

AURORA STANDS UP TO DXP INSPECTION

Essex printer DXP Print Solutions is enjoying the environmental and production benefits of using a CTP plate that is developed through a water-wash unit – Presstek's Aurora Pro.

DXP Print Solutions, a 13-staff commercial printer in Wickford, Essex, has been using Presstek's Aurora Pro chemistry-free plates for about two years now, having switched over from conventional plates requiring chemistry via a processless plate that was developed on press.

While managing director Nick Livemore draws no particular environmental distinction between chemistry-free and processless plate technology, describing both as 'one hundred times better' than a conventional plate, there have, he said, been both cost and productivity benefits since making the switch to Aurora.

'Price is always an issue, and we wanted to determine whether we could save money while at the same time improving our productivity and maintaining our quality. Aurora Pro plates have met all of those objectives,' he said.

One big advantage, which can potentially save a great deal of press downtime, is that the Aurora Pro shows a very dark image when it has been through the company's Kodak Trendsetter platesetter and the water-wash unit that develops the plate; this means it is easier for the operators to spot errors on a plate before putting them on press – something that was not possible with the processless plate, because the emulsion is only removed on the press and is disposed of through waste sheets and in the fount solution.

'Once we realised that there was an error on a plate when printing a five-colour job,

we had to stop the press, remove the offending plates, and correct and re-image new plates,' said Mr Livemore. 'This could waste up to an hour's production time, leaving our presses idle during that time. This is not the case with Aurora.'

Presstek supplied DXP with a water-wash unit to develop the plates (DXP can produce as many as 1400 plates per month). The wash unit recirculates warm tap water and takes about a minute to wash each plate ready for press. 'It's a much cleaner process,' he added. 'There are no particles left in either the fountain solution or the ink train, and no press contamination; a huge advantage over our previous plates. Although we were initially concerned about the maintenance of the wash unit, it only takes ten minutes every two weeks, not a burden at all.'

SHARPER IMAGE

DXP has standardised its printing at 200 lpi, and has found that the quality of the image is significantly sharper than with conventional plates. There were also colour matching problems because a 30% dot in new chemistry would become a 35% dot a few weeks later when the chemical solution was less fresh. Mr Livemore said: 'Now the dot will be exactly the same whenever you output the plate.'

Although Presstek specifies the Aurora Pro plate for up to 25,000 impressions, DXP is able to get 30,000 to 35,000 impressions from a plate, which is more than adequate for most jobs in the B2 market, said Mr Livemore. However, the new Aurora EXP



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plate, which can handle run lengths of up to 50,000 is still of interest to DXP, depending upon the pricing, he said, because it would reduce the need to look out for plate-wear.

The company runs a single five-colour Heidelberg Speedmaster 74 press, producing a wide range of marketing and point of sale materials. Aurora Pro has proved itself to be a very stable plate, which is vital to a small printing business such as DXP, as Mr Livemore explained: 'If for some reason we can't print a job, then we can't meet our customer's expectations and their increasingly tight deadlines. Handling a variety of jobs predictably and reliably is our lifeline.'

Overall, he said, the Aurora Pro plate is working very well, and the company's productivity has improved substantially, especially through being able to inspect plates before putting them on press, and thereby reduce downtime – doubly important since DXP has only one press. The service and support received from Presstek has left an impression on Mr Livemore.

'Presstek has been brilliant,' he said. 'The customer service has been outstanding and if there are any issues, someone is here straight away. That's one reason I keep using the company. It's not all down to costs; back-up is fantastic; and being a small, busy company we need that back-up, because we don't have two presses or platesetters. It all needs to run well.' ■