

A DIGITAL OFFSET GAP

This summer, Presstek commissioned InfoTrends to survey owners of DI® digital offset presses. Respondents identified key factors that influenced their selection of DI presses, and how its application fit into a real-world print operation. Presstek's DI presses incorporate the platemaking into the press. The DI images a digital file to chemistry-free printing plates that are automatically mounted directly on press. All four plates are imaged simultaneously in precise register with completely automated set-up, makeready and job changeover.

The study found DI offset presses currently in live production are seen by users as well suited to bridge a gap between longer runs on offset and shorter digital toner runs (see table). DI offset, say users, provides a combination of speed and quality to deliver value to clients in a manner not currently being filled by either conventional offset, or toner-based presses.

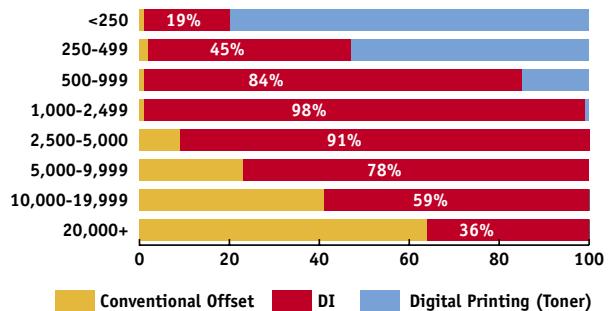
Perhaps most surprising was the discovery by InfoTrends researchers that DI owners were influenced in their choice of DI offset as much, or more, by expanded business opportunities and marketing value, as by the appeal of its state-of-the-art technology. Its ability to help grow business and raise profitability were highly valued. Key factors driving the choice:

- Expansion into new customer markets
- Improvement of productivity and print quality
- Complements existing offset and toner-based devices
- Addresses customer needs for shorter runs, fast turnaround times and lower per-page costs

DI Offset: outranking digital toner

Some 80 printers with DI presses responded. Most also offer conventional offset and toner-based electronic printing, as well as creative services, prepress, CTP, binding and finishing, and wide-format color printing. Respondents who also operated conventional offset (65% of the study group), were asked to list what characteristics of DI offset presses were most important, versus conventional technology. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 most important), the top five factors identified were: Print quality (3.6); ease of use (3.5); durability and reliability (3.4); throughput (3.4) and makeready (3.4) from the time the job is sent to the press.

When the same questions were put to those who operate digital color toner presses—83% of the group—quality ranked even higher: 3.7. Among digital toner's greatest challenges—consistency, cost-per-page, and speed—users gave DI Offset a solid 3.6 for its performance on these points. Reliability seemed very significant, as respondents expected to operate the press for 8.6 years, on average.



Other key findings from this study included:

- Makeready on a DI press takes less time than on conventional offset: 23% less on a 13.5" DI; 38% less on a 20.5" model.
- Respondents indicated that DI printing services increased their business; 80% brought in new clients or won customers from competition based on abilities DI services added.
- DI printing revenue is expected to reach 44% of total printing revenue of respondents over the next two years.

The "sweet spot" for DI printing is in the range between 500 to 20,000 finished press sheets (see table), a gap where conventional offset struggles to meet the low-end of the range, and toner-based digital can't hit the high end. Overall, users are very satisfied with the quality, speed, and ease of use offered by these devices. Their DI print revenue is growing and profit margins are increasing. It is clear that print providers are building their businesses around their DI presses.

DI PRESSES BOOST SALES

Find the complete InfoTrends study and more at:

www.presstekdi.com