One Year On: Specialized Signs rediscovers benefits of HP Latex R1000 following lockdown diversification

Edinburgh-based Specialized Signs largely paused its graphics work during summer 2020 but is now busy printing hoarding, plaques and more with its HP Latex R1000.

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Specialized Signs says it was 'surprisingly busy and surprisingly lucky' throughout the lockdown period after diversifying into new products, but is now returning to a new kind of normal with numerous graphics projects printed on its HP Latex R1000.

Edinburgh-based Specialized Signs has grown exponentially since it was established in 2009, investing in cutting-edge equipment such as the HP Latex R1000 flatbed printer which was installed in mid-2019.

“Previously, we had been printing onto vinyl and applying it manually to sign boards, so by printing directly to substrates we are making substantial cost savings on both vinyl and labour," Managing Director Graham Sim said following the printer's installation last year. "The quality is also better; the appearance of vinyl application is nowhere near as good as direct printed work on the HP R1000."

This type of work was largely put on hold owing to the impact of COVID-19, but Specialized Signs made an early decision to diversify into acrylic sneeze guards for retail and reception desks from late March. In a few short months the team used 30 tonnes of acrylic for this purpose.

By the autumn, however, Specialized Signs was back to using its HP Latex R1000 for signage projects including construction hoarding for a new housing development in Edinburgh.

"Now building sites are open again we have printed lots of hoarding," says Graham Sim. "As well as the ability to print directly to substrate on the HP Latex, we print all the hoarding panels with registration marks. Our CNC machine is then able to cut them so all the panel joins match seamlessly, and all of the fixings are aligned and perfectly symmetrical."

Graham says Specialized Signs has also benefited from the water-based chemistry of HP Latex ink in that it does not affect the recyclability of the substrate while retaining exceptional quality.

"We have printed a lot of plaques on Russian birch plywood and glass, which are fully recyclable," he says.

"The quality from the HP Latex R1000 is also exceptional on acrylic, especially compared to how we used to do it with vinyl which then had to be laminated and applied manually. Using that process you will always get some very small imperfections whereas when printing direct to substrate the results are flawless."

Looking ahead, Graham says it's difficult to predict what will happen in the market. He says: "2021 will be tough but no-one knows without a crystal ball. The ability to diversify will help many businesses going forward in these uncertain times."

For more information, please visit http://www.hp.com/go/LatexR2000

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