

# PhotoBox pioneers layflat photobooks in Europe with HP Indigo digital presses



## At a glance

**Industry:** Photobooks

**Business name:** PhotoBox

**Headquarters:** UK & France

**Website:** photobox.com



## Challenge

- PhotoBox needed a reliable, high quality digital print platform to pioneer the European photobook market.

## Solution

- For ten years it has partnered exclusively with HP and it currently owns two HP Indigo W7250 Digital Presses and four HP Indigo W7200 Digital Presses for photobook and card production, two HP Indigo 7000 Digital Presses for soft cover printing and one HP Indigo WS6600p Digital Press for layflat production.

## Results

- PhotoBox relies on the speed, reliability and quality of its HP Indigo digital presses to produce over two million photobooks and 18 million personalized greetings cards every year.
- HP Indigo digital presses have enabled the company to be the first in Europe to offer layflat photobooks.
- As a result, in just ten years, digital print has grown to represent the majority of all production.
- At peak times, such as Christmas, dedicated HP engineers visit onsite to help ensure the spike in volume is handled.
- Productivity has been increased by 25 percent thanks to innovations such as roll to roll feeding and improved monitoring tools.
- Costs have been reduced by the ability to buy paper in bulk for the roll to roll machines.

“By working collaboratively with HP and others, we put personalized print products into the hands of as many people as possible. HP gives us the tools we need to transform digital experience into a physical product.”

– Renaud Besnard, group production director, PhotoBox



Established in 1999, PhotoBox's central aim was to enable customers to print their digital photos online. Before the boom in broadband and digital cameras, this original objective helped to dramatically change the photo printing industry and remains at the heart of its business today.

The company allows customers to take their most precious digital memories and create something unique that can be shared with family and friends as a physical and often emotive product. Today, 750 employees split between its three dedicated factories and offices, produce upwards of 18 million cards and two million photobooks every year.

### Exponential growth

For PhotoBox, coping with the growing demand for photo services presents a significant challenge. On a single day in December, over seven million photos were uploaded to its websites and more than 100,000 orders were dispatched. The company needs a reliable digital print platform to handle all these requests without compromising on quality.

“The photobook and customized card industry is booming and our biggest challenge is to be able to provide a personalized service wherever our customers need us: on PCs, laptops, tablets and smartphones,” explains Renaud Besnard, group production director, PhotoBox. “We have also expanded into 16 European markets and have recently launched in Australia, New Zealand and in total, we are present in 20 countries. That means more customers demanding the best print quality, finishing and service.”

Originally, PhotoBox started out providing low-cost 6x4 inch prints produced using the silver halide process.

With the development of digital technology in the mid-2000s led by HP, PhotoBox was able to move from prints only to more complex, personalized photo-based products (such as photobooks), improve the quality of the products on offer while maintaining good value for money.

“Photobooks, greetings cards and other customized products now form the majority of our business,” adds Besnard. “Over the past ten years we have gone from having a single standardized book cover to introducing more customization across the production process with now more than 20 different photobook types, 40 templates and 120 layouts. Our latest addition is the layflat photobook, which we were the first to offer in Europe and which represents a growing market for us.”

### A long term partnership

From the outset, PhotoBox chose to work exclusively on HP Indigo digital presses and since 2005, it has purchased 21 different models. It currently has two HP Indigo W7250 Digital Presses and four HP Indigo W7200 Digital Presses for photobook and card production, two HP Indigo 7000 Digital Presses for soft cover printing and one HP Indigo WS6600p Digital Press for layflat production. It is pioneering the introduction of the layflat format in the European market and using HP Indigo digital presses to embrace this new luxury line of products.

“HP was always the ideal partner for us because it offers the best picture quality on the market and, over the years, has provided reliable and innovative digital print solutions,” says Besnard. “As we continue to expand the business overseas, we partner with local PSPs to fulfil orders in that market. However, we only ever partner with HP Indigo users as, for us HP is the mark of quality.”

### Seamless production process

The HP Indigo digital presses work in tandem with PhotoBox's proprietary software to produce top quality merchandise in the shortest time possible. Customers visit the website, select a format and design template and upload their images; images can also be dynamically uploaded from social media sites such as Facebook® and Instagram®.

An algorithm developed in-house ensures the picture quality is optimal and the product is then assigned to one of the three owned factories where it is ready to print within half an hour and a lean finishing process, including cutting and lamination, is applied. The final stage is a full quality assurance check before the finished item is despatched to the customer.

Regardless on the time of year, the customer can receive their photobook, calendar or card within a matter of days.

“Christmas is always dramatically busier for us, it's a time where we work longer hours and weekends. Our skilled HP Indigo operators and HP have always given us excellent support during these busy times,” comments Besnard.”

### Better quality, more productivity and lower costs

Another benefit PhotoBox is enjoying in some of the newer models is the roll feed functionality. This provides faster throughput because there is less paper handling involved while also improving consistency and increasing productivity. The company also appreciates how the print quality has continued to improve over the years, even as the production process has become faster.

“The quality has improved significantly and we have far fewer complaints about image fidelity. Color saturation is much better and new software tools enable us to monitor production more effectively,” says Besnard. “Overall, our productivity has increased by 25 percent, while costs have lowered through being able to bulk purchase paper for the roll to roll machines.”

PhotoBox also offers a choice of paper for customers and recently introduced Felix Schoeller E-PHOTO® Paper, which it considers to be truly comparable to Silver Halide quality: “We offer Felix Schoeller E-PHOTO® Paper as an option for our premium and layflat products; it's a bridge between digital and AGX that shows how far digital has progressed in terms of quality.”

### Putting innovation at the heart of everything

Working with a company with great innovation credentials was very important to PhotoBox: “HP's clear focus on innovation brings us more productivity and efficiency across the business, including new software tools, presses and types of paper and substrate,” continues Besnard. “HP's commitment to bringing new ideas to market quickly is brave and we are proud to work collaboratively with HP on these new advances.”

As PhotoBox continues its global expansion, it expects HP to continue playing a role in its business: “We'll keep upgrading to the latest models, continue to ramp up the volume and look for new ways to offer personalization,” concludes Besnard. “This year we are celebrating ten years of successful photobook production and HP has been a key part of that success.”

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