Crush Creative is a Burbank, California-based division of branding solutions provider, Merisel of New York and a specialist in large format printing. Founded in 2001, the company currently employs 120 people in an 85,000 square foot facility.

With over forty years of imaging expertise, starting with custom high-end photographic processing, Crush has always remained on the cutting edge of the imaging world. As new technologies developed, Crush continued to be in the vanguard of progressive imaging firms, wisely investing in profitable superwide format digital output systems such as VUTEk® superwide printers from EFI™. In fact, this division alone operates six EFI printers—two VUTEk 3360 printers, and one each of the VUTEk 5330, QS3200 and QS3220 printers.

Today, the firm’s broad range of solutions stretches from creative and design services to retouching and high-end output of all sizes. Crush Creative’s main application focus is retail, but they also handle a wide spectrum of jobs from sports marketing and event graphics, to large-scale banners, to building and vehicle wraps. As the retail accounts they service gained market share, Crush needed to continue to insure that they could perform at the highest level to meet the increased demand.

“We never wanted to be in a situation where we could not handle the work,” said Barry Polan, vice president of new business development at Crush. “Some of our key clients have been experiencing significant growth even through the tough times of today’s economy. Some are experiencing a reincarnation of sorts and through this have significantly increased sales. Production lead times are often shorter than normal with larger projects. We wanted to be able to continue to perform while having enough increased capacity to continually add new work into the mix,” explained Polan.
To keep up with the dynamic market growth and customer demand, Crush once again decided to go with EFI, purchasing their latest superwide printing technology, the VUTEk GS3200. This advanced system offers the versatility of both a flatbed and roll-to-roll UV printer solution with true 1000 dpi resolution to produce sellable, high-quality output at up to 2,400 square feet per hour. It can also handle substrates up to 126.5” wide and up to 2” thick, and its white printing capability allows printing white in six variations: overprint, underprint, spot, underspot, fill and overspot.

“Our QS and GS printers not only allow us to service clients at the highest level, but also to touch some business that might have gone to screen or litho. The speed and versatility of these VUTEk printers has opened up new markets by giving us the ability to hit lower price points on appropriate work. Additionally, we did not have white capability previously and it’s a huge advantage to print on colored materials, window clings and other transparent substrates. The GS3200 and our new cutter create more of a manufacturing line environment, with pricing more traditionally associated with screen and lithographic printing. Print quality from the GS printers is better and than both screen and litho. The color just pops off of the paper,” said Polan.

Merisel, Crush Creative’s parent company, also installed two new VUTEk GS3200 printers at Color Edge Visual, their east coast facility, bringing Merisel’s total EFI VUTEk printers up to eight. The company’s explosive growth during a period of economic turmoil, plus the strategic positioning of its major accounts, has led to a significant demand for increased production. This past year, Merisel has also made significant investments in both production and color management, as well as on the IT side of the business.
"We have implemented and become certified at the G7 Master color management level. This, combined with our redundancy of equipment on both the east and west coast, allows us to implement economies of manufacturing unrivaled by our competition. We can seamlessly split up a large retail fulfillment based on shipping locations, reducing lead time, production cost and shipping cost. This all translates to a direct savings to the client and there is no sacrifice in quality or consistency because every machine is calibrated to the most stringent standards of color guidelines," added Polan.

Crush Creative recently printed and installed 14,911 square feet of window graphics for The Gap's flagship stores located in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Montreal, and Toronto for the August launch campaign of its line of 1969 Premium Jeans named to commemorate the company's founding 40 years ago. Two weeks later, phase two of the campaign involved a refresh of several images, involving another 9,470 square feet of graphics. All of the graphics were printed on Crush's new VUTEk GS3200.

“We try to support our clients with the newest and best printing technology available,” said Kathy Lencki, Crush Creative's vice president of operations. “What they want is quality, quality, quality. The GS3200 helped us speed up production and offer new print options. Its ability to print color–white–color, back–to–back is a big benefit,” said Lencki.
Print to Win

EFI (www.efi.com) is the world leader in color digital print servers, superwide 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 23 offices worldwide.