

CASE STUDY: The Ink Spot—High Quality for Discerning Customers

Company

The Ink Spot, Quincy, Massachusetts

Profile

A total print communications company serving the design, university and nonprofit communities of Greater Boston

Challenge

The Ink Spot sought a small-format, metal CTP solution that would improve productivity while furthering their ability to deliver the high-quality printing the company had earned a reputation for.

Solution

Presstek Vector TX52 CTP system and chemistry-free Freedom plates

Results

- Easy, fast platemaking
- Greater flexibility in production scheduling and meeting fast turnaround times
- High-quality metal CTP plates with the on-press performance of conventional metal plates
- A chemistry-free prepress operation without the costs associated with the handling, maintenance and disposal of film and chemistry

For High-quality and Streamline CTP, the Vector TX52 Hits the Spot

The Ink Spot, located in Quincy, Massachusetts, serves the Greater Boston design, university and nonprofit communities with high quality printing and related services.

While it is primarily two-color printing in small formats, the company's work is known for high quality in terms of both printing and overall production. Needing to improve their platemaking operation, The Ink Spot chose a Presstek Vector TX52 CTP system and Presstek Freedom plates to help deliver the high quality printing their markets require.



The Ink Spot's Quincy, Massachusetts, shop serves the Greater Boston area. The Vector TX52 and Freedom plates are the perfect CTP solution for the printer's two-page format presses.

Established in 1981, The Ink Spot has grown into a company of 15 employees offering

graphic design, prepress services, digital printing, small-format offset printing, and a full range of bindery, finishing and mailing services. The firm has found success by attracting discerning clients with small-format projects that have high production values. Many of those projects support the fundraising campaigns of Greater Boston's universities and nonprofit organizations. Owner

John Winter explains, "We do everything from materials in support of meetings and events to direct mail. Many of the pieces are short runs where the client wants a very elegant piece—for example, in support of a dinner to be attended by major donors. These are usually spot colors on fancy papers, often with foil stamping. They must have high production values

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Continued on reverse

Case Study: The Ink Spot—High Quality for Discerning Customers *Continued*

to appeal to attendees who are likely contributing significant dollars to host a table at the event.”

With much of their work coming from the Greater Boston design community, The Ink Spot also has become a preferred source for printing corporate identity materials. Winter says, “Companies turn to designers for help with brand identity systems—a new look, and perhaps a new logo. The resulting corporate identity packages include standards for business cards, stationery, signage, brochures, and anything else that bears the company’s brand.” The Ink Spot’s ability to accurately and consistently reproduce corporate colors across a wide spectrum of projects has earned the printer a stellar reputation in this market.

To deliver its high-quality printing, The Ink Spot has a Heidelberg 20-inch two-color press and two Ryobi 13 x 18-inch two-color presses. Today, all three presses are operated exclusively with Freedom plates imaged on the Vector TX52; but it was not always that simple.

Platemaking Challenges

Before installing the Vector TX52, The Ink Spot had three different platemaking systems. The choice of system depended upon the requirements of a job. At the low end were Megalith plates, although Winter says, “Requirements for most of our work had exceeded the quality that method could deliver.” He also had a polyester platemaker and a conventional film-based metal platemaking solution. Winter comments, “Juggling three different systems and approaches was not worth the effort of deciding which to use for each ticket and managing inventories for all three processes. It was too unwieldy and affected everything we were doing.”

Winter points out that quality requirements were outpacing the capabilities of both the Megalith and poly systems. This led the company to use film-based metal platemaking output across the board, virtually retiring the Megalith and poly systems. But Winter also knew that in order to stay competitive he needed to find an alternative to the antiquated film-based process, which he describes as “costly and time-consuming.”

Winter set about looking at alternatives. He says, “We are a two-page format operation, and most of the CTP systems in the market are four- or eight-page formats. We have no aspirations to move up in size and could not see the value in the extra cost and footprint. Furthermore, since we were moving away from film, I wanted to leapfrog to the most efficient process, and in my mind, that is chemistry-free.” A system that produced a high-quality metal plate was also an important requirement.

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The Vector TX52 features chemistry-free imaging and an internal water wash for easy operation and maintenance.

Presstek Freedom plates offer high resolution up to 200 lpi and quick makeready.

A Streamline Solution

With that criteria, and the need for quality foremost, in 2005 Winter decided to install a Vector TX52, which he had seen demonstrated at Print '05. “We then faced a decision,” he says, “whether or not to run parallel systems. We took a leap of faith and moved all of our plate production to the Vector TX52.”

“We are producing an average of 700 plates a month. The time savings are incredible,” Winter reports about their experience with the Vector TX52. When using the film-based process, it could take The Ink Spot up to 40 minutes to produce a plate. “For a complex job, it might have taken a whole shift just to produce the plates,” Winter adds. “Now, we can put the same job on press in less than 30 minutes. With the Vector TX52, there is no processing. The plate comes out of the system ready to mount on the press. The speed with which you move from a digital file to hanging plates on press is fantastic.” ■

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