

# Staedtler and Technoplot with digital, solvent-free screenprinting alternative

When, last year, the Nuremberg ink manufacturer Staedtler first went public with its Lumocolor Jet idea – water-based inks for printing on all surfaces –, it sounded a bit like science fiction. Now, one year on, this utopia has become reality. This was made possible thanks to a cooperation with the Munich printer specialist Technoplot. On the occasion of the market launch of this innovative solution – called Technoplot Ultrasonic System – we talked to Staedtler Ink Jet's division head, Mr. Wolfgang Pöhlau, and Technoplot managing director, Mr. Joschy Polierer, about the background and potential behind this cooperation.

**FDN:** Obviously my first question has to be: How did the cooperation between Staedtler and Technoplot actually come about?

**Wolfgang Pöhlau:** We were on the lookout for an associate who met certain criteria. Our partner had to be highly competent in the field of mechanical engineering. What's more, the company had to be highly innovative and interested in committing to a long-term cooperation. It was obvious that both sides were going to have to put in a lot of pioneering work. For us, Technoplot was the ideal choice in every respect.

**Joschy Polierer:** For us, the project began more as an experiment with uncertain outcome. The idea of modifying a printer so that it could be used for printing on just about any surface using water-based inks seemed utopian to us yet, on the other hand of course, extremely interesting at the

same time. We would normally never have started work on such a project, but the very notion that it might actually work was just too tempting. After all, with its Lumocolor pens, Staedtler is pioneer in the field of products designed to meet special writing needs.

**FDN:** Are you not promoting the Staedtler/Technoplot solution as a kind of 'egg-laying sheep-cum-cow-cun-pig animal', i.e. the ultimate answer to all needs?

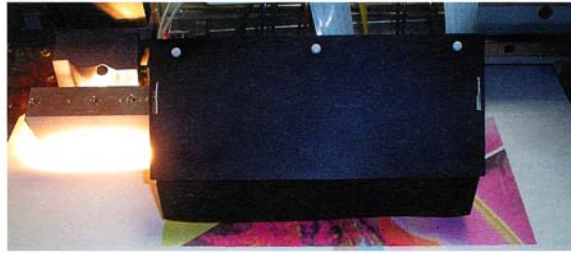
**Joschy Polierer:** As far as the versatility is concerned, yes, absolutely. What we're not saying however is that the Ultrasonic solution is the right solution for every Tom, Dick and Harry. To refer back to your strange creature, let me put it like this: if all you need is an egg for breakfast every now and then, you are undoubtedly better off just keeping a hen.

**FDN:** Which target group are you primarily aiming at?

**Joschy Polierer:** We intend, at least in the launch phase, to set priorities.



Wolfgang Pöhlau



As we are really talking about two Ultrasonic solutions, we see two potential target groups. The pinch wheel printer – and conversion kit for existing printers – is mainly designed for users who want to print on a variety of different materials with only one ink. Our flatbed solution offers additional turnover potential for screen printers as the printing of small quantities is currently not cost-effective.

**Wolfgang Pöhlau:** I see yet another potential target group: new customers in the field of digital printing who, in the light of forthcoming legal changes, do not want to begin using solvent-based inks.

**FDN:** You are referring to a real hot potato here. The issue of solvent-based inks is a subject of great controversy at the moment – the standpoints couldn't be further apart and range from one side playing the whole subject down to the other side painting a gloom and doom scenario. Do you intend to crusade against solvent-based inks?

**Wolfgang Pöhlau:** Personally, I consider it to be a German pro-

blem. There is too much talking going on and not enough action. While, for example, here in Germany debates are still going on as to whether or not to fit soot particle filters in cars as standard, Peugeot/Citroen has taken over from VW as market leader in the European car market. The topic of solvent-based inks is not so much a question of morals but a question of alternatives. There's not much point in complaining about the health and ecological hazards posed by solvent-based inks when there isn't really an alternative available.

The fact that the Technoplot/Staedtler solution does offer an alternative is something we are, of course, propagating.

**FDN:** The Ultrasonic solution is sold solely by Technoplot. Does that mean that the brand name Lumocolor Jet is going to disappear?

**Wolfgang Pöhlau:** Lumocolor Jet was, from the outset, a conceptual idea. The inks will, as in the case of Technoplot, be adapted in line with the individual printer and printer head requirements.

**FDN:** So there are going to be a number of different Lumocolor Jet versions on the market?

**Wolfgang Pöhlau:** Yes, but not in one and the same market segment. There already is a second Lumocolor Jet version, designed especially for the needs of the Japanese market. It was developed together with a Japanese machine converter and was successfully launched at the beginning of the year.

To us, a strategic cooperation does not mean casting a dozen fishing lines into a fish pond and waiting to see what you catch.

**FDN:** On the Ultrasonic ink tanks, Staedtler is clearly indicated as being the manufacturer of the ink. This is, at least in the field of digital printing, very unusual.

**Joschy Polierer:** That's correct! But since the 'Intel inside campaign' at the very latest, you have to ask yourself whether this kind of secrecy is called for these days. It is commonly known that Technoplot is not an ink manufacturer. Reference to a competent ink manufacturer makes sense – especially in the case of a totally new generation of inks.

After all, it's not as if we have anything to hide. When a printer converter and ink manufacturer join forces, the question on how to best divide the tasks at hand becomes obsolete.

**Staedtler Mars GmbH & Co.**  
Stand B2.441  
**Technoplot GmbH**  
B1.146