



District Photo ramps up business with new print products

In 1949, District Photo was founded as a small black and white photo lab servicing department stores and Rx stores that sold Kodak Film. Through the next 50 years the business grew into a large central photofinishing lab by building a mail-order business servicing all 50 states as well as continuing to service the retail market. Today, District Photo is one of the largest wholesale and direct-to-consumer custom product and photo fulfillment operations in the world.

DISTRICT PHOTO INC

Industry sector: Photo Specialty

Business name: District Photo

Headquarters: Beltsville, Maryland, USA

Testimonial from: Joleen Kelley, division manager operations, District Photo

HP solution: HP Indigo 7600 Digital Press and HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press

Website: districtphoto.com



Challenge

“Our customers wanted to create custom photo items that we were unable to fulfil through traditional silver halide methods. They contracted with commercial printers, but the concept of printing one of one and turning it around quickly was new and foreign to them.”

Joleen Kelley, division manager operations, District Photo



Taking the initiative

District Photo saw a business opportunity to apply a new technology – digital ink-based printing – to create personalised one-off photo products. District Photo chose HP Indigo because of the high image quality and HP was able to help create an infrastructure to get the business up and running.

“We saw an opportunity to apply a methodology we had used for years to a new technology – digital ink based printing. Selling new products like personalised calendars, photobooks, greeting cards and stationery items has provided opportunities to us in a growing market,” Ms Kelley explains. “We chose HP because it had the best image quality and was able to assist us in building a platform and infrastructure to get started.”

District Photo today utilises HP Indigo digital presses to meet customers’ ink based needs 100 per cent of the time. While initially the market was in photobooks, today District Photo uses HP Indigo newest technologies to manufacture a wide menu of products.

“HP Indigo does a good job incorporating the needs of customers in each new technology,” continues Kelley. “With each new iteration of the series we have seen better efficiency, better maintenance routines and easier interfaces.”

Solution

“We are excited about the inline spectrophotometer, the media fingerprinting and the advances made to the oil recycling. We think the inline spectrophotometer will continue to bring better colour consistency to the presses and the media fingerprint will be more accurate in defining substrates.”

Joleen Kelley, division manager operations, District Photo



Expanding the business with new technology

The image quality of the HP Indigo digital presses and the support from HP is what keeps District Photo coming back when looking to increase printing capacity. In fact, it recently installed multiple HP Indigo 7800 Digital Presses which were up and running more quickly than with any of the previous installs.

“Our favourite press so far is the HP Indigo 7600 but only because we haven’t had the HP Indigo 7800 long enough to try all the special applications,” says Ms Kelley. “We are solid from the HP Indigo 7000 to the HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press. I think that speaks volumes to the technology all around and I think the HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press is going to add advancements to that with the spectrophotometer.”

District Photo is pleased with the colour consistency across all of its HP Indigo digital presses. As they expand to a new building location in Phoenix, AZ, they are working to ensure that the presses have colour consistency from site-to-site. This new facility also reduces shipping time and costs for customers while maintaining the high quality and colour consistency they have come to expect from District Photo.

“It is essential that both our Phoenix and Beltsville plants are consistent in colour quality of product – no matter which site it is produced at – and we need to do this without any additional effort, which HP has been instrumental in helping us with,” she adds.

Result

“We are seeing that the consumable life expectancy is higher with the HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press. We are seeing increased lifespans when compared to the HP Indigo 7500. Over the long term, it is going to increase efficiencies and reduce costs.”

Joleen Kelley, division manager operations, District Photo



Introducing new media and applications

The photobook market, which has been a business staple, is changing with more pages per book and a menu of more sizes and types of binding. The versatility of print sizes and the speed of which pages can be produced has been the ‘HP way’ since District Photo first bought an HP Indigo press in 2006. “HP press innovation as well as the print quality has enabled us to drive customer demand in different and exciting ways,” she says.

“We see opportunities to sell products that were not previously possible due to the increase in substrate choices,” comments Ms Kelley. “We have also just begun to dabble with special effects. Today, we offer over 35 different substrate choices to customers and expect that will increase in the future to meet consumer needs.

“The finishing and special effects partnerships provided by HP marry nicely to our portfolio of products,” concludes Ms Kelley. “As long as we continue to generate interest in the market of printed material, this is going to grow.”



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4AA5-7798EEW, September 2015, Rev. 1