

PRINTING CUSTOMISED NEWSPAPERS



Kodak Prosper 6000C Press at the heart of Sogemedia's editorial strategy



Founded in 1989, Sogemedia is an important French press group that specialises in local news weeklies. The group publishes no less than 21 newspaper titles, and has its own printing subsidiary—Imprimerie de l'Avesnois—that prints all the group's news weeklies, as well as those of other French and Belgian publishers. With Imprim'Vert certification, it achieves turnover of around 3 million euros and employs 18 people.

Like all newspaper publishers, in recent years the Sogemedia group has been faced with a drop in circulation and advertising revenue. The root cause is not only the financial crisis, but also the rise of the internet, which has resulted in radical shifts in behaviour. This trend has disproportionately affected the regional and local press, where the publisher is expected to provide news very closely targeted at the reader. In response to flagging sales, many publishers have cut production costs by limiting the number of editions, with increasing the size of the geographic area covered. And yet, the wider the area, the less relevant it is to readers' own local areas and the advertisers' catchment zones.

"The rationale of the press, whose production process has consisted historically of designing and producing one and the same product of which it hopes to sell the largest number of copies, is totally at odds today with how contemporary society works", explains Sogemedia CEO JP de Kerraoul.

In response to these trends, Sogemedia is pioneering a different approach. Starting from the premise that every reader is unique and

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– JP de Kerraoul, CEO
Sogemedia

that each edition must adapt to his or her areas of interest, its regional papers have been segmented into a number of micro-editions, aimed at a limited area and enabling subscribers to choose topical sections of interest to them. This segmentation enables readers to enjoy the benefit of a "customised" and relevant newspaper. For advertisers, this development enables them to target the relevant readership in their catchment area, ensuring a significant increase in return on investment.

In order to maintain profitability while producing personalised, short-run editions, Sogemedia was bound to turn to digital printing. After a contest with two other well-known manufacturers, the group chose the KODAK PROSPER 6000C Press. Installed in late 2015 at the Imprimerie de l'Avesnois facility, this PROSPER Press was supplemented with a Manroland Web Systems post-press line. "Using the web-fed digital KODAK PROSPER Press enables the Sogemedia group weeklies to offer a "customised" newspaper, a first in Europe", says JP de Kerraoul.

After the operators were trained by Kodak's engineers, the PROSPER 6000C Press printed its first newspapers barely two months after being installed.

KEY ADVANTAGES

- Winning back readership and advertisers
- Increasing advertising revenue
- Protecting margins



"The Kodak team has shown great professionalism, and we have observed a high level of motivation on the part of operators to work with this new press. I believe they are aware of having their hands on cutting-edge equipment capable of extremely high performance", adds JP de Kerraoul.

Choosing tried and tested technology

Sogemedia's first criterion for selecting the KODAK PROSPER Press was print speed. Running offset, Imprimerie de l'Avesnois puts out 20,000 to 25,000 newspaper copies an hour. With no machine downtime between runs and production speeds of 300 metres (1,000 feet) per minute, "the PROSPER Press is fast enough to keep all our production rolling and ultimately with the same schedule as previously. This would have been impossible with a slower machine", explains JP de Kerraoul. Besides print speed, Sogemedia required a fully-integrated solution, complete with consumables. Not only does the PROSPER Press consist of technology controlled "in house", the fact that Kodak manufactures its own inks was also a major economic factor. JP de Kerraoul notes, "In digital printing it is the inks that are expensive. Had it been necessary to depend on an outside supplier, we might have been exposed either to a breakdown or a price increase beyond our control. We needed to rely on a dependable partner in direct control of variations in the price of ink".

A pioneer in digital newspaper printing with variable data, Sogemedia needed a committed partner to join it on this venture. "At Kodak I sensed an analysis of the market similar to ours and strong involvement at our side: we have a common interest in developing digital printing in the newspaper segment", emphasises JP de Kerraoul.

Having been in production since February 2016, Sogemedia has made an initial assessment of its KODAK PROSPER Press operation. Although the cost of inks is higher with digital printing, paper waste is substantially reduced and the expense of plates is eliminated. Furthermore, postal carriage charges for subscribers are down since the newspaper's micro-editions contain fewer pages, which means less weight. Finally, running a digital press requires less manpower.

"At the end of the day, the added cost of ink is offset by the savings achieved. In the best-case scenario, we should even see a drop in

the production cost of the newspaper, since as the digital market develops, there should be a downward trend in the price of ink", indicates JP de Kerraoul.

A winning bet

For all that, Sogemedia's primary aim was not to cut production cost but to be more relevant in the product it offered to readers and advertisers. "Our strategy is above all an editorial strategy", asserts JP de Kerraoul.

Three months after printing its first personalised newspapers, the results are plain to see. "We have readers writing in thanking us, which is promising!" explains JP de Kerraoul, and local advertisers are rapidly buying in. "The communication manager for a consumer brand was very pleased to learn that he would be able to have 7 different versions of his advertising, without having to pay a single euro more for it". In fact, all the advertiser needs to do is to buy a single page of advertising, the content of which can be changed for each individual edition. And to take targeting even further down the line, Sogemedia is developing a CRM package that will enable reader profiles to be narrowed down. "The added value from the press will be exceptional if we are able to bring the strengths of the press—namely an editorial environment and a specific relationship with the reader—to advertisers, while adding the benefits of direct marketing, i.e. personalisation in line with close targeting", notes JP. de Kerraoul.

And tomorrow?

Digital is not just an opportunity for newspapers printed traditionally on standard newsprint, it also enables them to add to and diversify their editorial offering with booklets printed on coated paper. "With inkjet technology boasting high-definition print quality and the ability to print on coated paper up to 270 gsm, the KODAK PROSPER Press is ideally suited to printing inserts in booklet form", claims JP de Kerraoul. Readers as well as advertisers will appreciate the fact that the newspaper is capable of offering a variety of paper media depending on content. "Digital printing means the availability of a 360° offering, with personalisation and technical quality", concludes JP de Kerraoul.

Printed using **Kodak** Technology.

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