

# Bushby calls for top level clearout

By Alex Grant

Photobition founder Bob Bushby has launched an online campaign calling for a management clearout and a retreat from the US market, and resisting plans for an mbo.

Called Photobition Forum, the website – www.photobitionforum.com – has had 1,500 hits in its first week. Mr Bushby says that he has backing from nearly 15% of shareholders, the threshold needed to call a company egm. One institutional shareholder is also reportedly on board.

"Photobition has traditionally commanded a huge amount of loyalty and goodwill," he says. "Recent events, including the collapse of the share price, have pushed everyone's patience to the limit."

Mr Bushby, who started Photobition in 1965 and was a non-executive director until three-and-a-half years ago, says that the display graphics group was



Bob Bushby: 'support is very encouraging'

badly mistaken in buying its US operations at a high price and then trying to run them like British companies, just as the US advertising market went into decline.

The company now has debts of over £110m and expects to make a loss in the year to June 30, despite earlier forecasts of £9.5m profit. First half profits were down more than 50% at just over £3m, mainly because of poor performance in the US.

However, Mr Bushby supports the way that Photobition's UK operations are being run and the current rebranding exercise which

is shedding old names and giving plants a common identity.

Although Mr Bushby only owns about 2% of Photobition, he already has someone from outside the printing industry lined up to take over as a new chief executive if institutional shareholders, that own 48% of all shares, agree.

The current chief executive, Eddie Marchbanks, is planning an mbo with finance director Steven Smith, neither of whom would comment last week.

Photobition's share price now stands at an all-time low of 25p, down from 556p a year ago. One message on the Forum site alleges that there is a conflict of interest if an mbo is on the cards: existing management want to keep the share price low to make the company more affordable.

However, no deal is expected soon because due diligence is taking longer than expected, sources say.

## MAN unimpressed by sell-off stories

The MAN Group has poured cold water on German press reports that MAN Roland and its truck interests could be sold off to placate German institutional investors hungry for better returns.

Although Volkswagen has confirmed it wants to buy MAN's truck business, MAN says it will not sell. Neither has it received any offers for MAN Roland.

"It would be impossible for Heidelberg or KBA to take over MAN Roland because of competition

law," says MAN spokesman Wieland Schmitz, who nevertheless would not comment on whether a non-press manufacturer may be interested.

"We have no intention of selling off MAN Roland as it is one of our best businesses."

Meanwhile, MAN Roland chairman and chief executive Gerd Finkbeiner has a new

e-mail address – chairman@man-roland.de – with a difference. Anyone who e-mails him is promised a

## TM rumour mill grinds on

Trinity Mirror is being coy about rumours that it may sell off its Sunday People title to Daily Star and Express publisher Richard Desmond, ahead of interim results due out on Friday, July 27.

"From time to time we are approached by people wanting to buy part of our business, but there is no for sale sign over the People," says a spokesman. "Media rumours require no further comment or speculation."

Trinity Mirror has already warned in a trading update that growth in advertising revenue has slowed

## Tempus fugit

WPP may launch a £500m bid for media buying group Tempus, to beat off interest from the French company Havas, which bid £425m for Tempus last week. WPP owns 22% of Tempus, and under takeover law has access to all data that Havas has seen.

## On the cards

Birthdays Group, the greetings card chain, is looking for a buyer willing to pay up to £80m for the business, according to press reports. One potential buyer would be rival Clinton Cards.

## Chapter adverse

Hewlett Packard is buying the bulk of Comdisco, an IT continuity company that has just entered Chapter 11 protection because of bad debts, for \$610m in cash.

## Delight for De La Rue

De La Rue says that first quarter results will be ahead of last year's level, in part because of the euro notes currently being printed at its Gateshead factory. Sales are up in both the Cash Systems and Security Paper & Print divisions. The latter is being integrated with the Global Services division, which includes brand protection and holographics.

**Georgia Pacific net income falls**  
Page 16

## Inchbrook gains ground in leaps and bounds

Printer/call centre provider Inchbrook has been ranked among the Top 20 fastest-growing private companies in the country in a league table compiled by the Mail on Sunday and HgCapital, the venture capital supplier.

Inchbrook Printers, a forms printer dating back to 1947, was owned by conglomerate Tomkins until an mbo in 1996.

Now called simply Inchbrook, it has since diversified into security printing, mailing and latterly a call centre, increasing its turnover from £3.5m to £14.2m since 1994. May and June 2001 were record months, the company says, 8% up on a year ago.

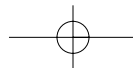
Profits last year stood at £1.4m and customers include most utilities and high street banks. Staff number 220, only 80 of them print workers.

Although print still accounts for two-thirds of turnover, with continuous printing done in Wotton-under-Edge and sheetfed at its Cedar Press subsidiary in Bristol, sales director

## Direct mail lifts Halcyon

Huddersfield printer Halcyon – formerly Waddington Business Forms – seems to be finally shedding its image as a forms printer and has increased its direct mail sales.

The company increased total sales by £1m this year, though its direct mail division grew by £2m to reach £6m, £1m higher than budget. Sales director Stuart Scott says that Halcyon, which is owned by the Adare Printing Group, plans to upgrade its Océ PageStream



## Business GROW-HOW



From Paul Holohan & the team at  
Richmond Capital Partners Limited

### RECRUITMENT

No matter how hard we try we still seem to make mistakes in our recruitment. What can we do to lessen the risks – and the costs – of failure?

Firstly don't be too hard on yourselves. Recruitment is a specific skill and even the best firms achieve little better than a 70% success rate! However, there are some simple steps that you can take. They are known as the four 'P's and are:-

- **Plan** recruitment. It should be linked to your Business Plan. Lack of planning can have disastrous consequences.

- **Prepare** for the recruitment process. Define the job, prepare an ideal candidate profile, involve colleagues in the discussion, prepare interview questions and the interview room (never use your own office).

Prepare company information covering ethos, style, policies and future plans (in outline). Remember that the interview includes 'selling' the company to the candidate as well as 'buying' the person.

- **Process**. Identify likely sources. Market the vacancy using the ideal candidate profile.\* Consider alternative (e.g. internal promotion). Issue/collect application forms. Arrange interviews. Prepare standard assessment forms and complete these. Write up notes, arrange second interviews and make selection. Finally make the job offer.

\*If using recruitment consultants, only use reputable ones and beware of paying money in advance. Check them out. Good ones will offer a 'guarantee' of some sort.

- **Post** Recruitment. Good induction is VITAL. Issue Employment Handbook. Note any probationary period

The METHOD of recruitment is also key. Use a COMBINATION approach. For example:-

- A well planned and structured interview.
- References.
- Mental ability tests encompassing numerical, literal, perceptual and reasoning skills. These are simple to execute.
- Work sample – this is the single most effective method.
- Psychometric tests. These are growing in popularity and can be used for spotting talent internally.
- Check qualifications and employment history. Don't take information supplied on trust and beware liars! 66% of all CV's are false!

Clever companies see all recruitment as a STRATEGIC ISSUE. You should be aiming to use your people as key 'differentiators'.

Clearly, better recruitment coupled with good training and development are vital components for the future success of any business.

Try a little harder, usually being more organised in advance, and you should save costs and therefore make more profits!

Good hunting!

The author accepts no legal responsibility for the advice given. Comments and advice given in this column do not necessarily represent the views of Printing World.

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## Xaar happy so far

Inkjet supplier Xaar increased its sales and profits to record levels in the first half of 2001 but says it cannot predict sales more than a few months ahead, hinting at fears of a major slowdown this autumn.

Sales have grown 14% to reach £12.3m and pretax profit is up from £700,000 to £2m. But although there is a good order book for the third quarter, Xaar has no "order coverage" after that.

Although Xaar's own printers, mainly for indus-

trial uses, reached sales of £9m (up from £7m last year), licences and royalties from Xaar technology used in office printers fell from £3.8m to £3.3m.

There were no new licences signed up, although existing licence upgrades were signed with Seiko and Toshiba.

However, Xaar claims a big deal signed with Sharp last year skewed the figures. "Licence income is always lumpy and unpredictable," says finance director Gordon MacLeod.

Ink sales are also up 35%

and sales offices were opened in Hong Kong and Chicago last month. Sales are 50% European, 25% Asia and 25% in the US, so Xaar sees scope for growth in the latter market despite the American economic slowdown. Xaar is also launching a new printer for textiles. The XJ1266, which uses water-based inks, will be commercially available from this autumn after beta testing.

But Xaar's new wide format PWA colour inkjet printhead, which hit technical problems last year, has

## Wait and see at Jarvis Porter

The largest shareholder in Jarvis Porter says that it will be "taking up with management" its ideas on how to return the group to profitability.

Jarvis Porter made a loss of £4.3m last year, and has said it will look at "all

strategic options" including sale or merger with a competitor. "When a company is losing money, something has to be done about it," says a spokesman for Union Discount, which now owns 26.6% of the ailing label company.

Union Discount has bought its shares in Jarvis Porter as part of a group-wide policy of buying stakes in what it considers "undervalued" businesses, at the instigation of its parent company Browallia.

The spokesman says that

### legal notices

#### Appointment of liquidators

- **Printek Screen Process Ltd**

Previous company name: **Printer Screen Process Ltd**  
Printing for the gaming industry. Liquidators: GD Randall and

EF Hunt, HLB Kidsons, Southey House, 33 Wine Street, Bristol BS1 2BQ

- **Times UK Ltd Publishing.**

Liquidator: G Henderson, Henderson & Co, 12 Tumblewood Road, Banstead, Surrey SM7 1DX

- **DJM Printing Supplies Ltd**

Printer and printing supplies. Liquidator: JE Avery-Gee, Kay Johnson Gee, Griffin Court, 201 Chapel Street, Salford, Manchester M3 5EQ

#### Appointment of

#### receivers

- **Displaypack Ltd** Paper manufacturer. Receivers:

S Hull and G Martin, Geoffrey Martin & Co, St James's House, 28 Park Place, Leeds LS1 2SP

- **Merlin Colour Printers Ltd**

Receivers: R Gadsby and P Lyon, Mazars Neville Russell, Clifton Down House, Beaufort Buildings, Clifton Down, Bristol BS8 2AN

#### Meetings of creditors

- **Elf Print Media Ltd** at Mazars Neville Russell, Clifton Down House, Beaufort Buildings, Clifton Down, Bristol BS8 2AN on August 3 at 10am

#### Notices to creditors

- **Syon Print Ltd** Creditors to

send claims to MCJ Sanders, BN Jackson Norton, 1 Gray's Inn Square, Gray's Inn, London WC1R 5AA by August 17

- **Mollin Publishing Ltd**

Creditors to send claims to HI Mirza, Pridie Brewster, Carolyn House, 29-31 Greville Street, London EC1N 8RB by August 20

#### Final meetings

- **Display & Graphic Production Ltd**

at Mountview Court, 1148 High Road, Whetstone, London N20 ORA on September 6 at 10am for members and at 10.15am for creditors

- **On-Line Presentation Graphics Ltd**

at Lines Henry, 27 The Downs, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 2QD on

