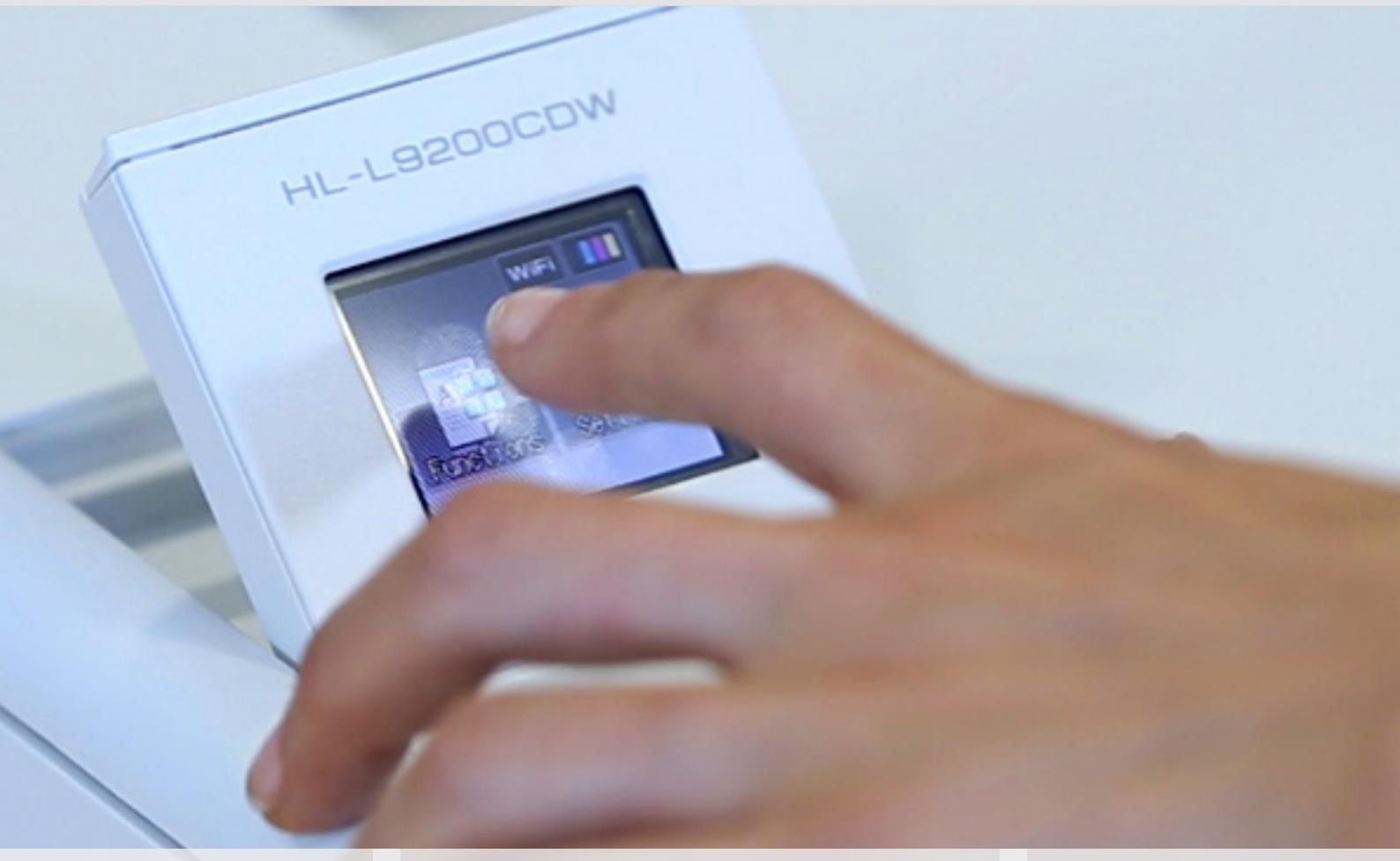


COLLABORATIONS IN COLOUR



THE BROTHER AND PUMPKIN PATCH STORY

Business is constantly facing challenges when searching for outcomes to problems created by rapid growth. This is a story about what happens when two great brands come together to tackle a serious operational dilemma resulting in a first-rate strategic solution.



When it comes to kids' fashion, there are few brands with such a glowing global reputation for quality as Pumpkin Patch. The young-at-heart franchise with outlets across New Zealand, Australia and Ireland, specialises in the latest fashion trends for boys and girls.

As befits a company at the cutting edge of children's fashion, colour plays a huge role in everything Pumpkin Patch does. Not only is the clothing sold in bright, vibrant and colourful stores but the layout of each store acts as sensory stimulation for customers and passers-by alike.

The retailer places huge emphasis on the layout of each store. As new fashions become available, they must be worked into existing store layouts. Similarly, when items are put on sale they must be placed in a prominent position.

With 128 retail outlets in Australia, it is imperative this process is coordinated from a centralised location. Pumpkin Patch realised this early on and thus set up a mock store in its corporate headquarters.

Whenever new season ranges are launched or there's new promotional activity, the mock store is painstakingly laid out by Pumpkin Patch's team of visual merchandising experts. Once these have been reviewed and approved, the entire layout is captured photographically and documented thoroughly in order to be communicated to stores via visual merchandising (VM) bulletins.

Pumpkin Patch state manager NSW/ACT, Liz Greig, explains that, during sale times, stores will often have hundreds of items to be discounted and this requires many VM bulletins sent from head office to each store. "How we get our product lines from the storyboards of our designers to what the customer sees when they visit our stores is really important to us. We get so excited when we are unpacking our new stock and we can't wait to be able to share it with our customers."

"It's a huge amount of information on price changes. The stores need to have a clear visual representation of each item so they can easily identify which need to be marked down."

In addition to VM bulletins and marketing communications from head office, managers also need to view price change reports, end of day reporting, stock carton receipts and general correspondence. The stores are also regularly required to produce additional promotional material for in-store display purposes. As part of its customer engagement program, Pumpkin Patch frequently runs colouring-in competitions where



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it needs to produce multiple copies of black and white colouring templates to be handed out to the customers and their little ones in store.

Communicating all this information and documentation to each store presented a logistical problem. How was head office to convey the new layout suggestions to the retail stores in a descriptive and visual manner? How could it deploy a single solution that could be used for a vast array of company processes? The solution needed to be elegant, simple and cost effective.

DUE DILIGENCE

Pumpkin Patch explored many options and sought a best practice solution to address this issue. One such option was equipping each store with Wi-Fi and providing tablets. This would allow store managers to view all

communications from head office on a single device. There were a number of concerns with such a solution, chief among which was security. Pumpkin Patch Technology Excellence Manager, Gwen Wong, explained that the company was concerned a Wi-Fi network would leave the company vulnerable to potential security threats and data breaches.

"It was a real concern for us and ultimately the reason we decided not to go down that path."

The other issue was that it could not address one of the key requirements of the solution, the display of promotional material.

To address this Pumpkin Patch would have had to deploy digital signage in each store in addition to Wi-Fi and mobile devices, making an already prohibitively expensive option untenable.

This realisation caused the company to rethink its options and in doing so, reach out to one of its most trusted business partners.

Enter Brother, Pumpkin Patch's long time print partner. With a relationship that spans seven years, Brother is a trusted supplier that understands Pumpkin Patch's needs and worked with the retailer to find a solution.

COMMON SENSE PREVAILS

Each of the Pumpkin Patch stores was already equipped with a Brother laser printer. These are a necessary component in the day-to-day operations of each store.

Liz Greig explained that due to this existing relationship, Brother was the perfect partner to reach out to. "The team at Brother know our business; we have worked with them for over 7 years so we were confident they would be able to find us a viable solution."

The technological advancements that Brother has made over the last few years have cemented its reputation as a world leader in print solutions.

One of its latest models, the HL-L9200CDW, is a high-speed, colour laser printer with up to 30 pages per minute output in colour and monochrome. It was designed to do more in less time and save money on every job by reducing overall printing costs.

As a number of stores were reaching the end on their printer refresh cycles, it was the perfect opportunity to explore the possibilities for tying the refresh into solving the multi-faceted issue Pumpkin Patch was facing.

The two parties realised that there was a solution available. By refreshing the print solution, Pumpkin Patch could use its existing infrastructure to address the problems it was facing.

The HL-L9200CDW has the capacity to fulfil all of Pumpkin Patch's requirements. The issue of store mock-ups was the first to be addressed by the two companies.

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For an organisation with so many retail locations, it is important that there is continuity in design and layout at each outlet. As a result, colour and the representation of colour plays a huge role in the communication process between head office and Pumpkin Patch stores. Store layouts are carefully crafted and painstakingly organised at head office and so ensuring this effort yields results, Pumpkin Patch needed a solution that could visually represent these efforts.

The retailer came to the conclusion that a high quality colour laser printer could fulfil all of its needs. The colours used in the store mock ups are beautifully reproduced by the HL-L9200CDW. This combined with the speed, efficiency and small footprint of the unit made an ideal fit in the limited spaces of Pumpkin Patch retail back offices. There were other features of the printer that made it ideal for Pumpkin Patch's needs. Like any successful business it is expert in what it does – selling great quality and stylish clothes.

The retail outlets are specifically designed for this purpose and this leaves little room for bulky cumbersome printers. Having a footprint of 640(W) x 564(D) x 553(H) mm makes the unit ideal for the limited spaces in which it must operate.

The other key benefit of the unit is that it features a front loading toner tray. The staff at Pumpkin Patch are experts at helping parents and children find the best possible clothing options but do not need to be experts at printer maintenance. "With our IT support office being located in New Zealand, we needed to make sure what we delivered to the stores could be installed and maintained by our retail teams. We need it to be intuitive and easy to work with," Liz explained.



Brother understands this better than anybody and has designed a unit that is not only easy to install and setup, but has a toner replacement system so easy to use that store managers can complete the process speedily.

What this story represents is a happy marriage: Two companies developing a common sense solution to an everyday problem. Many companies would have spent an incredible amount of time and resources on a high tech solution that would have required time and effort to implement.

A SEAMLESS IMPLEMENTATION

Once an effective solution was agreed upon, the rollout was next on the agenda. As part of its commitment to moving into the future, Pumpkin Patch began replacing its old model printers with the class-leading HL-L9200CDW.

The key to the solution is efficiency. This was a focus for each level of the deployment and so replacing all printers at once would have run contrary to the goals of the project. With this in mind Brother and Pumpkin Patch agreed that the rollout should be done initially for stores that were at the end of their print refresh cycle.

These stores would serve as a test case for the rest of the deployment. This way if there were any inefficiencies discovered at any location, they could be addressed immediately without affecting Pumpkin Patch's operations.

As of May 2015, the printers have been rolled out to 20 locations across Australia, with a further 108 still to be deployed. Pumpkin Patch employees were quickly and easily able to install the printers at each location and all the drivers were able to be installed remotely from head office in New Zealand. This turned the traditionally time consuming process of printer installation on its head. "We launched Brothers latest printer as a trial into 20 stores and the results have been impressive," Liz Greig said.

"The new printers showcase the vibrant colours in our products as well as the detail of our designs so it makes the job of recreating the VM team vision easier for retail staff and they are fast which comes in handy when you have a heap of kids at the activity table."

The printers were set up and ready to go in a short time frame that allowed the retail outlets to get on with the job



of delighting customers with their fantastically colourful clothing and displays.

THE BEST OF OUTCOMES

After successful implementation of the solution across a smaller number of stores, Pumpkin Patch and Brother are now gearing up for full deployment of the solution nationwide.

The HL-L9200CDW has given Pumpkin Patch the ability to clearly transmit its message of beautiful displays and store layouts to each location with ease. Managers are able to view price changes, end of day reports, stock carton receipts and general correspondence with just a few clicks.

The bottom line is a rare tale of good news, then more good news! Brother helped its partner to improve efficiency and reduce costs by deploying a solution that is as simple as it is elegant. The two companies worked together toward a mutual goal with speed and precision that has cemented what was an already strong and long standing partnership. "It's a great example of how we can create solutions when we work together and it leaves us free to continue to provide fashionable, quality kidswear that our customers love," Greig said.

For Brother it underscored its aim as a forward thinking print partner business to solve complex problems with cost effective, crafted solutions to drive growth and improve the bottom line.

Find out if Brother can help your business by contacting the Brother Commercial Divison on:

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