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Three Small Successful Printers

CITY COLORS

Direct Imaging Devotees

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West Coast Editor



the business and has been working in printing with husband and company president Roberto Infante for the past 20 years. Son Antonio also works for the company in the prepress department. “The Miami area is growing, and we’re now serving the East Coast and beyond,” she adds. Doral is in Miami-Dade County, with City Colors located about five minutes from the Miami International airport.

Son Miguel, company vice president, explains that prior to launching City Colors, the family owned a one- and two-color operation running ABDick presses. Seeing that their customers were moving into color, the family chose to start fresh with City Colors.

FOCUS ON the basics—market opportunity, customer needs, streamlined workflow and the right equipment—is paying off for City Colors Digital Printing Center, Doral, FL. A family owned and operated business, City Colors was created in 1998 as a “to the trade only” printer, running a new Heidelberg QM DI with an imaging system from Presstek. As the company grew, it added two more of these direct imag-

City Colors is owned and operated by the Infante family (from the left): Miguel, VP; Maria Elena, VP; Roberto, president/owner; and Antonio, graphic designer.

ing presses. Today, it employs 18 people and has recently added two Presstek 52DIs, replacing two of the QM DIs.

“We’re confident and happy about our future and our opportunity for growth,” reports Maria Elena Infante, who handles the financial end of

“We decided on trade printing with no design services and no one- and two-color work. We set it up to receive print-ready files and send them directly to press. We’ve always been basic. We have four to six papers available in-house. We run full-color only, and offer business cards, post-

cards, flyers and brochures," he says.

The company, now a \$3.7 million, single 10-hour shift operation, has been growing steadily at 25 percent annually. City Colors currently services customers in approximately 25 states, primarily on the East Coast and in the Midwest. The firm is moving into Texas for the first time this year, but is not yet attacking the West Coast.

Quality, Speed, Cost

High-quality reproduction, quick turnaround and price are key to the company's success. For example, an order for 1,000 UV-coated business cards submitted as a print-ready TIFF file costs \$17 and ships in 24 hours. Other file formats are accepted, but Infante maintains that TIFF is the easiest format to process and correct, if necessary, so a lower price is warranted.

City Colors attracted its first customers via direct mail and word of mouth, and continues to rely on direct mail to expand.

"We started with a 10,000-piece mailing, and now we try to get our name out two to four times a year. We have no sales reps, but we attract four to six new customers daily. In addition to graphic designers and brokers, small and large printers use our services. Some small printers aren't set up to run full-color, high-quality work; and 40" printers aren't interested in running business cards and postcards, but both want to satisfy their customers. About 98 percent of our printer customers are below our size," Miguel Infante explains.

As technology evolves, City Colors continues to streamline its entire workflow. The company began to accept e-mail orders in 2003 and subsequently transitioned to online ordering from its Website in 2005. In addition to submitting the file, all necessary paperwork is done on the

Website, and the price of the order is calculated, as well. "Today, we don't accept e-mail orders," Infante says. "While a few people still send us a CD and fax the order, 99 percent of our orders and files come through the Website."

The company began offering UV coating in 2004 with a system from Tec Lighting and Vencol. According to Infante, customer demand provided the impetus, but City Colors quickly moved from offering optional coating to "mandatory" UV. He notes that, in addition to providing the significantly shinier look that customers want, UV curing helps postpress operations, like cutting—because with the inks cured, there is no chance for offsetting. What's more, pressmen can now run a job in 20 minutes instead of having to build in drying time.

At the heart of City Colors' operations are its direct imaging presses. The company installed its first Presstek 52DI in December and, within 30 days, ordered a second. Infante cites the ability to print 300 lpi at 2,540 dpi with makereadies of under 10 minutes as crucial to the quality and turnaround time the company offers.

The 52DI is a landscape press that prints up to 10,000 sph. Sheet sizes range from 20x14" maximum to a minimum 10x7". Files image on all four cylinders simultaneously in 4.5 minutes. Since the press is waterless, there's no ink/water balance to achieve before coming up to color. All business card and postcard orders are printed on the 52DIs at 300 lpi.

More Gangs for the Buck

Infante points out that in addition to the significant leap in quality for both color and text, the new 52DI's wider format enables larger gang runs. Since 80 percent of City Colors' business card and postcard orders are for 1,000 items, it typically runs

1,000 sheets per job, producing 20,000 to 30,000 sheets per day per press.

For brochures, orders are placed for more than 10,000, but the typical order is from 1,000 to 5,000.

With the remaining Heidelberg QM DI, City Colors prints brochures, flyers, etc., at 150 lpi and 1,270 dpi. Postpress equipment includes guillotine cutters, folders and "at least" 10 Rollem slitters.

Ironically, the company used to purchase Chinese papers, but switched to American and English stocks some time ago, buying 10 to 15 skids per week. "The price is not as low as the Chinese was," Infante notes, "but with the recent tariff increase



Maikel Arnaldo, pressman (left), and Miguel Infante, vice president, discuss details of a printed product.

on Chinese papers, that may no longer be true. For our competitors and other small printers, a 6 to 10 percent increase is significant."

Not a company to stand still, City Colors will be concentrating on geographic expansion. "Our future looks positive for growth," he says. "It's a secure market. Everyone needs a business card—and our price, turnaround and quality are going to be there." **PI**

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