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Robin Sprong Wallpaper doubles turnover with unique designs for lucrative wallcovering market

The wallcoverings and surface decoration market is enjoying enormous growth. Designers are tapping into their creativity to brand and decorate spaces so that they stand out from the crowd. Robin Sprong Wallpaper combined its creative ideas, traditional and online marketing activities, and investment in a versatile printing technology for in-house wallcovering production, to see its business really take off.

Robin Sprong

WALLPAPER | SURFACE DESIGN | PHOTOGRAPHY

Industry sector: Decoration Segment, digital wallcovering

Business name: Robin Sprong Wallpaper

Headquarters: Cape Town, South Africa

Testimonial from: Robin Sprong, owner and designer

HP solution: HP Latex Printing Technologies, HP WallArt

Websites: robinsprong.com



Challenge

"We struggled to exactly match customer requests for multiple applications in a project, and to deliver on schedule. Our wallpaper design business relied heavily on our print supplier's technology. And our outsourcing costs accounted for a large part of our budget."

Robin Sprong, owner and designer, Robin Sprong Wallpaper



Gaining greater freedom to create bespoke wallcoverings

Robin Sprong Wallpaper is a surface design company that creates imagery for interiors. Based in Cape Town, South Africa, Robin Sprong's images and designs are used by interior designers to build their customers' brands and decorate customer environments, such as commercial spaces, boutique hotels and offices. Sprong managed production by outsourcing to print service providers.

"We were sometimes forced to adapt our creative ideas when outsourcing production," says Sprong. "You can switch suppliers for specific needs but you risk compromising quality and consistency if you are printing several designs of tens of metres for different locations and applications.

"It's also time-consuming and more expensive. If your supplier does not stock a particular media, will they order some when you are the only client requesting it? Given the quantities, I obviously had little contractual power so my margins were squeezed, and when I managed to offer samples to a customer, it was expensive. I was often bumped to the back of the queue as their larger customer accounts got priority so I risked missing deadlines and having to rush installation. With teams of contractors working on a site, you really need to stay on schedule."

Robin Sprong Wallpaper transformed its creative capabilities when it installed the HP Latex printer in its studio, able to produce a range of exclusive, high-end products, including wallpapers, stretched canvases, fine art prints, vinyl wall tattoos and bespoke custom services.

Solution

"Thanks to the versatility of the HP Latex printer in our studio, we are free to develop a much wider range of attractive wallcoverings and decorated surfaces for interior designers. Being a small team, the printer's unattended productivity and in-office operation ensure we can turnaround projects faster by eliminating outsourcing."

Robin Sprong, owner and designer, Robin Sprong Wallpaper



Versatility to develop attractive wallcoverings

"The printer's versatility and productivity stand out," Sprong says, describing a project to decorate a boutique hotel. "We designed surfaces for common areas, rooms, and the restaurant, including ceilings, panelling, bar tops and illuminated glass tops. We printed 800m² of wall decorations on PVC-free wallpaper for its high-quality look and feel and on unwoven PVC wallpaper for high traffic areas, such as passageways and bathrooms. The designs applied under bar tops and on glass doors were printed on self-adhesive vinyl.

"We can print on a range of different substrates and get consistent results across applications, all on a single printer. That wouldn't be feasible using multiple technologies. Although we had 40 or 50 other projects running at the same time, the printer can run overnight unattended so even if we are a small team, we handled the job comfortably. Its productivity and ease of use is really important in our small studio environment. It doesn't require a dedicated operator so we can get on with designing and finishing."

Robin Sprong Wallpaper markets its business by attending the major interior design trade shows, participating in photo-shoots that can lead to free advertising in magazine articles, and by providing backdrops for television shoots. It also attracts business through its web catalogue that generates three to four enquiries daily, and through social media channels. Door-to-door promotion using samples and swatch books remain key sales tools, as do product demonstrations.

Result

"We have doubled our turnover year on year as customers realise they can reinforce and differentiate their brand with bespoke wall decorations. By eliminating outsourcing our costs have fallen dramatically and we dedicate more resources to marketing and sales. Business is growing."

Robin Sprong, owner and designer, Robin Sprong Wallpaper



Doubling turnover with unique designs

"The decoration of the boutique hotel was so successful that the owner started to hand out our business cards to enquiring guests," explains Sprong. "Not only did we offer a series of designs that rendered the hotel and restaurant environments unique to their hotel, but printed wall decorations using HP Latex Inks offered a practical and cost-effective solution. The wallcoverings are highly resistant and cleanable with a damp cloth. HP Latex Inks are certified to comply with numerous health and safety standards, which proved decisive in selling wall decorations to one international food retailer, and the fire retardant certification adds extra weight to our proposals for hotel spaces."

As demand for wall decoration rapidly grows and so does Robin Sprong Wallpaper the company has been able to expand its business into the US and Australia which has become its second largest market, and is currently investigating market opportunities in Dubai. Exploiting online sales channels and modern shipping logistics, wallcoverings can quickly reach their destination or they can be printed through partnerships with local HP Latex PSPs.

"The addition of the HP Latex printer to our studio has transformed what was essentially a one-man-show into an image consultancy business with eight members of staff and a community of designers and photographers. We can design, produce and install unique wallcoverings to decorate almost any space, and interior designers and property developers are rewarding our creativity with their business," Sprong concludes.

