



Belgium's Pelegrie finds a solution for improving operational processes with uncompromising quality



Christian Pelegrie with the VUTEK QS3200

CHALLENGE:

Large-format printing is more than just printing, finishing and mounting.

Submitting fast, accurate price quotations and a clear overview of the planning and cost structure are just as important for success in this highly competitive market. Monitoring the output quality through efficient and intelligent control of the different print solutions is another important requirement. Pelegrie, a well-respected producer of large-format solutions, located in Hoboken, Belgium found the perfect solution for improving business processes without giving up quality.

“In addition to perfect print quality we were also looking for solutions to map our cost structure and to optimise control of the printers.”

Anyone who visits Pelegrie today will find it difficult to believe that the company began as a photography shop more than 75 years ago. Arthur Pelegrie created a stir at the time with beautiful wedding albums. He passed the photo bug on to his son, Paul Pelegrie who specialised in industrial photography. Many Opel car models that rolled out of the factory in Antwerp were photographed in the Pelegrie studio. When his son, Christian Pelegrie came on board in the early 1990s, he made digital imaging his primary emphasis. This was a pivotal moment for the company because it was then that Pelegrie shifted focus from its origin as a photographic studio to a manufacturer of large-format digital prints. In 1997, when Nathalie Pelegrie came on board to develop the sales department, the company's growth path progressed rapidly.



The production department

SOLUTION:

“EFI VUTEk completely fulfils its reputation as a ‘total solution provider’ with the various solutions which it implemented at our site. Robust, user-friendly and reliable.”

Looking for an alternative

In 1999 Pelegrie installed a Lambda photo imager. Pelegrie used this digital halftone photo printer to expose photos and backlit applications at a width greater than 130 cm and almost unlimited length. “The result and the quality of the prints are amazingly beautiful,” says Christian. “This process involves full RGB halftone exposure on light-sensitive material. As a result, you obtain beautiful deep colours at a resolution comparable with a 3200 dpi printer, but at 30 m² per hour.” However, the system also has its limitations. The material is water-sensitive and therefore only suitable for indoor use, and it must be mounted as it comes from a roll. These were sufficient reasons for Pelegrie to look for an alternative for printing outdoor applications directly on vinyl and hard materials.

Only one service call in four years

The task of upgrading was more easily said than done, because it was not easy to find a large-format print system with a comparable quality to the Lambda, certainly in comparison with the large-format printers that existed in the market at the time. Christian explains: “Given that we had come from the photographic market, our quality requirements were quite high. Furthermore, there were few inkjet systems that offered what we considered acceptable quality at the start of the decade in 2000, and certainly not in larger formats of two to three metres wide.”

The VUTEK PV200 UV large-format printer offered the right capabilities for a new start in the right direction. “We were the first in Belgium to invest in the PV200. It is not a cheap machine, but with six colours and a resolution of 600 dpi the PV200 satisfied our quality requirements perfectly,” Christian says. “With a print width of two metres and the possibility of printing on both hard and flexible materials, this was the ideal machine for us. After this, the ball really started to roll, and within a year we were working two shifts to complete the numerous orders we had.”

However, the two-shift system also had a downside. In the evening there was no one present in the DTP department who could give advice or the required support for problematic cases. For this reason, and also to avoid over-dependence on one machine, Pelegrie decided to invest in a second printer. Christian recalls, “We did not have to think this over for a long time, because we had had just one service call on the VUTEk PV200 over a 4-year period.”



The company building in Hoboken with in-company produced signage

This reliable servicing history particularly tipped the balance in favour of the VUTEk QS3200. With a print width of 3.2 metres and a resolution of 1080 dpi that guarantees superior image quality, it is the ideal complement to the PV200.

The user-friendly Fiery XF interface scores highly



Pelegrie opted for the EFI Fiery XF RIP when it acquired the VUTEk QS3200. This RIP was specially developed for large-format printers and was the top choice, thanks to its simple-to-use operation and the unique capability to control several printers with one single RIP. Christian points out, "In addition to the VUTEk printers, we have another couple of printers, including a solvent printer for vinyl applications such as car wraps. Each machine had its own RIP, which meant that colour management and predictability was not always equally optimum. This is now a thing of the past with the EFI Fiery XF because all files for all printers are ripped on the central XF server. The only thing that an operator still has to do is to select the ripped file on the client and to print it. Everything else is fully automated; it really could not be simpler. The header files required for our cutter are also created with the EFI Fiery XF. The well-organised, user-friendly user interface scores highly with staff in particular."

Activity based cost calculation

Christian Pelegrie had developed his own software to produce quotations, track the planning and for invoicing. However, its extension and adaptation to new standards and needs was taking up too much time. "I was actually facing a new challenge, because I had partly lost sight of the total cost profile due to our growth. What orders were profitable and where were there hidden costs? I wanted to regain an insight into this, so that I could also make adjustments where necessary," he notes. Most of the MIS packages that Christian examined did approximately the same as Pelegrie's own solution, and therefore offered no added value. They all start from the traditional cost calculation where the fixed and variable costs determine the total cost. In contrast, Pace, EFI's MIS solution, begins with an 'activity-based' cost calculation. This is a cost calculation method that is also taught at Harvard University.

"According to this method every transaction has a cost price. I will give an example. Setting up a new roll on the machine has a certain cost. There is nothing spectacular about this so far, but what's different is that the software also takes account of the weight of the roll. In fact, you cannot set up a 100 kg roll alone, so there is an additional wage cost for a second person. It is quite a complex method, but much more precise. In addition, Pace naturally has everything, such as JDF support, that a modern MIS system has to fulfil. We are still in the start-up phase at present, but just like with our other VUTEk solutions it looks very promising," explains Christian.



RESULTS:

"With the VUTEk print and RIP solutions we have predictable top quality that satisfies our strict quality requirements, while we also have the planning and costs profile under control."



Implementations for the Magritte museum in Brussels

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