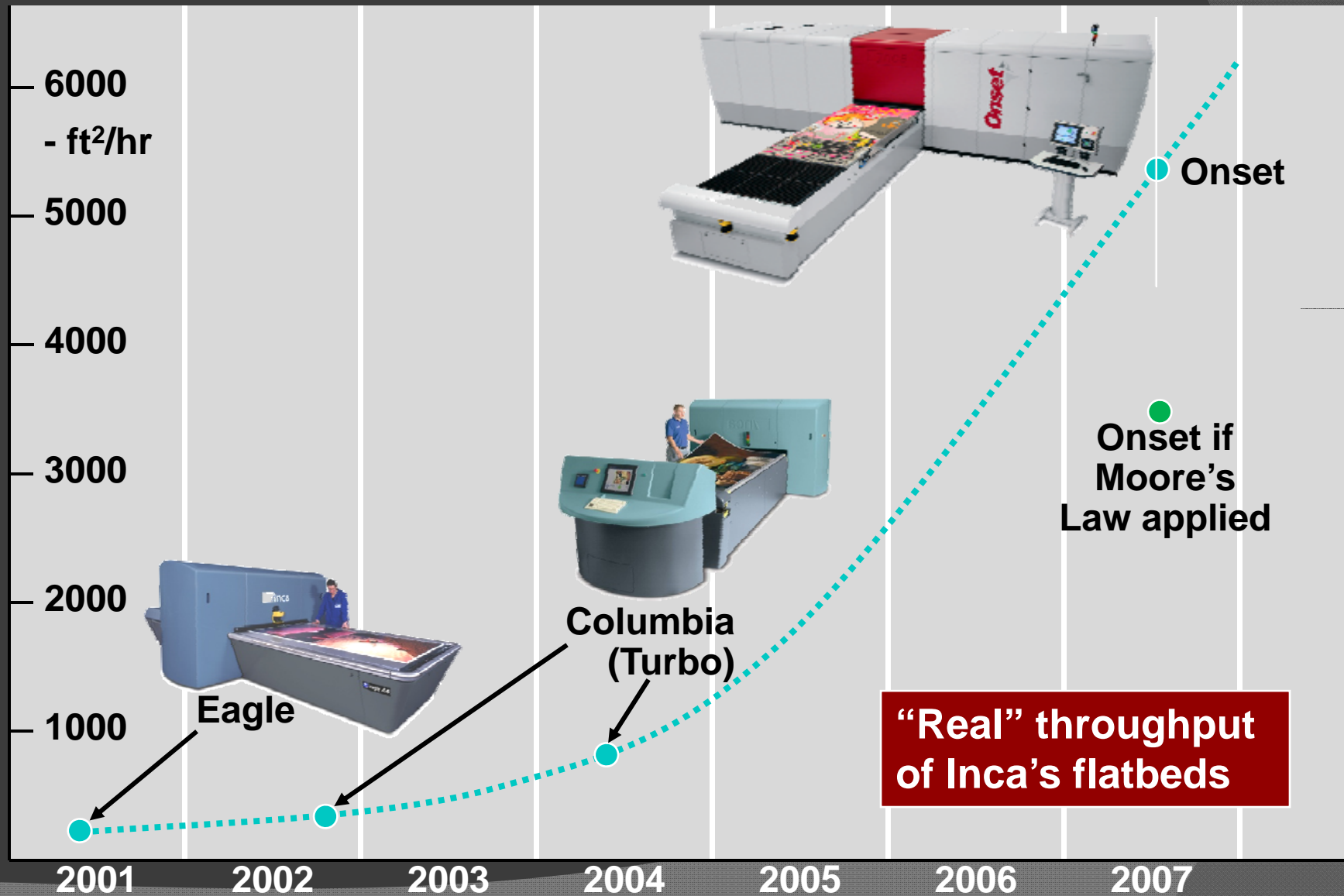


THE VIEW FROM A “CUSTOMER”

- DYNAMICS OF A SMALL BUSINESS
- USEFUL INTERACTIONS WITH UNIVERSITIES
- FRUSTRATIONS OF WORKING WITH UNIVERSITIES
- WAS IT WORTHWHILE?

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Dynamics of a small business#1



Dynamics of a small business#2

- ⦿ **Health warning:** this applies to one business: others have completely different drivers.
- ⦿ For Inca, it's all about time to market.
- ⦿ One day of delay in getting a new product to market costs Inca ~£25k from its P&L.
- ⦿ One day's salary bill for the whole company is about ~£22k.
- ⦿ Key skill is to get teams of prima donnas from many technical disciplines working together effectively.
- ⦿ Eventually the technology will mature and the drivers will become more "normal".

Useful interaction with Universities

- ⦿ KTP to introduce quality measurement tools into our customer support organisation.
- ⦿ Advice – formal and informal – on running our MRP and other aspects of our manufacturing and purchasing systems.
- ⦿ Some training programmes.
- ⦿ Partner on EPSRC research programme involving several other inkjet companies and universities.

Frustrations of working with universities

- ⦿ Setting anything up involves a ridiculous amount of bureaucracy and time.
 - So do things informally whenever possible! Quick and free!!
- ⦿ The output of collaborative work can be in a form very useful to academics, but not to industry.
 - Insist that time is allocated for explaining results to industrial partners.
- ⦿ Heavy on process (and jargon).
- ⦿ People at universities don't think a week is a very long time!

Is it useful?

Yes, for this one business, if:

1. The collaboration does not touch anything concerned with product development (or any other time-critical activity).
2. The objectives can be clearly defined and understood by all.
3. The objectives are limited and modest.
4. The work processes, and the reasons for the processes, can be explained to, and accepted by, all.
5. Personal chemistry works OK.