

HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses are a game changer for Documation



At a glance

Industry: Publishing/Direct Mail

Business name: Documation

Headquarters: Eau Claire WI, USA

Website: Documation.com



Challenge

- Deliver books, newsletters, magazines and collateral faster and more cost effectively to its clients including publishers.
- Expand into new business areas including direct mail.

Solution

- Two HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses to meet the needs of its growing business and the emerging needs of its customers and prospects.
- HP SmartStream modules for its PDF workflow.

Results

- Migrated colour book blocks for children's books from offset and digital sheet-fed presses to more efficient inkjet printing.
- Able to use a wide range of substrates (including gloss), achieving full throughput and exceptional colour without the need for pre-treatment or bonding agent.
- UV inline coating enables production of high-quality postcards digitally, a new application.
- Plans to leverage the HP T230 presses to grow direct mail business, which currently represents 13 per cent of revenues.

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– Martin Aalsma, vice president and chief operating officer, Documation

Documation is a print industry specialist based in Wisconsin. The business provides tailored solutions to manage, create, produce and distribute print projects throughout the US. It has 160 employees and a mix of sheet-fed offset, sheet-fed digital and, most recently, two HP T230 Color Inkjet Web Presses to support its customer base.

The new HP presses were brought on-stream in 2012 and 2013. According to Martin Aalsma, vice president and chief operating officer, the business was looking for a way to continue improving its quality and service levels at a more competitive price point. Shorter runs and faster turn times are also key benefits of the presses.

In making these significant investments, Documation looked at a variety of production inkjet presses. It determined the HP T230 presses best met the company’s needs.

“Every press has its nuances,” Aalsma says, “and HP has been very responsive, open to suggestions and willing to make changes based on customer input. This is critical in a dynamic marketplace, particularly with a company like ours. We’re not satisfied with ‘business as usual.’”

He adds, “I am a relationship-based person in business, and HP is a relationship-based company with whom I have a long history. I feel comfortable with its technology and its people.”

Stretching the limits of inkjet

Documation has worked with HP to stretch the limits of its inkjet presses, in terms of quality, throughput and the range of substrates used. “We’ve had the best success with Finch uncoated, Mondi DNS Enhanced and Appleton Utopia,” explains Aalsma. “We’ve also been able to overcome issues with running gloss stock at full rated speed. The key to production inkjet is making sure the substrates perform well in terms of ink laydown and drying. We’re committed to ongoing testing as substrate manufacturers continue to enhance their products for better inkjet compatibility.

“Although people told me you couldn’t ‘G7’ inkjet printing, as a G7 Certified printer, we’ve proven them wrong. We’ve created a proprietary process that balances the management of both ink and colour. That produces consistent colour across our entire production platform, a critical factor considering that many jobs use components from multiple printing technologies. Our ability to effectively integrate colour management and ink management within our workflow is our secret sauce.”

Today, direct mail represents approximately 13 per cent of Documation’s revenues, and Aalsma sees good growth potential. The recent addition of an inline UV coating station to the HP T230s enables the production of high quality postcards and tri-fold mailers, both new business and migration from other printing technologies.

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He says the business is gradually moving this work from offset and digital sheet-fed to the T230s: “It’s bringing faster throughput and more competitive prices to our clients with a quality they love.”

Documation runs a PDF workflow and has been able to integrate the HP SmartStream front end for its T230s with its existing workflow. “All our direct mail runs through HP SmartStream,” says Aalsma. “The integration with existing workflow has helped balance the work across our entire production platform, as well as providing one point of entry for clients.”

The next step is to expand beyond print. “We print a number of journals and magazines,” explains Aalsma, “and have developed EZMag as a digital replication of the printed editions. We’re gearing up our cross-media platform based on HP partner MindFireInc. It means we’ll be able to do full personalised URLs, email blasts and other campaigns with full tracking and reporting. We’ll present the results in an easy-to-understand dashboard for customers. This type of work is essential to the long-term viability of our business - and to print as a medium. Blending the two adds more value for the customer than either can deliver alone.”

Aalsma concludes, “The HP T230s are top-notch presses with competitive operating costs, even compared to digital sheet-fed. As a business we like to push the envelope on quality and innovative applications. Our team meshes well with the HP vision.”

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