

Glo Color Labs leads India's photobook industry with HP Indigo technology



At a glance

Industry: Photo Specialty

Business name: Glo Color Labs

Headquarters: Gandhipuram, India



Challenge

- Glo Color Labs wanted to pioneer the photobook market in India but found silver halide production to be costly, slow and wasteful. It wanted a digital solution that would cut costs and time.

Solution

- Glo Color Labs initially installed the HP Indigo 3050 before adding a new press every year. There are now two HP Indigo 3050 Digital Presses, HP Indigo 5600 and HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press, with two more 7600s and an HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press soon to be added.

Results

- Photobooks can be produced 40 per cent faster at 40 per cent of the cost without compromising on quality.
- The HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press has enabled the introduction of Glo SFX, a method of using raised ink to print on gold and silver foil.
- Expanded product offering which includes personalised packaging and calendars, enabling the company to grow its business.
- The production process is cleaner and greener with less wastage.
- The investment in the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press will allow Glo Color Labs to add large format books to its portfolio.

“Our fleet of HP Indigo presses enables us to produce 500,000 high-quality prints per month at a cost that is 40 per cent lower than silver halide. They are at the heart of our business.”

– T. S. Ramanan, managing director, Glo Color Labs



Glo Color Labs was founded in 1981 to cater for commercial and wedding photography. It now has a network across India with branches in every major city and three central production facilities.

Low cost flexibility and quality

The photobooks were originally processed on silver halide presses but the company saw the potential in digital printing as a way to introduce more customisation while lowering print costs.

“In 2008 we made our first investment in digital print technology with the HP Indigo 3050 Digital Press. It was the natural choice as the market leading solution and it quickly helped us take the lead in the nascent digital print market,” explains T. S. Ramanan managing director, Glo Color Labs. “Since then, digitally printed photobooks have grown to account for 90 per cent of our output. This has allowed us to reduce the number of silver halide machines from 20 to just one.”

Glo Color Labs has increased its fleet of HP Indigo presses every year and currently operates two HP Indigo 3050s, one HP Indigo 5600 and one HP Indigo 7600. These enable the company to offer a wide range of personalised products on a variety of substrates.

“HP Indigo technology gave us the opportunity to introduce innovations such as double sided printing on over 200 types of media including metallic and textured substrates,” adds Ramanan. “The print quality is better than with silver halide, production is much faster and costs are 40 per cent lower. Every single aspect is improved on the HP Indigo press.”

Glo Color Labs can now print and dispatch a photobook within 24 hours of receiving the order – twice as fast as before. But originally, the idea of digital printing was surprisingly not an easy sell.

“When we pioneered the market, the benefits of digital printing – speed, quality, cost and flexibility – were apparent to us but consumers and our competition took some convincing. We had 3,000 other lab owners telling us we were wrong and customers who were naturally wary of new technology,” adds Ramanan. “However, with HP’s help and the tangible advantages offered by digital, we began to gain traction, which rapidly snowballed to the point it now accounts for 90 per cent of our photobook business and half a million high value prints per month.”

Quality photobooks

Glo Color is also taking advantage of HP Light Cyan and HP Light Magenta Inks, which make brighter colours 15 per cent more faithful. When this astonishing quality is combined with the prints’ unmatched durability, the end product never fails to impress.

“In India, we require the best colour detail and fidelity and with Indigo technology we get 100 per cent accuracy, surpassing that of silver halide production. The HP Light Cyan and HP Light Magenta Inks increase colour retention and make bright colours come alive,” remarks Mr. Gamyanth Shren, executive officer, Glo Color labs. “Furthermore, while traditional prints might last 30 years, we have a 70 year guarantee with Indigo press prints. That means these phenomenal colours will endure.”

Beyond photobooks

Photobooks do not make up the entirety of Glo Color Labs’ business. It is also focusing on the general printing sector with a range of personalised packaging for FMCG products as well as customised gifts and calendars.

“Around 30 per cent of our business is made up of packaging and calendars. Variable data has played a huge role in making this possible,” explains Shren. “The photobook side of the business is seasonal as weddings can only take place on certain auspicious days. This means when we are printing fewer photobooks, we can turn our focus on new commercial printing channels to keep the presses running.”

The most recent addition to the fleet is the HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press which has proven so successful that Glo Color Labs is in negotiations to purchase two more. This machine has enabled the company to introduce Glo SFX, a method of using raised ink to print on gold and silver foil.

“This is unique to the HP Indigo 7600; no-one else offers this type of personalised special effect printing and it is proving popular with 8,000 books produced per month on one press,” comments Shren. “As each sheet costs 250 rupees, (\$4) and the final cost per book is around \$80, it gives us a healthy margin on a premium photobook.”

Glo Color Labs uses its HP Indigo fleet in combination with Esko Kongsberg XE finishing equipment, a personalised die cutter which costs just one per cent of traditional die-cast finishing. This has, in tandem with the HP Indigos, driven the huge increase in short run, personalised jobs.

User-friendly and environmentally conscious

When it comes to operating the HP Indigo presses, it couldn’t be easier for Ramanan and his team. The user-friendly, intuitive operation and reliability have made life simple: “They are very straightforward to use and require no special training which keeps our costs down. And if one of the machines does break down, which happens every other month, a the HP engineer is on our doorstep within hours to fix the problem.”

The Indigo presses are also much more ecologically conscious because the Silver Halide process has significant wastage and chemical output. This is eliminated with HP Indigo digital production, making the workplace a cleaner, healthier environment with minimal waste.

Large format future

Next on the horizon is the introduction of the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press, which will open up an entirely new market thanks to its ability to print up to 75cm format with quality, substrate versatility, and production flexibility.

“The large format gives us a huge advantage and will help with the overall expansion of the business through the revival of poster and blow-up prints,” remarks Ramanan. “It costs 40 per cent less than using inkjet print and we can pass those savings on to our customers to make large format printing an attractive option.”

HP has proved critical in helping Glo Color Labs become India’s largest photobook publisher and this fruitful relationship is set to continue long into the future.

“We are proud to be the largest HP Indigo customer in India. HP has been a great support to us and our customers,” concludes Ramanan. “We are looking forward to building on our partnership to offer new, exciting products to consumers across the subcontinent.”

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