

Auraprint adapts to changing market conditions using HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press for label and shrink sleeve production



AT A GLANCE

Industry: Labels & Packaging
Business name: Auraprint Oy
Headquarters: Turku, Finland
Website: www.auraprint.fi



CHALLENGE

- To meet increasing requests for high-quality, short-run label products, Auraprint needed to find a digital press offering reliable, high-volume production.
- Auraprint also had seen an opportunity for digitally printed shrink sleeves, which it was unable to offer.
- The economic environment was making customers more cautious in their ordering, with rising requests for shorter-runs, which placed production and profitability pressures on conventional production.

SOLUTION

- Having studied the market, Auraprint chose an HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press that offered the desired quality and production capabilities, while also enabling the production of shrink sleeves, as well as the potential to produce flexible packaging and folding cartons.

RESULTS

- The new press increased Auraprint's capacity for label printing and also enabled Auraprint to offer digitally printed shrink sleeves.
- In addition to shrink sleeves – 20 percent of which are now printed digitally – Auraprint has developed new products including double-layer labels.
- The capabilities of the HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press have enabled cost-effective short-run labels and shrink sleeves, plus value-adding production of new products like double-layer labels.

“Apart from enabling us to produce high-quality, added value products on-demand, our HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press has led us to streamline our internal operations to achieve 24-hour turnaround times efficiently.”

— Tero-Matti Kinanen, managing director, Auraprint Oy

In 2010, Auraprint Oy marked its 125th year in business; it was also the year that it installed an HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press.

Auraprint supplies a wide range of labels, flexible packaging and commercial print to a broad customer base, offering conventional and digital printing services to more than 3000 customers throughout Finland. With production facilities in Turku and sales offices in Turku, Helsinki and Tampere, Auraprint is a market leader for converting services in the country.

An early adopter of digital technologies, Auraprint has been using digital inkjet devices for more than 20 years, using them for barcodes, sell-by dates, batch numbers and other track and trace information. However, this was in monochrome only. With the installation of a dry toner system, Auraprint became the first digital color label printer in Finland.

“After running our dry toner system for two years, we realized that we needed additional production capacity, and after evaluating the presses available, we decided that the HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press would best suit our needs,” says Tero-Matti Kinanen, managing director, Auraprint Oy.

“We wanted to handle a range of different materials, and with this press we are able to do wrap-around labels and shrink sleeves, as well as labels on a wide variety of substrates. Because there is very little heat in the process, we can print films and many more substrates than before. The ability to print with white ink is also an advantage in label and shrink sleeve production,” he continues.

Offering new products

The addition of a digital shrink sleeve capability was one reason for installing the HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press. The company already offered flexo-printed sleeves, but the demand for shorter runs and faster turn-arounds was affecting both margins and production schedules.

“Run lengths and cost are the factors that determine whether we print orders digitally or conventionally,” Kinanen explains. “Our customers are more concerned with quality and service than knowing how jobs are produced, though of course, some jobs can only be printed digitally.”

In the year since the installation of the HP Digital Press, which was supplied by Visutech, HP’s channel partner for the Nordic countries, Auraprint has seen digital grow from zero to 20 percent of its shrink sleeve production.

“We attribute this to several factors,” Kinanen continues. “First, the quality enables the use of either flexo or digital for these jobs; our customers are satisfied. Secondly, the economy and marketing trends are causing companies to request shorter runs, which favor digital printing.”

In fact, Kinanen has noticed an overall trend for smaller orders, shorter lead-time and minimal risk-taking.

“Companies are reacting in the best way they can to the uncertain economic outlook, and, fortunately we are able to meet their requests by printing digitally,” Kinanen says. “Shorter runs make it easier for them to try some new things to differentiate themselves.”



Enriching the product mix

With customers in food and drink markets, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and healthcare, as well as technical and industrial products, the variety of label products is equally diverse.

“We’re now able to help customers test shrink sleeve designs,” Kinanen says. “Printing them digitally means we can produce half a dozen sleeves and fit them to containers to help companies judge the design and impact. This just wasn’t possible before.”

Another innovation is Auraprint’s production of double-layer labels. These are labels that typically open to create three surfaces that can be printed, two of them in full color. Using a combination of digital and flexo printing, Auraprint creates these labels using PE and PET materials for a variety of purposes.

“For example, if a company wants to do a web promotion, a unique code can be printed on the inner layer of the label. Consumers go to the website and enter the code from the label to receive an offer,” Kinanen says. “It can also be used for additional information: instructions or recipes, for example. Or, it can be used for including a different language on the label without taking up more room on the surface of the product.”

In addition to sleeves and self-adhesive labels, Auraprint produces specialist and smart labels using RFID codes or indicator labels that show if products have been kept at the right temperature. It also produces biodegradable stickers made from corn starch for use with biodegradable packaging, such as with vegetables.

Auraprint operates an online ordering service for its customers. Using its NETikett service, substrates, weights, volumes and number of variations within a run can be chosen for a cost effective solution.

Benefits and challenges

“Having the digital technology of the HP Indigo Digital Press is a wonderful thing. Our customers can see that we’re in the front row of label converters, and the products and services we can now offer are popular with them,” Kinanen says.

“The addition of the HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press also forced us to meet the challenges of on-demand production: how can we better organize ourselves to deliver what customers want in 24 hours? It’s not been easy, and the process continues, but it’s helping us to change and grow,” Kinanen concludes.

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