

## The importance of co-operation

SDK is proud to present itself as a Xerox Premier Partner. General manager Herbert Kurthen: "Xerox typically distinguishes itself for its reliable customers and this network

allows them to exchange valuable information. Colleagues from other countries and cities are generally not seen as competitors. We maintain friendly ties with companies in Cologne." He goes on to say: "Besides the Premier Partnership, three years ago SDK co-founded an association of printing production companies in seven German cities, known as MND "Media Network Digital". These companies exchange information on equipment, market developments, new production

methods and training. They've also made arrangements regarding the purchase of paper and back-up in case of calamities. This can be of vital importance offering security to very large customers. And almost all of these companies have recently joined the Xerox Premier Partnership."

## Digital printing, the efficient alternative

This is the slogan SDK Systemdruck Köln GmbH & Co. KG uses for the digital production systems it has been deploying since 1983. The company belongs to the Gruppe Rudolf Müller, which consists of nine companies: seven publishing houses, a training institute specialising in educational programmes in the form of seminars and workshops, and a printing production company. The publishing

houses and the training institute all cater for the construction industry, the individual expert publishers each according to their own specialism. The group as a whole employs some 185 people. Printing company SDK, with its high level of automation, employs a staff of only 15. Currently, SDK realises 82% of its total turnover working for customers outside the group.



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"Partnerships with customers and suppliers determine the flexibility and strength of our company."



THE DOCUMENT COMPANY  
**XEROX**

## SDK Systemdruck Köln saves publishers money

# Publishers opt for Printing on Demand

General manager Herbert Kurthen explains SDK's success in Cologne from two factors, which together form a perfect symbiosis. A company needs to deploy the right machines and software to optimally meet its customers' wishes. Insight in the market and its leading figures is another determining factor for success. Evidently, SDK has struck the right balance.

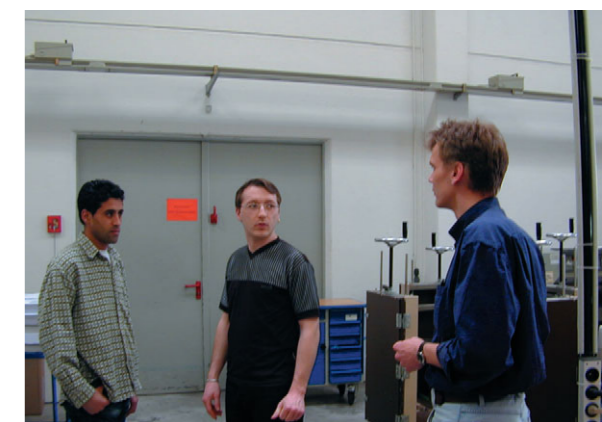
### Reliability and flexibility

The right mix is of vital importance. Herbert Kurthen, who originally started out in publishing himself, says that SDK purposely uses its knowledge to persuade publishers to regulate their production by opting for Printing on Demand. SDK does

not wish to be just another supplier, with the negative connotation this may entail. The company aims to solve its customers' problems, from production to logistics, from storage to distribution. "The price is one factor customers look at when determining where to place their orders; but more importantly, they want reliability and quality. And that is exactly what SDK aims to offer its customers. Reliability is guaranteed when a number of criteria has been met. For example, we have to be able to provide back-up provisions in case of unforeseen calamities. We have to offer perfect logistics, manifesting itself in customer convenience. And - last but not least - customers are looking for expertise, for a partner who speaks their language and understands their needs," says Herbert Kurthen. "Our extensive knowledge of the publishing industry is an important bonus in our everyday customer contacts. Quality standards are of vital importance in publishing, as publishers are all retailers. This means quality standards play a much



“The quality a publisher aims for expresses itself not only in excellent typography, but also in perfect logistics, timely processing and up-to-date information.”



more important role than with end users. We have translated this given into strict rules for quality management. With us, quality not only applies to standards for the appearance and finishing of the final product, but also to the advantages we offer our customers in terms of less storage, faster delivery, cost savings and more up-to-date products,” he concludes.

#### Extensive production

On a tour of the company, manager Rüdiger Schwartz showed several rows of document files, containing some 49.000 pages in total. Together these form an educational product SDK produces via Printing on Demand for an educational facility which publishes loose-leaf course material on various aspects. These pages are not produced all at the same time. New instalments or supplements are published biannually, annually or quarterly, requiring relatively small volumes. Also, there are several different areas of expertise. All in all, this makes for some 50 to 60 different syllabi. So despite the many different pages, editions are fairly limited. New subscribers to such loose-leaf courses receive a complete file in print. Also, pages are updated regularly. Such projects thus

generally entail a large volume of printed pages.

#### Specialisation

But SDK handles even bigger bulk. The company produces some 53.000 pages for a publisher of legal texts. “For us, the producer, the knack is to consistently identify those aspects of the total production process which are suitable for Printing on Demand, in terms of logistics, quality and cost-effectiveness,” Rüdiger Schwartz explains. All in all, SDK produces some three to four hundred thousand different pages, in editions varying from just a few to some 500 copies. SDK uses various partners to realise the other aspects of the end product, such as screen-printing or offset-printing the document file covers as well as pre-printing certain spot colours in offset as a base for subsequent printing in black. The process is assisted by four sturdy monochrome production printers: two Xerox DocuTechs 6180 and two Xerox DocuTechs 6135. The latter are particularly suited to light-weight papers.

This is of special importance to SDK with regard to its customers who desire many pages in a single file. These production machines allow SDK to print on papers with a weight of only 50 or 60 grams.

A specialisation much appreciated by the expert publishers and training institutes SDK works for.

Three DigiPaths scanning and editing stations ensure that existing, analogous pages can be combined with digitally delivered pages. SDK



processes digital files in PostScript, PDF, and TIFF, as well as native formats. Finishing, such as drilling, folding, collating, and packaging, is an integral part of the production process.



#### Catering to customers' wishes

SDK has an extensive customer network, encompassing publishers, training institutes, production companies and the printing industry. Their customers can be found all over Germany and even beyond. Their specialism clearly centres on the publishing world and training institutes. SDK belongs to a group of companies which includes various publishers and a training institute. The publishers are under no obligation to place their production with SDK, but there are strong ties. The companies belonging to the group constitute eighteen percent of SDK's turnover; all in all, publishers constitute some 70% of their customer network. Training institutes constitute 15% of their turnover. SDK also services other companies and graphic offset companies, which gladly make use of their logistics and the quality they offer for their limited editions.

“Naturally we are looking for customers who bring us bulk. However, other than in offset printing, the total volume does not have to be realised all at once. It is mostly split into different portions, with follow-up assignments. This approach is ideally suited to the

special interest and expert markets. With their loose-leaf publications, publishers aim to keep their customers supplied with up-to-date information for lengthy periods of time, thus providing them with substantial cost-savings. In our logistics centre educational material is composed, printed and delivered in limited editions. A training institute we cater for says they save some 40% on the cost of logistics. The need for storage is virtually eliminated,” Rüdiger Schwartz concludes.

“It is of vital importance to speak the customer's language.”