CASE STUDY:
Tags & Labels – Riding the Wave

Company
Tags & Labels, Inc., Hallandale, Florida

Profile
Founded in 1976, this packaging and commercial printing company has 23 employees and generates approximately $2 million in annual revenues.

Challenge
Taking the company to the next level required upgrading from film-based platemaking to a chemistry-free CTP solution. Tags and Labels' primary criteria in selecting a CTP solution was that it had to be chemistry-free.

Solution
A Vector TX52 chemistry-free CTP system

Results
- Improved turnaround time, quality and service
- Able to reassign a pre-press worker to a vacant position in the company, thereby reducing headcount
- Reduced environmental footprint
- Producing plates for three 52 cm presses with capacity to grow
- Up and running, generating plates, within three days of installation
- A more productive press room

Chemistry-free Vector TX52 and Freedom Plates Save Costs, Labor and Time

"Chemistry-free CTP is not the wave of the future," says Peter Appelbaum, owner of Tags & Labels. "It is the wave of today. About two years ago, we set out to make sure we were riding that wave." Tags & Labels was founded in 1976, primarily to serve the packaging industry, and offers a wide range of products that includes hang tags, woven labels, printed labels, and pressure sensitive labels. "Packaging accounts for about 95 percent of our revenues, and we have commercial printing capabilities as well," Appelbaum explains.

A Vector TX52 is an easy-to-use, compact, chemistry-free CTP solution for Tags & Labels. The system is suppling high quality Freedom plates for three presses, with room for growth.

The Tags & Labels team attended Print 05 in Chicago to look at the state of the CTP market. Appelbaum had some very specific requirements. "First of all," he says, "our number one criterion was a CTP solution that was chemistry free. Secondly, we were concerned about footprint, since space is always at a premium. And finally, we are a Heidelberg 52 cm shop with three Heidelberg 52 cm GTO presses. Most of the CTP solutions we found in the 52 cm range were larger machines that can accommodate a 52 cm plate. We were looking for a true 52 cm system."

"I don't have to worry about the EPA and all the permits anymore...I don't have to dispose of spent chemistry."

Appelbaum found just what he was looking for at the Presstek booth with the Presstek Vector TX52. Tags & Labels purchased the Vector TX52 and it was installed in December of 2005. "The installation was seamless," he says. "Presstek came in, set up the machine, provided training, and in about three days we were up and running plates. We shut down our conventional darkroom and stripping department, sold what we could of the archaic equipment, and never looked back."

According to Appelbaum, the chemistry-free Freedom plates imaged by the Vector TX52 are slightly different than the analog plates the press room had been used to, but the press operators adjusted to the new plates quickly. "Anytime you change plates," he states, "there is an adjustment process. The adjustment process would have been the same even if I had simply switched brands."

Continued on reverse

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Chemistry-Free

Appelbaum was delighted with the chemistry-free operation of the Vector TX52. "I don't have to worry about the EPA and all the permits anymore," he says. "Secondly, I don't have to dispose of spent chemistry, be it plate developer or film developer. The plate wash water from the Vector TX52 can go in the local sewer system." Appelbaum's customers were also delighted with the new approach. Many of the company's customers were already asking for more environmentally-conscious printing. Now, he points out, they are thrilled when they learn that Tags & Labels has a chemistry-free operation that makes the company greener. "This has been a big selling point that has helped us with customers who are concerned about being green," he adds. "It makes life a lot simpler."

Better Quality/Lower Costs

Tags & Labels' customers are also happy with the improved print quality they are now receiving. "By running first generation plates on the Vector TX52, we are able to produce higher quality work much faster."

"I was hesitant about making the investment after the show," admits Appelbaum. "But the week after the show, my office manager informed me that she was leaving the company and would not be returning. It set off a light bulb in my head. The employee who was doing the stripping had already been cross-trained on the office manager job, and she would be a perfect replacement."

The other big area of savings for Tags & Labels has to do with the elimination of chemistry. "In Florida," says Appelbaum, "disposing of hazardous materials is getting to be a real problem, and it is expensive. Just in chemistry disposal alone, Tags & Labels is now saving hundreds of dollars annually," he reports.

"If I were starting up an entirely new shop tomorrow, there would be no question which way I would go—chemistry-free platemaking from Presstek."

Productivity Beyond Prepress

While the benefits of upgrading from film to CTP are well-understood and documented from a prepress perspective, the impact on the pressroom is often overlooked. "When we implemented the Vector TX52," explains Appelbaum, "we found that our presses were much more productive because imaging of the plates was so much more accurate than our film-based process. The pressmen are up and running on jobs much faster because it is easier to get the registration right the first time. Moreover, we seldom have to burn a new plate. With the Vector TX52, we have a much higher accuracy rate on plates, less waste in prepress, and much less labor and paper waste in the press room." Appelbaum points out that if a new plate is required for some reason, it is a matter of minutes to remake the plate with the Vector TX52.

Some of the tags, labels, packaging and general commercial printing that Tags & Labels produces. All three of their presses are run exclusively with Presstek chemistry-free Freedom plates imaged on a Vector TX52 CTP system.

Looking Ahead

According to Appelbaum, the Vector TX52 is so efficient that there is plenty of capacity to produce plates for another press. "We could handle four times the volume we are doing in plates," he says.

Appelbaum comments, "I have been delighted with the Vector TX52 and with Presstek's service and support." He states that while the shop is currently in the 52 cm market, there is a possibility of expansion to a larger press in the future. "If we go that route," he says, "of course I would assess the solutions on the market before making a decision, but unless something dramatically changes, I would upgrade to a larger Presstek chemistry-free CTP system. Presstek's service people treat us like we are a $20 million shop, and that is very important to us. If I were starting up an entirely new shop tomorrow, there would be no question which way I would go—chemistry-free platemaking from Presstek." ■

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