

Franklin Printing Group - Print that inspires, informs, teaches and moves

Contact:

Jamie Marsh, Co-ordinator Technical Training

The Franklin Printing Group is one of the largest printing companies in Australia. It employs over 200 people in purpose-built manufacturing facilities in Melbourne. Their seven web presses produce over 150 million catalogues and direct mail pieces a month, in an extraordinary range of formats, as well as directories, magazines and a host of high-impact mailers. Production facilities include in-line finishing — pop-ups, shape-cuts, double gatefolds, concertina folds, sliders, unzips and rub-offs — plus off-line binding, sheetfed and CtP prepress.

The Group is run by the same family that founded the company in 1936, and its growth is attributed to their hands on approach and belief in old fashioned values – building quality relationships with customers and staff, and continually evolving the business to meet customer needs. Part of Franklin’s mission statement is to be a company admired by their employees, the community, and the industry and a company that people want to work for. This is one of the explanations behind the company’s commitment to training.

Trainee to trainer

Jamie Marsh, Co-ordinator of Technical Training made his apprenticeship with the company and was an early user of the Sinapse printing simulator. Since taking up his new role he has expanded simulator training for the company’s 22 apprentices. The software and hardware was upgraded in 2004, and it is now used more intensively. Each week, a roster of nine apprentices has individual two-hour sessions using the built-in training exercises and their progress is tracked automatically.

“The simulator has been found to be highly motivating”, states Jamie Marsh. “The big advantage for young trainees is that they immediately become involved in the entire printing process including colour setting. They can learn by making mistakes which helps them to develop their problem solving skills. They also experience a lot of events, many of which occur infrequently on press, or are otherwise not immediately visible.” As an occasional added incentive he organises snap showdown competitions for all the apprentices and the winner collects \$100. He has also developed



Michael Jambor (Left) and Andrew Herbert (right) working on Sinapse Print Simulator

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Bât. Epicure – Les Algorithmes – Route de l’Orme aux Merisiers – 91194 SAINT AUBIN CEDEX - France

Tél. : +33 (0)1.69.35.54.00 - Fax : +33 (0)1.69.35.07.15 - e-mail : info@sinapseprint.com

S.A.S. au capital de 400 300 Euros - RCS. EVRY B 432 377 604 – TVA Intra. FR 33 432 377 604 – Code NAF 5829C

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several specific training modules with active support from several suppliers, an approach that will be used more in the future. Other initiatives include cross-process tours for trainees to better understand prepress and maintenance and courses for other staff.

Complementary skills development

One of the problems in Australia is the industry's reluctance to take on 4-year apprentices which for three years alternates with two week of work at the company and two week blocks at the technology college. A further challenge for web printers is that college training is focussed on sheetfed. This is where Franklin's internal training programme and the simulator offer essential complementary skills development. Franklin's strong growth creates staff vacancies and normally they offer their apprentices a job when their training is complete — which is not always the case in the industry.

“Companies will not survive unless they attract and train staff”, explains Franklin's Human Resources Manager Richard Patterson. “Printing is poorly perceived by many school students and their parents. In response, Franklin is building bridges to local schools to help break down this barrier. This includes visits to classes to help explain how to look and apply for a job, particularly students not going to university. Students are invited to tour the printing company to see how computers skills, colour and mechanics combine in printing, and that they can see for themselves it is no longer a ‘black hands’ industry. The simulator is also an excellent interactive introduction to printing for them.”

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For more information, contact Sinapse Print Simulators: +33 1 69 35 54 00

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