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alato chooses technologies to fit its business model for delivering large format web-to-print

alato GmbH, of Berlin, Germany, operates two online companies providing large format print and graphics to a broad, pan-European market. Factors in its success include a clear focus and reliable equipment that enable it to fulfil orders quickly and keep up with changing market demands.



Industry sector: Sign & Display

Business name: alato GmbH

Headquarters: Berlin, Germany

Testimonial from: Marcus Frohn, technical manager

HP solution: HP Latex 370 Printer, HP Latex 360 Printer,
HP Latex 280 Printer

Website: alato.de, lfp-shop.com, berlindisplay.de



Challenge

"We service a wide range of customers with a variety of requirements from colour quality, to substrate, to special applications, or a mounting format but most critical to all is turnaround time. We need solutions that best fulfil those demands including increased overnight unattended printing to secure delivery on time."

Marcus Frohn, technical manager, alato GmbH



When the business model dictates the technology

alato GmbH operates two online sites for large format printing: LFP-Shop is designed for use by those experienced in ordering print and has a large selection of specialty mountings for exhibitions, promotions, displays, graphics and signage. Berlin Display offers an easy entry point for ordering large format print and uses templates to guide new and occasional users.

"Both companies produce high-quality indoor and outdoor graphics, with all printing carried out at a single location," says Frohn. "We wanted to invest in printers that are the fastest, have the highest resolution, or offer the most sophisticated options. We look for printers that will meet our key objectives, and if it happens to offer any of those other things, so much the better."

alato previously used solvent printers, but in 2011 it introduced HP Latex Printing Technologies to its business and is now a 100 per cent HP Latex company. Its first investment was in the HP Latex 280 Printer shortly after its launch in 2011 and since it has added four HP Latex 260 Printers, and in 2014 added two HP Latex 360 Printer to its fleet. In the spring of 2015, the company completed beta testing the HP Latex 370 Printer.

"According to operators who remember the days of solvent printing at alato, HP Latex printers create a much cleaner pressroom environment and note that that it's also better for Mother Nature," says Frohn.

Solution

"You can only grow if you have reliable equipment. If you don't, you can't meet customer expectations; you'll fall behind and become uncompetitive. Our HP Latex printers enable us to keep our edge, attract new customers and grow the business."

Marcus Frohn, technical manager, alato GmbH



Keeping the printers running

The HP Latex 370 Printer gives alato additional production capacity and ability to respond to the unpredictable workloads generated by web-to-print customers. All the printers run virtually 24 hours a day. Orders that come in before 9am will be dispatched the same day. Those that come in later will be shipped the following day.

"With that level of production, it is essential to keep the work moving, and that means keeping the printers running, and with the new HP Latex 370 Printer this is a given," says Frohn. "This means that although the company's 14 employees work a single shift, the printers run all night to keep up with the work."

The HP Latex 370 Printer is designed for more unattended production at lower cost of operation. A 64in (1,625mm) printer, it will run at up to 334ft/hr (31m²/hr) in Outdoor High Speed mode, and its high capacity 3 litre ink cartridges are designed to help reduce cost per print while saving operators time.

"Typically, we produce between 600 – 700m² per day," Frohn explains. "Sometimes that's two or three very large jobs; other times, it can be about 400 different smaller jobs."

"The HP Latex 370 Printer design allows its large cartridges to be changed while it is running saving time as production doesn't stop. With no need for off-gassing more time is saved and orders can be dispatched immediately after they come off the printer."

Result

"The HP Latex 370 Printer is the latest in the range of printers at alato. It combines the speed and substrate versatility of earlier printers with the ability to run for longer unattended, thanks to the new 3 litre cartridges."

Marcus Frohn, technical manager, alato GmbH



The circle of reliability

Setting the standard for quality, versatility and reliability is the goal of alato and its online web-to-print companies.

"From vehicle wraps and backlights, to pop-ups, roll-ups, banners, flags, collapsible bars and counters, frames racks and stands, what we can be called on to produce is virtually endless!" says Frohn.

The logistics of having the right substrates and mounting supplies on hand is another challenge faced by alato; it prints on papers, vinyl, self-adhesive materials, canvas and other textiles and must be prepared.

"Our customers expect us to be reliable, and we expect our printers to be reliable," he continues. "Our HP Latex printers can run unattended, and knowing the HP Latex 370 Printer has a large supply of ink, operators can check other aspects of production like print quality, head performance, and substrate consumption."

The HP Latex 370 Printer also has a smartphone app that enables job status and ink levels to be checked remotely.

"We depend on HP to keep our printers running at optimum levels. HP has an expert team that we can contact when we need support. For the future, as long as HP keeps up to date with the technology and reliability, it will suit our business to be in the same boat with them," concludes Frohn.



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