

HP Indigo Digital Press technology transforms home start-up operation into global market success



At a glance

Industry: Photo Specialty

Business name: Photobook Worldwide

Headquarters: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Website: photobookworldwide.com

Challenge

- To remain a profitable provider of high quality photobook products in the face of a rapidly expanding competitive marketplace.

Solution

- Photobook Worldwide first invested in the HP Indigo 5500 Digital Press and added the HP Indigo 7500 Digital Press. In 2012 it purchased its first HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press and added a second in 2013.

Results

- Enabled expansion to a truly global business with offices in four countries.
- Grew the Kuala Lumpur HQ operation five-fold in eight years.
- Achieved cost effective and high performance productivity from its HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press investment in the face of highly competitive market pressure.



“HP has always been the ‘enabler’ to make our success happen. The HP Indigo Digital Presses enable us to make high quality photobooks, cost effectively and with minimal down time. That means we can focus on the important business of growing our operation.”

– Mark Koay, CEO,
Photobook Worldwide

Setting up a digital printing press in your own living room is an unlikely first step in achieving an ambitious global business idea. The idea: to create unique products with superior quality and craftsmanship that people would treasure as important lifetime keepsakes.

With an e-commerce background, but with no print industry experience, that is exactly how Photobook Worldwide CEO Mark Koay started. He wanted to fulfil two simple passions: firing up people’s imaginations and preserving special memories.

“Looking back to 2005, we started Photobook Worldwide not knowing what to anticipate. The company began with the idea to produce a web-to-print solution for capturing and immortalizing people’s precious memories. The HP Indigo 5000 Digital Press sat in my living room in Kuala Lumpur. A small dedicated team and the undying support of my family helped get us off to a gradual, but solid start.”

Productivity, profitability and quality

“While we knew about digital marketing, digital printing was entirely new to us. The HP Indigo 5000 gave us productivity, profitability and quality from the outset. It was easy to operate and provided a great platform for producing high quality photobooks.”

He recalls the environment the company faced in 2005. “There had been a dot com boom followed by a dot com crash. Not too many businesses were keen to invest in digital marketing. But for Photobook Worldwide we focused on creating a robust photobook buying platform online because we knew there was no other more cost-efficient way for us to grow globally. Three categories make up the Photobook Worldwide target market: individuals, photographers and corporate companies.

“Instead of trying to create our own software to build a photobook, we started using Taopix, which is a feature-rich end-to-end software platform. Because we are a global company with over 100 country photo creation websites, we can spread the love of preserving memories anywhere and everywhere.”

An everyday, anywhere evolution

Koay tells how Photobook Worldwide expanded its digital printing capability in line with the way the market has been evolving rapidly over the past few years. “We added the HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press in 2012 as a further upgrade to fulfil our daily orders. We purchased an additional HP Indigo 7600 in 2013. We often hit peak production deadlines which always carry with them financial targets. The two HP Indigo 7600 Digital Presses guarantee the high performance and high throughput that ensures we meet both goals.”

He notes that the proliferation of mobile devices with image capturing capability. “The abundance of digital photographs stored away in computers means that people are now looking at new ways to preserve precious memories such as weddings, holiday trips, special emotional moments, new born babies, favourite pets, and art portfolios or just about anything you can think of.

Professional photographers are an important segment of loyal customers. “They appreciate the attention paid to the quality and detail of our photo products. There is also an increasing demand from corporates who see the photobook as a presentation tool, brochure, coffee table book, award recognition or a souvenir item.



“This market is highly competitive. Because a customer can order just one book at a time the cost has to be reasonable and affordable. We’ve noticed a handful of companies emerge and leave the market over a short period of time. Our fleet of HP Indigo Digital Presses ensures we remain competitive,” he explains.

Number one goal

He nominates the key differentiation in the Photobook Worldwide marketplace as the quality of finished prints and also the materials used for photobooks. “Our number one goal is to provide a photobook designer software solution that creates high quality finished books, customised in whatever style and material our clients wish. The difference in quality is very noticeable because most of our customers have a keen eye for minute details and are very particular about the quality and experience that is provided by us.

“We satisfy this demand by using first class papers from renowned suppliers. Mohawk, from the USA, has a four generation history of providing wonderful standard and textured paper ranges, while German specialist, Felix Schoeller, has been doing the same for more than 115 years. We use Schoeller’s Photo Lustre range.

“It is on this quality of papers that the HP ElectroInk gives us a fantastic range of digital colour. Its seven ink stations help us achieve special effect inks. We make excellent use of light cyan and light magenta inks particularly when professional photographic printing demands those realistic skin and sky tones. The HP Indigo Digital Press guarantees our products are handmade to perfection.”

The company needs high volume to achieve the right economies of scale as it constantly strives to generate online traffic to its websites. SEO efforts to hit the online market are essential. Apart from social media, other online channels they leverage are blogs, forums and communities who are interested in photography.

Quality, financial and production targets

“The HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press has the incredible capacity to print millions of colour pages every month. Its Enhanced Productivity Mode (EPM) can increase the throughput when we are handling extremely colour rich products by 33 per cent to 160 pages per minute. EPM makes an invaluable impact in helping us reduce turnaround time and production costs.

Koay makes a closing promise: “Thanks to the HP Indigo Digital Press technology we’ll be here as long as people continue taking photos and as long as they want to capture and look back to re-live those cherished memories.”

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