

Advantage Mailing

HP Indigo Press puts direct mailer at the cutting edge



“My mentor told me to always reinvent myself, because innovation drives success. The HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press puts Advantage Mailing at the cutting edge, where advanced technology delivers strategic advantages in customer service and operational cost-efficiency.”

—Tom Ling, President, Advantage Mailing, Orange, Calif.

HP customer case study: Product innovation and operational efficiency gains enabled by HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press

Industry: Commercial printing

Objective:

Fulfill vision of advanced technology as strategic tool to serve customers, grow market share

Approach:

Deploy HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press to provide fast turnaround, high quality, economical pricing and print personalization

IT improvements:

- Decrease press-run costs 20 to 50 percent
- Migrate medium-run “tweener” jobs from offset
- Speed turnaround 10 to 50 percent
- Personalize printing with variable print
- Produce economical short-run color
- Enable press operators to multi-task

Business benefits:

- Increase customer “share-of-wallet”
- Provide one-stop shopping for print
- Maintain and grow market share
- Increase ROI and operational efficiency
- Deploy technology for strategic advantage



In a commercial printing industry challenged by electronic publishing, competition from in-house print operations and ever-increasing customer demand for faster turnaround and lower cost, Advantage Mailing is thriving. How? President Tom Ling of the Orange, Calif.-based company, in part, credits the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press. AM acquired the press to compete in the growing market for variable print. That strategy has worked beautifully, enabling AM to offer one-stop shopping for all its customers’ printing needs. What’s

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more, the press delivers another highly significant advantage: AM has shifted a large portion of what Ling calls “tweener” jobs—static press runs of 2,000 to 7,000—from offset presses onto the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press. This has sped up turnaround, increased return on investment, and generated financial savings that AM passes on to increase customer satisfaction. And Ling adds, the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press is reliable, easy to operate and produces output of superb quality—a total win for AM and its customers.

“My expectations of the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press have been far exceeded in terms of image quality, speed, substrates, workflow automation, variable data, ease of use and the ability to handle large files,” Ling says. “What that adds up to is competitive advantage.”

Customer service from data to delivery

Founded in 1994, Advantage Mailing provides complete direct mail production services from data to delivery. In addition to the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press, the AM shop is equipped with six offset presses, four-color digital devices, 16 monochrome printers, a

full bindery and an in-house Post Office. Its customers include direct marketers such as Fortune 500 companies, advertising agencies, manufacturing firms and marketing groups. AM employs some 200 workers, including 28 digital/offset press operators. Its jobs range from postcards to multi-piece integrated packages. Ninety percent of AM’s output is mailed.

Changes in the commercial printing marketplace have moved Ling from regarding technology as just a production tool to seeing it as a strategic differentiator. “As leader of this company, I need to have foresight beyond the current year,” he says. “We have to be cutting edge with the latest technology to fulfill a customer oriented strategic vision. Variable print is the one demand in this industry seeing double-digit growth year by year.”

Ling knew that adding variable print would round out AM’s capabilities and increase its customer share-of-wallet. However, moving into this marketplace takes a leap of faith, he says; many commercial printers have hesitated to adapt their business models or invest in the necessary equipment. Yet, survival can depend on it.

The HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press; an advanced solution

The HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press is an advanced sheet-fed solution targeted for volumes of more than 2 million color pages per month. It delivers fast production speed of 120 four-color letter size pages per minute, with offset and photo quality. The press is optimized to print large numbers of static jobs with run lengths ranging from one copy into the thousands, as well as variable-data work requiring “every page is different” capabilities. AM chose the six-color option in order to emulate corporate customers’ PANTONE® colors. The HP SmartStream Production Pro Print Server provides a robust, scalable digital front end able to RIP large files quickly; it also will manage multiple HP Indigo presses when AM expands. The company sent three press operators to HP trainings, including HP Certified Operator Training, HP Shared Maintenance Training, HP Front End Tools for PrePress Training, and

HP Self-maintainer Training. It acquired the press on a four-year lease through HP Financial Services, along with HP Care Pack Service with 4-hour response. Operators also use HP information resources such as the My HP Indigo personalized website. Up and running quickly, the press registered some 5 million clicks its first month, and volume is growing beyond 7 million. "The operation is reliable and the image quality is outstanding," Ling says. "ElectroInk liquid Electrophotography ink looks more like offset, with a fluidness of colors and vibrancy that produces skin tones accurately."

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With the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press, AM mines the growing market for personalized direct mail, such as scheduled-maintenance reminders for the automotive industry, personalized coupon offers, and restaurant menus that include the individual diner's favorite dishes. One dynamic job requires AM to load and switch out hundreds of images, along with variable tables and text. The RIP is fast and seamless, Ling says. AM uses Personalized Print Markup Language (PPML)

in conjunction with software from HP Partner GMC Software Technology to set up jobs. "GMC is an extremely valuable tool," Ling explains. "It's a multi-faceted piece of software that drives multiple monochrome and color digital devices."

Ling hears much positive feedback from press operators. On-press and off-press diagnostics and troubleshooting maximize uptime. On-the-fly ink replacement saves time and effort. An intuitive touch-screen interface simplifies operator-to-press commands. "The operators say a lot of good things about the GUI, and they also like the press mechanically," he says. "It requires less operator involvement, less intervention and less maintenance. They can focus their time on prepping for the next job or multi-tasking to run multiple devices at once."

Shop workers like the press so much that one day someone from the production department approached Ling with an idea: Why not reschedule a medium-run static job from an offset press onto the HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press? It would be faster—requiring no time for ink to dry—easier to set up and less expensive to run. Ling agreed, and soon print production managers were sending more and more "tweener" runs to the press. Turnaround on these jobs was 10 to 50 percent faster, and costs dropped 20 to 50 percent depending on the run size. "That gave us a huge surprise advantage," Ling says. "I'm always doing accounting, but little did we know that in addition to competing in

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

Variable short-run color; migration of "tweener" (2,000 to 7,000) static runs from offset presses

Primary hardware

- HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press

Primary software

- The HP SmartStream Production Pro Print Server

HP Services

- HP Certified Operator Training
- HP Shared Maintenance Training
- HP Front End Tools for PrePress Training
- HP Self-maintainer Training
- HP Financial Services
- HP Care Pack Service, 4-hour response

the variable print niche, we'd find this jewel that would bring these operational efficiencies."

AM passes these ROI savings on to customers, increasing loyalty. Also of value to customers is AM's commitment to the environment. The company is pursuing certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. The HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press supports that effort with on-press oil recycling, lower electricity consumption, long consumables life, and elimination of make-ready and overruns. "The environmental aspect is important in this community, and this machine is a wonderful tool to support our LEED certification efforts," Ling says.

AM has been growing 20 to 25 percent a year and has no plans to stop. Today the company is pursuing new markets and offering new products within and beyond the direct mail arena. The HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press supports this drive with robust capabilities and substrate flexibility to produce everything from photo books to polyester magnets. Through all this, Ling says, HP continues to be a trusted technology and strategic partner.

"HP salespeoples' knowledge of the product is exceptional, and the delivery, installation, and



training services are outstanding," Ling says. "HP is very pro-active in extending resources for networking with the HP community of printers to share ideas. In fact, I'm meeting with HP to discuss our next steps in product innovation."

To learn more, visit www.hp.com

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