

Autografika

Brilliant image quality and colour for unique vehicles



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Craig McConchie
Founder and General Manager
Autografika

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Take a car, any car, and consider it a blank canvas. It might be a canvas upon which to create attention-grabbing business signage or one where every square millimetre of painted surface is covered with an imaginative mural. That's precisely what the team of designers at Canberra-based Autografika do every day – transform 'never look at twice' vehicles into works of art or high visual impact business billboards.

Challenge: Nothing short of print excellence

For Autografika founder, general manager and designer Craig McConchie, the company's ability to create the best possible full body vehicle wraps, signage and visual enhancements meant bringing in a large format printer that delivered on nothing short of print excellence.

"The main challenge," Craig says, "is more than achieving the standard requirements of colour and detail. It's ensuring they can be achieved on a final print that can be used on a vehicle and withstand year after year of direct sunlight, dust, rain and pollution. The prints *must* be durable.

"On top of that, we were looking for a printer that had sufficient print width to allow us to create vehicle wraps, even for large vans, that wouldn't need to be stuck edge-to-edge. I suppose what we were really looking for was a printer that actually went well beyond the standard signwriting printer requirements."

The Epson Stylus Pro GS6000

Having worked in graphic design and signage for several years, Craig knew precisely what was needed of a printer, and weeks of research and discussion led him ultimately to the Epson Stylus GS6000. "I'd looked at a number of possibilities," he says, "but the GS6000 was the only one that met all the requirements of durability, quality, colour and, with a 1615 millimetre print width, size."

The perfect colour and size every time

Whether for an Autografika corporate or private customer, accurate colour reproduction is critical. According to Craig, it's the advanced eight-colour ink set of the Stylus Pro GS6000 that meets that critical need, especially in the Pantone range. "In the majority of cases, corporate customers have incredibly precise requirements when it comes to matching colours," he says. "And without the colour range we have with the GS6000, we simply wouldn't be able to deliver on that."

In signage, where extensive use is often made of coloured vinyls, a key problem has long been the expense of ensuring such vinyls are of the correct colour. "If we needed a colour that wasn't standard stock, we

would have to place a special order of around 30 rolls," Craig says. "The cost we'd have to charge customers would be astronomical."

In contrast, Autografika now takes full advantage of the Stylus Pro GS6000's colour gamut – wider, in fact, than the Euro Pre-Press Standard – to generate any colour and in any volume. "It's important that we can take on even small jobs without going to the expense of bringing in coloured vinyls every time. From a business perspective, it means maintaining a constant flow of work and establishing a strong reputation with both corporate customers and private car owners."

Versatility for business growth

With the Stylus Pro GS6000, Craig has established a print environment that enables Autografika to take full advantage of the rapid and broad growth in demand for high quality large format printing. Even though the printer's primary application is for vehicle signage, Craig has already taken on design and print work well beyond that initial application.

"Custom design and printing for vehicles is definitely a growth area," Craig says, "but the business reality is that in order to grow the business further, we rely on the versatility of the GS6000 to provide a comprehensive range of services.

"With the printer's ability to generate high quality prints on everything ranging from fine art and synthetic papers right through to vinyls and canvases, we're saying 'yes' to business that we might otherwise have had to pass up on. Essentially, while other businesses might come across difficult times because they lack the tools to take on work beyond their traditional boundaries, we regard the GS6000 as being crucial to our viability and growth."

The environmental factor

Fundamental to the Stylus Pro GS6000's ability to print on such a wide range of media is its use of Epson Ultrachrome® GS solvent ink. As well as supporting printing to coated and uncoated media, the advanced solvent ink is virtually odourless and nickel compound-free.

Where it used to be the case that solvent ink printers needed to be housed in dedicated rooms with forced ventilation systems to minimise danger to operators, Autografika's Stylus Pro GS6000 is located squarely in the company's main work area.

"For serious vehicle and outdoor signage work, solvent inks are absolutely essential to print durability," Craig says. "With the Epson Ultrachrome GS solvent inks, we gain all the benefits of solvent ink without any of the negatives that have been traditionally associated with *standard* solvent inks.

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Low maintenance and minimum management

Just as with any design and signwriting business, Autografika focuses on providing customers with outstanding levels of design and print. That's the core business; and there's little time available to devote to the management and maintenance of equipment.

"Even though I hadn't given it a great deal of thought at the outset, the reliability of the GS6000 has ended up saving us an enormous amount of time," Craig states. "Aside from the occasional head clean operation and media loading, the printer requires virtually no attention at all."

That fact was demonstrated when Autografika was commissioned to design and print 80,000 nine-by-nine centimetre food packaging labels. Instead of printing the labels – all of which were done in 8,000 label lots – during business hours, the company adopted a 'set and forget' attitude. Craig explains: "A combination of the automatic take-up reel, three-stage heating system and general printer reliability meant we were able to start the prints jobs each afternoon just before closing time. When we came in the next morning, the labels were printed, rolled up and ready to send off to the client."

Quality that makes a difference

It's worth noting that with that particular print job, even though the labels were printed in high speed production mode, the need for high levels of detail were of paramount importance. On every label, barcodes had to be printed accurately and text as small as 1.5mm needed to be legible.

"Everything printed perfectly," Craig states. "Every component, regardless of size of detail was reproduced with total accuracy; and that meant we met the customer's requirements and established ourselves as a print provider that can be called on for all future print jobs."

For Autografika, it's when it comes to prints for vehicles that the print quality of the Stylus Pro GS6000 really shines though. "Every vehicle wrap and detailing job we undertake is done from the ground-up," Craig explains. "After all, the main focus of our business is on design, so when we start a new job we're putting our full attention into creating custom graphics that are going to make the vehicle totally unique. And that generally means a design that is detailed well beyond what most people might expect."

"With the GS6000 and its 1440 dots per inch resolution, we concentrate on creating high detail work and know full well that it will be reproduced faultlessly by the printer."

"What we have is the ideal printer that, as far as we're concerned, has been designed specifically for Autografika."

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