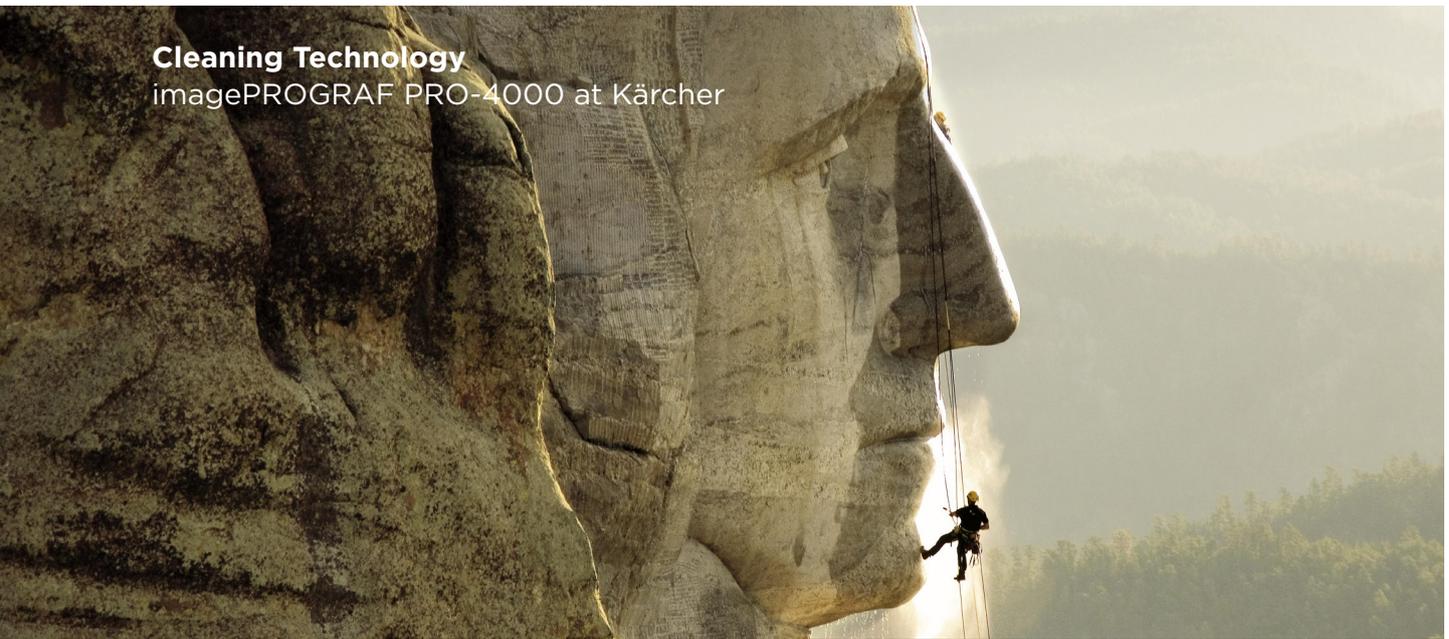


Cleaning Technology
imagePROGRAF PRO-4000 at Kärcher



KÄRCHER

makes a difference

Customer: Alfred Kärcher SE & Co. KG

Industry: Cleaning technology

Established: 1935

Location: Winnenden, Germany

Services: Proofing in packaging design

Website: www.kaercher.com

Partnership with Canon: 7 years

PROFESSIONAL PROOFS WITH THE CANON PRO-4000

Goal

- Create binding proofs for packaging production
- Achieve short turnaround times and lean processes
- Save time and money

Challenge

- Cumbersome coordination with reprographics companies
- Dependency on the production cycle
- Developing the necessary expertise

Solution

- Introduce Canon large-format printers
- Upgrade the hardware environment with the Canon PRO-4000
- Proofing based on PosterJet RIP software

Benefits

- Higher quality thanks to binding proofs
- Lower costs thanks to in-house processes
- Huge time savings that make time-critical product series possible

Canon

Challenge

As head of the Packaging and POS Design department for the global market leader in cleaning technology, Titus Helmke is particularly concerned about reproducing Kärcher's corporate design faithfully: "It's really important for us to be able to examine each new cardboard box and see exactly what it will look like before production starts, so that there won't be any need for corrections further down the line." This applies both to the special "Kärcher yellow" and to all the relevant blocks of text and product information. Kärcher is the only company that still manufactures inexpensive end products in Germany. "The information on the box has to be accurate because hardware stores don't usually offer advice about these products. And the printing templates that we create centrally in Winnenden for all our production sites worldwide must also be correct. Otherwise production will be delayed and that pushes up costs too," explains Titus Helmke.

The challenge: A wide range of form factors for boxes or POS cardboard boxes require all the printed elements to be designed individually while still presenting Kärcher's corporate design in a uniform manner. "This is especially important when low-cost products are simply blister-packed in boxes, and the description and instructions are printed on the box," says Jörg Krista, Prepress Specialist at Kärcher. The layout of the design elements is always based around the Kärcher logo in order to ensure instant recognition in retail. As Titus Helmke explains, the Swabian company maintains a large proportion of

the print data itself — and for good reason: "We often have short product cycles, some of which only last a year. Everything has to move quickly when we develop new products, especially if chain stores are planning promotions. This is why packaging is approved just before production, so that the production process can always begin promptly."



The proofs we create using the Canon PRO-4000 are an essential part of our production process. We can always depend on this system and the reliability of PosterJet.

Jörg Krista,

Prepress Specialist, Packaging and POS Design, Alfred Kärcher SE & Co. KG

Cleaning technology company Kärcher offers an extensive range of products for both private customers and professional cleaners. Alfred Kärcher SE & Co. KG employs more than 13,000 people in 120 companies across 70 countries. More than 50,000 service centers worldwide are responsible for serving customers. Business is characterized by short product cycles: Around 90% of all products are 5 years old or younger. The Swabian company has earned itself a global reputation, especially with its high-pressure cleaners. In the consumer market in particular, packaging is constantly being updated, whether for promotions by large chain stores or because the parameters of the end devices have changed. Kärcher's marketing department uses the imagePROGRAF PRO-4000 from Canon to create its own proofs for the ever-changing print templates for cardboard boxes and POS displays.



Canon



PosterJet is an open software solution, which made it easy to adapt to the printing workflow at Kärcher. Using an open solution is particularly advantageous in large-format printing because the applications and workflows can be extremely diverse. The considerable expertise we've gained over the years enables us to develop custom solutions for users from a wide range of industries. Furthermore, PosterJet is easy to use and has a number of detailed features to help avoid mistakes in production.

Robert Eisfeld,
Managing Director, Eisfeld Datentechnik

PosterJet®
HIGH PERFORMANCE RIP SOFTWARE

Solution

To ensure reliable in-house proofing, Titus Helmke's team chose the imagePROGRAF PRO-4000 from Canon in conjunction with PosterJet RIP software from Eisfeld Datentechnik. "As a certified Canon partner, Eisfeld has in-depth knowledge of all technical matters. We've been working together for a long time now and we value Eisfeld's expertise enormously," says Jörg Krista. The Canon partner delivered and installed the large-format printer at Kärcher, just as it did with the previous imagePROGRAF iPF 8400 system, which is still in use in Winnenden today. "Both systems are integrated into a standardized workflow. Once the layout has been approved by our product management team, the original file is sent to PosterJet Hot Folder and the proof is printed. We then have a binding printout that looks just as it will on the final packaging," explains Titus Helmke. A particular advantage of large-format printing is that proofs can be produced in any size — either on a roller conveyor or, in the case of particularly large packaging, by printing across multiple pages and then assembling them accordingly. After production, the design team receives an automated email notifying them that the print is ready for collection. "We don't have to manually impose pages any more, or move them to a file folder, or initiate processes. PosterJet's Hot Folder technology in particular is a

key component of this automated workflow," says Titus Helmke. This streamlined proof management process is vital for Titus and his team as his is the only unit in Kärcher's marketing department that is directly linked to production. "Our processes have to run like a well-oiled machine or there'll be problems in production!"



The decision to purchase the Canon imagePROGRAF PRO-4000 has paid off in numerous ways. Creating our proofs ourselves means there's no need for long-winded correction processes with reprographic service providers. This saves time and ensures that production runs smoothly while significantly reducing costs.

Titus Helmke,
Manager, Packaging and POS Design,
Alfred Kärcher SE & Co. KG

Benefits

In-house proofing enables Titus Helmke's team to avoid the correction runs to external reprographic service providers that used to be part of the previous workflow. "The back and forth often took days and required multiple costly courier trips. With our new workflow, we can make the corrections ourselves in one day and consequently avoid these additional costs. So the decision to invest in Canon's solution has paid off very quickly," he says, adding that, given the many hundreds of packaging materials and POS cardboard boxes that Kärcher's marketing department create from scratch or modify each year, the team would not be able to manage external processes like these any more. The defined approval process and precise production using PosterJet, together with the reliable imagePROGRAF large-format printers, produce finalized proof files that then serve as the basis for making the cardboard boxes. "It is only at this point that the external service providers come back into play," says Jörg Krista, explaining that the time pressure caused by waiting times—such as when department stores and hardware stores launch promotions, often at the often last minute—has now been eliminated. For the packaging designers, collaborating with Canon's partner Eisfeld Datentechnik is vital. "Whenever we need technical support, we always receive help quickly, directly from them. This is a key factor within the entire solution," says Titus Helmke. Production of the patterns has sensibly been split between the two large-format printers. While the PRO-4000 mainly produces web offset prints on self-adhesive paper, which are subsequently assembled into extra-large-format patterns, all smaller patterns are produced on the iPF 8400. "The advantage is that we can print and examine all the patterns individually. This means we always see what the future packaging will actually look like," explains Jörg Krista. In addition, the PRO-4000's dual roll unit makes it easy to quickly switch between different print media in the automated sequence.



Titus Helmke (L), and Jörg Krista (R),
Alfred Kärcher SE & Co. KG

In-house proofing with PosterJet and Canon's large-format printers significantly reduces the approval time for new packaging materials at Kärcher. Not only is this essential for demand-driven production of cardboard boxes, but the company is consequently responding effectively to the trend toward increasingly short runs too. Whereas orders used to typically be for 30,000 units or more, it is now more common for smaller quantities of 3000 to 4000 units of packaging materials and POS displays to be ordered, and in more and more languages. All these variants are created, approved and proofed centrally in Kärcher's marketing department in Winnenden for all the company's sites worldwide. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, attractive packaging helps the "Made in Germany" company to successfully deliver on the premium-quality promise it makes to consumers.

» Find out more about large-format printing systems from Canon

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