CHALLENGE:
“ATC needed to find an affordable solution that would allow us to increase production and quality while expanding the types of substrates choices for our customers.” —Christophe Aussenac, Co-Director, ATC Groupe

Despite the competitive marketplace in which they operate, few large-format print providers have successfully harnessed the unique blend of professionalism, responsiveness and above all passion for their trade in the same way as the Lyon-based ATC Groupe. From its beginnings in 1991 as a small producer of hand-painted signs, ATC has developed into one of France’s foremost suppliers of digitally produced indoor and outdoor large-format graphics for a host of applications.

The ATC of today has long-since outgrown the tiny garage where it initially operated. Though its 3000m² print facility lies tucked away from view in a quiet Villeurbanne side-street, its heart continually pulsatess to the rhythm of an impressive line-up of VUTEk® large format digital inkjet printers. The performance and reliability of these machines are testament to ATC’s rapid rise and importance within the domestic marketplace.
SOLUTION:

“We turned to EFI, saw the VUTEk 3360 and QS2000, and we knew we had our answer to increasing productivity, quality, substrate options plus the opportunity to become Eco-Friendly.”

Large Format Capability

ATC’s most recent investment in VUTEk was made in the summer of 2007 when the company installed a 3 meter-wide VUTEk 3360 inkjet printer. Thanks to the 3360’s use of EFI’s environmentally-friendly VUTEk BioVu™ inks, the printer conforms to ATC’s strict environmentally-friendly ethos.

The company produces thousands of square meters of large format graphics that are displayed at major sporting events and in city centers, and also wraps 3000 vehicles in striking self-adhesive vinyl every year, including the 200-plus sponsor vehicles for the world famous Tour de France cycling race each year.

ATC’s co-director Christophe Aussenac confesses that, though its original core principles remain the same, ATC’s dimension changed once it invested in its first VUTEk printer seven years ago.

“For me, the emergence of digital printing really took off towards the end of the nineties,” he says. “At the time, we were running Scotchprint electrostatic technology to produce large format banners. This was rather laborious and our dream was to eventually own a machine that could print high quality graphics onto mesh substrate.”

The SGIA exhibition in 2000 signaled a turning point for ATC, when after pondering the range of large format inkjet options available, it purchased a 3.2 meter-wide, 300dpi VUTEk 3300 printer to undertake printing onto mesh.

“We were somewhat undecided about which supplier could most effectively meet our needs, but I saw the results attained by another VUTEk user and was completely blown away by the quality achieved. Not just that, but the cleanliness of the machine and the environment in which it was printing was a key factor, so right there and then our minds were made up,” explains Aussenac.

A continual rise in business and greater production demands would see ATC invest in additional VUTEk equipment over the next seven years. The original VUTEk 3300 was joined a year later by the newly launched six color, 360dpi 2360 production printer, providing ATC with the means of fast, high-quality printing onto vinyl.

By 2004, the company had trebled its VUTEk large format printing capability with the addition of the PressVu® UV 180/600 EC flatbed printer. “The arrival of a machine that could print directly onto rigid substrates was truly the answer to our prayers,” says Aussenac.

The installation of an eight color, 360dpi VUTEk 3360 during the same year meant that ATC could run the machine twice as fast in 2x4 color mode and produce the same job at 80m²/hr across both the 3360 and the 3300, thereby increasing its responsiveness to customers. “The 3360 is also useful if we need to relieve the 2360, as we can adjust it to the same quality and print onto self-adhesive vinyl. It’s a truly a flexible and dependable item of equipment for our business.”

ATC was quick to react when EFI introduced its successor to the PressVu, the QS2000. With its High-Definition Print (HDP) capability and fast production speeds, the QS2000 was, according to Aussenac, “the perfect solution for responding to ever-tightener deadlines and demanding customers.”

“The QS2000 is an evolution of the PressVu and our production needs had become so great that we didn’t hesitate in upgrading to a more powerful incarnation. The QS2000 allows us to achieve up to 74m²/hr and up to 1080dpi image...
via quirky designs, using high quality printed graphics,” explains Aussenac. “We work for four of the five largest agencies who manage the promotion for the whole vehicle entourage of the Tour de France and thanks to our responsiveness and the quality of output we can achieve, our production has increased each year.”

Stadium Graphics

ATC has also produced graphics for the Stade de France in Paris since 2000. In 2006, the company was asked to produce last minute graphics for Lille Football Club, who despite securing entry to the UEFA Champions League competition, found the crowd capacity of its own stadium too small to accommodate the interest in the high profile matches it would play. Having ‘rented’ the Stade de France for two matches, Lille called upon ATC to rapidly produce ten 10m x 30m mesh banners to adorn the exterior of the stadium. “The project for Lille Football Club required the use of both our VUTEk 3300 and 3360 machines. The strict deadline gave us only five working days to print the 3000m² of graphics, deliver them to the Stade de France and manage their entire installation,” says Aussenac.

BioVu Inks

Although a primary objective for ATC is the continued fulfillment of its customers’ needs, of equal importance to the company is the long term sustainability of the environment and how, as a company, it can make a difference. Indeed, such is Aussenac’s whole-hearted embrace of this philosophy that ATC is currently formulating its self-styled ‘Eco-Attitude’ program.

resolution on both rigid and flexible substrates—and to change between the two in under a minute. This versatility, speed and quality are indispensable.”

For ATC, part of its success can be attributed to the way in which it differentiates itself from other large format print providers. While some have positioned themselves purely on price, ATC has formulated a wider proposition which, according to Aussenac, not only ensures existing customers remain loyal, but proves equally attractive to its potential clients.

“We are quite unique in that we offer our customers a more encompassing package that guarantees the best quality, at the best price, delivered within the shortest time frame,” he explains. For ATC’s clients, this represents an all-around end-to-end service capability from artwork creation to final installation. By extending such a broad service offering, ATC has built a reputation in a sector where dependability and the ability to respond to seemingly impossible deadlines are uppermost among a customer’s prerequisites.

Vehicle Graphics

Despite offering the full spectrum of large format printing applications onto a continually increasing range of media, Aussenac singles out the company’s vehicle graphics production as a dominant strength which accounts for around 50% of ATC’s production. “We wrap around 3000 vehicles each year, mainly for promotions and events projects. At least two thirds of this number can be attributed to our VUTEks,” he explains.

ATC’s stance within this specific application is best typified through its involvement with the Tour de France. For the past four years, the annual July race heralds a surge in ATC’s production that in 2007 lead to the production of over 4000m² of full-color self-adhesive vinyl graphics for the 200 sponsors vehicles that lead the race. “With such a huge TV audience, it is paramount that sponsors communicate their promotional message via quirky designs, using high quality printed graphics,” explains Aussenac. “We work for four of the five largest agencies who manage the promotion for the whole vehicle entourage of the Tour de France and thanks to our responsiveness and the quality of output we can achieve, our production has increased each year.”

RESULTS:

“Thanks to VUTEk we increased and met demand for our products and services by guaranteeing the best quality, at the best price, delivered within the shortest time frame—and became more Eco-Friendly in the process.”
Featuring its own logo, Eco-Attitude comprises a carefully structured plan that centers on the recent purchase of the VUTEk 3360, using BioVu inks. ATC is the first customer in France to utilize BioVu inks, which are the first environmentally-friendly solvent inks made with totally renewable resources (derived from corn) and the only ink recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“BioVu ink represents a major step in improving our environmental footprint and epitomizes our Eco-Attitude program,” explains Aussenac. “Made from food-grade ingredients, they deliver the benefits of traditional solvent inks—such as the same color gamut—but without the compromises inherent in eco-solvent and aqueous inks.”

The company has also hit upon a novel idea of promoting its Eco-Attitude message by providing unused and waste substrate to a local designer, who hand-crafts it a second life as objects that include handbags, document folders and lamps, to PVC cushions filled with strips of mesh. Other waste substrate is sorted carefully by ATC and sent to a recycling plant before reincarnation as hose-pipes and new road surfaces.

“We began to realize just how much waste material like mesh and PVC we were discarding,” says Aussenac. “We are also finding that, as a supplier, more and more of our customers require us to adhere to certain ‘green’ requirements. This will become increasingly important so adopting a responsible attitude makes absolute sense. We are now in the process of formulating our own criteria for sourcing environmentally-friendly suppliers.”

A Winning Formula
For Aussenac, the ability to serve clients needs while also introducing equipment that is in tune with his own strict environmental practices is vitally important. However EFI’s leading environmental stance is only part of the picture that, to Aussenac, makes it his supplier of choice.

“When my colleagues and I created ATC, we weren’t printers by trade. Our entire learning and development in large format digital inkjet printing has been achieved with VUTEk technology and our success and evolution is largely due to EFI’s ability to innovate,” he says. “We count ourselves fortunate to have an affinity with the company, its people, equipment and its overall philosophy and strategic thinking, which together represent a winning formula.”

Print to Win
EFI (www.efi.com) is the world leader in color digital print servers, supervide format printers and inks, industrial inkjet printing systems and print management, Web-to-print and proofing solutions. EFI is dedicated to giving customers a competitive edge with award-winning, scalable solutions from creation to print that maximize productivity and increase profits. EFI maintains 26 offices worldwide.