



# Allied Printing rethinks ink with new strategies, technologies and services

Print has been man's primary form of communication for over 1,800 years for good reason. Its permanence and portability have stood the test of time. Allied is re-introducing the creative potential of print with precise, targeted communications that generate higher response rates and cultivate lifetime customers. Recently, Allied's belief in inkjet technology has lead the company to rethink its processes, resulting in a transformative investment.



**Industry sector:** Direct mail and commercial printing

**Business name:** Allied Printing Company

**Headquarters:** Ferndale, Michigan, USA

**Testimonial from:** COO: Tony Pelc, CMO: Elly Chichester

**HP solution:** HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press

**Annual turnover:** \$20 million

**Website:** alliedrethink.com



## Challenge

“The events of 2008/9 resulted in a dramatic change to our customer base and to what those customers wanted. We began a process of transformation throughout our business, a process that’s been on-going for the last seven years. This process is now culminating in Allied’s investment in the HP T300 Colour Inkjet Web Press.”

Tony Pelc, COO, Allied Printing Company



## Innovation from adversity

Few areas were hit by the recession harder than Detroit; fortunately, Allied’s management had diversified its customer base, allowing the company to grow and thrive during adverse economic times.

“We did a lot of work for companies related to the car industry, like automotive finance institutions, advertising agencies, larger banks, retailers and other businesses,” says Pelc. “We had also diversified our service offering earlier than other local competitors, offering direct mail and fulfilment services in addition to commercial print.”

Nevertheless, the changes in the market and business environment were dramatic. “As economic conditions improved over the last several years, it became very evident to us that we needed to differentiate ourselves and that our diversification provided the basis for a sound new business model,” he continues. “The way we were producing work with a hybrid of litho and digital imaging was becoming inefficient; our volumes were too high and our capacity at that point in time did not permit the growth we were experiencing. These jobs varied in volume from 10,000 pieces upwards of 1,000,000 pieces, and the hybrid format was becoming commoditised and less profitable.

“For a long time, I believed that digital inkjet would be a disruptive technology and had been following its development closely,” Pelc explains.

## Solution

“About five years ago, we began serious investigations and talks with all the major suppliers. HP was the final inkjet press supplier we spoke to, and that was a good thing. We better understood that many other suppliers had modified their toner presses to accommodate inkjet while HP had developed its inkjet presses from the ground up.”

Tony Pelc, COO, Allied Printing Company



## Changing the digital balance

Allied’s HP T300 Colour Inkjet Web Press was installed in November 2014. “We completely renovated what was formerly a warehouse and fulfilment centre into a state of the art, secure, digital direct mail centre with the T300 at its heart,” says Pelc. “We also installed cut-to-sheet and letter/signature folding equipment, and plan to expand our digital footprint and move our mail lines into the facility.”

“As part of the development of the direct mail centre, we moved our data processing and program services staff into the new facility to offer a high level of data security,” says Elly Chichester, CMO, responsible for Allied’s rebranding efforts.

“Having a self-contained mail centre provides a lot of benefits,” Pelc continues. “Separating the digital from the conventional operation enables us to streamline workflows, yet, retain the ability to put digitally printed jobs onto our conventional finishing lines should the customer’s specification require it.”

Another important solution from Allied Printing is POPcolor®. “POPcolor® is a proprietary process that enables designers to create content in RGB and preserve much of the expanded colour gamut of the RGB colour space,” says Chichester. “It gives on-screen colour quality, essential for consistent branding and colour matching across marketing materials; not to mention it makes for the highest quality print production on the market.”

## Result

“To give you an idea of the impact of the HP T300 Colour Inkjet Web Press on our capabilities, we recently printed a job on the press in 7.5 hours that would have taken seven days using our previous hybrid method.”

Tony Pelc, COO, Allied Printing Company



## Creating a different business environment

“Even in the short time the HP T300 Colour Inkjet Web Press has been running, we have seen a huge transformation in our business,” Pelc says. “Before it was installed, 60 per cent of our output was conventional and 40 per cent digital. We see that dynamic shifting every day.” In Allied’s case, there has been very little analogue to digital migration; the majority of the work being produced on the HP T300 is variable in nature.

“Our two six-colour sheet-fed presses are still running 24/7, but they are now printing longer, higher-value runs,” Pelc explains.

Along with POPcolor®, Allied’s Popology™ is also an important part of the company’s Rethink Ink concept. “Popology™ is an online storefront system that facilitates customer ordering of product – whether printed or warehoused products,” explains Chichester. “It’s ideal for companies with a distribution network because it allows the parent company to retain control and ensure brand standards are met. These services have attracted customers from a wide variety of industries, further diversifying the company’s customer base.

“Looking ahead, we’re focusing on increasing levels of automation.” We have the conventional and digital printing power, and we can grow it further. We will continue to educate our customers about the versatility of our HP T300 Press where 100 per cent of every page can be unique and personal, allowing a marketer to use print to speak individually to each recipient,” Pelc concludes.