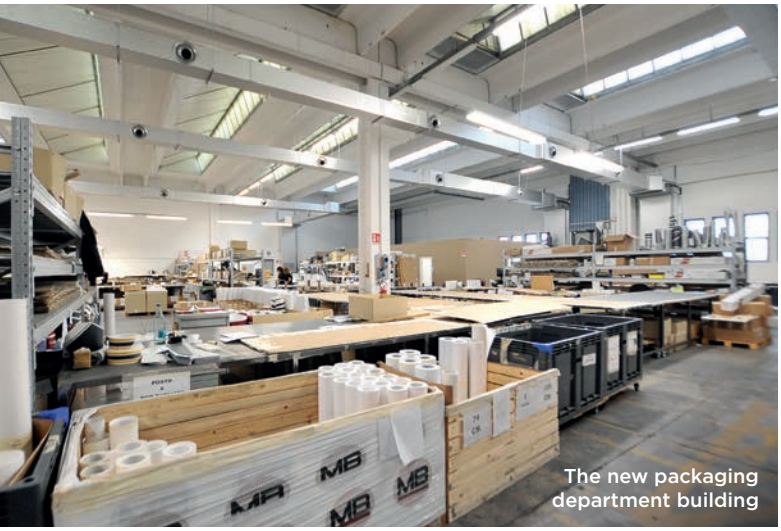
Bespoke tailoring for RVs

Every year, M.B. Trading makes graphic decorations for 40,000 motorhomes and campervans, with services running from design through to just-in-time delivery

Words Renato Antonini, photo Enrico Bona

In the Italian heartland of Tuscany is a company whose products equip around 30% of all new motorised RVs sold every year. Very few companies in the European RV value chain can boast such numbers. The company in question is M.B. Trading, and they make a product that at first glance seems very simple: graphic decorations for motorhome bodies. But in reality it's a far from simple product and, above all, it has a strategic importance: it requires careful graphic design and robust materials with brilliant colours and stable adhesion to the bodywork. This demands close collaboration with the vehicle manufacturer to ensure that the right product is delivered at exactly the right time. The fact that M.B. Trading now has a 30% share of its market is due to its ability to guarantee a high quality product and outstanding client service.



The new packaging department building

Just-in-time

"Our continually growing penetration of the RV market is due to the high quality of our service and our excellent product," says Walter Bracci, the company's founding partner. *"Our results are obviously a testament to the quality of our product, but we are also a trusted partner for our clients because we offer a fast turnaround and well-organised deliveries. We can work on a just-in-time schedule, with deliveries tailored to each client's requirements. When we started working in the RV market in 2011, the managing director of a large company - not a client of ours at the time - told me that they were holding a stock of 150,000 euro of graphic decorations in their warehouse, unused because they were out of date. I told him that there was nothing we do about that material, it just had to be thrown away, but that we would be able to guarantee just-in-time deliveries in future, thus preventing waste.*

Converting from a production batch system to a just-in-time system was challenging, to say the least, but the results speak for themselves. It means that our clients don't need to hold thousands of euro worth of stock, because we have access to their production planning and can send them the product exactly when they need it. Even if they damage a unit during installation, we can send them a replacement in 24 hours."

40,000 vehicles a year

M.B. Trading provides graphic decorations to nearly all Trigano Gorup companies, from Trigano Spa in Italy to Trigano VDL in France, including their campervan division and the Benimar plant in Spain. But the company also supplies the Rapido Group and the Pilote Group, as well as a new client in South Korea.

Overall, the Tuscan company's graphic decorations are used on over 1,000 different models of motorhome, in all their various versions. This means that every year, M.B. Trading products are used on over 40,000 vehicles in Europe. To satisfy this enormous demand, the company has made major investments in plant. The company currently has fourteen graphic plotters, together with a range of lamination machines. There is also the packaging department, which prepares the packages for just-in-time shipment to the client.

Custom kits

"The products are shipped according to the client's needs," says Walter Bracci, *"and we are able to guarantee highly flexible packaging and delivery solutions. Some clients want everything shipped in a single package, others want the kits divided into four packages, one each for the right and left sides, one for the front and one for the rear. Assembly line staff working on the right side of the vehicle are often not the same as those working on the left side, so it's convenient to have two separate decoration kits, to prevent overlaps, confusion and wasted time. These kits are not stored in the warehouse, they are simply booked into the system and then sent directly to production - a much more efficient way of working. And if there are any problems, which fortunately is very rare, they report them to us effectively in real time and we can immediately start working on a solution."*

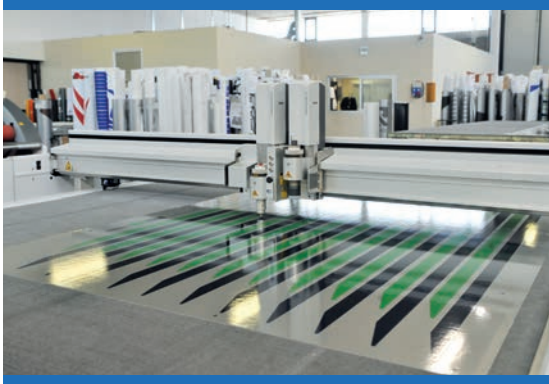
The new packaging department has proved to be of strategic value to the company's organisation. The material arrives at the new building, which has a number of dedicated stations for each client, and the packages are prepared for shipping, ordered by week and day of delivery. All of this is done in accordance with the client's production plans. The production plans indicate which decorations are required for each sequence, and M.B. Trading packages them accordingly - divided by production line, with barcodes for scanning by the production line operators to rule out any mistakes. Some manufacturers want the decorations printed in rolls, other as flat panels, and the company provides the product as required.

After the recent expansion of their facilities with the new packaging department building last year, M.B. Trading now has an area of almost 4,000 sq.m. under cover. The workforce consists of 60 people divided into two shifts. But M.B. Trading has both the capacity and the determination to grow even further.

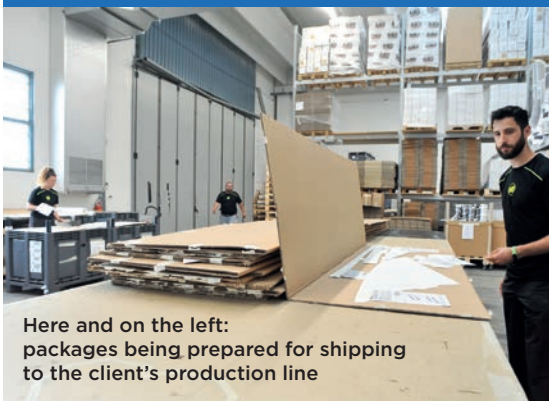
"We are fully prepared to satisfy new clients," says Walter Bracci: *"all it takes is a new printer and a new cutting plotter. That would enable us to make another 10,000 units a year - even 15,000 if necessary. We would then be able to to make decorations for over 50,000 vehicles a year."*

Company Profile

M.B. Trading srl is one of the leading italian and international companies in the field of printing for industrial and advertising decorations. Cutting-edge technologies, orientation towards innovation and creativity are at the base of a wide range of products and solutions that enable M.B. Trading to dress and decorate surfaces and materials of any kind. M.B. Trading's printing techniques range from screen printing, with a 25 years experience, to the most innovative digital printing. The company covers a total area of 4000 square meters and has 60 employees.



Walter Bracci (left) in conversation with our editor in chief



Here and on the left: packages being prepared for shipping to the client's production line