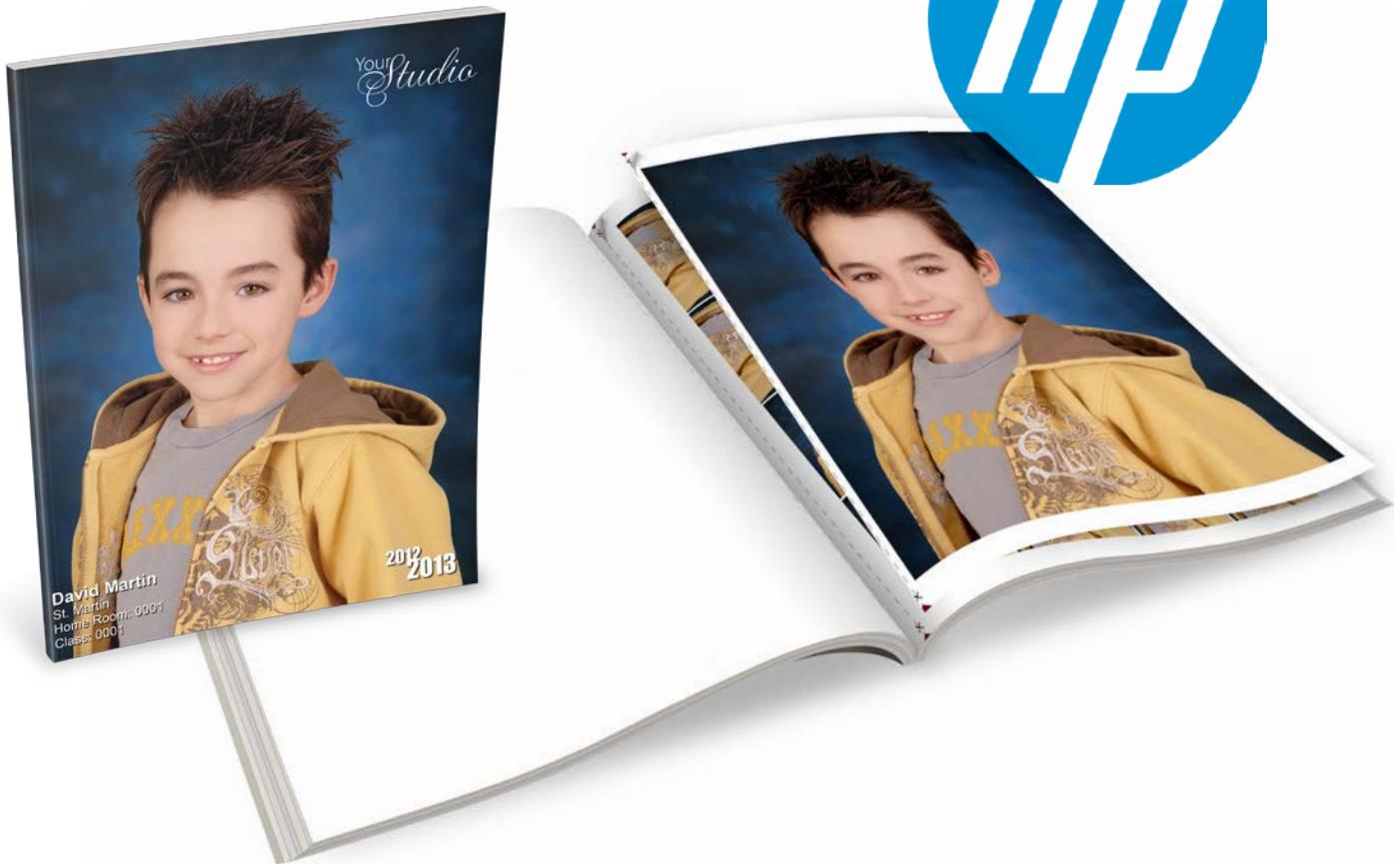


36Pix revolutionizes the school portrait industry using the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press



At a glance

Industry sector: Photo Specialty

Business name: 36Pix

Headquarters: Montreal, Québec, Canada

Website: www.36pix.com



Challenge

- 36Pix wanted to leverage the rise of photo merchandising and needed a digital press that could help the company create an industry-first product—school portrait books.
- The company required a solution that could deliver print quality as good as or better than the expensive silver halide techniques.
- To solidify its leadership position, 36Pix demanded a digital press that could handle very high volumes at peak times.
- The cost of silver halide supplies also forced 36Pix to search for a less expensive and more stable printing method.

Solutions

- The HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press offered top-grade quality across a wide range of certified substrates and broad versatility—printing not only school portrait books, but a variety of other applications.
- HP Indigo digital technology provided 36Pix a strategic printing advantage in a crowded market that hadn't significantly changed its core product for more than 60 years.

Results

- 36Pix is the first in its industry to successfully deliver school portrait books.
- During its first peak season, 36Pix delivered more than 250,000 school portrait books and boosted revenue.
- The HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press helps 36Pix satisfy more than 650 day cares and schools across Canada, as well as numerous photo labs throughout North America.

“The HP Indigo is the best press out there, bar none. Nobody comes close to it in terms of printing quality.”

—Robert Ste-Marie,
Founder and CEO, 36Pix

Innovation is at the core of 36Pix. When the company's founder and CEO Robert Ste-Marie saw an opening for digital fulfillment services in the photography industry in 2000, he left an international career in aerospace to launch an online photo printing business from his basement. Today, 36Pix is one of the fastest-growing photography companies servicing the school photography industry in Canada.

The Montreal-based company is transforming the photo industry, offering beautiful school portrait books to parents looking for a memorable keepsake. Now, with more than 30 employees, the company outpaces the competition by keeping pace with today's latest technology. And that's where the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press comes in.

In 2012, the company transitioned from silver halide printing to digital—leading the school portrait industry into new territory with its acquisition of an HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press. 36Pix uses the digital press to service its 650 Canadian school and day-care customers, under the Green Apple Studio brand, as well as photo labs across North America. The result so far? “Beyond expectations,” says Ste-Marie. “The product from HP Indigo has been received extremely well.” In fact, one Montreal, Canada day-care owner says, “The book format is fantastic! All the parents are blown away. It's a really beautiful, incredible product.”

A remarkable press for a remarkable product

Ste-Marie says the HP Indigo 5600 was a no-brainer for 36Pix, because “only HP Indigo delivered quality good enough for creating school portrait books.” The HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press offers versatility to print on up to 2,500 certified substrates—from coated and uncoated papers, to various natural and synthetic media.

36Pix counts on that versatility and quality to help the company deliver school portrait books in addition to other photo merchandise, with beautiful, true-to-life colors and crisp lines, to families all across North America. “We wouldn't be able to create this product without the 5600,” says Ste-Marie. The HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press—with up to seven ink stations—uses HP ElectroInk to deliver photographs that match silver halide for final quality. 36Pix currently uses a 4-color process and runs approximately 1,200 13" x 19" prints per hour.

The company crafts its signature product—school portrait books—on the HP Indigo 5600. Unlike the traditional delivery of school pictures—loosely gathered in an envelope—these books are bound with personalized covers, including details such as the student's name, his or her school, and the year. With perforated pages, these glossy, memorable booklets make it easy for families to keep photos in a safe place or remove them to share with friends. Ste-Marie is thrilled with the quality books his company delivers with the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press. “The HP Indigo is the best press out there, bar none. Nobody comes close to it in terms of printing quality.”

A game changer in an established industry

The school portrait industry is decades old. But as photo merchandizing has brightened outlooks in many adjacent photo markets—with fresh, improved products and customization options—the school portrait industry has been slow to catch up. 36Pix is hard at work to change



that, thanks to the printing power of the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press.

Combining proprietary green screen technology—with the uniqueness and quality of its school portrait books, 36Pix is focusing on creating a new, quality product. Instead of using the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press to grow business merely through higher volume, the company is delivering a higher-value, streamlined product that customers love. “If you do what's possible with the 5600,” says Ste-Marie, “your product actually becomes more of a premium product.”

During its first peak season, 36Pix delivered approximately 250,000 school portrait books. And the company is already feeling the growth effect. “We had more reorders because the product is so beautiful and unique,” notes Ste-Marie. “So, absolutely, yes, we increased our business significantly because of the HP Indigo.” The HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press helps 36Pix stay at the vanguard of digital printing technology, while allowing the company to offer an entirely new product.

Adaptability for a growing market

36Pix will make the most of the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press's adaptability. Ste-Marie believes this press offers a distinct workflow advantage compared with old silver halide techniques. “You can take an HP Indigo and put other equipment around it to dramatically improve your workflow,” he notes. The result is “a much cleaner process” that is “a lot easier to automate.”

In addition to providing a better workflow, digital printing is a more affordable option. The cost of silver halide has become more of a financial burden over the years because of the increased price of silver and lower overall demand. The process also uses more environmental resources than digital printing and isn't as flexible or versatile.

“Within the next few years, silver halide will disappear from our market,” says Ste-Marie, who is definitely ahead of the transition. “We are trying to encourage our industry to participate in growth markets,” he continues. But doing so requires continual adaptation and change. For 36Pix, the HP Indigo is a key part of that strategy.

Still in its first year printing school portrait books with the HP Indigo 5600 Digital Press, the company is already making impressive strides and expanding the borders of the portrait printing industry.



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