

Heidelberg

News

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THE ISLAND PRINTER

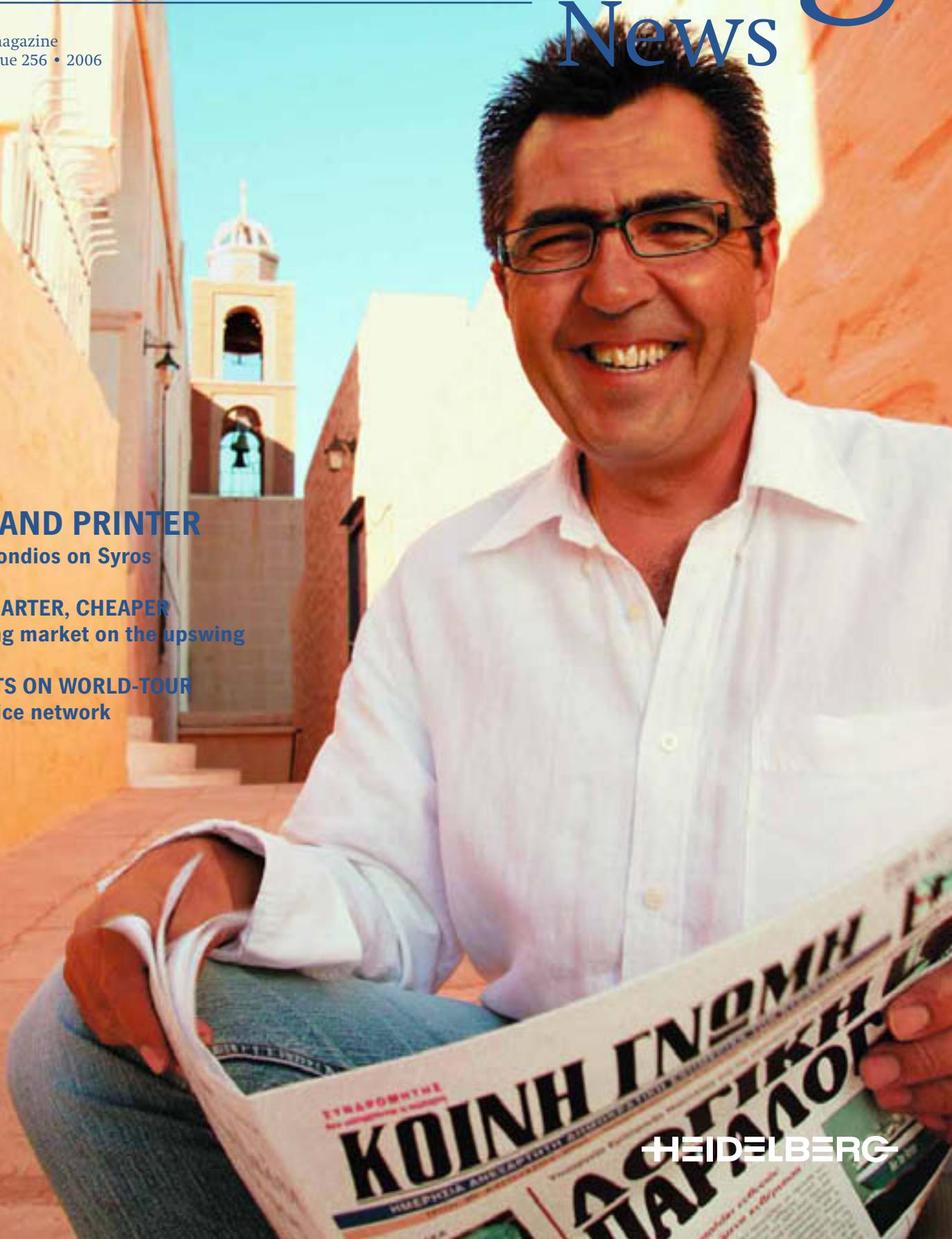
George Vakondios on Syros

FASTER, SMARTER, CHEAPER

UK's printing market on the upswing

SPARE PARTS ON WORLD-TOUR

Global service network



HEIDELBERG



Dear Readers,

The more positive climate in many print media industry markets signals that things are looking up again – even if the upturn is modest and regionally variable. Many printshops re-tooled their business models for this during the recession. Examples may be found in England, for example, where the economic downturn set in earlier than elsewhere. You will learn about how this market evolved from George Clarke, the Managing Director of Heidelberg in Great Britain. In addition, you can witness how – despite adverse conditions – Bahson Colour, a family-run enterprise in the British Midlands, was able to grow; and also come to understand the role advancing technology played from Heidelberg in this.

Besides this, we shed light on Prinect Color Solutions, and accompany a Heidelberg replacement part on its journey to the client. We report on Ichikudo Printing in Japan, where unusual CD cases and packaging are being designed and manufactured. The “island hopping” in this issue also includes a visit to Typokykladiki, which has blossomed into a genuine media enterprise – with its own newspaper for the Greek Cyclades. Finally, we provide you with a few tips on insurance against the elements, and explain how, in days gone by, wood letters were used in the printing of posters. We hope that this time, you will once again find something to interest you!

I wish you a pleasant read,

Bernhard Schreier
CEO, Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG

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TYPOKYKLADIKI S.A., GREECE

The Island Printer of Syros

The Greek word typography connects printers throughout the world with each other. It comes as no surprise then that the Heidelberg News is also able to report from Greece on an interesting company that due to, rather than in spite of, its unique location on an island has subscribed to its own business success: George Vakondios is the name of the owner of the print shop Typokykladiki S.A.

George Vakondios laughs heartily at the question as to whether anyone ever actually counted all the islands in the Cyclades. "I suppose so, but there are very many. However, only 24 are inhabited," he points out. If there is a print shop in a dreamlike setting, then from now on it has a name: Typokykladiki S.A. Translated this means something like "Printing in the Cyclades." The Cyclades is a group of Greek islands in the Aegean Sea – that is the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. The print shop offers an artist's view of Syros, the island capital city of Ermoupolis, and the turquoise sea with a clear blue sky. An idyllic picture post card, so beautiful that it creates an almost surreal and breathtaking effect.

About 100,000 people live spread out over the islands, the majority of them on Syros. There are islands with less than one hundred inhabitants, others with several thousand. Slightly developed as far as tourism is concerned, Syros with its beaches and historical buildings is still a top-secret tip for vacationers. Syros lies in the middle of the Cyclades, and with its 86 square km (33 square miles) is the eleventh largest of the islands.

Ano Syros is located at a point majestically overlooking Ermoupolis, the capital city of Syros and at the same time the administrative district of the Cyclades. George Vakondios grew up in Ano Syros, an inviting city, with many steps and narrow alleys that has remained virtually unchanged for over 700 years. Every ▶





1. View over Ermoupolis, the capital of the Cyclades. 2. Street scene on Syros, with a Greek-Orthodox priest in typical vestments. In the background, the town hall. 3. Two “islanders” reading the “Public Opinion”, the daily paper on the Cyclades. 4. Eating well is a matter of course on Syros, whether in the restaurants, or by locally-run shops such as here, in a butcher shop with air-dried sausages.

day he had to go down to school in Ermoupolis and in the afternoon back up again. This was arduous, but life in the historical walls for him was also exciting. Whenever he speaks about it, the pride in his roots beams through clearly in his face. Ano Syros was founded by Venetians and is populated mostly by Catholics, in contrast to Ermoupolis which is populated mostly by Orthodox due to the fact that Ermoupolis received influences from Greeks that immigrated later from the mainland and the surrounding islands. The family name, Vakondios, also reflects Catholic roots, for it is actually derived from the Italian, in which “vai con Dio” means “go with God” in English.

George started out as a simple printer in the family business, and yet “simple” is both an accurate and also inaccurate euphemism in his case. His grandfather and father were already printers. His father founded, along with a brother, his own print shop in the Old City of Ermoupolis in 1958. George is already assisting in his father’s business at a young age. He supports his father wherever he can and in this way learns the printing trade. The business has been in operation with its Heidelberg Tiegel (platen press) since the early 1960s. Yet, George wants more: He studies for a time in Athens, goes through about ten different print shops there and familiarizes himself with various printing processes, as well as managerial styles. It is from this period that his own ideas for the family business develop: He would like to have modern printing presses and he intends to expand. The uncle, who is also Co-Managing Director, is rather skeptical, however, his father supports him in this. Since the uncle has no intention of investing any of “his” money in new printing presses, George, at 16 years of age, pawns his motorbike on the spot, and with the proceeds buys the first cutting machine. Up until that time the paper required always had to be purchased in the very size that the printed product was to have later, because to date there was not one single cutting machine in all of the Cyclades.

Entrepreneur with foresight & business sense. George, who was just 19 years old at the time, and his father become independent in 1979, separating from the uncle, who continues to operate his own print shop. In 1982, the father and son move out of the Old City, where they only have 60 square meters (646 square feet) of space, into a building with a pressroom that initially is 150 square meters (1,614 square feet) in size. After a massive renovation they expanded to about 600 square meters (approx. 6,458 square feet) of space on three

stories. The office, on the other hand, still remains in the narrow, little alley in the Old City of Ermoupolis and even today is still used as a “branch office,” at which customers can submit advertisements or print jobs. George in the meantime continues to invest and in 1985 brings into the Cyclades the first offset printing press, a single color GTO 52. “The GTO could not immediately be used at full capacity and for this reason printing was only done on it one day a week. Offset was not yet so popular on the islands and the customers had to be won over at first,” George comments pensively on the times then.

Newspaper founding & expansion. A business idea that had already been formulated three years earlier develops magnificently as well: George sets off on the road to success in 1982 with his own island newspaper named “Koini Gnomi” (Public Opinion), and it has been profitable from day one. The newspaper started with one editor (in chief) as a four page black and white weekly, and today it comes out with twenty pages daily. Its layout already resembles that of major Greek daily newspapers – color cover, many pictures and good editorials on and about island life and full of advertisements. The newspaper today has twelve employees for editing, layout and the advertising business. “The advertisements and the yearly subscriptions are not really expensive. Our issue is fully localized and adopted to the local life style and is competitive to other main Greek titles published by the large publishers,” George explains.

About 2,500 copies are printed day-in and day-out on a Speedmaster SM 52 and a Speedmaster SM 74, and distributed to subscribers. At the island’s sidewalk cafes they can also be borrowed and read through over a coffee. This option is quite often utilized; the newspaper has swiftly become one of the important media on the islands. It carries information on the most significant island events like the classical concerts at the historical Apollo Concert Hall of 1864, a scaled-down replica of Milan’s La Scala. An additional 1,500 copies of the newspaper are e-mailed in PDF-format to customers, because it’s not every day (sometimes even only once a week) that a ferryboat calls on the islands, some of which are remote. Because of this, the delivery of a daily newspaper in printed form would make no sense.

An additional major move into a completely new and individual company building ensues in November of 1999. A new Speedmaster SM 52 and two Speedmaster SM 74-2 with perfecting-units are installed. A Prosetter 74 CtP system, the first in all of Greece, comes

afterwards in 2003. To increase his prepress department productivity and also enhance the company's customer service approach, George decides to invest in Heidelberg's JetBase system. This decision is very important because customers were now able to collaborate with prepress via internet and speed up the order submission and customer approval process.

Latest technology. After one year, George enhances his JetBase system by installing Heidelberg's Prinect Printready. His prepress department, apart from preparing all his printing plates and proofs, is also responsible to submit via the "E-mail Approval" function every night a low resolution PDF file containing the newspaper edition to his subscribers, which are recorded in a mailing list. Last but not least, the Printready system enables George to expand his services, such as remote proofing, beyond his geographically constrained business environment, and attract key customers that are based in Athens. This has such an effect that George accelerates his decision to install a new SM 74-4 with coating unit, and extended delivery which was put into operation several months ago. "Before we had to have protective coating handled by other print shops in Athens; but the main reason for purchasing the machine was to increase our productivity in medium sized run lengths. We are now able to do so, for example, with the Prinect prepress interface," George gives reasons for purchasing the new printing press with coating unit.

He can now handle such jobs himself and more competitively with the new Speedmaster. Overall the print shop today has 3,000 square meters (32,292 square feet) of space, of which 1,650 meters (17,760 square feet) on the ground floor with the pressroom, prepress, storage and office space. The areas for the editorial office, social rooms, a paper storage area, as well as a subtenant with its own office premises, are located on the second story. The third story is still free for the additional expansion plans of the lively entrepreneur. The floors, for instance, have already been prepared in order to bear the weight of the large and heavy presses.

Broad-based economic resources. What is printed on an island? And for whom? George appears amazed at the questions. For him this is really not an island – at least not in the everyday way of thinking. Those who live here do not consider it anything special that warm temperatures most of the year, a blue sky and a calm sea with beautiful beaches are immutable parts of life. There are many companies and businesses on the islands, and Athens is not far away either – just 30 minutes by airplane and about two hours on the fast ferryboat. Typokykladiki S.A. with its 39 employees, of which 19 in prepress, pressroom and finishing, is the third largest employer on Syros. Only the Casino company and the shipyard employ more workers. Apart from that, though, small companies set the tone for the economy and by and large account for the low unemployment rate on the islands. Thus there are many businesses, restaurants, bars, cafes, bakeries and, for example, the loukumus (a nougat specialty) sweets manufacturer.

The printing company is the contact for 80 percent of the Cyclades companies in matters of printing. George does not have to fear any competition because there are only two print shops on Syros, Typokykladiki S.A. and the uncle's print shop, which is operated by the latter's grandsons. There are several smaller print shops on the other islands that in most cases have only one printing press with one or at the most two colors. George collaborates with several colleagues from these print shops, e.g., for the advertising business or for printing jobs requiring more colors. The average runs in the case of books are in the area of 1,000 to 3,000, in the case of business reports even lower than that. Brochures and flyers have somewhat higher runs. In the case of books it is a matter of shipyard or ship chronicles, for example. Predominantly small to medium runs are produced for Athenian customers. Annual sales of 1,930,000 euros (approx. 2.4 million U.S. dollars) could be generated in 2004.

High season in the island printing business is from April through September, coinciding with that of tourism, even if the latter is still moderate in relation to the other islands. At that time the advertising brochures, catalogues or menus, etc. are printed, for example, for hotels. In the remaining months business is somewhat quieter and several years ago the pressroom would sometimes simply remain closed in January if there were insufficient orders on hand. In 1999, with the new Speedmaster printing presses, George was finally in a position to compete with the Athenian colleagues in regards to print quality, thereby increasing his workload in the pressroom with more orders from Athens. Thanks to his reasonable prices and ▶



The pressroom at Typokykladiki looks as neat as a pin. The Greek showpiece enterprise prints its high-end products exclusively on Heidelberg equipment.



1



3



2



4

The latest technology and equipment ensure a seamless workflow from prepress, through print, and postpress. 1. Nikos Varthalitis checking data 2. Petros Papitsis on the Speedmaster. 3. George Vakondios and Melina Xanthaki on the folding machine 4. Three generations in one glance: Joseph Vakondios, his father (far left), the founder of the successful print shop, and his two sons Joseph and Marios (left to right).



high quality George quickly achieves success. “Surprisingly due to the distance and our island location, our customers from Athens are satisfied with us primarily because of the timeliness of our delivery,” George reports. This comes as no surprise as he has attached particularly great significance to that from the very beginning. Vakondios makes “only” about 20 percent of his sales in the Greek capital.

Transportation to the other islands and to Athens is fast and relatively inexpensive. If an order comes in during the morning, in some cases it will be shipped on a ferry by that evening and will be at the customer’s on the following morning. The location has advantages beyond the vacation setting, which George knows how to exploit. Famous corporations like Panasonic or the Alpha Bank, the largest private bank in Greece, which in the meantime are among the customers of Typokykladiki S.A., also realize this. All of customer service and the processing of transactions are done through Syros; there is no sales office in Athens. The coordination with the customers on the other islands or in Athens occurs via Internet; even the proofs are corrected online. A web server, which the customers are able to access directly, is used for data reconciliation.

No unnecessary risk. With all the investments in real estate and presses in recent years, which were enormous for his print shop, George Vakondios has banked on steady and moderate growth. He did not forget that the small orders from many small businessmen made his success possible. For this reason, he prefers to keep away from the supposedly lucrative big orders that are regularly offered. He does not need to put off the old core customer base for that and make himself dependent on a few major customers. George would much rather bank on a broad customer base with smaller runs. The company with its presses is geared to that.

High value printed matter at reasonable prices, produced reliably and fast on the state-of-the-art presses: this is George’s recipe for success. A significant additional ingredient is his ability to have a high level of staff motivation which at the present are 39 employees. “What good is money if I cannot enjoy it? I want my employees to be motivated, to have fun in their profession and to feel good with me,” George emphasizes. Of the 39 workers, 14 have a “corporate car” for their private use and next year there are to be even more. “All my

employees are trained in-house because qualified employees can scarcely be found on the islands. This island may seem like a paradise to a foreign visitor, but to many Greeks it is just one more island among many and it is relatively difficult to make people from the mainland feel enthusiastic about a job here,” George says. He loves his profession and is more a father than a boss. He also invests in the further training of his employees because only then, as he knows, will also the best performances be achieved. Only a person, who loves his job, will also give everything to it, as he does.

His satisfaction and his success radiate. The endearing Greek, one of the most popular people on the island, is also the acting General Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce in order to represent the interests of the companies of Syros justly. Whenever he goes through the streets of Ermoupolis, or someone is sitting with him in the harbor at one of the many sidewalk cafes, time and again you hear: “Hi, how’s it going?” Everyone here knows him and revels with him in his success. ■

Facts & Figures

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