

Autobarn moves into top gear with Epson colour laser printing

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CASE STUDY

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Chris Panagiotou - Autobarn National IT Manager

Formed initially as a co-operative of nine major Victorian specialist auto parts and accessories retailers, Autobarn has become Australia's largest franchise retailer of quality automotive aftermarket accessories, spare parts, car audio and security systems. The success of the company's operations is evidenced – in part – by its growth. Now, with close to 100 stores throughout Australia, and over \$100 million purchasing power, Autobarn can well be regarded as an Australian business icon.

Challenge: The One Printer for Every Situation

For Autobarn National IT Manager, Chris Panagiotou, one of the challenges he faces on a daily basis is ensuring every element of the entire Autobarn IT infrastructure – corporate and franchise-based alike – functions in a manner that best supports the ongoing efforts of the company and its franchisees. "Essentially," he says, "every piece of hardware and software that we use within Autobarn has to be the very best in a mixed corporate and retail operation. In addition, everything has to work together seamlessly; and this is absolutely critical in our highly distributed IT environment."

With increasing demand for in-house colour printing capabilities, Panagiotou was faced with the need to identify a networkable colour printer that was fast, had quality of colour – all important for use in retail where absolute adherence to corporate branding standards is essential – and could be used and maintained by the users themselves.

Solution: Epson AcuLaser C2600N

In late 2005, Panagiotou commenced trialling an Epson AcuLaser C2600N colour and monochrome laser printer. "I've seen over the years that Epson has established a strong reputation in the laser market," he says. "And I was keen to see how that reputation, in combination with the company's leadership in colour printing would suit our corporate and franchise requirements."

Ideal Solution for POS Material Printing

In the Autobarn retail environment, the effective use of point-of-sale (POS) materials, such as brochures and shelf-signage is an important part of the business – and it's one where the Epson colour laser printer is set to have significant impact. Panagiotou explains: "Just as with many other high profile retail environments, the consistent use of correct branding throughout Autobarn is an absolute must.

"This means that when one of our retail stores prints shelf signage, the colours have to be an almost perfect match to what's shown on the screen of the computer. With the AcuLaser C2600N, the quality of colour is so accurate that there's virtually no discernable difference between the print and the screen,



Challenge

- ◆ High speed colour *and* black-and-white printing
- ◆ Easy-to-use and -manage laser printer for non-technical users
- ◆ Totally accurate screen-to-print colour matching for corporate guideline adherence
- ◆ Full compatibility with 100 per cent of Autobarn in-house and third-party software

Solution

Epson AcuLaser C2600N Colour Laser Printer

Benefits

- ◆ 9-12 month return on investment
- ◆ Rapid and easy development of manuals for in-house use
- ◆ Accurate colour reproduction for POS materials
- ◆ Reduced management of networked laser printers
- ◆ Improved comprehension of reports and presentations

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which makes it absolutely ideal for printing POS material."

Even printed communications to be used solely within the Autobarn business have to meet corporate standards; and Panagiotou's IT department regularly generates notices that go out to all of the company's operational locations. "We often print notices either for ourselves or other departments, notifying the stores of changes to product ranges or advising on specific IT issues," Panagiotou says.

9-12 Month Return on Investment

A sub-12 month full ROI on the retail price of the AcuLaser printer is one benefit that

monochrome printing over the past few months, we're still running on the one set of low-yield toner cartridges that was installed at the beginning of the trial."

Improving Report Effectiveness

After years of presenting black-and-white reports to the Autobarn management team, Panagiotou has now seen first-hand the benefits of preparing reports – especially those containing graphs and charts – using the speed and colour of the AcuLaser C2600N. "The improvements," he said, "are particularly noticeable when the reports have graphs showing things such as sales results and even departmental Web usage.

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Panagiotou regards as being a major justification for recommending the printer to Autobarn franchisees. "We discovered very early on that the quality and speed of the printer were of such high levels, that we were able to produce our own software procedure manuals and brochures for a fraction of the price it was previously costing us with an instant print supplier," he says.

Adding further to the cost savings afforded Autobarn by the AcuLaser C2600N is the ability to use a single printer for monochrome *and* colour laser printing.

"I was actually quite surprised about the printer's low operational costs," Panagiotou says. "Even though we've been using it extensively for colour and

"I've noticed that when someone picks up a report and looks at the colour charts or graphs, it's now taking about half the amount of time to absorb the information than with the previous black-and-white only reports. And for a management team responsible for overseeing nearly 100 separate franchise operations, this type of productivity improvement is regarded by everyone as being crucial."

Simple Management and Operation

Bearing ultimate responsibility for the operational effectiveness of the entire Autobarn IT infrastructure, Panagiotou regards the AcuLaser C2600N's simplicity of use and management as being one of the printer's most attractive features.

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"It's an ideal printer at just about every level," he continues, "and it's one that we're strongly recommending throughout the organisation."