



FENN MAKES THE MOST OF WIDE FORMAT MIS

Fenn Graphics specialises in the production of vehicle livery for commercial vehicles, public transport, advertising and promotion as well as providing a nationwide vehicle wrapping application service.



The company is located in Stoke-on-Trent employing 57 people with offices and production facilities occupying some 2800 sq. metres together with a modern Application Centre of 635 sq. metres.

Established over thirty years ago, trading then as Fenn Signs and Graphics (later renamed Fenn Graphics Limited in July 2003), and incorporated in 1995, the company has successfully developed into a £4.5m turnover business trading in its targeted UK market of vehicle livery and European market for specialist durable (five year lifecycle) industrial labels.

The production facility at Fenn is home to a range of manual and semi auto screen printing machines which sit alongside high resolution Nur Fresco and Mimaki wide format digital inkjet printers to produce high quality vehicle livery graphics onto a wide range of vinyl substrates prior to being cut to shape using a range of computer aided plotter/cutters.

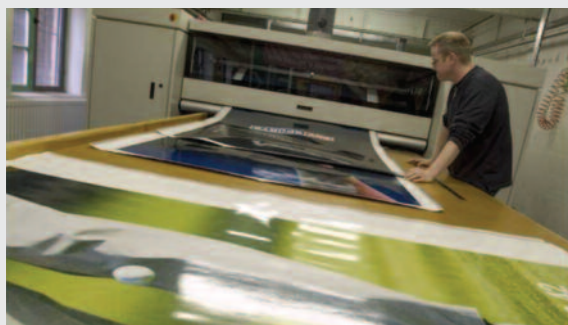
The company has established an impressive track record for quality and reliability, especially within the truck industry where it has won the much acclaimed 'Motor Transport Award' and 'Best Vehicle Livery'. The company's impressive customer portfolio embraces anything from small privately owned businesses, emergency services and major blue-chip organisations such as Sky, RAC Auto Windscreens, B&Q, United Biscuits, National Express, Arla, Staples, and the supermarket giant Asda to name a few.

Keeping the business running smoothly in the background is a comprehensive management information system which was first supplied by Shuttleworth in 1997. Prior to this all

estimating, invoicing and management reporting was produced manually. Today, the MIS at Fenn Graphics has, according to managing director Tony Herod: "grown alongside the business" to incorporate modules for Template Estimating, Sales Order Processing, Costing, Invoicing, DataFlow, CRM and Access Accounts.

The process of estimating the amount of raw material that will be used to cover a commercial vehicle and calculating the time it will take to produce the livery is a complex process, but made easier using the Shuttleworth Estimating module. Before an accurate quote can be produced the company must first clearly understand the customers' requirements then produce a visual representation of the required job. This involves obtaining a copy of the customer's designs which are passed to the graphics studio at Fenn (which maintains a comprehensive image library of vehicle templates for every type of commercial and public transport vehicle) who will superimpose the graphics onto a template of the desired vehicle. This ensures that the design accurately fits the specification of the vehicle and doesn't interfere with door handles and windows etc. The visual is then passed back to the customer for approval before the job can be quoted.

Factors affecting price would commonly depend upon the size and number of vehicles, the type of material used and the complexity of the graphics.



CASE STUDY



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While it might seem at first impression to be a complex procedure, once the estimating has been completed, the job planning will already have been generated for the process. "We're actually killing two birds with one stone," says Mr Herod.



"A great deal of care is taken in the planning process to ensure we get it right first time. It would be very costly indeed to be required to re print a job due to a miscalculation on our

part because the range of adhesive vinyls that we use are very expensive. Good planning benefits both the customer and ourselves. We operate in a tough and competitive market and it is essential to know exactly what it costs to make the livery in order to make an informed decision on pricing," he continues.

Some of the more recent additions to the MIS have included Shuttleworth's DataFlow module for the collection of accurate shop floor data and a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) module.

"DataFlow was up, running and making a difference in just days following implementation. It has alleviated the need for physical job tickets removing a very time consuming manual process. It's been a real God Send. It saves time, it saves us money and it's fast, accurate and easy to use. In my opinion if there is one module that guarantees an almost instant return on investment it has been DataFlow," he says.

The CRM module at Fenn Graphics sits at the heart of its MIS and is being developed to help empower account managers to better manage their accounts.

"We make good use of the Events facility within the CRM to record, for example all Non Conformances as part of our QA programme. We find that customers are actually quite impressed by the way in which we handle any kind of query or complaint, even if it wasn't our fault. We certainly don't hide from such matters.

We think that there are things to be learned from having this as part of our QA procedures. We review every query or complaint that gets logged on the CRM, even if it was the customer's error, using this data to see if there are ways which we could further improve our processes. Our customer satisfaction rating currently stands at 97% but I won't be satisfied until we reach 100%," says Mr. Herod.

In summary, Fenn Graphics can best be described as a progressive, technology led company that has made exceptionally good use of business software management tools that have helped the company to build a business at the forefront of its chosen market.

"Our MIS really works well for us," says Mr. Herod in conclusion. "Of course we are using it for the obvious things such as making sure that jobs are being produced on time and that we are hitting our production targets. However, in my opinion, to really improve your business processes you need to record and analyse as much information as possible to facilitate the process of continuous improvement. It's not complicated to do. In fact it's pretty easy once you get started. We recognise that if we don't continually improve what we do we won't survive in this highly competitive market, and that's the reason why we have the Shuttleworth management information system. It is the business software tool that we trust to help us make informed decisions about the running of our business."

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*Tony Herod
Managing Director*

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