

Group GSA

Epson speed, quality and colour - critical CAD factors



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Jim Wright
IT Manager
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Established in 1979 and now a multi award-winning integrated design practice, Group GSA offers its clients a comprehensive range of architecture, interior design, urban planning, landscape architecture and graphic design services.

The company is recognised as one of Australia's top 10 design firms, employing over 110 personnel and having completed more than 3,000 projects throughout Australia, the Pacific, Asia, India and the USA.

Challenge: High speed colour and fine detail output

Since 2002, Group GSA has relied heavily on Epson large format printers to generate high quality colour CAD (Computer Aided Design) architecture, interior and landscape design prints. In early 2010, with the company experiencing rapid growth, speed of output emerged as a critical factor.

According to Group GSA IT Manager, Jim Wright, the demand by clients and local Councils for colour design prints has become the norm rather than the exception. "What it comes down to," he says, "is that colour is now an essential component in presenting plans and designs in client presentations and Council approvals.

"So much so, that even with an Epson large format printer already in-house, we needed another one to take over and deliver even higher speeds while ensuring prints still had the colour range and incredibly fine detail our people – as well as clients and approving authorities – expect."

Solution: The Epson Stylus Pro 9700

Regardless of the fact that Group GSA had a stated preference for Epson large format printers for all its colour work, Jim, who states he is "an architectural draftsman by trade and an IT manager by mistake", searched the market for a printer that would meet deliver on the company's requirements.

After evaluating several models available on the market, it was a demonstration of the Epson Stylus Pro 9700 44-inch B0+ that brought the search to an end. "We took a number of CAD-generated files to an Epson dealer's showroom and ran them out on the Stylus Pro 9700," he says.

"Aside from the speed – which was evident right from the start – we were looking for colour range and detail; and when we saw the results and were given the price, as far as we were concerned it was a done deal.

Three weeks later we took delivery of the printer and within 20 minutes, it was installed and running."

Saving thousands every month

As Group GSA continues to grow in staff numbers and projects being undertaken, so too do the time and cost savings resulting directly from the company's Stylus Pro 9700. In cost savings alone, it's being measured in the thousands of dollars every month, representing a return on investment achieved in a matter of months.

"If we were to outsource final design prints to a print bureau, we would easily be spending around fifty dollars per print as opposed to just a couple of dollars it costs running them out on the Pro 9700," Jim explains.

"And considering we go through approximately 200 metres of plain and glossy paper every week, it's obviously extremely economical for us to have the in-house print capabilities."

On the issue of time, the benefits to Group GSA are every bit as tangible; and they are being realised by means of the Stylus Pro 9700's high speed throughput and support for unattended printing.

According to Jim, with the high demand for colour prints in the architectural and design industry, and the important role they play in winning new business, the company's architects and designers are, understandably, making extensive use of the printer throughout all a project's design stages. "In the majority of cases," he says, "by the time the designer has walked from their desk to the printer, the print has already been generated.

"This means that if adjustments to the design need to be made, they're identified in a matter of minutes, and people aren't getting frustrated and held up in their work by having to wait an inordinate amount of time for their prints.

"Essentially, the printer is keeping pace with the designers and architects and supporting them in their efforts to achieve high quality results in quick time."

In situations where prints are being generated in particularly large volumes – typically for final presentations or submissions – the high capacity 700 ml ink cartridges, an ability to print out many paper rolls before needing to replace cartridges, and automatic rotary-type cutter are used to facilitate overnight unattended printing.

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"At least once a month design teams will have the need for large print runs of anything up to 70 full sized colour prints," Jim says. "In those situations, it's just a case of ensuring there's sufficient ink and paper, setting the job and then walking away. When the team comes in the next morning, all the prints are sitting there in the output bin."

Detail, precision and colour

While approving authorities and Group GSA clients look for detail and precision in the design prints with which they are presented, it's the designers and architects themselves who have the most critical eyes; and their response to the Stylus Pro 9700's quality is more than justifying the purchase.

"The colour range and incredibly fine line detail of the printer means the designers are able to create prints that clients can easily read and understand," Jim explains.

"Instead of having to resort to using monochrome hatch patterns to distinguish items such as furniture and carpet, the designers are able to incorporate accurate colour for vegetation, furnishing and even wood grains.

"It means that when the designs are presented to clients, there's an immediate understanding of every element in the design. Shades and toning enhance the three-dimensional perspectives, and designers now make good use of being able to draw the client's attention to specific areas of the design."

In commenting on the fine line detail capabilities of the Stylus Pro 9700, Jim states: "The clarity and crispness of the line work is far superior to anything I've seen generated by laser and heat-based large format printers.

"And the fineness of line work can make all the difference between a drawing that's easy to read and one that has the client constantly asking for clarification."

Support through reliability

With the Stylus Pro 9700's print and media handling capabilities playing such an important part in Group GSA's day-to-day operations and successes, the reliability of the printer is proving to be every bit as crucial. But then, according to Jim it doesn't come as much of a surprise.

"The Stylus Pro 9700 is every bit as reliable as any other Epson large format printer we've had; and considering we had a Stylus Pro 10600 that went three years without a service, we're in the position of having a printer that not only meets the high standards of our designers, architects and clients, but saves time and money, and will continue to do so for years to come."

For more information about Epson Large Format Printers, please call 1300 123 321 or visit www.epson.com.au



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