

Video rental stores realise the potential of the 24 Photostation from Cei-lux: a standalone installation for printing digital images on to Sony media



Print photographs – from digital devices – in video rental stores. Automatically.

Background

C.E.I.-Lux srl is a Modena-based company with over 20 years of experience in the electronics and industrial automation industry.

Customer Challenge / Business Needs

Following the advent of the Internet and digital imaging, the store-based video rental and photographic market has been in decline. C.E.I.-Lux srl needed a means of diversifying its business while helping to revitalise a market in need of innovative ideas to win back its appeal. In 2000, C.E.I.-Lux srl introduced the 24 VideoStation, the first completely modular vending solution in Europe, thanks to the possibility of adding expandable storage containers at any time, an first in the video rental world.

To give extra appeal to its VideoStation and to boost its video rental and photographic business, C.E.I.-Lux expanded its range and designed, in conjunction with Sony Italy, the 24 PhotoStation. This was the first range of fully automated stores which, in addition to giving customers the chance to rent and purchase DVDs, video games and gadgets, made it possible to print photos in various formats in total privacy using Sony paper and printers – in under ten seconds.

“The automatic vending industry needed to innovate. 24 Photostation offers a reliable, quality service to customers that can be used in multiple environments and has been a great boost to our business. Our relationship with the Sony Italy team, who supported us with the installation of the 24 Photostation units, made the project design and implementation easier

than we could ever have imagined” comments the owner of C.E.I.-Lux, Maurizio Manni.

The Implementation/Sony solution

To implement this service, C.E.I.-Lux fitted its traditional find-a-film modules with readers for the most readily available digital memory cards (mobiles, cameras, USB sticks and Bluetooth-ready). By inserting a memory card into the reader, the customer can then decide which and how many photos to print, whether to personalise them (for example in black and white or with other visual effects) and whether to produce calendars, postcards or greetings cards with their photos. Thanks to Sony technology, the printing process lasts only ten seconds and guarantees a service which is both rapid and totally private.

Implementation of the 24 Photostation project has been extremely quick: initial contact with Sony Italy was made in September 2006 and immediately transformed into strategy, enabling the company to install the vending units, which are currently present in four pilot stores, within the space of two months.

The first tests on professional media watermarked with the “Print by Sony” logo were performed on the Snaplab, the digital touch-screen minilab solution, whilst the product subsequently chosen for use in the standalone unit was the Sony UP-DR150/3 dye sublimation printer, capable of delivering 10x15cm and 10x20cm photo formats.

Its exceptional speed, superb quality and image sharpness (in addition to the recognised reliability of Sony products) led C.E.I.-Lux to select this type of printer, installed with specially adapted software which guides the customer from insertion of the memory device to collection of the photos.

To ensure the highest quality output, C.E.I.-Lux chose Sony 2UPC-C14 paper. In terms of print media, it is considerably more resistant to tearing than other brands.

Customer Benefits

Just like with its other core product 24 Videostation, C.E.I.-Lux originally planned to place the 24 Photostation at its so-called “auto stores” – rental outlets unstaffed except during periodic scheduled maintenance. However, following intensive market analysis and a comprehensive customer survey, it also saw an opportunity in its conventional video rental stores which only partially automate their business. In this sort of environment 24 Photostation, designed in collaboration with Sony Italy, could transform the conventional video rental store into a service centre offering greater entertainment possibilities: on the 24 Videostation customers can watch trailers of films which interest them, choose one and collect their DVD from the dispenser. During the same visit, there is nothing to prevent customers stopping by the 24 Photostation and deciding to print off holiday photos or to convert them into a gift calendar for friends.

Sony – The Market Leader

Marketing Manager Paolo Maini: “Thanks to the reliability of Sony products, we are able to offer our customers an innovative solution which clearly demonstrates we are proactive and have a dynamic presence in this market. We foresee Photostations being installed in museums, gyms, villages on tourist routes and meeting points: it has infinite potential”.