

Customer Success Story



Centor

Industry: Manufacturing

Location: Queensland

Overview

Centor needed a 3D printer in-house that included managed print services so the company could treat it like any other printer. To meet these needs Centor chose the 3D Systems Projet 660 combined with Konica Minolta's managed print services.

Challenge

- Fast, reliable 3D printing for physical prototypes
- 3D printer that included service and maintenance

Solution

- 3D Systems Projet 660
- Managed services

Customer benefits

- Speed in bringing design concepts to life
- Ability to bring final version to market faster to meet customer demands
- Maintenance and troubleshooting provided by the experts

Konica Minolta 3D Printing Solutions bring affordable prototype design in-house, saving valuable time for Centor

Centor is a multi-award winning designer and manufacturer, with more than 60 years of expertise in the window and door industry. Because the world is beautiful, everything Centor does is designed to connect people with the world outside. It does this with Centor Integrated Doors – a world-first product that combines a door, screen, shade, and hardware as one, allowing homeowners to create inside-outside living without the compromises.

The challenge

The research and development (R&D) arm of Centor is based at its Brisbane Head Office, while the company manufactures its products at locations all around the world. Centor's R&D team aims to help all parts of the business deliver better products to market faster, meeting customers' needs more precisely.

Centor has used 3D printing for more than 10 years for a variety of functions, such as developing functional prototypes and creating physical parts that can be used to demonstrate design ideas.

Michael Smith, senior industrial designer, said, "About five years ago we decided to bring some of our 3D printing in-house. While we still outsource when we need functional prototypes, we now create all of our physical demonstration parts in-house.

"In 2015, we needed to replace our existing 3D printer. While we were happy with the make and model we had, we also wanted the 3D printer to include managed print services, which essentially means we can treat it like any other printer on-site."

The solution

To address its need to integrate the 3D printer into the rest of the business, Centor chose Konica Minolta to provide a 3D Systems Projet 660 as well as managed print services.

The Projet 660 is an affordable, full-colour 3D printer. It is a valuable solution for design firms, model makers, engineers, manufacturers, and other applications requiring strong, accurate 3D-printed parts. Operation is simple, multiple printing is fast, and labels, logos, and images can be printed in colour for greater realism.

Michael Smith said, "Centor uses the 3D printer a lot, so we needed to make sure the printer and services we chose gave us a strong return on investment.

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“By offering a 3D printer with a managed services component, Konica Minolta is helping to normalise 3D printing and make it a part of everyday work life. The sooner more companies adopt it, the sooner we will start to see more innovation, particularly in the design and manufacturing industries.”

Michael Smith,
Senior Industrial Designer, Centor.

The ProJet 660 met that requirement, and the managed print services from Konica Minolta meant that we didn't need to be responsible for maintaining and troubleshooting the machine. “I'm surprised at how accustomed we have become to having the 3D printer onsite. Now I don't know how we did our job without it. It has just become an integral part of our workflow.” Because the ProJet 660 is now such a critical part of R&D, Centor needed to make sure that any issues with the printer would be resolved quickly and that downtime would be minimal. Michael Smith said, “This is where Konica Minolta fits in. We knew when we bought the new machine that we wanted to treat it as much as possible like a normal printer. Konica Minolta had the printer we wanted combined with the expertise and service levels we knew we could rely on, making it an obvious choice.”

The benefits

One of the key benefits of the new printer is the speed at which Centor can now bring design concepts to life. Being able to 3D print in-house means the R&D team can now have 3D parts overnight. Previously, if the team had to outsource a part to be 3D-printed, it could take three days to a week before they would get the part back. Michael Smith said, “Having a fast, responsive 3D printer onsite means faster iterations, which ultimately lets us innovate quicker. This is essential in remaining competitive and meeting our customers' needs.

“There is a saying “don't tell me, show me”. Being able to print our idea concepts in 3D for spaces between door jams or door handles for example, takes the ambiguity out of conveying our ideas and avoids any confusion or misinterpretation when we have discussions or meetings about a new design.

“Being able to 3D-print parts and concepts cuts down on meeting times, and it ensures that we get better feedback because stakeholders can touch, feel, and interact with the product. They are not trying to interpret 3D concepts off a 2D screen.” Konica Minolta also provides managed print services, which includes servicing the equipment and troubleshooting any issues.

Michael Smith said, “Having this support from Konica Minolta takes the stress off us. We know that we can leave the printer management to the experts and go back to our core job: designing. Before we had the managed print component our team would spend time trying to solve problems and troubleshoot if something went wrong, which was not an effective use of their time.

“When we first got the 3D printer I was apprehensive about how much we would use it versus the value we would get out of it. We changed our CAD model to make it work smoothly with the 3D printer and now this has become a natural and valuable part of the process. I was surprised at how much the printer was used and how well it integrated with our existing workflow.

In the future Centor would like to be able to use 3D printing for short-run manufacturing. It would mean they could make changes to iterations immediately and would make the manufacturing process quicker, and more economical.

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