



OEC ACQUIRES MGM GRAPHICS

HOW THIS 25-YEAR-OLD COMPANY FIT THE OEC MOLD

- In July 2014, OEC Graphics made a significant move to increase our presence on the West Coast. OEC acquired MGM Graphics, a 25-year-old prepress company with locations in Seattle, WA, Portland, OR and Salt Lake City, UT.

OEC's decision to acquire MGM Graphics was based on the opportunity for continued expansion in the region following the success of OEC Graphics – West Coast (Union City, CA). Brad Vette, OEC Graphics' Corporate Director of Business Development, explains, "With locations near Seattle, Portland and Salt Lake City, the acquisition of MGM Graphics establishes OEC as the preeminent prepress supplier in the region. OEC and MGM Graphics' services are so similarly aligned that it will be a seamless transition for their current customer base." OEC will bring a broader spectrum of products and services to the region including: Fusion Workflow Management, Brand Strategy and Design, Seamex ITR, Display Graphics and digital flexible packaging.

The new OEC – Portland location services front-end workflows including prepress, color separations, color management and technical support. The OEC – Salt Lake City facility services include liquid and sheet platemaking and corrugated plate-mounting services. Through the acquisition, OEC gained an exceptionally strong team of sales and operations professionals that have been instrumental in transitioning the company while maintaining a continued high level of service and quality.

Six months into this acquisition, OEC is projecting to more than double the growth of the previous MGM sales. Investments have been made in both equipment and people which have laid the foundation for a strong future. OEC looks forward to our continued evolution in this marketplace, as well as strengthening our relationships with this new group of customers.



VISUALSIGHTS

RETAIL ON THE VERGE

By: Lori Jepson, Manager, Branding Group

- Fifteen years ago, there were industry experts predicting the Internet would spell the ruin of brick-and-mortar stores. While there's no doubt the Internet has had a significant impact on retail environments, brick-and-mortar stores are still here – and pretty much as important as ever.

After all, they still process 95% of retail transactions.

Most retailers have embraced the Internet as part of an expanded multi-channel sales strategy. While the Internet certainly offers customers some appealing advantages, a recent research study from the Association of Retail Environments reports the emotional benefits of the store experience still trump the functional benefits of online.

Merchandising: Still the Key

People still want the hands-on buying experience. The new challenge of retailing lies in enhancing that experience with more involved, interactive and stimulating store environments. Just offering in-demand products at a competitive price will not be enough. Both suppliers and retailers have to think bigger and broader. Fortunately, there are some pretty exciting areas to explore. Here are just several avenues:



Global fashion retailer H&M, featured on Extra Tonight, used this unique flying saucer display as part of its College Student Makeover promotion.

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More Than Packaging

Special displays that go beyond simple end-caps can be a high-potential option. A bold display automatically attracts attention. When carefully designed, displays can effectively extend a brand message and image while promoting both trial and repeat buying. Displays can also take advantage of interactivity. Besides appealing to sight and touch, displays make it easy to incorporate sensory involvement. For example, motion detectors can trigger lighting, recorded music and messaging, or even fragrances.

Create a Selling Environment

Ambient decoration not only establishes a store's atmosphere, it also can help create a buying mood as well as direct store traffic. But now is the time to go beyond simple signage. For example, QR Codes around the store can alert shoppers to specials or sale items. The attached messages can be easily changed on a daily or hourly basis. Or, rather than the traditional flat signage, consider adding some dimensional elements to enhance thematic décor.

Take Advantage of E-Magic

The same science that created the Internet phenomena offers remarkable opportunity in brick-and-mortar venues. WIFI and smart-phone technology lets retailers provide customers with instant information and feedback, thereby creating a more integrative store experience. The same technology can provide the retailer with invaluable data on how customers use the store space, what gets attention and what does not. There are an ever-increasing number of ways to use email, social media, and even game technology to engage customers and create loyalty.

Your Piece of the Action

So rather than spell the demise of the brick-and-mortar world, the Internet has actually opened a vast new horizon of retail potential. But, these opportunities require a new paradigm and strategic process. OEC's Branding Group, along with our sister company, OEC Display Group, already use the integrated approaches this new world of retailing demands. Our proven skills and track record means we can work with both packagers and retailers to ensure maximized returns. If you'd like to learn how we can help you, please contact Lori Jepson at 920-560-4512 ext 2116.



Dimensional wine bottle signage created appeal and atmosphere for Festival Foods, a regional supermarket in the Midwest.

Meet Our WEST COAST LEADERS : TUMA & McCRAY

OEC welcomes our new leaders in the West Coast Region following the acquisition of MGM graphics. Pavel Tuma and Chris McCray both bring years of experience and in-depth knowledge of the print industry. Their history and backgrounds are impressive, and their vision for the future inspires.



Pavel is married to Cathy, who works for an adoption agency specializing in finding homes for children in the foster care system. They have four adult children and one grandson. In their spare time, Pavel and Cathy enjoy hiking, bicycling and kayaking, as well as being involved in their church.

Employee Profile: Pavel Tuma

Pavel Tuma has had a long and varied printing career. After attending a four-year graphic arts school in Prague, Czech Republic, Pavel chose to leave his home due to Russian invasion in the country after the Prague Spring in 1969. After immigrating to England, he was elated by his newly acquired freedom and began to learn the English language. Soon, he was able to use and polish his skills in photoengraving, lithography, rotogravure and flexography by attending some classes in Watford, North London College and securing jobs in rotogravure and flexography. It was in England that he met his future American wife who was attending Manchester University. After getting married, they moved together to the U.S. where he immediately got his foot in the door in Torrance, Los Angeles at a web offset printer, RR Donnelley Newsweek plant.

Pavel moved from RR Donnelley to a prepress company in Portland, Oregon called WyEast Color. From there he partnered with a group of four individuals to start his own prepress house called Color Imaging, Inc in Portland. His company was one of the first to introduce an electronic prepress system to the Pacific Northwest in the early 1980's. Experiencing success with Color Imaging, but finding that working with five partners was complicated, the group sold to Spectrum Inc., based out of Minneapolis. Pavel was working for Spectrum prior to the sale as their Prepress Manager. With his experience in high-end electronic prepress, he helped to transition the company to desktop systems. Upon purchasing Color Imaging, Spectrum chose to put Pavel in this new "Spectrum West" location as the General Manager.

In the late 90's, Spectrum West was undergoing some changes that led Pavel to act on a job offer from Color Technology, Inc. Pavel spent the next eight years as Color

Technology's Plant Manager, with the last year spent in flexographic prepress sales. At this point, Michelle Weis was having her color separations done by Color Technology, directed by Pavel, for her firm MGM Graphics. Eventually Michelle managed to hire Pavel into her newly established office in Vancouver, WA.

OEC Graphics came onto Pavel and MGM's radar when OEC started to do work for a mutual customer in California. OEC began to fill in the gaps where MGM had needed to outsource overflow. Since the current owners were ready to retire, OEC acquired MGM Graphics in July of 2014, which has been a huge change for Pavel. Prior to the acquisition, Pavel spent his time as sole account manager. He managed the office for Michelle, was doing color separations and training other employees in wide web flexo. Over the last six months, more of his time has been spent transitioning to OEC's internal systems and overseeing the office changes. Although there were many challenges, according to Pavel, the results were worth it. He stated, "OEC Graphics is revitalizing our business with the investments they are making. Our customers are realizing the benefit of the additional resources now available to them."

Pavel sees a bright future for this new branch of OEC Graphics. He feels things are falling into place since he can focus more on managing the facility now that OEC operating procedures are in effect. Pavel looks forward to future growth for this OEC hub in the Pacific Northwest and the changes that new ownership will bring.

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Employee Profile:

Chris McCray

Chris McCray has understandably had to make some adjustments as Operations Manager of OEC Graphics' new location in Salt Lake City, UT. Chris had been with MGM Graphics since its beginning; his dad owned and operated the business with two partners. Chris's interest in box printing came early. Making his first rubber plate at 13, he has watched the evolution from design tables and cameras to computer graphics with excitement of what the future may bring.

Chris's career at MGM has had years of service in the graphics department, platemaking, mounting, shipping and customer service. At 20-years-old, he moved to MGM's Salt Lake City location from Washington to be the Assistant Manager. While at MGM he went on to become manager of the corrugated group in Salt Lake and continued building relationships with the customers. The acquisition from OEC came as no surprise. Chris's dad and his partners were nearing retirement and OEC had been the go-to for overflow work in their Pacific Northwest locations.

Although MGM's Salt Lake City customers weren't familiar with OEC, they are definitely starting to see the benefits of the transition. Chris stresses that equipment improvements have streamlined their operation and have started to reduce run times. He hopes to add digital laser platemaking equipment to expand their capacity in Salt Lake. They now run liquid and sheet photopolymer, as well as conventional corrugated platemounting.

The future is definitely bright for OEC Graphics – Salt Lake City, with aspirations for adding increased technologies. One thing hasn't changed though, according to Chris, "Our plant is dedicated to keeping our customers happy and meeting their goals; no request is impossible and we will use every minute of every day to make it happen."



Chris McCray lives with his wife, Erin, and four children (ages 1,3,11,13) in Salt Lake City. They all share a love of horses and are able to ride daily on their land.

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Building Consistency

- There are many variables within the Flexo process that must be managed for a print job to meet and even exceed customer expectations.
- Those printers that can best manage multiple variables on a daily basis are the ones that produce the best print day-in, day-out, year-in and year-out. You know them; they are the companies that are winning FTA awards on a consistent basis and seem to be consistently busy throughout the year. What makes them different from their competition? Each company can buy the same or similar pieces of equipment, run the same plates, comparable inks, etc. So why are some struggling from job-to-job, while others seem to run smooth and produce quality print daily?

In my opinion, the answer is quite simple. Those printers that have simplified the print process, in an effort to manage the multiple variables that go into each job, have driven consistency into their product. The ability to print today, the same as you did last week, last month or last year is a valuable asset and print buyers are taking notice. So, as we start the New Year, it may be a good time to take an inventory of your production process and identify areas that you could simplify or implement Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that will enable your company to become a more consistent printer. Let's take a look at a few.

ART REVIEW:

Most companies already have a daily production meeting where items such as scheduling, shipments, production totals, as well as upcoming projects are discussed. This is the time where new artwork should be discussed among all of the manufacturing departments and any concerns are immediately identified and addressed. Many times, it is beneficial to have a representative of your graphics provider participate in these meetings so they can be involved in the project from the start.

PRESS-SIDE CONTROLS:

The fingerprinting process is an exercise that many printers look at as a total waste of time and something that they "have to do" to satisfy either a customer or prepress provider. Nothing is actually further from the truth. Taking the time to conduct a proper fingerprint will save you endless hours later on chasing color while the customer languishes in wait. During the fingerprint, make sure that you capture all of the data that you can. This should include, but not be limited to: press speed, plate type/treatment, ink characteristics (i.e. pH/viscosity), anilox information (lpi/vol/id), color rotation, backing material, substrate, etc. Try to run the fingerprint to your target densities if you have them. If not, this would be a good time to establish some run parameters, such as density, Lab, and dot gain numbers that can be used by press personnel.

Once the run is complete and the prepress provider has analyzed the tear sheets, ask them to supply the data back to you. By replicating these run parameters on subsequent jobs, a close color match should be obtainable. In fact, top printers have set starting points, such as dot gain and density, and they drive to those numbers on every job. Again, by being consistent and starting at the same point on each job, each press crew understands what their data points should be and can quickly identify if a problem arises.

If you do not currently take press-side readings and document it somehow, I would recommend that you identify at least some basic data points to track and implement a simple tracking program to start.

ANILOX CARE:

It has been said that the anilox is the heartbeat of the press and that point would be hard to argue. The question is how are you taking care of your heart? How are you cleaning your rolls? By hand or by anilox cleaning equipment? Is the equipment the right fit for your rolls, meaning, can it clean high line screen rolls? How are you verifying the cleanliness of your rolls? Do you have an anilox inspection process in place to verify volumes or are you leaving that up to your roll supplier? Do you have each roll identified uniquely? These are all questions that you must answer and address to bring consistency to your print process.

After all, the job of the anilox is to deliver a consistent ink film to the plate and thus to the substrate. How can you be sure you are doing that if you truly don't know what the volumes are or what conditions your rolls are in?

PLATES:

Maybe the biggest advancement in Flexo in recent years has been around plates and the different surface treatments at your disposal. Many times these new plate technologies allow printers to print smoother solids, increase solid ink density, and increase line screen, among other things. Testing needs to be performed to find the best screening technology in conjunction with the tape and aniloxes used. However, many times printers can fall into the trap of wanting to constantly test every conceivable variable in the marketplace in an effort to find that ultimate print package. While there is nothing wrong with testing, at some point a decision should be made as to what plate/tape/anilox package you will use, anchor into it and begin to establish run conditions that your operators are familiar with. This will create consistency from job to job.

We have only touched on a few areas of the manufacturing process that need to be evaluated to see where potential improvements could be made, but those that are constantly seeking out ways to be a more consistent printer are the companies that will succeed in the long run. If you would like help on conducting a pressroom audit, contact your local OEC Sales representative for more information.

Making a Splash at Pack Expo and the FTA Fall Conference

- **OEC Graphics** was excited to collaborate with HP at Pack Expo 2014 in Chicago this November. OEC's marketing promotional packaging was printed on-site at the show on the HP Indigo 20000. The results were impressive and showcased the press's expanded color gamut capabilities, SKU iteration possibilities and print quality. The interest of attendees was evident; the HP press is clearly paving the way for the future of digital wide-web print for the flexible packaging market.

OEC also took part in the FTA's Fall Conference in Minneapolis, MN, October 20-22nd. We hosted a tabletop at the conference which we do each year. As usual, the turnout was good and we appreciated the opportunity to visit with industry peers and listen to the educational programs.



These promotional bags were designed by OEC's Branding Group and printed on the HP INDIGO 20000

OEC Graphics to Host Open House for the HP Indigo 20000

- **OEC Graphics – Union City (CA)** will be hosting an open house to formally introduce the HP INDIGO 20000 wide-web digital press to our customers. Scheduled for early February, the event will show off the capabilities of this powerhouse, including expanded color gamut and the ability for flexible packaging design that was previously constrained by traditional press technologies. A 30" wide press, the HP INDIGO 20000 allows access to wider brand iterations, product customizations, regionalization, variable data and lower runs. Both stand-up pouches and roll stock are also available with the 20000. OEC looks forward to showcasing this unique press in conjunction with HP.



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