

CASE STUDY:

Topknotch Prep & Print—New Customers, New Products

Company

Topknotch Prep & Print, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

Profile

Founded in 2001 as a prepress company, today Topknotch is a full-service commercial print shop with a staff of seven.

Challenge

In 2006, Topknotch acquired their first Presstek 34DI® press to reduce outsourcing. The DI's digital offset capabilities facilitated a 25 percent growth in business, spurring the need for additional capacity.

Solution

Added a second Presstek 34DI digital offset press

Results

- Adding second DI press increases capacity, flexibility and ability to offer new services
- DI's environmental benefits fit company and customer requirements
- Exceptional DI quality driving migration to higher margin customers and products

Presstek DI® Drives Business Growth and Reduces Environmental Impact

Amin Suleman founded Topknotch Prep & Print as a family-owned business in 2001 with digital toner-based printing and film-based platemaking. His strategy was to provide a full-service commercial print offering by partnering with two to three local offset printers to whom he could outsource all his offset printing work. This strategy worked well for him for the first few years, and his business continued to grow. But he found disadvantages to farming out 70 percent to 80 percent of his work.

Like most printers, Suleman sees a growing need for small-format short-run full-color work. He says, "It was difficult to produce this work cost effectively with our internal configuration, and the smallest conventional press we owned was 19" x 25". So I began to look for an alternative solution—one that I could bring in-house without disrupting my existing production process."

In 2006, Suleman acquired his first Presstek 34DI press in order to bring as much work as possible in-house, and to improve quality and turnaround time for his customers. "The DI press allowed us to reduce the amount of work we were farming out," he says, "but it also drove a 25 percent growth in business. Despite adding a second shift, though, we were still farming out about 25 percent of our four-color work. And several customers were not happy with the quality of the outsourced work.

Taking the Plunge

One of the reasons Suleman originally chose the Presstek 34DI was to meet the quality requirements of his customers. "Our customers are picky," notes Suleman. "We need 300-line screen printing and perfect registration to meet their needs. With on-press imaging in perfect register and 300-line screen or stochastic imaging, the 34DI clearly met that requirement.

Continued on reverse



Owner Amin Suleman (left) and press operator Kevin Commerford with one of two Presstek 34DI presses that power their company's growth. The company is committed "to delivering the highest quality printing in the Toronto area," says Suleman. Presstek DI is helping them meet that goal.

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The downside, however, was that work we were farming out did not meet those quality requirements, and our customers were demanding that their work be produced in-house. We added a second shift, but we still needed more capacity.”

Suleman’s original plan had been to acquire a conventional 19" x 25" offset press to accommodate increased volume, but based on the performance of the first DI press, its environmental benefits, and customers’ response to DI quality, Suleman opted to acquire a second Presstek 34DI.

In addition to the quality the DI press delivers, Suleman points out that in Canada, and particularly in the Greater Toronto area, customers and the government alike are very concerned about the environment. “The Presstek DI press is 95 percent VOC free,” he comments. “It uses no chemicals and its waterless printing not only delivers better quality, but eliminates water consumption. Many of our customers want to purchase sustainable printing. DI’s waterless printing and chemistry-free platemaking, combined with the ability to use recycled papers, has been a win/win for us and for customers. It does not make any sense to introduce conventional offset into the operation at this point.”

Topknotch also participates in The Conservation Foundation of Greater Toronto’s Trees for Life program, which plants trees throughout the area. Suleman adds, “The air in our plant is clean, and we want to contribute to the overall air quality in our community, as well.”

Pushing the Envelope

With the second 34DI press in place, Suleman will dedicate one press to long runs and the other to short runs and specialty work, such as Pantone® inks, varnish and four-color envelopes. “There is good demand for four-color envelopes,” he says. “Before installing DI, we turned that work away.”

Suleman is profitably producing runs as low as 500 to 1,000 on his DI presses, and is also pushing the envelope at the top end. “We have a project for a customer that is 100,000 impressions,” he explains, “and although we need a plate change every 20,000 impressions or so, it is still quite profitable to produce on the DI. We did look at farming this job out, but the customer was not happy with press sheets

from our partner printers. They preferred that their job be printed on the Presstek 34DI.”

Topknotch regularly produces take-out menus and refrigerator magnets for a retail food chain with outlets across Canada. Items are customized for each location, and the customization is accomplished with a black plate change every

2,000 impressions. “The customer is very quality sensitive,” Suleman comments. “They want all the pieces to look exactly the same regardless of which location they are used in.”

Suleman also plans to increase his focus on higher-margin work, saying, “There is a terrific opportunity in that segment with short-run, fast turn work that smaller printers

cannot produce at the right quality level, and which are too small for larger printers to effectively manufacture. We are also experimenting with specialty substrates, including plastics, and we are interested in the UV option for the DI press. We will consider that down the road. That would open an entirely new range of opportunities for us.”

In order to prepare his operation for even better color quality, Suleman has pursued and been awarded certification as a G7 Master by IDEAlliance. “This is another example of our commitment to delivering the highest quality printing in the Toronto area,” he says.

Whatever opportunities Suleman chooses to pursue with his two Presstek 34DI presses, one thing is certain: Quality will remain top notch. Suleman says, “Our policy here at Topknotch is that any work produced has to be acceptable to

our employees. We ask them to take a critical look and ask themselves, ‘Would I buy this if it were my job?’ Returns from customers are almost non-existent.”

Working with Presstek

“Another important reason that we chose to acquire a second DI press,” concludes Suleman, “is that Presstek has delivered the best service we have ever had from any supplier. Their people are on the ball, quick to respond, resolve any issues that occur, and easy to work with. And, their services are very affordable. You can’t beat that combination!” ■

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For information about Presstek digital solutions, or for a schedule of demonstrations, visit

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