

Trendy at 30



Celebrating its 30th anniversary in business this year, Graphique de France is tackling today's business climate by offering even more "lifestyle trend" stationery products.

Jean-Jacques Toulotte doesn't just have an eye for art and design; he also has a keen eye for new business opportunities. His vision and ability to identify lifestyle trends and industry developments has helped guide his company, Graphique de France, to its current-day position as a leading international publisher of calendars, counter cards, holiday cards and other stationery products.

Toulotte arrived in the U.S. from France in 1979 with a plan to organize

GRAPHIQUE DE FRANCE, headquartered in Woburn, MA, has more than 50 employees in the U.S. and Europe.



exhibitions and sell original paintings in galleries. While traveling around the country, he started to see that many independent framers could also operate as poster shops. Working out of a small apartment on Marlborough Street in Boston, MA, Toulotte secured a small inventory of posters from France, bought a Corona typewriter and launched Graphique de France. Within six months, he was already selling to more than 1,000 framers.

"I was 22 years old at the time and had to quickly learn basic business practices and processes to operate my company and make sure my customers were supplied on time," recalls Toulotte. Within two years, he was supplying 10,000 retailers and developing catalogs, advertising and other sales tools.

Once he established a distribution network for selling posters, Toulotte saw an opportunity to

GRAPHIQUE DE FRANCE (800/444-1464) is introducing "Home Decal" repositionable, self-adhesive, vinyl wall appliques (\$19.95).

From **GRAPHIQUE DE FRANCE** (800/444-1464) comes this "Desk Frame" (\$9.95): an easel picture frame with 200 full-color printed note sheets.

publish and produce on his own. "I realized that if I could control the quality and designs, I could create exclusive products for my clients," he says. It was this commitment to quality and a passion for design that helped Toulotte build a strong reputation with his retail customers, museums and artists alike. By 1984, he was reproducing work for some of the most renowned art establishments in the world, including the Museum of Fine Arts, National Gallery of Art, Art Institute of Chicago, as well as working with prestigious photogra-



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GRAPHIQUE DE FRANCE founder Jean-Jacques Toulotte with Sherelle Peterson, one of the company's graphic designers.

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phers and up-and-coming artists.

In 1991, Toulotte saw that the poster industry was reaching a saturation point. He began looking to diversify his offerings to prepare for the inevitable decline. "Calendars were the logical evolution, but they had their own set of challenges," he explains. "So, I had to create a new business model. I focused on better images, colors and overall quality to create a superior product. From there we continued to grow into greeting cards and then into stationery."

Today, Graphique de France is a full-functioning publisher with more than 50 employees in the U.S. and Europe. Headquartered in Woburn, MA, the company has its own in-house design studio and licensing department, and also manages print production centers in Europe, Asia and Canada. "We are able to take full control of our products and quality by managing the entire publishing process in-house," states Toulotte.

On the sales side, Graphique de France uses an in-house sales team and a network of field representatives to present its line in the US. In 1997, Toulotte established a distribution agreement with Nouvelles Images in France, which has since evolved into a strong, successful relationship between

the two companies.

Graphique de France's retail customer base runs the gamut from large chains to boutique establishments – both domestically and abroad. "Our products reach a wide variety of consumers due to our lifestyle trend approach, which is used to identify consumer trends and interests and apply them to new product design," says Toulotte. "All of our research is done in-house. We take advantage of our presence in Europe and the U.S. to find new trends and opportunities and to identify new artists. We select design, font and paper the same way a chef will create his dish – picking the best ingredients, adding the right flavors and presenting it in an elegant way."

Toulotte has certainly set a bountiful table this year, with even more new products joining the line. To showcase these designs, Graphique de France participates in a variety of trade shows serving different industries, including gift, grocery, convenience and college stores.

The high point of Graphique de France's trade-show calendar is New York's National Stationery Show, where the newest introductions will be unveiled. "When other manufacturers are cutting back, we have decided to move forward, develop new, innovative

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product and help our retailers to be successful in this economy,” says Toulotte. Among the company’s products being highlighted at the NSS is the release of the “Home Decal” line of repositionable, vinyl wall appliques – a successful product in Europe that invites people to create their own wall art. “We’ve taken our lifestyle trend approach and applied it to this new product line,” notes Toulotte. “We believe that it will be a huge success in the U.S.” Graphique de France also continues to expand its calendar category and will be introducing 29 new titles as well as new desktop formats.

The company will also showcase its



“Portable Notes” (\$11.95) from **GRAPHIQUE DE FRANCE** (800/444-1464) feature 10 notecards with coordinating envelopes and seals in a tri-fold case with magnetic closure.

popular new “My Life on the Go” line of stationery products at the NSS. Inspired by the busy life of today’s woman, the collection features everyday stationery items packaged for easy use while staying mobile, including “Portable Notes” – a chic, tri-fold case of notecards, envelopes and seals created to fit in any size handbag; “Week by

Week” pocket-sized organizers; “My Life 24/7” all-in-one note stations; and easel picture “Desk Frames” containing 200 full-color, printed note sheets.

As Graphique de France celebrates its 30th anniversary, Toulotte has no plans to slow down. The company has recently redesigned its

website – www.graphiquedefrance.com – to become a full b-to-b portal, which, he says, will allow Graphique de France to introduce products more frequently and to keep customers informed.

“After 30 years, I still have a passion about what I do every day,” he says. “I am so fortunate to be able to create products that I love. This passion is not only in me anymore, but through my entire organization.” ■