

TESTIMONIAL:

VGM Strategic Imaging—A Digital Offset Strategy



Subject

VGM Strategic Imaging, Waterloo, Iowa

Profile

VGM Strategic Imaging is the printing division of VGM Group, Inc., a member service organization for the durable medical equipment industry. The division provides complete printing and mail services to members and non-members alike and specializes in target marketing, direct mail and commercial printing.

Challenge

Eliminate outsourcing by acquiring high quality offset capabilities without changing the company's all-digital platform and business model

Solution

A Certified Pre-Owned Presstek 75DI digital offset press

Results

- Added offset capabilities without having to purchase and maintain a platemaking system
- Eliminated outsourcing for greater profitability and control
- Increased production flexibility and efficiency
- Able to combine technologies for hybrid printing solutions
- Expecting to add a second shift to meet demand

A Certified Pre-Owned Presstek 75DI Integrates High Quality Offset Printing Within an All-Digital Business Model

As the printing division of VGM Group, Inc., a nationwide member service organization, VGM Strategic Imaging provides high-quality digital printing to other VGM divisions and member companies. Its largest customer base, however, is the general business community at large. Its printing and mailing capabilities are part of a wide array of VGM marketing services. VGM Group is based in Waterloo, IA, and is employee owned.

General Manager Jim McClatchey's strategy for Strategic Imaging is to partner the latest digital imaging technology with extensive experience in printing and mailing to produce high quality, timely, and cost-effective marketing communications.

"With a DI® press, we could keep our all-digital platform while adding offset production."

A Goal to Print Everything In-house

While Strategic Imaging's core business is direct mail and target marketing, McClatchey says, "Customers come for our expertise in variable data and bring us their other printing business, as well." That includes a wide range of projects that are specified or best suited for offset printing. Prior to acquiring a Presstek 75DI digital offset press, Strategic Imaging had been outsourcing its offset printing. However, driven by its sales force, the company wanted to produce those projects inside for better control and profitability. "Our goal," McClatchey says, "was to have the capability of printing all the offset work ourselves but stay within our digital business model."

McClatchey recognized that DI® technology combines the qualities and features of offset printing with the speed and efficiency of digital imaging because he had once operated a DI press himself. "With a DI press, we could keep our all-digital platform while adding offset production," he says. Strategic Imaging chose a 75DI model because it features a 31-inch sheet size. The company's iGen 150 has a 26-inch format and they did not want an offset format smaller than their digital format, he explains.

The environmental benefits of DI printing—especially chemistry-free imaging, waterless printing with low VOCs, and minimal paper waste—also appealed to Strategic Imaging. "We had just remodeled our facility, making it energy efficient with low consumption. A DI press fits that model, too," McClatchey points out.



The Strategic Imaging team (at top) gathered together during an open house event to introduce its Presstek 75DI press (shown above) and newly remodeled facility. General Manager Jim McClatchey, second from the left in the group, describes the 75DI as a perfect fit for the business, including its environmentally-friendly features.

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“We will continue to grow and the Presstek 75DI will definitely be a factor in that. I can even foresee a third shift for the press and 24-hour operation.”

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Continued

It All Came Together

Purchasing Certified Pre-owned equipment was not Strategic Imaging’s original plan, but it turned out to be their best option when they needed to move forward with their acquisition. The cost saving was a consideration, but the availability of the right equipment at the right time was a major factor, according to McClatchey. In what he describes as “a perfect storm,” a refurbished five-color 75DI model with inline aqueous coating became available right at the time they were ready to purchase. “What we needed, what we wanted, and when we were ready all came together in this press,” he says.

Production Flexibility

The 75DI press has delivered the capabilities that Strategic Imaging was looking for, producing all of their offset printing and providing new flexibility in their production planning. Deciding which jobs will run on the 75DI, McClatchey says, “depends on the size, quantity and makeup of the piece. There are a lot of factors that go into that equation.” The production flexibility can even be applied within an individual job. “Sometimes a single job is divided among presses if there are multiple versions in greatly different quantities,” he explains. “Some versions will go on the iGen and others on the DI.”

With fifth color and inline aqueous coating units, Strategic Imaging’s 75DI press accommodates a broader range of work, delivers higher quality output, and offers greater production flexibility than a four-color press. The shop runs gloss and soft-touch coatings on a number of jobs for visual appeal or to speed up production with fast drying. A protective coating can also speed up the bindery, McClatchey points out, because there is less need for caution about marking and scratching. “We do almost all flood coating, with an occasional simple knock-out. For complicated spot finishes, we print varnish with the fifth color unit,” he says. In addition to varnishes, the fifth color unit is used to print special colors and Pantone® inks to meet customers’ specifications and enhance quality. The fifth color unit sometimes eliminates issues, he says. This is the case when a Pantone® ink is used because keeping a particular color consistent would be difficult with process inks.

By pairing the 75DI digital offset press with their digital devices, Strategic Imaging is also able to offer hybrid products that combine the best of both technologies. McClatchey explains, “We’ve run books that have static guts of which we print 10,000 to 20,000 on the 75DI, and then come back with short runs of custom covers printed with the iGen. We also print shells on the DI that we run back through a digital press for variable data content.”

McClatchey confirms that the Presstek 75DI has met the company’s goals and more. “We are close to needing a second shift on the 75DI,” he says. “We will continue to grow and the Presstek 75DI will definitely be a factor in that. I can even foresee a third shift for the press and 24-hour operation.” ■

