

Elanders Germany drives digital growth through 'just-in-time' user manuals



At a glance

Industry: Publishing

Business name: Elanders Germany GmbH

Headquarters: Waiblingen, Germany

Website: elanders-germany.com



Challenge

- Run-lengths declining as car makers increase variety and frequency of manual production.
- Car manufacturers looking for new solutions to minimize storage costs and stock risks of car manuals.
- Ink stability and durability must be maintained even under extreme climate conditions.

Solution

- HP ElectroInk is the only color digital printing technology certified by brands such as BMW, Audi, Volvo and Daimler for meeting ink durability requirements.
- Four HP Indigo W7250 Digital Presses operating in 4C, 2C and 1C modes configured inline with Hunkeler Popp6 finishing lines to produce cut and stacked blocks ready for binding.
- Enabling runs from one copy to 1,500 copies to be digitally-printed cost-effectively.
- Covers produced on three HP Indigo 7600 and the HP Indigo 7500 sheet-fed presses.
- Direct link to vehicle manufacturers' stock systems to receive current sales forecasts on a daily basis and adjust production accordingly.

Results

- More than half of digital printing revenues now generated through car manuals for globally recognized automotive brands such as Audi, BMW and Daimler.
- For BMW alone Elanders procures around 1,000 variations of in-car documents that must be on the assembly line within 3 weeks' notice of a new car model launch.
- Car manuals can now be printed in sequence i.e. in the exact order in which the vehicles come off the factory production line, to eliminate inventory cost and risk.

“The HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press has introduced significant productivity gains, shifting the break-even point even further away from offset printing and in favor of digital printing.”

– Andreas Rainer, key account manager, Digital Solutions, Elanders Germany



Elanders Germany is part of the Swedish printing conglomerate, Elanders AB. The company has nine production sites on four continents, over 2,000 employees and generated a turnover of €238 million in 2013.

In order to accelerate the growth of its digital print business, Elanders built a new European digital printing center in Waiblingen, near Stuttgart, comprising four HP Indigo W7250 Digital Presses, three HP Indigo 7600 Digital Presses, an HP Indigo 7500 Digital Press and an HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press. Together, these presses produce an average of over 40 million page impressions each month or close to half a billion per year.

The automotive industry is one of Elanders' largest digital customers. More than half of digital printing revenues are generated through user manuals for globally recognized automotive brands such as Audi, BMW and Daimler. These manuals are produced in A5 format on 80g/m² and 90g/m² paper, mainly in two or four colors. Increasingly, Elanders Germany is choosing to print these manuals on HP Indigo, with print-runs of up to 1,500 copies now done on these presses. “The HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press has introduced significant productivity gains, shifting the break-even point even further away from offset and in favor of digital printing,” says Andreas Rainer, key account manager, Digital Solutions at Elanders Germany.

Delivering user manuals ‘just in time’

To minimize storage costs and stock risks for its customers, Elanders is directly networked in to the vehicle manufacturers' factories via Electronic Data Interchange. This enables it to receive current sales forecasts on a daily basis and to adjust production orders accordingly. Elanders' digital printing facility means it is capable of producing even the smallest batches with optimal efficiency.

As car manufacturers increase the variety of manuals produced and the frequency with which they are revised, HP Indigo digital printing technology allows Elanders to fulfill requirements for shorter run-lengths and faster turnaround times. For BMW alone, Elanders produces around 1,000 variations of in-car documents that must be available on the assembly line within a three week notice period, for the launch of a new car model. Taking this to the extreme, the BMW plant in Dingolfing even requires manuals to be printed in sequence, that is, in the exact order in which the vehicles later roll off the production line, effectively treating each individual manual produced as a single copy order.

Automated production line

For this to be possible, every process – from the receipt of data through to the printing, binding and finishing – must be highly automated. Elanders use the HP Indigo W7250 Digital Presses to produce the inner pages; these high-speed presses are web-fed, minimizing the need for paper changes and eliminating paper jams. Operating in four-color, two-color and one-color modes, they can produce any user manual required.

The presses are configured inline with a Hunkeler POP6 finishing line to produce cut and stacked book content immediately ready for binding. Simultaneously, the covers are produced on the HP Indigo 7600 sheet-fed presses, with the covers and content brought together in a Kolbus PUR adhesive binder, where they are either glued or saddle-stitched with a Duplo backstitch automation. Electronic control mechanisms are a prerequisite for an error-free workflow, particularly when dealing with multiple models and languages, and for this reason, Elanders uses barcodes to match the contents and covers at the binder.

HP Indigo print and paper quality indistinguishable from offset printing

Rainer explains: “For a long time now, producing the onboard literature with HP Indigo web-fed digital presses has been the best solution for us. The main benefit remains the quality, which is absolutely comparable with that of offset printing. This means that the products look and feel absolutely identical – a basic requirement for the business of manuals. With all other digital printing presses, there are clear differences between offset and digital production.” Furthermore, inline priming allows virtually any paper to be used on the press, which means that the final product will retain the same look and feel, regardless of the production method selected. HP Indigo also offers spot colors, a must for brands in the automotive industry, according to Rainer.

Rainer cites the “enormous growth in productivity exemplified by the growth in two-color printing” as a further advantage of the HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press. While other digital printing processes require four impressions to produce two-tone manuals, with HP Indigo it only takes two impressions, doubling productivity and significantly reducing overall cost.

Only HP Indigo ElectroInk is certified by vehicle manufacturers

Known as the Climate Chamber Test, leading car manufacturers require their user manuals to withstand climate variations from -40 °C to +120 °C without visible changes or blocking. The HP Indigo unique ElectroInk and the method of applying it to the substrate mean that it is the only color digital printing technology certified by brands such as BMW, Audi, Volvo and Daimler to meet these requirements.

In the future, Rainer believes that individualization and personalization will play an increasingly important role with regard to vehicle manufacturers' user manuals. This means that, in the future each user manual will only present and explain the functionalities that relate to the exact model purchased. If they have no navigation equipment for example, the user manual will be printed without that chapter. “We're already producing small, individualized brochures for premium vehicles. The potential vehicle purchaser receives this as a sales support measure. This is an excellent opportunity to visualize the dream car and create an incentive to purchase. This concept of personalization will certainly transfer across to user manuals in the future. The technical possibilities here are almost infinitely scalable, not least thanks to digital printing.”

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