

Always one step ahead of the process standard

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE. Today, many graphics companies have a vision of a standardized, highly automated production and this also feeds through into plans for investment in premedia. Langebartels & Jürgens, which achieved PSO certification almost unaided, might serve as a model for this.

What other printers take months if not years to achieve, Langebartels & Jürgens Druckereigesellschaft of Hamburg, which was founded 1893, managed in a few days. Run by Managing Director Axel Faber, this full service printer became the first company in north Germany to be certified to DIN ISO 12647-2 and for over a year now has officially been producing in accordance with Process Standard Offset. "Actually our printing has been standardized for the last three years", reports a smiling Faber. "It was already our intention back then to be better than others and, even more importantly, to create structures that were more transparent and easier to monitor. Quality management and standardized workflows are essential for this and inevitably lead to quality gains, time savings and subsequently to reduced costs." The company started to invest in this for-

ward looking approach to production not out of any necessity or because it was being driven by demanding industrial customers, as is frequently the case today. "Then", recalls Faber, "the question of standardized print production was not yet such a central concern as it is today." Langebartels's subsequent PSO certification was not at all planned and is today rather viewed more as a positive side effect of a long standardized production process, which Axel Faber has exploited for marketing and other purposes.

NO PATENT REMEDIES. When asked what investments are really essential in order to be able to achieve such a certification, Axel Faber quickly makes it clear that there can be no 'patent remedy' for this because every company is fundamentally different from every other one in terms of the state of

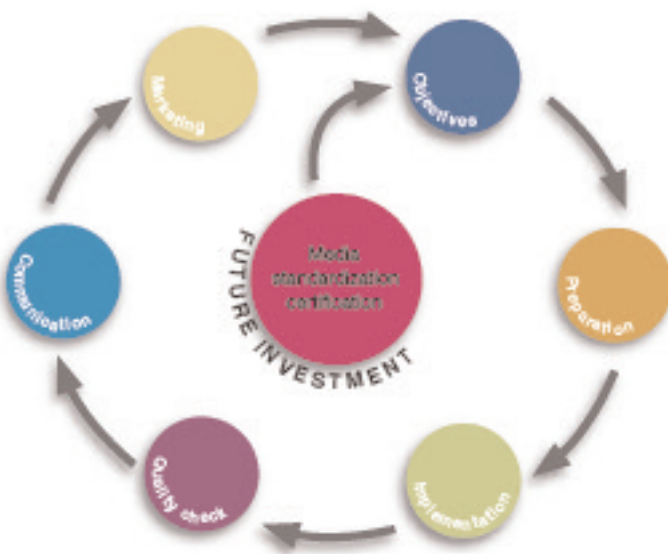


Managing Director Axel Faber (left) and Marketing Director Sven Arent present the Langebartels & Jürgens brands at the entrance to the company, which is housed in a former paper mill in the west of Hamburg.

its technical equipment, its workflow, its control aids (especially for quality control) and even in the know-how of its workforce. In relation to the last of these, it is absolutely vital to make clear to all the staff what lies behind the certification in order to create transparency here too and to alleviate any hidden anxiety.

Monetary investments in hardware—in the case of Langebartels, for example, these involved two colour measurement systems for colour and quality control on the press—were of somewhat secondary importance. "Just like a workflow, a standard must really be lived at all times", is how Axel Faber puts it, "and only the staff can live something!" In-house seminars on various subjects such as the Altona Test Suite, colour management or PDF/X-3 have and continue to be used to constantly develop the state of the L & J workforce's knowledge. The result is a motivated workforce, and at Langebartels they are also able to instigate their own round tables at any time on subjects of their choice. External training courses and constantly updated reference material form another part of the mix.

"We didn't just want to invest in manpower, but in manintelligence and we had substantial requirements in quality control in particular. However, instead of bringing outsiders into the company, we played smart and upgraded our team of prepress experts,



Media standardization the Langebartels & Jürgens way. It is a process of continuous improvement that was embarked on long before all the PSO hype.

who are already familiar with our short communication pathways and structures.”

THE PATH TO STANDARDIZATION. In creating its own in-house approach to media standardization, Langebartels & Jürgens has been forging its own path for years (see dia-



VDM Nord Managing Director Fritz R. Ostermann (centre) presents Axel Faber with the PSO certificate over a year ago. As a result, Faber has been able to ‘officially’ advertise his standardized media production.

gram). A number of considerations lay behind the goal of developing a standardized, automated and very much quality oriented print production. One objective was to win new customers, whilst another was gain a competitive edge through improved quality and simultaneously, if at all possible, to save time and costs. A lengthy period of preparations led to an assessment of the current situation and a formulation of where the company wanted to get to. To this end, detailed goals were worked out and an initial time frame defined.

During the implementation phase Axel Faber defined clear structures for himself and his team and a short time later work started on forming expert teams for all areas of responsibility. Test materials (Fogra, BVDM, etc.) were officially selected (where they had not long been on hand) and specific test mechanisms laid down. In Faber’s opinion, it was extremely important to involve the suppliers and to benefit from their body of experience. Since then, constant quality control at all the interfaces in media production has been a must, just as has the documentation and archiving of measurements, which, naturally, have been made with integrated high end measurement equipment.

The drive to improve internal communica-

tions that has been described above was pursued in parallel with external customer communications. Ultimately customers need to be informed of the newly established production workflows and—much more to the point—about the advantages of standardized print production, namely the improved quality, the shorter production cycles and the ability to run repeat jobs that are a much more precise match. To date, this has been achieved through open houses, a regular newsletter and PR activities, all of which have been co-ordinated by the Marketing Director Sven Arent. “And for us this closes the circle of our investment for the future in media standardization”, reports a satisfied Axel Faber, “because with the increased demands made by the customers, which our marketing initiatives have stimulated, we automatically move along to a new set of objectives in our successful cycle of continuous improvements.”

THE RESULT. Today, Langebartels & Jürgens uses an open workflow based on Callas CLI (Commandline Interface) products that can be edited at nearly every point. Quite a number of other products from different manufacturers (the company did not want to be dependent on proprietary formats) have been integrated into this ‘living’ PDF/X media and production workflow, which is freely editable (through Apple or Java Script, for example). All data first of all undergoes the standardized customer data acceptance before further PDF/X-3 based processing. Epson proofers for daily production and an Iris proofer in an air-conditioned room for contract proofs provide ac-

curate print outs for checking colour and state. An Agfa Chromapress 50i digital print unit serves as the ‘marketing machine’ for individualized short runs (production lists or dummy brochures, for example). The formes are imposed by the Krause Imposition Manager and Brillia plates are set by a Fuji Luxel T-9000 CtP HS.

In practice, in-house production is always ISO 12647-2 compliant and media neutral. Data entry and processing are standardized through the use of ICC profiles in accordance with the standard and the ROOM principle is used for the production of proofs, data delivery and CtP with standardized PDF/X-3 data. Proofs and printers are constantly linearized and profiled and visual assessments are always carried out under standardized lighting. All processes are constantly monitored using standardized devices and all measurements and assessments are archived daily. The customer therefore receives a certified quality product whose highly reliable production has been fully monitored. This in turn provides for legal security. Reference customers such as Erfurt (wallpaper), Schwarzkopf, Akzo Nobel Deco or the major Hamburg advertising and production agencies have long benefited from the advantages of Langebartels’s production.

Now, Langebartels & Jürgens has become the first ‘Creator’ to be certified by the Swiss PDF/X-ready group, which wants to introduce PDF/X-3 as a standard across the whole of the Swiss printing industry. Yet another investment in the future ...

Michael Schüle

Nothing left to chance in the workflow

L&J in brief ■ Langebartels & Jürgens is an innovative full service print and media service provider in the west of Hamburg with a workforce of more than 50 that is primarily involved in large format sheet-fed offset. Under the umbrella of the GmbH, the company offers its impressive production capabilities to customers through three brands: Faber Publish (digital premedia), Boxsys (display and packaging development) and Think Print (individualized printed products). A separate GmbH, Pixelwave, is active in digital and analogue studio photography. High quality print is delivered by three sheet-fed offset presses: a 89 x 126 cm format four colour, a 70/100 five colour and a 70/100 six colour with coater. Plates are produced by a high performance thermal CtP setter inte-

grated into an open PDF/X and colour management workflow. This is not an off the peg solution but is modular in structure and was designed and built to meet the company’s wishes and requirements. It is backed up by a media and production database and online print resource logistics. The commitment and voluntary activities of Axel Faber in the federations and associations such as the ECI, Fogra, the BVDM and VDM Nord have paid off in the in-house development of the premedia brand and his workforce in particular has benefited from the vast volume of know-how transfer. Die-cutting dominates postpress because of the large number of packaging jobs, whereas binding is outsourced to suitable partners.