

# Yoshimura relies on HP Indigo Digital Presses for quality, speed and flexibility



## At a glance

**Industry:** Labels & Packaging;  
Flexible Packaging

**Business name:** Yoshimura  
Package Partners Co., Ltd.

**Headquarters:** Tokyo, Japan

**Website:** yoshimura-pack.co.jp



**Business name:** Meiko Chagyo Co., Ltd.

**Headquarters:** Shizuoka, Japan

**Website:** meiko-chagyo.co.jp



## Challenge

- Yoshimura needed to find a flexible printing platform that would allow it to produce low volume print runs quickly without compromising on quality.

## Solution

- The company installed a HP Indigo WS4500 Digital Press that proved so successful it was quickly joined by three HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Presses and one HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press.

## Results

- Yoshimura's digital business has grown by 500 percent in four years and is now bigger than the traditional gravure printing business.
- Small print runs enable customers to experiment with package design, allowing them to more effectively target different demographic groups.
- The turnaround on a typical digital print job is seven days, compared to 20 for gravure printing. This includes making bags into complete finished products.

“The HP Indigo digital presses have been incredibly beneficial for us. Even though prices continue to become increasingly competitive, the HP Indigos allow us to stay ahead of the curve.”

– Kumiko Hashimoto, president, Yoshimura



Founded in 1932, Yoshimura has become a leading provider of printed packaging for food, most notably Japanese tea. Headquartered in Tokyo, it employs 205 people across nine offices and factories, and has an annual turnover of approximately five billion yen.

### Creating targeted packaging

Since its inception, the company has adapted to changing client requirements. The need to offer short runs has been clear for several years and this has been a focus. Yoshimura is also one of the few print service providers in Japan offering fully integrated manufacturing, not only printing but also design, print, slit, lamination and bag production. The challenge lies in making the packaging attractive so products can compete effectively in the current market.

“In the past, if you had the product, it would sell, because the demand outreached the supply. The packaging didn’t really matter, but as consumer expectations have matured with the economic growth of Japan and the introduction of plastic bottled drinks, the Japanese tea market has become more selective,” explains Kumiko Hashimoto, president, Yoshimura. “We have to break consumers down into different segments, for example specific packaging aimed at young people or for working women. We start from the consumer’s point of view with design in mind and approach the package as a tool to help sell the product.”

### Digital flexibility leads to growth

Critical to this focus on customized packaging is Yoshimura’s HP Indigo WS4500 Digital Press which was installed in 2008. Prior to its introduction, the company had relied on traditional gravure printing methods. However, this approach was limited by the inflexibility of the plates and the large volumes involved.

“The Indigo digital press has been a huge asset to us, enabling customers to create something new or develop a product targeting a specific segment. Implementing the HP Indigo with the ability to produce smaller print runs let us try lots of new things. With small lots, you don’t have a plate charge so you can quickly and easily try out new ideas. Then you can compare those results and decide which one would work best. The ability to introduce this type of planning was exciting for both the customer and for our business,” explains Hashimoto.

The HP Indigo WS4500 Digital Press proved such a success that Yoshimura went on to add an extra three HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Presses and one HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press. In the past four years, the digital business has grown by five times as customers have become aware of the flexibility and quality offered by the digital process.

“We currently have four digital presses in operation, and the highest production from three machines was over 5.4 million impressions in March 2013,” continues Hashimoto. “Jobs are growing by about 120 percent each year, which is good for business. It’s also great to continue receiving orders without having to compete for customers.”

### Quality and versatility

Alongside the ability to print in small volumes and produce more customized products, the level of quality produced by the HP Indigo digital presses has also been an important factor in winning over customers who are more used to the gravure process.

“The HP Indigo presses excel at gradation and can reproduce at one percent with smooth color gradients. There is a lot of gradation in designs in our industry, and with gravure, 10 to 15 percent of this is uneven. Making the switch to HP Indigo gives much better results that keep customers happy,” comments Tetsuya Yoshimura, vice president, Yoshimura. “In addition, recreating certain textures like Japanese paper, craft paper and other paper-based materials just doesn’t work as well with gravure. Photo printing on these substrates was even more challenging. With HP Indigo, the printing is fluid and consistent, and customers are delighted with the results. Customers were impressed with the reproduction of beautiful solid colors and fantastic photos.”

### Speed is of the essence

One company that is reaping the benefits of digital printing is Meiko Chagyo, a tea producer that has been a Yoshimura customer since 1972. It recently introduced a new product line of high grade Maccha tea, which required 110mm x 145mm aluminium foil laminated onto PET to make a standing pouch. The fast turnaround of the print process, combined with the ability to experiment with design, was critical to the success of this product’s launch.

“If we had to use gravure printing and print 20,000 packages at once, we would have just used a plain package and stuck a sticker on it but instead the HP Indigo lets us try something new - we can print just 3,000. So we created a casual package, which went over well,” says Hashimoto. “Also, the print quality of the picture was excellent. Maccha is a very delicate thing – a good maccha is foamy and the print quality allowed us to really capture this feature. Turnaround was also quick. For gravure, we aim for 14 days, but it usually ends up being around 20 days. With digital, we can deliver in seven days once the proofs have been checked, which includes making the bag.”

Takashi Nagase, president, Meiko Chagyo agrees with this positive endorsement: “We often receive requests to try different designs, but until now the plate charge held us back since it doubles the price of a bag. We tried stickers on packages but this was rarely successful for products that weren’t already established. Then Yoshimura proposed its new digital service to us. At first we were doubtful and assumed that the quality would be inferior to gravure printing, but it turned out to be better than we expected. In fact, the print quality of the HP Indigo WS6000 is on a par with gravure printing. We can now cater to individual customer requests and can easily take care of private label products for our customers. We expect this to be a big part of our sales strategy in the years to come.”

Looking to the future, Yoshimura is convinced that HP will continue to play a vital role in the company’s growth and development.

“In future, we plan to expand our use of digital printing – not just for the tea business, but for food packaging in general. This is another reason why having HP as a partner is extremely helpful, since it can provide related insights and information based on its experience,” concludes Hashimoto. “One other thing that we’re looking at is Web-to-Print services. We’re hoping to create a service where, without even having any contact with staff, an individual could design their very own unique package to print in small lots. With low volume jobs, interfacing with people is often one of the primary bottlenecks, so I’d like to see us move beyond that into a new era.”



Get connected.  
[hp.com/go/graphicarts](http://hp.com/go/graphicarts)

Share with colleagues.



© Copyright 2013 Hewlett-Packard Development Company, L.P. The information contained herein is subject to change without notice. The only warranties for HP products and services are set forth in the express warranty statements accompanying such products and services. Nothing herein should be construed as constituting an additional warranty. HP shall not be liable for technical or editorial errors or omissions contained herein.

4AA4-8333ENW, September 2013

