

# Making dreams come true for photo book clients - Clearstory and HP Indigo Digital Press deliver



## At a glance

**Industry:** Photo Specialty

**Business name:**

Clearstory, Creative Digital Publishers

**Headquarters:** San Diego, California, USA

**Website:** myclearstory.com



## Challenge

- To always sustain and deliver on the promise to clients: "You dream it. We make it".

## Solution

- Installed an HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press capable of delivering fast, cost effective, richly personalised quality books for a wide marketplace.

## Results

- Increased the business six-fold in less than three years.
- Profitable delivery of consumer entry level Everyday Photo Books for around \$20 (€15), while also producing for the professional market the highest quality portfolios with different binding techniques in premium finishes on specialty materials.
- The HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press allows a total in-house operation, guarantees quality control and eliminates the need for outsourcing any part of the process.

“Whether the magic is fulfilling the extreme personal dreams of families and individuals or the vision of the most demanding graphic arts professional, the HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press has made that possible. It means everything to our operation because it supports every dream we promise and every promise we keep.”

– Debara Medina,  
founder, Clearstory,  
Creative Digital Publishers

Making dreams come true – that’s a big call. “You dream it. We make it” was the promise that San Diego based creative digital publisher, Clearstory, announced in December 2010. The promise was to empower Clearstory clients to celebrate life’s special moments with a sophisticated, simple and high-quality photo book.

Since 2005 the marketplace had seen a growing appetite for treasured keepsakes – the richly personalised books that honour family and individuals’ milestones in text and images. But before fulfilling their side of the promise, Clearstory had to overcome the hurdles that were limiting the delivery of quality photo books.

Clearstory founder, Debara Medina, put her background in marketing, technology and photography to good use to research the marketplace. She recalls: “There was definitely a strong desire for visual storytelling. However, I discovered that there were issues preventing its real fulfilment. The public’s enthusiasm was undermined by overlong timeframes, disappointing paper quality, especially since the book might be handed down through generations, and the complex process of producing the books.”

Even with the evolution of software that simplified the production cycle and tackled some of the more arduous elements, Medina says the quality of the finished print product remained an issue.

### HP Indigo Press capability and quality is a “revelation”

“I’d looked at the printing solutions offered by major vendors. Then I went to a graphic design and photography exhibition and saw the HP Indigo Digital Press solution in action for the first time. The quality was spectacular. Duplicating colour was critical. For our clients it must be an exact match every time. The HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press was doing that before my eyes.”

She adds: “At that point, Clearstory’s business model was centred on a modest physical storefront operation using inkjet print technology. The HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press was clearly an exceptionally well made machine. More than that, it turned my planned business model on its head. I could live up to our promise, and I could do it via the web.”

Medina dug deeper and decided to visit The HP Experience Demonstration Center in Atlanta. “It was obvious that HP were putting substantial investment into Indigo digital technology. HP’s development of digital paper capabilities and the beautiful substrates that were being harnessed to the HP Indigo Digital Press solution were a revelation.”

### Customers take ownership of their dream

With a fusion of creative energy and design skills along with the high-quality digital imaging technology from the HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press, Medina and her two employees built a state-of-the-art production facility and created beautifully designed book templates with professionally designed industry leading software. Today, less than three years later, Clearstory offers customers the ability to produce their own elegant, personalised books.



Clearstory created the stepping stones that made the process economical without sacrificing quality. Its designers built custom-made, pre-designed templates specifically for the most popular types of book. Clearstory clients simply download the software, select a book design and drag and drop text and photos. The HP SmartStream Designer makes it even easier to create and print variable data, such as a person’s name, dropped in throughout a book.

### Strong professional graphics art following

The company also has a strong following among professional photographers and graphic designers. Professional quality books in this sector include artist portfolios, cook books, poetry books and businesses showcasing their creative work. Clearstory’s designers, pre-press and production team work together to satisfy this demand and oversee the state-of-the-art HP digital printing facility in San Diego.

“For the professional market, which can be understandably finicky, there is simply no argument – print quality must be top notch. So the unique six-colour liquid HP Indigo ElectroInk technology, which offers light/cyan and light/magenta, allows delivery of museum-quality inks to match the demands of the premium quality finish.

“The HP Indigo Digital Press allows professionals to use an amazing range of substrates such as metal, plastic, chipboard or foil board. It enables us to be extremely competitive in our pricing. The shortest of runs are profitable for us, while still meeting our clients’ most demanding requirements.

### Established business with long-term vision

She rates highly her experience with HP: “From the outset the HP team understood exactly what I was trying to do. I quickly realised that HP was committed to the graphic arts and they intended to develop solutions to keep up with progress in the sector. This gave me great confidence, and the fact that the HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press just keeps humming along only reinforces that feeling.”

Medina underlines that level of comfort by reflecting on her positioning as a successful women-owned small business, now thriving and employing 20 staff: “The first conference I attended in this sector, I was one of only three women there. Many men kindly warned me that the photo and print business was crashing all around, and that maybe I will find my start up too much of a challenge,” she remembers with a smile.

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