

Case study

American Litho adds full-color variable inkjet capability to traditional press



iDataPrint™ HP C800 solution from Document Data Solutions provides CMYK color inkjet personalization for commercial print and mailing applications

Challenge

- Identify a low-cost method for full-color inkjet imaging
- Increase variable data color printing customer base
- Maximize potential of existing equipment
- Create higher impact one-to-one communications

Solution

- Work with Document Data Solutions (DDS) to develop a tailor-made hybrid solution
- Installation of 4 x HP C800 Print Module for variable inkjet color printing
- High-volume ink reservoirs for uninterrupted production
- iDataPrint™ software and two controllers from DDS to provide duplexing capabilities

Results

- Versatility that enables American Litho to compete for more jobs requiring color variable data printing
- Increased response rates to customers' direct mail
- Reduced production costs while adding value
- Flexibility to use modules across web and sheet-fed presses, and finishing platforms



“The full color CMYK HP C800 Print Module with iDataPrint™ software features automated printhead servicing that manages purging and wiping of the print modules without having the operator manually touch the printheads. The automatic, self-contained cleaning station also eliminates messy and time-consuming start-up and shut-down procedures.”

— Michael Fontana, president, American Litho, Inc.



When direct marketing printer American Litho needed a variable data color printing solution to meet customer demands competitively, it turned to Document Data Solutions (DDS). DDS evaluated its needs and installed a tailor-made solution based on the HP C800 Print Module from HP Specialty Printing Systems (HP SPS) and DDS iDataPrint™ software. The solution offers cross-platform versatility and flexibility, as well as low cost digital color production.

“For the sort of direct mail and transactional printing work carried out by American Litho, the use of the HP C800 Print Module for full-color variable data printing can deliver significant cost savings compared to its legacy system. This is achieved through a combination of greater productivity, versatility, and reduced maintenance costs.”

— Robert Ellis, president,
Document Data Solutions, LLC

Industry:

Direct marketing, Commercial Print

Company name:

American Litho, Inc

Location:

Illinois, USA

HP equipment:

4 x HP C800 Print Module

Website:

alitho.com

dds-usa.com



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Challenge

Building response rates with variable data color

In the increasingly crowded and competitive consumer mailing market, brands and corporate organizations strive to achieve the best response rates. One proven way of doing this is the addition of personalization of variable data color text and images.

American Litho's customer base includes many Fortune 1000 companies, especially in the financial, healthcare and retail markets. With web and sheet-fed presses as well as extensive finishing capabilities, American Litho's revenues exceed \$100 million annually, with \$85 million of that coming from direct mail sales.

“We offer a complete service from creative designs to finished mailings,” says Michael Fontana, president, American Litho, Inc. “These pieces can include pop-ups, postcards, stitched booklets and other pieces with static or variable data content.” The company wanted to improve its cost-effectiveness, reliability, and productivity, and capture more jobs.

“Where we saw that we could do better was in full-color, personalized variable data printing,” says Fontana. “That was when we contacted DDS to see if it could find the best solution for us.” DDS, of Brookfield, Connecticut, offers consultancy, software, and hardware solutions to printers wanting to achieve high-volume VDP production.

“American Litho wanted to meet demands from existing customers, and to attract new ones,” says Robert Ellis, president, Document Data Solutions, LLC. “Given our experience in variable data inkjet color printing, software development, fabrication and consultancy, we developed a hybrid solution for them.”

Solution

Delivering value with unparalleled flexibility and reliability

At the heart of the solution for American Litho are four HP C800 Print Modules from HP Specialty Printing Systems (HP SPS) controlled by DDS iDataPrint™ software.

“HP SPS works with partners, like DDS, to develop applications for its thermal inkjet technologies,” Ellis says. “The HP C800 Print Module may be used for variable data documents, direct marketing materials, or packaging applications, and configured either singly, or in arrays.

“These can be in monochrome, or CMYK color, and may be installed on presses, finishing lines, or envelope machines,” he says. “Each module prints a 4.25-inch swath, up to five modules can be arranged in an array, and imagers stitched together to create full-color images that can be printed at up to 800ft/min.”

DDS writes the software for the controllers that handle the variable data files, and carries out any necessary hardware fabrication to ensure the customer can achieve its objectives.

“The print module start-up procedure is less than three minutes, and the shut-down procedure is less than two minutes,” says Fontana. “When required, the low-cost printheads are easily replaceable in less than a minute, and with no printhead refurbishment required, you get a new printhead every time.

A unique part of the American Litho project was that it wanted to use its four modules across its web and sheet-fed presses, and on a finishing line to fully utilize its equipment, and produce the maximum range of applications. “Using specially built carriages, we enabled this versatility for American Litho,” Ellis says. “Within minutes, modules can be moved from one platform to another and be locked into place to achieve perfect register.”

Results

A platform for growth

“Success in marketing today means creating a one-to-one experience for customers,” Fontana explains. “Our clients bring us rich customer data which lays the foundation. Our role is to help them personalize the message their customers receive. Adding digital inkjet color printing capability, with the HP C800 Print Modules and the iDataPrint™ software, lets us maximize our existing production capabilities while handling variable data.”

American Litho is now applying full-color variable data information and images to campaign runs from 100 pieces up to millions with the hybrid system.

“Most of this is one-to-one messaging, printed on a wide variety of substrates, including matte stocks,” says Fontana. “Our move from simple black or single PANTONE® Color personalization to full variable CMYK color has been a transformation. The ability to print variable data color images up to 8-inches wide is a tremendous advancement, and with the HP C800 Print Modules, they look beautiful.

“DDS has been a great partner from start to finish. Its approach was well thought-out, and it helped us every step of the way,” Fontana continues. “Since our plant never closes – we are literally producing work for clients 365 days a year – we experience quite a bit of stress when we’re bringing on new technologies, but DDS made it easy.

“The HP C800 Print Modules combined with DDS’s software and support further enhances our business plan to grow by expanding our digital capabilities,” Fontana concludes. “We consider the new hybrid solution a great strategic advantage for us and our clients.”

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