



Father and Son Sign Makers Grow Their Business with the Gerber Solara ion™

Sun Signs father and son owners, Neil and Liam Clark love their home town of Kendal in North England. As the gateway to the Lake District, Kendal experiences a large amount of tourism, a financial boon that has kept the city economically viable during these hard times. “Everyone wants to come visit this area,” notes Neil Clark, and that same tourism has also increased the jobs *Sun Signs* gets from local real estate offices eager to keep up with the demand for vacation properties.

The need to keep up with the expanding requirements of their clients and the desire to print directly on corrugated plastic drove the Clarks to purchase a flatbed UV inkjet printer. Their experience with their first foray into this new technology wasn't great, but after traveling to Bristol to see the Gerber Solara ion™, they saw the problems of their earlier machine were a thing of the past. Spandex, the UK supplier of the Gerber Solara ion, was committed to making sure they had the right machine for their business. Neil Clark reveals, “The Solara ion started living up to its claims very quickly. The day Spandex installed the Solara ion they trained us how to use it, so the next day we were printing jobs. It's really simple to use.”



Liam Clark asserts, “We’ve had the Solara ion for a couple months now, and it’s chalk and cheese. Jobs we couldn’t begin to do on our old machine go perfectly with the Solara ion.” Neil Clark adds, “We can do so many jobs we couldn’t do before. We had to send jobs out to screen printers and have them shipped back to us, which added a lot of time and cost to our process. With the Solara ion we can go directly from printer to cutter without having to wait for drying, which saves a lot of time. We don’t even need to use screen printers anymore. The Solara ion makes it financially feasible for us to do short-run prints or even individual prints for housing developments that want to showcase the individuality of each home. People don’t want to feel as though they’re buying a home from a conglomerate, and now we can offer this specialized service.”

Liam Clark says, “My favorite feature of the Solara ion is that it can print directly onto heat-sensitive materials, eliminating our need to cut out vinyl letters and apply them.” The proprietary technology of the Solara ion’s patented GerberCAT™ cationic UV inks, together with the revolutionary Cold Fire Cure™ process makes printing directly onto the substrate possible.



GerberCAT inks are non-solvent inks that produce no ozone or VOCs and bond well with almost any substrate. Neil Clark reveals, “We do jobs for local councils, and they all want environmentally-friendly prints. You need to provide what the customer wants, and with the safer inks of the Solara ion, we can give them what they are looking for.” Cold Fire Cure uses UV lamps to cure the Gerber CAT inks at nearly

room temperature, allowing the Gerber Solara ion to print on heat-sensitive materials that previously needed to be printed by screen printers. In addition to corrugated plastic, the Solara ion can print directly onto acrylic, aluminum, vinyl banners, cast vinyl, cardboard, chipboard, foam board, glass, paper, plywood, polystyrene, sign foam, textiles and more, reducing costs and exponentially increasing the potential for sign makers and screen printers to reach new markets.

Neil Clark notes that the Solara ion has already brought interesting new opportunities to Sun Signs. “We can now work directly with the client to design exactly what they want, and they can see the results almost right away. We are printing walking maps for tourism, color prints of what houses will look like after they’re built, and we’ve even printed menus that hang on the wall of a local Italian restaurant. The menus came out so well they are an integral part of the restaurant décor.” Liam says, “Doing lettering and signs on a vehicle is so time consuming, but with the Solara ion, we can send the image directly to the printer and it prints beautifully. We don’t even have to laminate it. This shows how much broader our applications can be.”

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