

**Digital Print Asia (DPA), located in Samutsakorn in Thailand, is a joint venture between SDI and the Thai based Yeh Group. It supplies digitally printed textiles for both sampling and finished product purposes.**

DPA's facts and figures speak for themselves. Managing director Mr Jimmy Yeh of DPA rapidly sums up: "We print 30,000 metres a month, and we are increasing our printing capacity to 2 million metres a year within the next year and a half. We have been profitable since 2004. The break-even point was reached within a year. We are productive for fifteen to eighteen hours a day now. And our customer base includes famous international brands such as Victoria's Secret, Speedo, Adidas, Puma, Custo Barcelona and Next."

#### **Stepping stone**

DPA's 30,000 metres a month account for not even one percent of the world's digital textile print production, which again accounts for not even 0.5% of the world's total textile print production. The market is, in other words, big enough for more digital textile printing plants. "We will gladly share the knowledge we have gathered in the past three years", Mr Olli Lemola confirms. As the international sales manager of SDI, he was closely involved in DPA's start. Now DPA is up and running, his focus is changing to launching the concept with other textile printers, of which he has high expectations. "Digital printing is especially suitable for high-end products, so to printers currently operating in the medium-priced market segment, it could be a stepping stone to higher market segments and better margins, a great opportunity to position themselves more exclusively."

On the other hand, Mr Lemola emphasizes, the start-up phase shouldn't be underestimated: "Our biggest challenge was convincing the senior management of international fashion companies of the advantages of digital printing, which took patience, and the ability to convince. Customers don't come to you, you have to go there, travel

the world and spread the word. First you need to concentrate on getting customers on board for trial orders; only then you can establish relationships that result in seasonal volume orders."

During DPA's start-up years, he learned that the acquisition process with each customer

can be broken down in four steps: presentation samples to demonstrate the quality of digital printing, short trial orders, first production orders, and seasonal follow-up orders. "The first two steps are the biggest hurdle; they're extremely time consuming. Once these first steps are over and done with, customer relationships really begin to evolve. Now, our customers keep coming back from season to season, with increasing volumes."

Mr Lemola explains DPA's strategy of approaching both the design and product development teams ("who need to feel comfortable with the technology"), and the top management ("who must believe in the commercial potential"): "Designers and developers tend to see the opportunities.

They recognize the design freedom digital printing can offer them, and they are by nature more eager to innovate, so it is essential to get them on your side. They are the ones that can sell your business concept for you. Furthermore, your chances depend largely on how enterprising the top management is."

#### **High margins**

"DPA not only demonstrates that digital textile printing can be put to profitable use," Mr Lemola continues, "but also proves the value of the U See concept. U See is recognized in the industry as a true quality guarantee. It isn't for nothing, that many

DPA customers include the U See hang-tag in their end products; it helps them to sell their products at higher prices."

Isn't it strange, given that DPA has so quickly turned digital printing into profitable business, there are still relatively few digital textile printers in the world? "I can imagine

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that some are put off by the relatively low production figures, compared to conventional printing", Mr Lemola says. "Probably, not everybody realizes yet that the margins are incomparably higher than those in traditional printing. Or that digital printing also has the enormous advantage of not having to make a huge initial investment. With digital printing, you can easily match production capacity to your incoming orders. You start out safely, with two or three machines for sampling and trial orders, and simply add more capacity when demand grows. This minimizes your up-front investments, and increases your flexibility in production."

Established only in 2002, DPA is already able to offer its customers the best possible quality control, the shortest possible run lengths, the greatest possible design freedom, and the shortest possible lead times. "We could not have done this without Stork's help and expertise, though", Mr Yeh concludes. "If you are considering digital printing yourself, I would advise you to make sure you have access to real experts such as Stork."

 digital print asia

For more information on digital printing, please contact your local Stork representative, send an e-mail to [info.storkprints@stork.com](mailto:info.storkprints@stork.com), or visit our stand at ITMA ASIA 2005.



# DPA: A PROFITABLE DIGITAL PRINTING OPERATION



## DIGITAL PRINTING

In 2002, Stork Digital Imaging (SDI) participated in the start up of Digital Print Asia (DPA), to prove in practice that, amongst other things, digital textile printing can be put to profitable use. What can other textile printers learn from DPA's business case? InterVision asked Olli Lemola of Stork Digital Imaging, and managing director Jimmy Yeh of DPA Thailand.

