

Keeping it local

Cliff Dyer loves printing as much as he loves Hawke's Bay. When you meet Cliff, who is a director of VW Print in Napier, and you meet his crew (including Harry the terrier and 'Uncle Ray' - who does some selling and delivery work) then you know straight away this is no ordinary printing business. It is an extraordinary printing business.

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⇒ It would be something of an understatement to describe the history of printing as a colourful and continually evolving one...given it began nearly 2000 years ago and that moveable type was first used around the year 1040. Equally, it would also be a huge understatement to describe VW Print (formerly Venables Willis Printing) as just another printing business. It is far, far from that.

Cliff has created a company that operates the very latest cutting edge digital and offset print technology - but a company which has a very approachable, friendly face. Calling to see Cliff and the crew is like popping along to have a friendly chat to someone in their home. There is an unmistakable and instantly agreeable family feel to it. "We are a friendly printer," Cliff said jovially as he introduced Harry who had wandered over from his usual spot on the sofa in the foyer. "He sometimes sleeps over here," Cliff added, pointing to a little bed beside one of the filing cabinets.

"People can come in to talk about a printing job they want done and they can sit down, have a coffee, and have a chat." Approachable, would be the most appropriate word to describe what Cliff and his team have set up in the heart of the Onekawa industrial area - just along from where the old Venables Willis building used to be. They moved about two-and-a-half

years ago in what was more than just a change of location. "We bought all new equipment and invested in state-of-the-art digital technology and morphed into 'VW' print."

Investment in technology

Cliff said he could see the printing trade changing and recognised the need to go after the very best equipment so he could deliver the very best results to his growing customer base. Some \$630,000 of technology investment later, VW Print were able to offer the same skills and results as anywhere in the world. Like it has over the past couple of thousand years, the industry is in constant change with the continuing advancement of computerised digital technology. Cliff recognises that and leases his digital colour press. "It has been superseded twice over the past couple of years, so we ensure we always have the latest."

Apart from the friendliness and casual professionalism you get presented with after walking in, you quickly realise that Cliff, his partner and administration chief Sue Rogers, graphic designer Melissa McCormack and printers Phil Yeo and Scott Thompson are passionate about being part of the print community. For offset and specialised jobbing work they are on top of their game. You want 50 letterheads or business cards only? No problem.

You want 5000? Again, no problem. "We have fast equipment and we offer competitive prices, and we want to do everything we can to give people exactly what they want."

It is a philosophy Cliff has carried with him all his working life - a working life in print which started out in his birthplace of Swindon in the UK. He took up an apprenticeship as a 'film planner' during a time when such work was done by hand, on printing film. "Now they do it all on a screen."

He worked at the biggest Heidelberg printing set-up in the whole of Europe. "Yep, in Swindon we had 27 presses."

Cliff left that company and went to work for a smaller outfit, but soon after arriving, that company lost a major client and things didn't look too rosy. "So I chucked on a suit and went and did some sales for them. I was surprised that sales seemed to come naturally to me!" His business acumen in the printing world did not go unnoticed and firms soon began to head-hunt him.

At the age of 24 he made another career change - starting his own printing company in partnership with another printer who had cut his teeth at the big Swindon press. They were a huge success.

Ten years ago he took another career, and life path. He moved to New Zealand, settling in



LEFT: Melissa McCormack helps with the dispatch of another local print job.

ABOVE: Fast, efficient equipment and experienced staff like Scott Thompson (top right) means a very competitive overall service.



Hawke's Bay which he has happily now called home. "I love the fishing, I love the weather and I love the lifestyle. We are so lucky here in Hawke's Bay. And I like my motorbikes so I'm able to get on my Harley and go for a ride to somewhere like Patangata. Stop at a café or a vineyard there's nowhere better."

Upon arriving in the bay he naturally veered toward the printing trade, and found he had an advantage as the printing techniques and technology he had been using in the UK were five or six years ahead of those in New Zealand. Cliff bought a third share in McMillan Craig Print that went on to become MR Print which he oversaw in both Napier and Hastings as general manager.

100 percent service

Then the side of Cliff that loves a challenge emerged again. Together with Phil Yeo, he bought into the long-established firm of Venables Willis Print. After shifting 'up the road' into their smart sun-lit new premises, Cliff, Phil and the crew's determination to provide 100 percent service for the city and the region's customers, saw a massive 34 percent sales growth in the first year of being under their new roof. He shrugs and smiles when people talk about recessions and cut-backs - pointing out that for the first three months of 2009 the growth figures were still strong at 15 percent over what they had been for the same period the previous year.

Price, quality and service are the boxes the VW Print crew ensure are ticked off. They design and create the artwork, they off-set or digitally print the result and they finish the job

with die cuts, folding, trimming and binding. Rack cards, brochures, flyers, letterheads, gift cards, presentation folders, order and invoice books and business cards.

There's one local real estate agent who can't say enough about VW Print's devotion to the job. The man walked into the office, to be cheerfully greeted by Sue and little Harry who wagged his tail from his sofa spot, and said he had a meeting that afternoon in Auckland and urgently needed new business cards. "Have a seat," they said, "we'll sort it out for you."

The man sat with Melissa who, using state-of-the-art graphics systems and her own remarkable design talents, quickly produced a series of card designs and lay-outs. Melissa, who has an EIT degree in visual arts and graphics, said she loves the challenge of creating and personalising something special, even when the timeframe was tight.

He liked the look of one card design in particular and said, "Yes, that's what I'm after." Then he watched wide-eyed and amazed as the team transferred Melissa's work to the digital printing process. Within 20 minutes of his walking in the door he had 50 stunning new business cards, enough to get him through his important Auckland meetings that afternoon. "No problem."

Cliff may have been born in the UK and may still have the unmistakable lilt in his cheerful voice, but Hawke's Bay is his home now, and he is passionate about it. To the point of producing a fold-out card which he has distributed across the region called 'Hawke's Bay Money Go Round - Keep it Local!'

"Make a Hawke's Bay business your FIRST

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Cliff Dyer

port of call," is the appeal he makes in the card. "1931 earthquake, Whakatū and Tomoana closures, drought. Hawke's Bay residents met those tough times with resilience, determination and a sense of community. Our current recession is yet another challenge that our region can successfully rise to and overcome through our collective will and grit.

Life goes on, and rather than be at its mercy, let's show our spirit again. Support Hawke's Bay and keep your money working here for the benefit of our region, our people. Shop local, buy local."

The card is not an advertising ploy or venture. It is simply a buoyant community message from the heart of a man who leads a team devoted to providing the very best for their region, and who believe in the future.

www.vwprint.co.nz