

GI Solutions doubles its digital print capacity with HP Color Inkjet Web Presses



At a glance

Industry: Direct Mail & Transactional Printing

Business name: GI Solutions Group

Headquarters: Leicester, UK

Website: gi-solutionsgroup.com



Challenge

- GI Solutions' digital print volumes have grown by 1,000 per cent over the past five years. It needed to upgrade to presses that were more reliable and more productive, to deliver higher quality and to support a wider range of substrates.

Solution

- GI Solutions invested in two HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses, replacing outdated inkjet printing technology.

Results

- Digital print now represents 40 per cent of GI Solutions' business, the two HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses immediately doubled capacity.
- High speed, high quality digital print with 1200 dpi running at one million A4 sheets per day that has also reduced downtime and wastage.
- Effective colour-matching, allowing GI Solutions to offer hybrid printing between the conventional and inkjet presses.
- Anticipates an increasing volume of its business will migrate from web offset to production inkjet in the near future.
- Able to meet increasing demand for consistently high quality personalised print.

“Our due diligence validated the belief that HP has the people and technology required to develop, deliver and support products, not just for today, but for tomorrow.”

– Patrick Headley,
deputy managing director,
GI Solutions Group

GI Solutions Group is a Leicester-based marketing services group. The business supports every aspect of the communications cycle, from personalised direct mail to multi-channel communications. Founded in 1992, it employs 248 staff and estimates turnover for 2014 to be £37 million with a projected profit of £2.2 million.

“We were founded as an inline litho printer with heatset web offset presses,” explains Patrick Headley, deputy managing director, GI Solutions. “We only entered the direct mailing business 10 years ago. But we took it seriously. We had the first ever web presses in the UK with inline inkjet heads for black-only personalisation of direct mail pieces.”

GI Solutions quickly saw the value of migrating some of its work to production digital inkjet, introducing this service in 2007. Seven years on and those original presses were starting to date. “We knew we needed newer technology to stay ahead of the game,” says Headley.

Preparing for the future

Headley and his team reviewed available production inkjet options, including presses from the existing vendor. They were most interested in improvements in quality, speed and capacity. Most importantly, they wanted evidence of long-term R&D investment: “We want a technology partner with the ability to meet future market needs,” explains Headley.

“We’re still doing a fair amount of hybrid work,” he continues. “We need to make sure the quality between the two technologies is close enough to satisfy our customers’ expectations. And those expectations continue to grow. Quality, fast time to market, and an innovative approach to solving problems is required.”

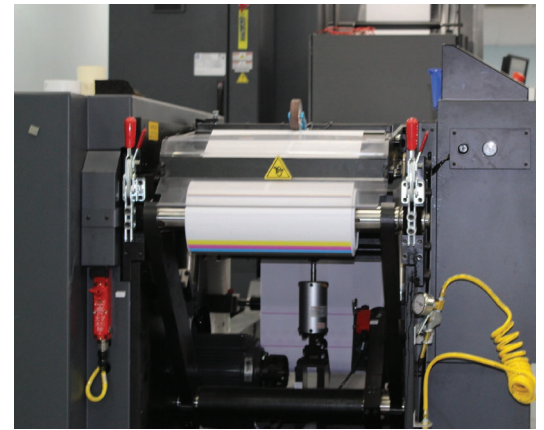
Uncompromising speed and quality

“One of the issues with our existing production inkjet presses was that we had to cut the speed in half to obtain the quality we needed for many jobs,” Headley reports. “This reduced the throughput to 210 feet per minute and created a bottleneck. The priority was to find a solution that gave us speed and quality, with no compromises.”

GI Solutions chose to partner with HP in making this investment and acquired two HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses. “We needed a partner dedicated to the same objectives,” says Headley. “For us, HP is that partner.”

The due diligence process included a visit to the HP Inkjet Innovation Center headquarters in San Diego, California.

“The HP presses print high quality at 400 feet per minute, which instantly doubled our capacity,” Headley says. “We don’t have any more problems with streaking, and we really like the head redundancy. If there is a problem with one inkjet head in the system, another one immediately compensates until we perform necessary maintenance. Not only are we getting higher quality and faster throughput, but we have less downtime and wastage.”



Not only is high-quality throughput transformed, the HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses make it more cost-effective for versioning, as every version on offset requires one or more plate changes. Every change is costly and time consuming.

“There will be a point in time, in the not-too-distant future, where offset will be replaced by digital,” says Headley. “Customers want to change more than just the black plate, switching out images and otherwise changing colour within the piece.”

Looking ahead

GI Solutions’ digital print volume has grown 1,000 per cent over the past five years and today digital print currently account for 40 per cent of the groups’ turnover. To encourage discussion among customers, the business has even taken to hosting seminars on Digital Print, showcasing creative work and data segmentation.

Headley says the business is aware it is operating in a dynamic environment. Larger databases and the ability to target communications to smaller groups mean direct mail customers are demanding greater personalisation.

“Customers are looking to incorporate more colour and variable imaging to add value to those communications,” says Headley. “That means a larger quantity of shorter runs that is simply not cost-effective to produce using web offset.”

He says the business is already considering its next investment. “One of our 40 inch web offset presses is ripe for replacement,” Headley says. “We’re closely watching market developments with respect to the expansion of substrates for production inkjet. In the future, we’ll probably replace the older web offset press with a production HP T410 Color Inkjet Web Press. It’s more suited to the job mix we expect to see in the future.”

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