



Sign FX moves with the times and prospers

When a business like Melbourne sign company Sign FX has been operating for two decades it is bound to go through some changes, especially in an industry forced to adapt to evolving technologies. Sharon Harrison spoke to Sign FX's Steven D'Elia.

From a one-man operation hand-producing sign writing, it has grown into a successful business creating computer-generated graphics on inkjet printers and cutters. With competition in the sign business tightening the company has evolved again, acquiring a Worldwide Online Printing franchise, increasing staff numbers to fifteen,



and adding digital and offset printing to its all-encompassing customer services.

'We could see that commercial printing and signage were crossing paths,' says Steven D'Elia, Sign FX's owner. 'We wanted to get in first before the competition did. Now we can promote ourselves as a one-stop print and sign shop. We can offer a broader spectrum of services to our existing customers and when we market ourselves to the print field we'll also be able to offer them our sign services.'

Started as a 16 year old apprentice

Steven started out as a 16-year-old apprentice sign writer. Two years out of his apprenticeship (in 1984) he started his own business - first in his dad's garage, then a year later in a small factory in Fawkner. All sign work was done by hand. When computers were introduced for letter cutting, etc., in the late 1980's he invested in new equipment and more staff. As wide format inkjet printers found a niche in the industry, more equipment was installed and with the expansion into commercial printing, high speed digital printers have been added.

Updating the sign making equipment has been an important step to increasing business. Two Roland large format printers were purchased - initially a small Versa Camm

SP-300 printer/plotter/cutter for short run form-cut decals and, last year, a high-resolution 1.8 metre wide SJ-745 SOLJET PRO II V for printing vinyl skins and banners. A 76cm wide Roland CAMM-1 CX-300 PRO plotter is used for computer cut vinyl.

'We're forever building our sign business client base and, when we put in the new printers, they made life a lot easier, opening up our market share because we could offer a broader spectrum of services with the better equipment.'

He is also considering adding a flatbed printer for the convenience of printing direct to stock - at present this process requires printing and then laminating.

Most customers are Melbourne based with some interstate jobs handled. Services include general signage, large format digital printing, vehicle and machinery signage and wraps, safety and directional signs, banners, computer-cut lettering and logos, screen printing, and occasionally some traditional hand sign writing. Graphic design and website design, development and maintenance can be provided, and a full range of general digital and offset printing.

The Worldwide Online Printing franchise is based on a hub-and-spoke model. Several local print shopfronts are equipped with digital

"It was a mess. We completely renovated and refurbished the whole building, putting in proper walls, ventilated rooms for the new large format digital equipment. It was really purpose-built."

printers for short run, on-demand jobs. At Sign FX, two Konica Minolta machines handle this work (a C500 for colour and a 7165 for black-and-white). Longer run work is sent to a centralised 'hub' with a full complement of colour offset presses for quick turnarounds. It is a cost-effective way to introduce commercial print services without a large capital investment.

Move to Cambellfield

Ten years ago, with the company expanding, the business moved to Cambellfield. It was meant to be temporary but they stayed nine years. Another relocation last year now sees the business right on the Hume Highway, with high exposure and neighbours like the Ford Motor Company.

'We wanted to get on the main arterial road and ended up with a really run down wreckers' yard,' Steven explains. 'It was a mess. We completely renovated and refurbished the whole building, putting in proper walls, ventilated rooms for the new large format digital equipment. It was really purpose-built.'

'The move has meant greater brand awareness and recognition, and has a subliminal effect. One hundred thousand cars drive past here each day keeping us in the back of their minds so, when the day comes that they need some printing or signage, we'll be at the top of their memory.'

The company is committed to the local business community and its young employees (including four apprentices) are all local residents. With its dual Sign FX and Worldwide Online Printing branding he hopes to expand next year with two new print/sign centres in the northern suburbs.

For more information about Sign FX's products and services, call (03) 9357 0357



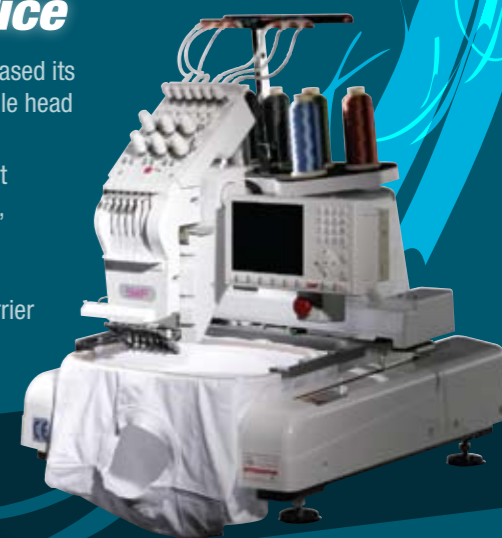
The Sign FX Team are a tight knit bunch, with most of its young employees coming from within the local community.

Impression Technology releases new commercial embroidery technology at a domestic price

Impression Technology has recently released its new SWF/MA-6, compact, 6-colour, single head embroidery machine.

After a successful demonstration at last year's Sydney Visual Impact Image expo, the SWF/MA-6 is now available throughout Australia.

The SWF/MA-6 has broken the price barrier on single head embroidery machines, whilst still maintaining its sound commercial quality.



All for just **\$11,500** + gst
Add \$1500 only for cap option

For further information contact Impression Technology
1800662255 www.impressionstechnology.com