



WHAT'S NEW?

The trends were set at Paperworld 2003. Have they come to fruition for 2004?

2004 catalogues are now published and we have taken a look to see what's new and what opportunities this presents to the industry. Innovation and new products are the lifeblood of any industry.

BY JANE SMITH

Paperworld is the annual European Office Products event held at the end of January where 'next seasons' trends and ideas are 'aired'. These tend to then show themselves in the market for resale the following January, giving us all an idea of what's really new. Last year the main predictions were an increase in digital imaging, higher awareness and use of data media storage, increases and a wider use of lamination and specialist paper. It was predicted that more people would be printing more than ever before and that office workers personal their workspace using more colour and design.

Well have they come true? 2004 catalogues are now published and we have taken a look to see what's new and what opportunities this presents to the industry.

Let's first take the area of technology. Digital imaging really is experiencing growth both in the high street and at work. Digital cameras are big business and offer the consumer a number of benefits. They provide a reusable media, instant review of images and cheaper ongoing costs. Storage is easier on CD instead of photo albums and libraries and images can be shared more

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easily over the Internet. Other areas of technology are also seeing high 'take up'. Digital dictation means that you can now dictate anywhere in the world and transmit for transcribing, via email, back to the office without the limitations of physical

tapes! The quality is much better and the functionality of product more flexible. This is transforming a traditional product area into a new up to date business tool that makes commercial sense.

We've been talking to JGBM, specialists in business machines. They agree and have also highlighted two further areas of growth for 2004. Firstly, in the arrival of multi-function machines that can print in colour. This opens up even more opportunities for the already popular desk side all-purpose machine. Secondly, in the popularity LCD TFT Screens. Although they are still expensive and will need to drop a little further in price, the benefits are persuasive. Not only will they free up a huge amount of desk space; they deliver huge savings in running costs. The energy used to run the new LCD screens is significantly less than for the CRT screens and there's the added benefit of no radiation!

John George, MD of JGBM told us that they are launching a new website in February. Because the market for business machines is moving so quickly and that non-specialist resellers are nervousness about how to make the most of the

opportunities because of their perceived lack of knowledge, JGBMs believe they have come up with the answer. A new web-site, uniquely customisable so that the end user believes they are using your own company's website. You will

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be able to set parameters regarding expected margin to control your selling prices. The site will be updated by JGBM's experts every day so that your customers get to see the very latest products set at your prices. As far as they are concerned they will be buying from you and benefiting from your expertise and experience. We like that, don't we!

Another thing that we think could be useful for you as sales people is the JB Business conference due to be held 17 February. Open to all resellers this event not only launches the new website initiative, it will also bring together some 17 business machines manufacturers to showcase their products and services. A number of those will also be speaking at seminars and will be covering some of the more significant opportunities that we have alluded to above.

SO WHAT ELSE DO WE SEE IN 2004 CATALOGUES?

Next let's take the issue of personalised desk space. And it's true. As predicted at Paperworld there are more products available now for end users to use their own colour and design preference around their working space. The evidence is in the wide range of transparent, translucent and metallic finishes on desk accessories, display books and filing products. There's the new funky Alpha desk accessories range from Avery for example.

The writing instruments sector certainly is expert when it comes to personal choice. They are masters of style and design and are constantly re-launching new styles and colours to suit the mood

of their target market. 2004 is no exception with lot's of hot new styles, designs and colours in the catalogues we have reviewed and I've heard that the next 'big thing' will be INK – coming soon an exclusive report on how ink will change the writing instruments sector.

Lamination was another area spotlighted for growth at Paperworld. Well, there are certainly loads of new models on the market this season that would indicate that there is some truth in the rumour. The lower price of entry has opened up this area to a new audience and the need for tighter security and health and safety awareness must also be helping. Talking of Health & Safety we hope you are all aware of the new directive pertaining to the recording of accidents in the workplace. It is now law to record accidents in the workplace and to make that record confidential to the individual involved. This has led to the development of a differently designed accident book – keep one with you on your travels to demonstrate. A great add on sale!

The other prediction was the increase in printing and the move towards specialist papers. Well we think this has come true to. We've seen some major players launching some very specific products, but all designed to increase customer choice and develop this huge marketplace. Take Hewlett Packard and their 59 cartridge. This new cartridge is designed to produce black and white images but at a much higher definition. Those of you who have some knowledge in this area may know a term called 4-colour black and white. This is a technique to produce a much more sophisticated black and white image using the 4-colour

process. In essence, the new 59 cartridge will produce a similar quality image by using the full reach of the grey scale. Another innovator Conqueror has launched a new office papers range with highly distinctive features such as watermarks, textures, fashionable iridescent and metallic finishes (just like our desk accessories and filing products). Designed to meet external communication needs and help businesses express their individual style. Compatible with the most up to date printing technologies this is yet another example of how we are beginning to see the use of specialist papers being used to maximum effect for differentiation and competitive advantage.

Over and above everything already mentioned there are many more new products and innovations worthy of mention. Whether it's the new Super Sticky Notes from 3M, Jiffy Airwrap where you really can post a bottle and guarantee it won't break, to a complete Photo ID System from Avery, for use in office receptions, trade shows, conferences and special events. With security being such a big issue the system includes software, a web camera, barcode scanner and a full range of badge supplies. A candidate product for use to organise Paperworld this month perhaps!

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