



Seikou focuses on the future and its digital print capabilities

Seikou, Japan is a fourth generation family owned business founded in 1911. Today it is considered the leading flexible packaging converter in the region. To retain this leadership position, drive innovation and ensure it remains competitive the business has continually invested in digital print technology.



Industry sector: Flexible Packaging

Business name: Seikou Co., Ltd.

Headquarters: Japan

Testimonial from: Masaki Hayashi, executive director
Junya Nakata, technical manager

HP solution: 2 x HP Indigo 20000 Digital Presses,
1 x HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press



Challenge

“What customers want changes drastically from day to day, but being flexible and adapting our products remains the biggest challenge. Meeting this challenge offers great business opportunities.”

Masaki Hayashi, executive director, Seikou



Integrating digital with gravure printing

Seikou has never been afraid to be seen as an early adopter. It invested in digital print in 2000, knowing it might take years to build a solid infrastructure if it wanted to offer digital as an alternative to gravure printing.

“At the time the market wasn’t ready to embrace digital print,” explains Hayashi. This has since changed dramatically. Today the Japanese flexible packaging market requires services only digital can offer. “Customers now want on-demand short-runs that include variable information. More specifically, we have people trying our packaging for product development and consumer testing,” says Hayashi.

“On-demand printing is very effective even for short-runs,” he continues. “The availability of short-runs has created a new market for brands with multiple products. Our only limitation has been the size of packaging we could offer.”

A key customer of Seikou is the confectionary manufacturing company Colombin, with over 90 years in business it has a strong customer base. “Our market is department stores, as well as shops in train stations and airports. We’ve been working with Seikou for many years, they have been supplying individual packaging film for our confectionary items,” confirms Masahiro Oota, merchandising director, Colombin.

“Recently our customers’ needs have changed,” Masahiro Oota continues, “There has been increasing demand for us to create original packaging for individual customers. The only solution is short-runs which was previously not possible using gravure printing.”

Solution

“We’ve been waiting years for the arrival of a wide format digital press. The HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press has proved to be the right solution. For us, it meets the demands of the flexible packaging market.”

Masaki Hayashi, executive director, Seikou



Wider format press supports flexibility and reduces waste

By the time the HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press was introduced at drupa 2012, Seikou had the infrastructure in place to take the press and fully evaluate it. “In the past two years we’ve been a part of HP Indigo R&D efforts and witnessed the development of the HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press,” confirms Hayashi. “The whole flexible packaging end-to-end consideration of press design makes it a natural fit in our existing production workflow.”

“The new primer in conjunction with robust design of Priming Unwinder system makes it easier to use. This enhances our ability to work with a wide range of media, as well as finishing processes such as lamination.”

Junya Nakata, technical manager at Seikou, says the new press is more versatile and efficient: “The 30 inch width of the press enables us to produce large bags, where previously this was only possible with gravure wide printers. Now we can deal with bag sizes flexibly. It’s possible to produce more formats with one roll. Based on bag size we can put multiple items together and make longer runs on one large roll. This reduces waste.”

Hayashi explains how this is helping support Colombin’s need for variety and short-runs, “Until now we were doing only large volume gravure printing for Colombin, we shipped just the necessary volume and held inventory for them. However, with the HP Indigo 20000, we can offer the exact volume needed, any design needed, when it is needed.”

Result

“If originality is possible for all merchandise it becomes a tremendous value add. Linking that added value to profit is one way of achieving big business.”

Masahiro Oota, merchandising director, Colombin



Meeting market demands and supporting new solutions

The HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press is the right solution for his market, says Hayashi: “We’re impressed by HP’s consideration of food packaging safety regulations, more than half of the products in the flexible packaging industry go to packaging food. As converters we take full responsibility for our products. HP provides the necessary conformity to enable us to print safely. It means we fully comply with any regulations we meet.”

The abilities of the HP Indigo presses allow Seikou to offer a flexible and competitive service, Nakata explains: “Using the HP Indigo press it is possible to do very speedy type changes, which was impossible with gravure printing as time and cost is prohibiting. HP Indigo technology allows fine print to be reproduced even smaller than with gravure printing. For packages that require gradations it can be reproduced even smoother.”

“One of the strengths of HP Indigo is that we can manage variable data printing. This allowed us to fulfil a new print run for Colombin that had a huge impact. The package has several tens of thousands of varieties, every individual package was unique.”

Seikou used the HP SmartStream Mosaic automated design capabilities of the HP Indigo 20000 to create this innovative packaging run for Colombin.

“Thanks to the HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press we at Seikou continue to take on customer challenges,” says Masaki Hayashi. “When customers present various problems we’re happy that we can now provide solutions.”



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4AA5-8805ENW, June 2015