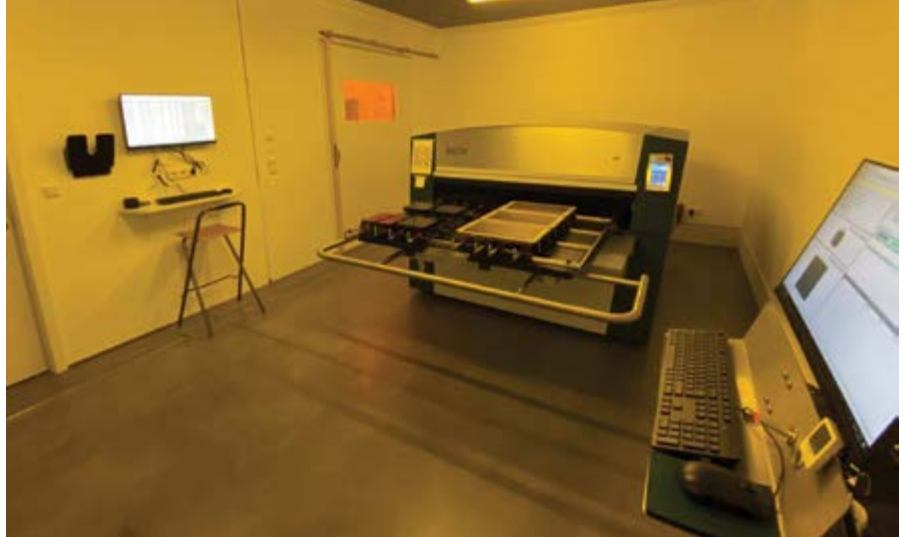


NEW CTS FLEET ENHANCES STENCIL PRODUCTION

Regina Pawlowski interviews Jörn Flottmann, Managing Director of Siebdruck Service Flottmann about the computer-to-screen market and the new Lüscher exposure system that his company installed early last year

"I find it difficult to give a meaningful figure for us as a service provider because our stencil sizes range from 10cm x 10cm to 380cm x 800cm. The figure of around 15,000 stencils per year is therefore difficult to assess," says Jörn Flottmann, Managing Director of Siebdruck Service Flottmann, when asked how many stencils the company produces per year. Picking up, delivering and cleaning frames, stretching and copying screens as well as complete data preparation and customer advice – all this is part of the Isernhagen (North Germany)-based company's field of activity.

The clientele is broadly diversified: the company derives a large portion of its customers from industrial ceramic and organic glass screen printing, with façade and interior designs as well as vehicle glazing being a primary theme. In addition, Siebdruck Service Flottmann supports its clientele in special glass applications as well as in the 'classic' sector of graphic screen, textile, tube and cartridge decoration. In the stencil service segment, customers are mainly located in Germany and within the EU, but customers from the Arab Emirates, South America, India and Asia are also supplied. Whereas a few years ago the stencil service accounted for about 50% of the company's turnover, the share is now about 60%. Technical specifications have also increased, with many new screen printing applications requiring extreme precision and constant



Siebdruck Service Flottmann's latest exposure system from Lüscher has a resolution of 5,080dpi

reproducibility. In order to meet these demands, Siebdruck Service Flottmann invested in a new MultiDX! exposure system from Lüscher Technologies.

Regina Pawlowski: Computer-to-screen (CTS) systems are still on the rise. How important do you consider the process in stencil production – at present and in the next few years?

Jörn Flottmann: In my eyes, there are hardly any alternatives. We have been witnessing for some time now that classic

repro film is losing more and more of its market share. Of course there are exceptions, which will continue to have their justification, but the majority will produce their stencils digitally in the future, either themselves or with the help of a service provider.

"Classic repro film is losing more and more of its market share"

RP: Which exposure system has been used in your company up to now? Does the new Lüscher machine replace the previous one or does it merely supplement the existing equipment?

JF: At the moment, we produce with three Lüscher computer-to-screen machines, which fully complement each other. For large-format glass printing, we still use a 'wax machine' in the 3,800mm x 8,000mm format; since coarser fabric is often used in this area, a resolution of 600dpi is completely sufficient here. In the medium format we produce on a laser machine in the format 3,200mm x 6,000mm with a resolution of 1,200 dpi. Our new MultiDX! now covers the slightly smaller format of 1,450mm x 1,500mm at a resolution of 5,080 dpi.

RP: When did the installation of the new exposure system take place? Did everything go smoothly?

JF: We had the new Lüscher exposure



Large format stencil production

system installed in early 2021. The installation went smoothly, which allowed an immediate start of production.

RP: How much lead time does it take to implement a new exposure system in the company?

JF: After 20 years of CTS experience, the required parameters around a new exposure system are quickly mapped out. Due to the enormous machine precision of the MultiDX! it was clear to us [that we needed] to establish an additional clean room. A preparation time of approximately two to three months was sufficient in our case. Since the machine is delivered assembled, the actual installation of the machine is rather plug-and-play.

RP: What features or special characteristics do you appreciate about the MultiDX! machine?

JF: Of course, the resolution of 5,080dpi is a decisive factor. In addition, we achieve extremely precise motif positioning in the stencil. This means that our customers can carry out a screen change in their machine within the shortest possible time and true to register. Last but not least, we appreciate the wide range of possible applications for different screen frames, up to cliché production for pad printing. Additional laser light sources can be installed in a machine for this purpose.

RP: Where do you still see room for improvement?

JF: I think for all businesses, speed is a decisive factor that will always be open to improvement – even if you can already use a very fast system with 128 laser diodes. In addition, as a service provider, we cover a wide range of applications with the most diverse frame sizes and shapes. Therefore, we would like to see an even more flexible frame mount.

RP: To what extent can you expand or increase your capacity through this investment?

JF: By expanding our machine park, we have increased our capacity enormously. Depending on the application, we can now distribute orders among three machines. In terms of production safety, our new 'machine back-up' solution is an important factor not only for us, but also for our customers.

RP: What other investments are planned for the near future and why?

JF: In the current situation, the acquisition of another computer-to-screen system cannot be ruled out. By investing in the MultiDX! we have gained access to various branches of industry, which now confront us with ever new technical challenges. Of course, we want to meet these demands and will try to meet them.

RP: How long does it normally take from the time the screen printer places the order to the delivery of the finished stencils?

JF: Depending on the accuracy requirements, relaxation times of the stretched fabric must be taken into account. The standard delivery time is approximately one week. However, this time frame merely refers to the weekly truck tours, where old stencils are collected and new stencils are delivered. The processing time for a stencil is approximately two working days. On request, screens can, of course, also be produced at much shorter notice. Prepared stencils are sometimes exposed and delivered within hours to the customer. ■

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