

Dissolvable stickers illustrate the true colours that Century Label regularly achieves with HP Indigo digital presses



At a glance

Industry: Labels & Packaging

Business name: Century Label

Headquarters: Bowling Green, Ohio, USA

Website: centurylabel.com



Challenge

- Improve colour management capabilities to meet tough colour demands from custom sticker customers.
- Expand capacity and decrease turnaround time, to enable larger jobs and drive business growth.
- Perfectly match colours of licensed artwork for a unique line of dissolvable stickers.

Solution

- HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press and HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press enable fast printing of high-quality custom labels and stickers and shrink sleeves, with excellent colour consistency.
- Inline Priming units installed on each press allow digital and flexo printing on the same media, reducing inventory requirements.

Results

- Century Label's custom label output has doubled in the two years since it installed its two HP Indigo WS6000 series Digital Presses.
- With the improved colour management and faster printing speeds compared to earlier-generation presses, Century Label is able to take on significantly larger jobs, running up to 150,000 labels.
- Leveraging its outstanding ability to match colours even on non-standard substrates, Century Label successfully produced a line of innovative dissolvable stickers.

“Mastering colour the first time and repeating it is a deal-maker for many customers. Our colour management process has made us very successful and the way HP’s technology calibrates on the materials and stays constant helps us with that.”

– Seth Hill, director of manufacturing and distribution, Century Label

For many consumer brands, logo colour is a key brand asset. The same is true for cartoons. Children, and their parents, often identify ‘real’ characters in part by the colours of their features. So, in any printed representation, colour accuracy is non-negotiable. Being able to precisely reproduce the specific colours of well-known cartoon characters is a key reason that the HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press was crucial to Century Label success in producing an innovative line of dissolvable stickers.

Century Label focuses on providing premier labels and shrink sleeves for manufacturers and distributors of nutraceuticals, food, and chemicals, using flexographic and digital printing and a wide range of finishing equipment. In early 2012, it installed an HP Indigo WS6000 Digital Press and an HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press as replacements for two HP Indigo WS4500 Digital Presses. This move has enabled Century Label to expand the range of jobs it takes on and the range of customers it serves.

Colour makes the magic for children’s stickers

With its 17 years of experience in printing on dissolvable substrates, Century Label was a natural choice for a leading maker of greeting cards, stickers and stationery when it wanted to add dissolvable stickers to its line of children’s products. The project involved printing 12,000 stickers in 26 different designs featuring die-cut licensed characters from children’s entertainment franchises. To meet the customer’s goals of creating children’s stickers that mothers will also love because they are easy to remove, Century Label used its own SmartSolve label stock, which features paper and adhesive that are both dissolvable in water.

Despite its dissolvable properties, the SmartSolve paper presented no special challenges during printing. The colours, however, were another story.

“The dissolvable paper performed very well, but the biggest challenge we had was matching the licensed artwork colours,” says Seth Hill, director of manufacturing and distribution at Century Label.

His colleague, Bryce Schwab, digital supervisor at Century Label, adds: “We were able to use the extended colour gamut of the WS6600, particularly the violet, to hit the colours we needed. We overcame the colour issues by profiling the substrate; and some stickers we backed with white ink to get the colours right and make them pop a little more. In the end, a lot of our proofs were approved right out of the gate.”

The wider web of the HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press was another advantage. “With the larger print area, we were able to print two-up instead of one-up, so we reduced printing time and scrap,” says Schwab.

Faster presses help drive business expansion

That special dissolvable sticker project is just one example of the many ways that Century Label’s migration to two new-generation HP Indigo WS6000 series Digital Presses has opened opportunities and fueled business growth.



Both of the new HP Indigo presses are equipped with an Inline Priming unit, which enables printing on standard uncoated paper, the same as what is used for flexographic printing. “Inline priming has helped decrease the amount of materials we need to keep in stock as we’re able to transfer materials from one printing process to another,” says Hill.

High growth from digital printing

He reports that the company has enjoyed medium to high single-figure growth over the past few years – and the digital part of it has had a major impact. “Digital printing is a high-growth area for us. We love what digital has done for our business.”

Since installing the two HP Indigo WS6000 series Digital Presses, Century Label has increased its digital printing from two shifts to three, and it doubled its digital output. Run lengths now commonly vary from 50 labels up to 150,000 – more than double the maximum run length using the older presses.

“We couldn’t accommodate such large orders on the WS4500 presses due to time constraints, but now we are doing much larger orders, and more orders, because we are able to get them done in time,” says Hill. For example, a legacy job involving 60,000-75,000 labels that used to take 4-5 hours to print on the older press has now doubled in size, but is printed in half the time on the HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press. “We are seeing a lot more of that customer’s business now. We are getting new and larger jobs from them.”

Focusing on larger jobs

Hill continues: “In general, our focus has changed and we are going after larger jobs now. This speaks a lot to our enhanced colour management capabilities with the WS6600 and WS6000. We have put a lot of effort into driving our colour management and that is giving us business growth.”

“Being able to match colours, to use an extended color gamut and hit colours we couldn’t hit before, along with the ability to back with white ink, and print at increased speed, have brought in more customers and jobs.”

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