

CASE STUDY:

Allegra Print & Imaging—Cedar Rapids—Doing More with Less

Company

Allegra Print & Imaging, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Profile

Opened in 1981, Allegra Print & Imaging has completed its transition to a fully certified commercial printer. The company has 21 employees and generates nearly \$3 million in annual revenues

Challenge

Allegra Print & Imaging was seeking a replacement for its Heidelberg GTO 52cm conventional four-color press that would deliver increased productivity without the need for advanced operator skills.

Solution

A Presstek 52DI® digital offset press

Results

- Increased throughput of color jobs by up to 200 percent per day
- Benefited from reduced waste and elimination of chemistry associated with four-color printing
- Planning for a 10 percent revenue growth in the first year of DI operation as a direct result of installing the Presstek 52DI

Streamlined Four-color Printing with a Presstek 52DI® Digital Offset Press

Bruce Van Kerckhove founded Allegra Print & Imaging in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, nearly 30 years ago as an Insty-Prints franchise. Over the years, Van Kerckhove continued to enhance the level of services his shop could provide and was certified as an Allegra Print & Imaging center in 2004, completing the transition from a quick printer to a small-format commercial printer.

“With the 52DI press, we have almost doubled the jobs we can produce in one day.”

The shop operated with two Heidelberg Quickmaster 46 two-color presses, a four-color Heidelberg GTO, two color copiers and two black-and-white copiers. Van Kerckhove had added a CTP system to drive all of its presses.

“As we considered replacing our Heidelberg GTO,” says Van Kerckhove, “we had several criteria in mind. First, we wanted a solution that would improve productivity—we wanted to be able to increase the number of four-color jobs we could produce in a day to keep up with growing market demand for four color. Secondly, we needed to improve our ability to match our press output to proofs. We wanted to be able to guarantee to our customers that what they saw on the proof was what they would get from the press, virtually eliminating the customer inconvenience associated with press checks. Finally, we wanted a solution that was easy to operate as it becomes increasingly difficult to find and recruit highly experienced four-color press operators,” so the company installed a Presstek 52DI digital offset press.

Continued on reverse

A Presstek 52DI has enabled Allegra Print & Imaging to easily upgrade its four-color printing without adding an experienced operator. “There are more people out there with computer knowledge than press knowledge, and the DI press allows us to capitalize on those resources,” says owner Bruce Van Kerckhove.



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Continued

Unexpected Green Bonus

For Van Kerckhove, the Presstek 52DI met all of his criteria and more. “An added benefit that we really hadn’t considered,” he remarks, “was the chemistry-free and waterless operation of the DI press.” Van Kerckhove points out that with waterless printing and automated operation, the DI press quickly comes up to color with precise registration, requiring far fewer makeready sheets than a conventional four-color press. Its waterless printing technology delivers exceptional quality, especially with heavy ink coverage, and sheets dry quickly, speeding job turnaround time and reducing the need for expensive dryers or long waits for sheets to dry before printing the second side and/or finishing. “A real bonus,” he adds, “is that with chemistry-free imaging, reduced VOC emissions, and less wasted paper, the DI press has helped us reduce our environmental footprint.”

Simplifying Staffing

Allegra Print & Imaging is very conscious of the need for redundancy in its operation in order to meet tight customer deadlines. The company had two qualified four-color press operators that shared press duties. Van Kerckhove recounts that both men were injured in separate non-work-related incidents, leaving the company without a qualified four-color press operator. “Interestingly,” he says, “our two-color press operator had indicated to me, just prior to these injuries happening, that he would like to cross-train on the four-color press. His wish came true much more quickly than any of us could have imagined. As I looked for a new press, ease of operation was an important criterion because I didn’t want to be put in that position again, potentially jeopardizing customer relationships by not being able to get work out on time.”

Van Kerckhove indicates that, like many companies, he has found it increasingly difficult to source tenured press operators. “There is a shortage in our industry,” he says, “and that is not likely to change anytime soon. While you need to understand color to operate the DI press, its highly automated operation requires much less intervention on the part of the operator. We have found that computer knowledge is more important with this press than knowledge about how to register four plates and get quality off of the press. There are more people out there with computer knowledge than press knowledge, and the DI press allows us to capitalize on those resources.”

Quick Response

The DI press has streamlined the workflow of the shop. Van Kerckhove cites an example where a customer came in at 1 p.m. on a Friday with a rush job that needed to be shipped overnight to another state. “By the time we RIPPed the file, got the stock from the paper house, and had the job ready to ship, it was 3:30 p.m. We were able to be responsive, the customer was extremely happy, and the quality they needed was there. We never would have been able to do that job before we installed the DI press.”

Revenue Growth

Van Kerckhove expects the 52DI to be a major revenue growth contributor for his company. “We had one of the busiest January’s in our history, largely due to the DI press even though it was only our first full month of operation,”

he remarks. “Like most businesses, our customers expect fast turnaround, and we are in a much better position to deliver against that requirement, meaning they bring us more business. With the 52DI press, we have almost doubled the jobs we can produce in one day. This improved productivity will certainly be good for us in the long run, and I expect our color revenues to be up by about 10 percent as a result.” ■

“A real bonus,” he adds, “is that with chemistry-free imaging, reduced VOC emissions, and less wasted paper, the DI press has helped us reduce our environmental footprint.”



Allegra Print & Imaging's customers have a large appetite for four-color printing, which a Presstek 52DI easily fills. Like the catering service whose work is shown above, Allegra's customers receive high quality and consistent color sheet-to-sheet, job-to-job, and day-to-day, regardless of run lengths and short turnaround times.

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

www.presstek.com

or call 1-800-524-0003 x3599.

