EFI VUTEk
Case Study

EFI VUTEk solutions help George P. Johnson excel in experiential marketing

Even as the world becomes more virtually connected, the experiential market continues to grow and thrive, fulfilling the need for brands to make live connections with customers. No company knows this better than George P. Johnson (GPJ), a global experiential marketing agency that produces an average of 23 events daily for international brands such as Honda, Infiniti, Netflix, IBM, Cisco, Google, Jeep and a host of other high-profile names.

Within the Detroit-based company's large client roster, GPJ's biggest focus is on the automotive and tradeshow/conference segments. Both markets are undergoing changes that reflect the evolving dynamics of experiential marketing and require quick, constant pivots from the agency to meet client demand for graphics that continually push the boundaries.

Complex demands require speed and top-quality output

"The auto business is shifting from the traditional, huge auto show to smaller and more intimate experiential events, with more targeted and direct messages," says Larry Ezzelle, GPJ's vice president of Operations. "The graphics though, are becoming more complex."

"The tradeshow/conference world is simply growing by volume and complexity," adds Joe Crowel, manager of Graphic Production at the GPJ's Nashville location. "Clients who need to make an impression often want a unique look or structure or shape. They're always looking to push the boundaries to make eye-popping impressions. Which means more unique fabrications for us."

Challenge:

"Customers are always looking to push the boundaries to make eye-popping impressions. Which means more unique fabrications for us."

JOE CROWEL,
MANAGER OF GRAPHIC PRODUCTION
GEORGE P. JOHNSON

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experience marketing

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George P. Johnson is a global event and experience marketing agency. A vertically integrated company, it handles all aspects of experiential marketing from strategy and creative, to experience design, fabrication, live production, and analytics.

With more than 1,400 employees and roots going back more than 100 years, GPJ spans the globe with more than 30 offices. In North America, it operates three fabrication plants, occupying more than one million square feet, in Detroit, Nashville and Los Angeles.

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The EFI VUTEk FabriVU 340 allows George P. Johnson to quickly switch between printing direct-to-fabric or on transfer paper using the same inkset, giving operators more flexibility in their output.

Recent memorable projects to come off of GPJ's printers include a 20x20-foot backlit graphic using new materials and new installation methods, and a massive 208x24-foot graphic composed of panels seamed together to create a giant back wall for the February 2020 Chicago Auto Show.

For GPJ projects large and small, there is more work to do to make each job intricately successful, something the agency's clients appreciate.

"We'll have a panel, for example, that a customer wants us to selectively backlight. So we'll layer up multiple materials and print them in different ways to showcase the backlighting. We do this with both hard and soft substrates. This is a new application for us," says Ezzelle.

On any given day, the company will print on wallpaper, adhesive vinyl, clings, fabrics, banners, foam board, acrylic, PVC, aluminum composite panels and a host of other substrates. Even with the wide variety of media GPJ must master, clients looking for one-of-a-kind, standout creations still also require quick print times at the highest quality possible.

Solution:

"One of the pillars of our business plan is to be at the leading edge of technology and EFI puts us there."

LARRY EZZELLE,
VP OF OPERATIONS
GEORGE P. JOHNSON

EFI delivers with speed, reliability and color consistency

Operating large, complex fabrication facilities that fulfill huge volumes with specs that change from job to job calls for robust and versatile technology that can keep up. The company's superwide-format digital print equipment needs to pivot very quickly to customer demands.

Because of those requirements, GPJ has relied on EFI™ technology for a number of years. The company currently has a fleet of five high-performance digital inkjet printers, the newest of which, a pair of EFI VUTEk® FabriVU® 340 dye-sublimation soft signage printers, were installed last year in GPJ's new, larger Nashville plant. Designed to drive efficiency and productivity in soft signage, this four-color digital fabric printer images direct-to-textile or via transfer process, on substrates up to 133 inches wide. It delivers fast throughput and very high quality with resolutions up to 2,400 dots per inch and speeds up to 5,381 square feet per hour.

The company also uses LED and UV VUTEk solutions – along with EFI Fiery® digital front ends for RIPing and color management – to drive maximum versatility on a broad range of applications. Along with the VUTEk FabriVU printers, GPJ's digital inkjet production operations also feature a 126-inch wide VUTEk GS3250LX Pro hybrid flatbed/roll LED printer; a 204-inch wide EFI VUTEk GS5250LXr Pro roll-to-roll LED printer; and an 80-inch wide VUTEk GS2000x Pro hybrid UV printer.

"The EFI printers give us robust, reliable, high-quality printing for an ever changing ask or expectation," according to Crowel. "Combined with the Fiery RIPs, which we run on all the printers, they allow us to pivot quickly and produce consistent quality in a timely manner, while being conscious of our waste and ink use," he says. "High quality at high speed is where we want to be."

Result:

"The quality of our products is second to none and the quality of color and resolution is fantastic. We hear lots of compliments on that from clients."

LARRY EZZELLE,
VP OF OPERATIONS
GEORGE P. JOHNSON

"The EFI platforms help us manage color consistency across different media," Ezzelle adds. "We may be providing PVC, vinyl, fabric, and you're always going to have inherent differences across all those materials. But, we color manage really well and deliver consistency from the smallest elements on a booth at a trade show to big, complex splash elements in the middle of a show."

Being able to print on anything among a very broad range of substrates is one of the things that sets GPJ apart. And for fabric-based graphics, that capability is even stronger with the VUTEk FabriVU 340 printers, which can quickly switch between printing direct-to-fabric or on transfer paper using the same inkset. That feature gives GPJ the advantage of producing work on completely different types fabric substrates at a consistently high level, whether it is a job printing on stretchable fabric or other options like sheers. "The FabriVU 340 gives us exceptional flexibility in our output," according to Crowel.

The quality and reliability of EFI technology has also delivered competitive advantages for GPJ in a market that is highly competitive. To meet ever-rising demand, the company built a new manufacturing plant last year in Tennessee that more than doubled its original space. Having reliable technology made it easier to commit to any expansion.

Customers have noticed as well, according to Ezzelle. "We compare ourselves to competitors and to other suppliers we use for outsource work. The quality of our products is second to none and the quality of color and resolution is fantastic. We hear lots of compliments on that from clients.

"And," Ezzelle adds, "when we bring a new client in or we switch from outsourcing a job to producing it ourselves in house, we absolutely see an increase in quality."

The quality, without compromise on productivity and the need to meet tight deadlines, fits right in to GPJ's commitment to being the top tier provider for its clients.

"One of the pillars of our business plan is to be at the leading edge of technology and EFI puts us there," says Ezzelle.

EFI fuels success.

We develop breakthrough technologies for the manufacturing of signage, packaging, textiles, ceramic tiles, and personalized documents, with a wide range of printers, inks, digital front ends, and a comprehensive business and production workflow suite that transforms and streamlines the entire production process, increasing your competitiveness and boosting productivity. Visit www.efi.com or call 650-357-3500 for more information.

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