

The Chinese Are Coming! !

Will suppliers from the Far East
take over the market for offset plates?



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Foreword

We've been following plate vendors from the Far East for the last eight years. Starting at Drupa 2000, we not only met with them repeatedly in Düsseldorf, but also at IPEX 2002 and 2006 in Birmingham.

In parallel with China's rise as an international business power, it has been pushing to increase its exports. So it is no wonder that an unprecedented number of Chinese exhibitors (especially plate vendors) turned up at Drupa 2008. In Düsseldorf, we spoke with every Chinese plate vendor we could get hold of, and we supplemented that material with a substantial amount of research (including, of course, on the Web).

Additionally, we researched and discussed the topic with well-known dealers in Germany. Their assessments of the products, markets, and vendors from China are likely to reveal important facts of interest to printers, [consumables dealers,] and the Chinese vendors alike.

At the same time, we posed the question of whether the market for UV CTP (which works with conventional analog UV-sensitive plates) might not experience a major upturn, given that these markets use up to 90% conventional plates.

Finally, it is also important to deal with the question of whether the supremacy of today's "big three" vendors in the world market (Agfa, Fuji, and Kodak) might be threatened by China's ascendancy. The market share of these vendors is estimated to be as high as 90%. Although this may vary from region to region, it amounts to dominance by these three vendors.

To illuminate all sides of the discussion, we asked the UV CTP vendors and the three major plate manufacturers for their positions on various questions, and we have incorporated them here.

We hope this report sheds light on an interesting segment of the graphic arts industry, and that we have given suppliers and consumers alike the information they need as well as the arguments, both pro and con.

PS: On many pages, we have added large photos because we hope that will convey something of the atmosphere of the Chinese exhibitors and their products.

Volltage/Osnabrück, May 2009

M. Mittelhaus

