

PRINT SITE

DI Makes First Contact

North Vancouver's Contact Printing & Mailing Ltd. recently installed Canada's first Presstek 52DI press. Co-owners David Brown and Bob Gibson have taken the middle road between traditional offset and pure, toner-based digital printing, replacing a 5-colour Heidelberg GTO with the DI, Presstek's first self-branded device. Compared with the use of its former press, the company can nearly double its productivity, according to Brown.

Roughly a week after installation, the press operators at Contact continue to experiment with Canada's first Presstek 52DI, training with live jobs. Brown is most impressed with the image quality, and the reduction in waste. "Doing the experiments, the waste is still less than what we were doing with the GTO, but not as low as it will be." He explains the press has a plate-saver function for a job with a small image area. "You image it, and advance to save that plate. Let's say you've got a 14-inch length on your plate, and you're only using seven inches. If you turn the plate-saver on, it'll only image the seven and save the other seven inches for the next job. If you're saving two inches per job over 44 jobs, that's 88 inches of plate material, so you've still got a few more plates in there. It's just a roll of material, and it advances as far as you need if you have the function turned on. If you don't, it will advance a full 14 inches every time."

How it measured up to other purchase options involves the company's preferences and individual needs. Brown and Gibson chose a DI press over a purely digital one based upon Contact's typical work, and also upon their preference for traditional printing. "We like the fact that it's still offset," he says. And while keeping offset, Contact can go after more high-end agency jobs, the designers of



Contact Printing & Mailing Ltd. co-owner Dave Brown, press operator Happy, and co-owner Bob Gibson.

which will appreciate the 52DI's 300-line screen. Contact prints art books and small-run books that will also benefit from the higher resolution. The owners chose a larger format DI press

because they wanted to stick with the familiar GTO sheet size and format, and kept away from comparable small-format offset because of space constraints within the shop.

Comparing theirs with the hypothetical purchase of a 5-colour Speedmaster 52, Brown envisions a critic that points out a relative loss in potential job variety and flexibility, to which he explains, "We're trying to make our business less complicated than it has been; this [installation] focuses us on a single type of printing." He acknowledges the faster makeready of small format offset, and points out a trade-off in labour: "If you were to have a race, the Speedmaster might come close to the 52DI, but the pressman is running around doing stuff, whereas our pressman might be cleaning the press or loading sheets [while the plates are imaged]." In the end, the company matched the press. ☺

— Matt Richardson