

The Print Foundry flourishes in fine art and photography market with Canon

The Print Foundry

Wide Format Printing



Case Study

Company	The Print Foundry
Founded	2008
Location	Croydon, United Kingdom
Services	Fine art and photography printing, large format, high-end applications, finishing, framing
Website	http://www.theprintfoundry.co.uk/
Products	Canon imagePROGRAF iPF9400 Canon imagePROGRAF iPF6450 Spectrophotometer

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Overview

Founded in 2008, The Print Foundry – based in Croydon, UK – started off as digital photo printing service under the name of Creative Wall Art, producing consumer photo products such as canvas and framed prints.

While the company enjoyed a respectable level of success, in 2012 the family-run business recognised that there was vast potential in both the high-end photography and the fine art markets. Relaunching itself as The Print Foundry, it set about upgrading its digital printing technology so it could produce the high level of image quality required.

To ensure it had the right technology to support and drive this evolution, the company sent out a range of materials to a number of large format printer manufacturers to print samples on. The clear winner, Canon’s imagePROGRAF and its 12-ink printing technology, was selected for its image quality across different stocks and superior colour calibration capabilities. These attributes have directly underpinned The Print Foundry’s rapid growth in its target markets in just over a year, with an impressive portfolio of clients that include large retail store John Lewis, London Fashion Week, leading electronic distributor Avnet, as well as a roster of artists and highly regarded photographers.

Finding its feet

The early stages of The Print Foundry’s development provided the company with an invaluable understanding of digital photo printing, explains company founder Renato Tavares. “We started as a four-man team who all had a background in photography, fine art or the graphic arts in some form or another. It was this passion that kept us going after a slow start, and it was only in 2010 that the business really started to

take off. The digital printing technology we had at the time enabled us to create superior quality photo products in a very competitive market.”

It was during time this time that Tavares and the team realised they were missing a golden opportunity to grow their business. They began to receive a number of printing requests from photographers who operate in the high-end fashion and retail sectors, as well as artists who wanted them to produce replica and limited edition runs of their prints. However, while the quality of their digital production line could handle consumer products, such as stretched canvas prints for the walls of a home, it was not high enough quality to grace the walls of galleries and museums.

“Following our relaunch as The Print Foundry, an imaging specialist in the fine art and photography markets, at the Focus On Imaging Show 2013, we attracted a lot of interest from prospective customers,” elaborates Tavares. “We knew then we had to invest in the right technology to take the next step up. We needed to produce prints that were consistent and visually appealing across all materials to meet this demand and the high standards expected. Unfortunately, while the machines we had at the time were strong on canvas, they lacked sharpness and detail on other materials such as high gloss paper and acrylic. This would not be acceptable for giclée or high-end photography work. And in some instances, these machines often had to be calibrated for colour consistency every few days, which was far from ideal.”

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Renato Tavares, Founder, The Print Foundry

A calibrated link

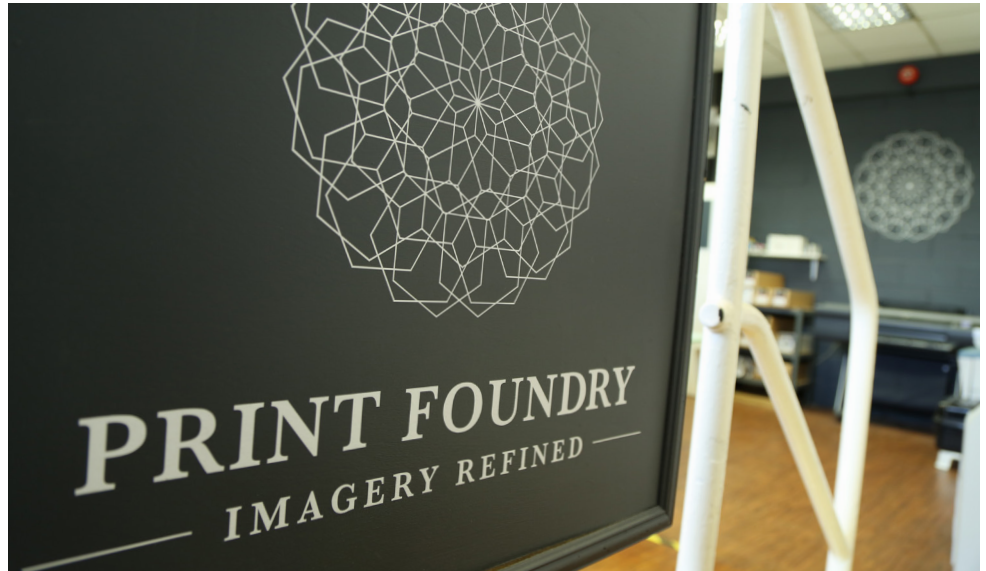
The Print Foundry wanted at least two devices to help it respond to incoming demand, and at the Focus On Imaging show Tavares spoke to Canon about the company’s new business model. Canon disclosed that it had a new 12-colour imagePROGRAF large format printer that was not only geared towards such markets, but also came with an optional spectrophotometer for precise, highly stable and consistent colour across a range of media. “The spectrophotometer really grabbed our attention as colour management was absolutely critical if we were to invest in two machines, and Canon’s unique calibration link would provide us with a unified solution to monitor both machines from a single operation point.”

Despite the instant appeal of Canon’s proposition, The Print Foundry wanted to be certain it was investing in the right technology and partner. It therefore contacted all interested suppliers and requested a selection of images to be printed across a range of specified stocks; a gloss paper, Hahnemuehle Photo Rag, Hahnemuehle German Etching, Harman Warmtone and Gold Fibre Silk. “The imagePROGRAF was the most consistent across all of the materials. Its innovative ink system enriched the colours, captured the detail, provided smoother tones and delivered a stunning intensity on the blacks. We knew this was the technology for us, and the spectrophotometer was the cherry on top.”

The Print Foundry trialled the 12-colour, 24-inch imagePROGRAF, as well as installing a 12-colour, 60-inch imagePROGRAF for larger scale prints. “That both printers featured the 12-colour ink system was another important factor. By selecting EFI Fiery to complement the imagePROGRAF, we are now able to simultaneously produce an image in different media sizes with the same high quality and colour consistency – which is vital for our clients’ portfolios. The other suppliers’ propositions couldn’t do that.”

Hit the ground running

Installed in March 2013, the Canon



imagePROGRAFs provided the perfect springboard to help propel the company’s new business – and brand – forward. This growth included a stylish new showroom, designed to promote the company’s new services and wares, which joined two production rooms, a light booth and a retouching area at the company’s site in Croydon.

“Canon was very diligent in setting us up. They came in, calibrated the machines, profiled all the materials and we were able to begin work almost immediately,” recalls Tavares. “Canon actually found us one of our first clients for the new technology, recommending us to work with London Fashion Week in the summer of 2013, and we produced 5,000 prints in just under a week. The machines showed remarkable reliability, running night and day for seven days without any issues and with minimal supervision. If you had told me a year earlier we would be running such premium value fine art prints at those speeds, I wouldn’t have believed you! The client was so impressed that we did more work for them in the Autumn/Winter show too.”

In their first nine months, the revenues generated from the fine art work – underpinned by the imagePROGRAFs – accounted to 17 percent

of turnover, and had grown to 20 percent by halfway through 2014. The company has now doubled in size to an eight-man strong team and aims to continue to grow the fine art side of business alongside the consumer and high-end photography work. Since installation, The Print Foundry has run more than 12,000 prints in 12 months on the 24-inch imagePROGRAF alone.

Tavares concludes: “Canon has been a great partner to work with. We often bounce ideas off them, discuss new ideas for products and how best to utilise the imagePROGRAFs, and they’re around in a second if we need anything. On the production front, our customers are delighted with the colour consistency of their prints, the vibrancy of the colours and the richness of the blacks - an integral component of any quality print. Owing to the spectrophotometer, the machines ran for the first six months without requiring re-calibrating, which enabled us to focus on other areas of the business without worrying about a drop in production quality. We’re confident that, with the support of Canon, we can continue to strengthen our position in these markets.”

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