering element of the KASEMAKE package we had the ability to create 3D PDF files and movies to present a professional visual design. This is just one example of the possibilities the software provides. We will undergo further training in future as it will undoubtedly create new opportunities for us."

He concluded: "The DYSS will be an integral part of our future development and growth."