

QUICK PRINTING

by Bob Hall

on the **road**

Copy Cop: A Digital Transition

When family owned Daniels Printing in Boston, MA, was sold in 1999 during a spate of industry consolidation, Grover Daniels' non-compete gave him five years to figure out what, if anything, he wanted to do next in the printing industry. When the non-compete expired, this fourth-generation printer and former owner of an \$80 million commercial printing company bought a string of Boston copy shops and, with his brother Adam and some other Daniels Printing alumni, started a major upgrade operation.

At the time, Copy Cop was a 15 location operation using mostly analog copying equipment. There was a central production facility with one early model Xerox iGen3, and a handful of small offset presses.

"It was a fairly traditional print and copy infrastructure that had grown wonderfully over a number of years and then hit the end of its useful life," says Daniels. "We were successful in bringing them into the next generation."

One obvious necessity was upgrading to digital equipment. "One of the first things I did was close the press room," says Daniels. "And we got rid of 95% of the analog equipment. We started to focus on delivering a digital product that was going to be beneficial to the customers and have enough legs in it

that any decision we made, we could live with five or 10 years down the road.

"We had an iGen3, so we went out to see what was competing with it. We went to HP and to NexPress and we were even looking at Canon," Daniels remembers. "What we found through that process was that the cost of acquiring that type of equipment was so high that it wasn't going to be beneficial to the turn-around of the company. We didn't think there was enough benefit in the ROI to spend that kind of money, so we went smaller. Instead of getting one big device, we put smaller devices in the stores. We moved production capability back into the stores with Toshiba and Konicas."

Another move was to trim and streamline the retail operations. "We closed several locations," says Daniels. "We closed all six Boston financial district locations because that area was just saturated. Outside that area we closed another two, so that leaves us with seven retail Copy Cop locations."

The remaining retail locations got a spruced-up look to go with their new digital capabilities. Locations were transformed into studio-like spaces with high counters, stools, and workstations, along with personal computer workstations on tables.

Today, all Copy Cop "studios" operate toner-based digital equipment including Konica Minolta bizhub PRO C500s for color, HP 5500s for wide-format, and Toshiba e-STUDIO models for monochrome. The company has also recently added two Konica Minolta C6500s.



▲ Grover Daniels heads up Digital Printing Company, the parent company of the Copy Cop chain.



▲ Copy Cop's front counter provides a user friendly environment for employees to interact with clients.

However, the biggest change came with the creation of the Digital Printing Company or DPC, which serves as the parent company to the Copy Cop retail stores. "That was one of the big changes," says Daniels. "Instead of having the production center be just another location, we've opened up a printing company that has direct clients and that uses primarily the Presstek DI. That's probably the most successful thing we've done to turn things around."

DPC also operates three Xerox DocuTechs, two Océ 800 CPS printers, and the HP 5500s for wide-format. Company-wide, Daniels estimates that about 30% of jobs are monochrome, with some 50% of color work coming off the Konica Minolta units and the rest from the Kodak badged Presstek DI 5334 and the HP wide-format units. Daniels says he is particularly impressed with the DI because of its rapid make-ready, high quality output, and environmental friendliness. Not only are the plates imaged on press, but also DPC uses soy-based inks and recycled paper to make it even more environmentally friendly.

Learning Curve

While the transition from analog to digital and the transformation of the Copy Cop retail locations was fairly straightforward, there was a challenge in learning how to deal with lots of smaller invoices.

"The challenge is trying to understand many more customers with thousands of smaller invoices in order to be able to put the



▲ *Digital files are the lifeblood of Copy Cop's operations.*

right equipment and capability to use so that they can continue to grow with you over time," says Daniels. "The previous financial department had overanalyzed and was looking at one invoice at a time. It was difficult to get a real overview, to aggregate the data and be able to look at the verticals. Look at the products within the verticals. Look at the customers. Look at the equipment in order to understand workflow. A very big part of the turnaround was getting in control of the information."

The company's Kodak badged Presstek DI 34DI. ►

On Demand

When asked if he considers himself to be a small commercial printer, Daniels says that he does not like to be pigeon holed by certain designations.

"One of the things that I would like to let your readers know is that part of what I see as my small role as a fourth generation printer is to create clarity in the minds of our customers," Daniels says. "I think the terms that have cropped up over the years—variable data printing, hybrid printing, commercial printing, and even to some extent quick printing—have diluted the ability of printing companies to articulate how good they are. I believe that there is an opportunity to have the printers stand up and say 'we are printers and we are proud,' instead of saying 'we are in the communications business' or 'we are in the direct marketing business,' and so on.

"Printers need to have a voice, whether it's through your publication or other publications, to have the clients come to us first before they go to the marketing company, or the photographers, or the designer. There are so many solutions that the printers have, that they know how to use, but they don't know how to articulate it to the market. I believe the reason they don't is that they are afraid to say they are printers. I believe printers need to be proud of their heritage and proud of their future.

"That said, I characterize us as a print-on-demand company. We're out there right now with our clients talking about print-on-demand, whether it's personalized, customized, static, or whatever. Whether they need a digital library or not. Whether they need access to the data or not. None of that matters because the whole thing is we print on demand. I refuse to have our customer service and salespeople refer to it as VDP because clients have no idea what VDP is. Print on demand means everything—whether you deliver it through the Internet, through email, or disk, or hard copy. That's what we do. And I think that the smaller shops that give a lot of the personalized attention are the true print-on-demand companies." ►►

