



Mercury Print Productions builds their business with KODAK PROSPER Technology and a great partnership

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Abstract:

Mercury Print of Rochester, NY is a perfect example of using digital technology as a driver for business transformation. They have also found that their vendor partners are a big factor in that success, and for all the right reasons...

Production Inkjet technology is undoubtedly revolutionizing print and packaging production. However, the real benefits of any technology are achieved by what can be leveraged with the partnerships you develop, combined with that technology, to help you revolutionize your business.



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Christian Schamberger, President,
Mercury Print Productions, and
David Zwang

Mercury Print, in Rochester, NY, was founded in 1969 by Valerie Mannix, as a typesetter and forms printer in the basement of her house. Today, 50 years later, her son, John Place, is the CEO and she is a valued advisor. When the business was founded, John was just a kid and really not interested in printing. Today, along with his partner and President, Christian Schamberger, who joined Mercury in 1999, they have created one of the most interesting and exciting printing

companies I have seen. And they have made it a practice to leverage new technologies throughout the life of the company to revolutionize their business.

When the business started, Mercury was running Multilith duplicators and A.B. Dick presses, typesetting and printing stationery for businesses. The company continued to operate out of the basement for 10 years until they moved to a “really cool looking old building” as John describes it. At that point

his mother convinced him to join and help grow the company. They purchased a 29” Miele offset press and they were on their way. They focused the business on doing B&W book printing, and the business growth and press purchasing continued. Mercury made the initial move to ‘digital’ with toner presses around 1991, starting with a few XEROX DOCUTECH presses. Being in Rochester, in the proximity of Xerox and Kodak, they were in a great position to become beta sites and work through any new product start up issues. They decided to approach the educational market with the new equipment and show them what value digital printing and mass customization could offer them.

This new business in the educational market created further opportunities, so they purchased an HP Indigo 3200, and then a few more Indigo presses, which brought their complement of press equipment to a variety of web and sheetfed presses. This included a couple of XEROX iGENs and three KODAK NEXPRESS Presses to give them the horsepower they needed to produce and compete. Ultimately, they were given another opportunity to take on even more of the educational book business. But this meant competing in the big league and printing on 45 lb lightweight stock. So, they needed to rethink their equipment mix again.

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Mercury Print currently has 5 PROSPER Presses.

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The introduction of Production Inkjet interested them, and they envisioned the potential it could bring to their book production business. All of the 'big guys' were competing with HP 'T Series' presses at the time, and they wanted to find a different solution that would give them a competitive advantage. During their review of available production inkjet presses at the time, they started by looking at the effective crossover point to ensure their selection would be cost effective in their prospective market. They reached out to Kodak and were invited to look at the new PROSPER 5000 Press, which uses KODAK Stream technology instead of drop on demand. They found that, with an effective minimum of

about 27 million pages per month, combined with the higher quality of the Stream technology, this would give them the competitive edge they were looking for. In April 2012, they took delivery of their first PROSPER Press. It was new technology and it was a little rocky at first, but Mercury and Kodak stayed at it as a team and it became a great high-quality production book press. At the end of the first year, things were stable and performing as they envisioned, so they ordered their second PROSPER Press. It has been so good for them, that in less than 7 years they have installed their fifth PROSPER Press.

Mercury has been profitably producing book runs of 3,500 or more on each PROSPER Press. With the five presses, this now gives them a fully justifiable 175M month capacity and, more importantly, the flexibility required to handle the on-demand nature of the book business. There are other benefits as well. Moving to Production Inkjet has allowed them to not only reduce the number of presses they have, but correspondingly, the number of operators as well. Having a complement of the same presses helps in manning and training, as they found early on with their Heidelberg offset and PROSPER Presses. They also both agreed that, while working with new technology is always a challenge, it's not just the equipment, but also the workflow and integrating it into the whole business mix.

The benefits of moving from toner to Production Inkjet presses were quickly evident. Testing their production quality, some of their customers do 'blind' quality tests with their qualified vendor base, and Mercury consistently comes out on top of the pack with their PROSPER Press output. In addition to the higher quality and becoming more price competitive, being able to produce more than 35 million pages in a month on a single inkjet press, compared to 1 million pages on a toner device, further opened up available capacity and the door to more business opportunities.

Their continued growth is not only dependent on Production Inkjet. In fact, they are putting in an additional Heidelberg conventional offset press and a 48-page Manroland LITHOMAN web press shortly. This addition will provide Mercury an effective way to produce longer book runs, while at the same time giving them the flexibility in the 2,000 to 4,000 copy runs to cost-effectively produce on either the Manroland or the PROSPER Press. Ultimately, while production inkjet is exciting and 'cool' technology, they continue to focus on selecting the right press for the right application at the right time, which is one of the keys to their continued success.

Mercury Print, which started in the basement, has moved six times to be able to support their continued growth. They have been in their current building for almost six years, and this latest building should offer them the ability to expand their space and continue to grow without moving again. John and Christian are strong believers in the partnership relationships they have with their press vendors. While selecting the right equipment with good productivity and operating costs is important, the vendor relationship is one of the major factors in their equipment selection process, and Kodak has proven to be a great partner.

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