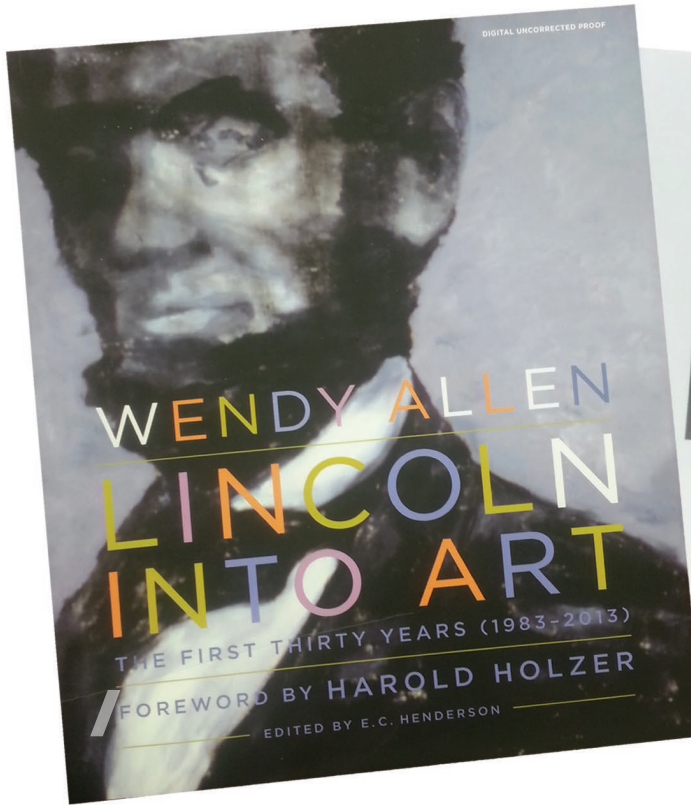


Bridgeport National Bindery takes print-on-demand book production to the next level



At a glance

Industry: Publishing

Business name: Bridgeport National Bindery

Headquarters: Agawam, MA, USA

Website: bnbindery.com



"Bound to Last"

Challenge

- To serve its mainstream publishing and art book customers, Bridgeport needed versatile printing technology that could deliver top-quality images and photos in both colour and black-and-white.
- Bridgeport wanted faster throughput for improved productivity while also maintaining outstanding print quality and affordability.
- The company needed technology that could efficiently handle a variety of short runs and one-off jobs for its print-on-demand customers.

Solution

- Bridgeport added two HP Indigo 7000 series Digital Presses with HP Indigo ElectroInk technology to deliver prints of the highest quality that match or exceed offset quality.
- The company acquired an HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press that offers high-volume production and supports virtually any paper at high speeds.
- Bridgeport installed automatic finishing equipment from Lasermax Rolls System to produce folded, cut and collated book blocks ready for immediate binding.

Results

- Bridgeport can produce superior books for its publishing customers with the highest print quality, on an unlimited range of coated and uncoated substrates, and traditionally bound to the finest standards.
- During peak production in 2013, Bridgeport produced 15,000 books a day, four times as many with less than half the people the previous year.
- In 2013, Bridgeport achieved a 30 per cent increase in revenue and a 40 per cent increase in business volume in its print-on-demand division.
- Equipped with its HP technology, Bridgeport can now offer customers a broader array of publishing options to support its growing print-on-demand business.

“The HP Indigo W7250 Press allows us to do more jobs faster – and higher throughput means our on-demand business can thrive.”

– Kent Larson, vice president of print-on-demand at Bridgeport



Bridgeport National Bindery is quintessentially ‘heritage’. Its origins stem from the late 1800s, as a producer of high-quality bindery for the US’ growing number of libraries and archives. It is also resolutely modern: the company is a global leader in the single-copy and short-run book publishing markets.

“We saw one-off book publishing as the future,” says Kent Larson, vice president of print-on-demand at Bridgeport.

It is one thing to spot a coming trend, quite another to commercialise and execute the opportunity. Bridgeport has a record of sustained growth and has partnered with best-in-class customers. It prints, binds and delivers primarily high-quality hard-cover books for such names as Amazon, Blurb, Lulu, Oxford University Press and John Wiley Press, among others.

The figures speak for themselves. During 2013 it averaged 10,000 books per day (with a peak of around 15,000), off an average run-length of just 2.4 books. “Everything we do centres on doing one book at a time,” says Larson, “and doing it the best we can.”

Flexibility in a fast-moving market

Bridgeport’s successful expansion into digital print-on-demand has been achieved with HP alongside. Since it bought its first HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press in 2006, Bridgeport has come to rely on HP Indigo to deliver the quality its customers’ demand, investing in a further two HP Indigo 7000 series Digital Presses.

“We have all different types of books going through our workflow, and each one can be different from the last,” says Larson. “The HP Indigo sheet-fed presses give us the flexibility we need to keep pace with fast-moving customer demands.”

At their most basic, the HP Indigo presses allow Bridgeport to handle a broad range of text and cover stocks, including coated, uncoated and recycled paper while delivering the high print quality their customers insist on. In a potentially complex market, this flexibility has allowed Bridgeport to build a print on demand service that meets the needs of the broadest range of customers.

Exploring opportunities in the art market

While the focus of Bridgeport’s business remains mainstream print-on-demand, the HP Indigo sheet-fed presses have created opportunities in new sectors. Bridgeport is winning new business from art book publishers such as Phaidon looking to do limited editions or collectors’ editions, and from artists and photographers such as Stephen Shore requiring a cost-effective way to publish their work. The work may be niche but it produces higher margins. Being more bespoke, it is also more challenging.

“These customers want short runs of high quality books with custom bindery,” says Larson. “We’ve produced books with plywood covers; a cube-shaped book . . . the versatility of our HP Indigo technology makes it possible to do these jobs.”

Such innovation has forged Bridgeport’s reputation as a progressive print supplier. Hans Teensma, co-owner of book and magazine design studio, Impress Inc., explains, “Every time I go to Bridgeport they’re showing me something new. I’m starting to think outside of the box, because of their technology.”

Stepping-up productivity with the HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press

While a reputation for innovation is great, Bridgeport has never lost track of productivity. To continue to grow its print-on-demand business at a rapid pace, Bridgeport knew it needed to radically re-think its production strategy to provide a more efficient and streamlined operation.

As the centre piece of this new strategy Bridgeport decided to invest in an HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press. This high speed, web-fed press (up to 480ppm for colour and 960ppm in super-fast monochrome mode) with inline priming, delivers exceptional productivity for high quality book printing.

Working closely with HP solutions architects, Bridgeport modified the print marks to allow 8-up printing of 6”x9” book pages. This maximised the efficiency of the frame usage and boosted the overall press productivity.

The HP Indigo W7250 delivers several production advantages. The large image size 12.5” x 38.6”, allows Bridgeport to produce large covers and dust jackets, with batching ensuring the roll-fed productivity is not compromised. With around half of all jobs on the HP Indigo W7250 being monochrome Bridgeport takes advantage of the press’ market leading productivity in one colour mode. Finally, the press is versatile enough to run a wide range of media from 27-lb text stock to 110-lb cover stock.

“If needed, we can even run photo paper on the HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press – which means we have a backup press for photobook production,” Larson notes.

An end-to-end solution - contributing to a 40 per cent hike in volumes

“At some point we realised that we were going to have to automate,” says Larson. “We couldn’t just continue producing these one-off book blocks with a manual workflow, sometimes just inventing a process to get the job done even if we were losing money. Once we reached volume, we knew we had to build an automated, scalable solution that would take us to the next level and drive profitability.”

The HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press was installed inline with Lasermax Roll Systems finishing device. This automatically folds, cuts and collates the pages into book blocks that are ready for immediate binding. In addition, Bridgeport added a near line PageReady cutter stacker, also from Lasermax Rolls Systems, which adds the same level of automation to its three HP Indigo sheet-fed digital presses allowing them to produce similar book blocks ready for binding. Covers and dust-jackets are then matched up at the bindery using barcodes.

The combination of Bridgeport’s sheet-fed HP Indigo 7000 Series Digital Presses and its web-fed HP Indigo W7250 Digital Press have enhanced the company’s efficiency and improved its ability to produce a range of top-quality books.

With larger customers submitting orders through a direct XML feed to Bridgeport job management system (software developed in-house by Bridgeport), the end-to-end system is capable of producing thousands of single copy hard cover books every day. By investing in the new web-fed press and the automated finishing solutions, Bridgeport has made a step-change in its productivity.

“Our old workflow was incredibly manual and used seven or eight people every day to cut and marry the books,” says Larson. “With our new HP Indigo W7250, we created four times as many books in our 2012 peak season as we did in 2011 – and we used less than half as many people.”

Turnaround times have improved, now averaging 2-3 days for a job. This combination has sparked business success.

“The benefits of having HP technology are a huge factor in the growth of our print-on-demand business,” says Larson. “We grew about 30 per cent in revenue terms and 40 per cent in business volume during 2013. Our expectations for 2014 are for a similar level, if not higher.”

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