The Big Print: Environmentally Friendly By Design

**Company Profile**
Founded in a Marin County, CA garage in 1999, The Big Print recently consolidated operations in Seattle, WA. The company employs 30 people in its 23,000 square feet production space and offers a unique, environmentally-friendly package called BioGraphix™, consisting of EFI's™ BioVu™ inks, the first bio-based solvent inks, paired with VOC-free substrates, to deliver both interior and outdoor large format graphics of all types.

**Challenge**
The company was initially looking for a way to print directly to rigid substrates based on increased customer demand for more cost-effective manufacturing of various types of signage. Additionally, The Big Print wanted to establish an environmental niche for itself, and invested significant research into how to produce its products with the smallest possible environmental footprint.

**Solution**
The Big Print originally installed a VUTEk® PV180 flatbed superwide format printer from EFI in 2002. Since that time, the company has literally become a total VUTEk shop, with a VUTEk PV200, a VUTEk 3360 and a VUTEk 5330. Additionally, The Big Print was a test site for EFI’s BioVu inks, the first solvent inks to be manufactured from renewable resources (namely, corn). In conjunction with its use of EFI BioVu inks, the company has worked with a variety of substrate manufacturers to acquire the bio-friendly substrates that are an element of the “green” solution the company has trademarked as BioGraphix.

**Results**
In addition to its standard offerings, The Big Print is now able to offer a line of environmentally friendly products under the BioGraphix name that significantly reduce the environmental footprint, in terms of their manufacturing process and the materials themselves. This unique positioning has allowed the company to expand its corporate customer base and double the size of its sales force, poising itself for growth in both revenue and profitability.
Bigger is not always better, according to Jon and Dan Zinsmeyer. The brothers established their business, The Big Print, in a garage in Marin County, CA in 1999 with a plan to create large format graphic display materials for both interior and outdoor use. Over the years, the company has grown in both size and capability, but has also focused on reducing its environmental footprint. According to President Jon Zinsmeyer, “We like big things—after all, we produce big prints. But in the case of our environmental footprint, we want to be as small as we can.”

The Zinsmeyers were first introduced to EFI’s VUTEk product line in 2002 when they were seeking a superwide format printing solution that could print directly to rigid substrates. Jon says, “We have never been afraid of new technology and new products, and acquired one of the first EFI VUTEk PV180s in the country to meet a growing customer need.” His brother and partner, Chief Operating Officer Dan Zinsmeyer, adds, “Not only did the VUTEk

The Big Print: Reducing its Environmental Footprint

Going Green

As their business continued to grow, the brothers realized that many of their clients were dedicated to developing green campaigns using eco-friendly products, and they set their creative energies toward uniquely positioning themselves to meet that need. They started by working with substrate vendors, looking for non-PVC substrates, or non-PVC laminates that could mate with non-PVC materials, as well as eco-friendly textiles manufactured in VOCs-free factories. They even found a pressure-sensitive vinyl that is manufactured from a vinyl alternative. As the company began to build its sources

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of supply for these materials, the only roadblock to a completely bio-friendly solution were the solvent inks required to deliver the color gamut and durability its projects required. Jon remembers, “Kevin, one of our operators, saw an EFI press release announcing that it had developed a corn-based solvent ink for superwide format. We immediately contacted them to see if we could be a test site for the product. At the time, we had two VUTEk presses, the PV200 and the 5330. When we were informed that these new BioVu inks would be first released for the VUTEk 3360, we didn’t even hesitate—we simply bought one.”

With this final piece in place, The Big Print launched its BioGraphix platform to rave reviews by its customers. Jon says, “We have a number of retail customers who are working hard to reduce their environmental footprint, not only in terms of the stores themselves, but even things like printing literature using soy-based inks. When we told them about BioGraphix, they were delighted.”

Dan adds, “BioGraphix is the skeleton key that opens up almost every door when we are talking to a larger agency or corporation. The advantage that the BioVu inks have contributed to that platform is immeasurable, and the entire package is a real door opener for our sales staff. Even if the customer ultimately uses our more conventional services, it is highly likely that they have chosen to do business with us because of our unique BioGraphix platform, which we couldn’t have built without EFI.”

The Applications
Using its EFI VUTEk presses, The Big Print generates a wide range of applications, from utilitarian waypoint signage and interior graphics such as fire evacuation maps, to more graphically rich billboards, building wraps, vehicle wraps, and fleet, retail and trade show graphics and banners.

One very unique application The Big Print has developed is retail kiosks. According to Dan, “One client has a photo kiosk deployed in photo cafes. Another kiosk dispenses electronics, including MP3 players, and cell phones, in airports, department stores and malls. Another sells skin care products. We see this as a huge emerging application.”

In producing these kiosks, The Big Print prints the interior and exterior graphics, and uses a computer-controlled router to round edges and create other effects that make its kiosks more than just a square box, differentiating them from other kiosks on the market. Kiosk images are printed on rigid substrates using the PV200.

Future Vision
Jon says, “I am looking forward to continuing to work with EFI as the company expands support for its BioVu inks across other superwide format printers in its portfolio. The minute I can print a corn-based billboard or building wrap on a five-meter machine, my customers will jump at it. Based on our experiences selling three-meter bio-friendly products, the product sells itself. Today, with our BioGraphix platform, we

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are the only providers of this type of solution and are aggressively building the market, through our own sales efforts, speaking at conferences and more.”

The Big Print is striving to be the first 100% non solvent grand format printing house and the company is well on its way toward that goal. Dan adds, “We are excited about the future possibility of converting our 5330 platform to BioVu with the help of EFI, VUTEk and InkWare®.”

Dan concludes, “We are doing as much education for the end client as EFI is doing for the industry, and we appreciate the opportunity to partner with it towards this common goal. We would like to see the level of the buzz heat up—both as part of our business growth strategy, and as a key element of our contribution to bringing bio-friendly products to market.”