

We spent 18 months looking for a software package that would help us to track jobs and manage production in our busy large format print factory. There wasn't a solution that did the job right. So we built one.

## webtrack The development blog...

Welcome to our story about the birth of Webtrack. We are the B&P Lightbrigade Group Ltd, the UK's largest independent supplier of large format print systems and services. One of the services we provide is the provision of large format print to the professional graphics trade. To do this we operate one of the UK's largest digital print factories; at the last count we run 4 VuTek, 1 NUR and 1 Uniform superwide solvent inkjets. We also run 2 flatbed UV printers, a number of high quality wide formats, a Zund iCut finishing system and multiple laminators. We also employ 30 plus staff in our print factory, working in Sales, Account Handling, Prepress, Production and Finishing.

When we first started our trade print division in 1992, it was a department of 2. The only kit installed was an Encad Novajet 1, a Rastergraphics electrostatic printer and 1 laminator. One guy did the selling and account handling, another did the pre-press, the print production and the finishing. Communication was simple, the jobs came in, they only went through 2 pairs of hands. The jobs got printed and we got paid. Life was easy then.

Over the years we have added more printers, more staff and more headaches! To the point that 3 years ago, we took a long, hard look at how we ran our print factory. The number of jobs that had to be re-printed was on the up, mostly because of silly little mistakes and lack of communication. Our Sales and Account Handlers spent 80% of their time chasing job bags around the factory, and perhaps 20% of their time doing the job we paid them for. Our busy print factory, whilst making good money, was slowly but surely becoming a monster. Every time we added a new printer, and the associated staff required to run it, the problems got compounded. We knew we needed a way to streamline our factory, track jobs, and manage our day-to-day production. So we decided to buy some software. Easy right?

18 months later and we still hadn't found a solution. You've heard the phrase 'organised chaos'? We turned organising chaos into a fine art. In fact we could have written the book on the subject. If we weren't all chasing job bags!

The simple fact is this. Large Format is still a relatively new market. There is no software out there to manage large format production, because it's still a market in its comparative infancy. There are hundreds of litho print management packages. They were of little or no relevance. There are hundreds of workflow management packages, some good, some bad, but none relevant to us. There were packages based on Customer Relationship Management software, packages for Prepress, packages for Job Estimating, based on Databases, on Spreadsheets. You name it.

We gave up looking and decided the only way to get a software package that could track large format print production, in the way we wanted it to, using an interface that our Sales Team, Account Handlers, Printer Operators and Finishing Department could all cope with and understand, was to write it ourself. We began the project 18 months ago. Our Production Manager became a Software Project Manager, we employed dedicated programmers, and basically built Webtrack from the ground up. We started with the obvious stuff, getting job info from our Account Handlers into Production, then we added more features, the sales people even had a bit of time to sell stuff for a change, Account Handlers were again handling accounts not job bags! 3 months into the project and Webtrack was slowly taking shape. It was working! Since then we have developed it to the point where Webtrack can now track and manage virtually every aspect of our large format print production. And if it works for us, it can work for you.

That is how Webtrack came to be. If any of the above strikes a chord with you, come and talk to us, we know what you are going through, and we can help you to come out the other end, with what remains of your sanity, intact.

Yours sincerely

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