

CASE STUDY:

Catawba Print & Mail – Adding Digital Offset Printing

Company

Catawba Print & Mail, Hickory, North Carolina

Profile

Founded as a lettershop, Catawba Print & Mail added printing to bolster revenues as more printers began adding mailing services.

Challenge

With its mailing background, Catawba Print & Mail was looking for an offset printing solution that it could easily integrate into its operation without extensive training, to enable the company to produce high quality printing in-house in conjunction with its mailing business.

Solution

A Presstek 52DI digital offset press

Results

- Doubled sheetfed offset revenues since installing the 52DI, with significantly higher margins on those revenues
- New printing capability has boosted mailing revenues by attracting new print/mail business
- Expect a 30 percent increase in revenues over last year, largely due to their in-house high quality printing capability

Presstek 52DI Acquisition Expands Service and Drives Revenue Growth

Catawba Print & Mail, located in Hickory, North Carolina, only recently added “Print” to its name. The firm has a lettershop heritage and has historically worked jointly with printers on mailing projects. Looking to expand its printing services, Catawba was attracted to the Presstek 52DI, due to its high level of automation, 300 lpi printing and 52cm format, making it ideal for the quick turnaround work that is the company’s bread and butter.

“The Presstek 52DI is a perfect fit for us...in ten minutes we are up and running sellable output.”

“Historically,” says owner L.F. Miller, “we have depended on print partners to engage us for mailing projects. But increasingly, those printers are adding mailing services. To protect our future, we decided to add printing capability to our offering. With our in-depth knowledge of variable data and mail, we believe we can effectively compete for some time to come with a blend of printing and mail services. It is easier to add printing to a mailing business than vice versa.”

Presstek 52DI: A Perfect Fit

Catawba initially purchased a toner-based digital printer with the idea that the bulk of its printing would be single-pass, full color variable data. “We are keeping that press busy,” says Miller. “But we found that we were also doing a significant

amount of non-variable print in longer run lengths, and it didn’t make sense to produce that on our digital toner-based press.”

Catawba’s Tim Larson, Director of Print Operations, points out that the company saw the need for 4" x 6" and 6" x 9"

postcards in runs of 10,000 to 200,000 climbing and was outsourcing much of this printing.

“The Presstek 52DI is perfect for us,” he says. “We can now

produce printing in-house without all of the hassles of prepress and platemaking associated with conventional offset. We have great people that understand color and the front end, but we

Continued on reverse



(L to R) Tim Larson, Jason Lowman (DI press operator), and L.F. Miller of Catawba Print & Mail at the console of their Presstek 52DI. “We were doing a significant amount of non-variable print in longer run lengths, and it didn’t make sense to produce that on our digital toner-based press,” says Larson.

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did not want to become a conventional offset house. With the 52DI, in ten minutes we are up and running sellable output.”

The Need for Speed

Speed is important to Catawba’s clients. Larson cites an advertising agency that was getting one-week turnaround from a commercial printer for 20,000 6" x 9" postcards, with additional time for transfer to a mail house. Catawba can produce them in a day and get them right in the mail stream in an end-to-end bundled service. As a result, Catawba has a very satisfied new print customer.

But the benefits to Catawba don’t stop there. “As we have grown our printing business,” adds Miller, “we are also driving more volume to the mailing side, including our inkjet addressing business, which is highly profitable for us.” In another recent case, Miller reports that a Georgia firm, for whom Catawba had been mailing for 20 years, now also sends 90 percent of its print jobs to Catawba based on quality, turnaround and pricing. “They were getting a two-and-a-half week turnaround from their previous print provider, and we were able to reduce that to one to three days,” comments Miller. “In fact, I often have printed work completed and on the floor waiting for their mailing lists to arrive!”

52DI Drives Profitability

While Larson points out that the sweet spot for the DI press is runs of 2,500 to 20,000, he has also had good success with longer runs, including a recent run of 45,000 that required one plate change. “For longer runs,” he adds, “we sometimes still outsource, but if we have press time, it still makes financial sense to run these projects in house, even if multiple plate changes are required. We are looking at a 4/4 two-up letterhead job that would require 70,000 sheets, and we will produce that on the DI. We make more profit by doing it internally.”

Speaking of profitability, Miller reports that the DI press has made money for the firm every month since it was installed. In addition, by driving more volume to the mailing side of the business, the 52DI also drives overall revenue. This is a key element enabling Catawba’s anticipated 30 percent year-over-year revenue growth since installing the Presstek 52DI press.

Looking Towards the Future

While the firm continues to focus on its postcard business, Miller points out another related application Catawba is finding successful—rack cards printed on 16-point stock. “Typically, people use 12- to 14-point stock for rack cards,”



Catawba Print & Mail’s Presstek 52DI has grown its printing business while also driving more business to its mailing services. “We see more companies using postcards and self-mailers,” says owner L.F. Miller.

he says. “The DI’s ability to do a quality job on 16-point stock gives us a terrific market differentiator for this application.”

Another growth area for Catawba is self-mailers. “We expect increased demand in this area,” Miller remarks. “Recent postal rate changes have really clobbered catalogs in terms of postage costs, and we see more companies using postcards and self-mailers to drive buyers to their web sites.”

What challenges has Miller faced since installing the press? “Honestly,” he says, “my biggest challenge is getting orders entered fast enough to keep up with the press!” He has also been extremely happy with the reliability of the press. “The 52DI has exceeded my expectations,” he says, “and we are very pleased with the progress our business is making with it.” ■



Samples of Catawba’s printing on the Presstek 52DI include rack cards printed on 16-point stock.

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

www.presstek.com
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