

Nosco find HP Indigo technology can meet colour expectations, reduce lead-times, and save money on short-run



At a glance

Industry: Labels & Packaging
Business name: Nosco, Inc.
Headquarters: Waukegan, Illinois, USA
Interviewees: Craig Curran, vice president sales and marketing
HP equipment: 5 x HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press, HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press
Website: nosco.com

Challenge

- Provide new services to existing customers, encourage new brands to enter the market and attract new business.
- Allow for more strategic runs and shorter lead times.
- Ensure print quality and colour consistency to enable customers to transition from litho to digital smoothly.

Solution

- Create an all-digital production facility including multiple HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Presses, an HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press and a variety of finishing solutions including a cutter-creaser from Kama.

Results

- Transition customers from litho to digital.
- Lower total print costs with better stock management.
- Enable new brands to get to market within 10 days.
- Deliver new business, enabling expansion plans.

“When brands come to do test runs on the HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press, they are amazed. They fully understand what the press can do for their businesses.”

– Craig Curran, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Nosco, Inc.



More demanding, more urgent, more creative

Nosco, Inc. is a major supplier of labels and packaging to the pharmaceutical, natural health and personal care industries. They serve national and regional brands from four sites around the United States, and offers customers a comprehensive range of equipment including flexo, litho, web offset and digital presses.

Nosco has relied on HP Indigo digital presses for more than a decade. They have five HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Presses, heavily used for digital label production. They also purchased the first US based HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press for folding cartons. “The markets in which we operate are extremely demanding,” says Craig Curran, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Nosco, Inc. “Not only do products need to be printed to the highest quality standards on a wide range of substrates, but they need to appear on the shelves faster than ever to achieve maximum market impact.”

Customers come to Nosco to solve a wide range of packaging problems. They want to be able to trial new products efficiently and ramp up production. Packaging must not only adhere to strict regulatory requirements, but it must also stand out on retail shelves.

For Nosco, digital print solutions provide customers with an opportunity to get to market faster and more cost-efficiently.

“It’s incredibly difficult for new players to enter well-established markets,” says Curran. “That’s where we saw another opportunity to develop our digital printing services further.”

Nosco wanted to do three things, he says: “provide new digital services to existing customers; encourage innovative new brands to enter the market and attract new business with a compelling digital offering.”

Building a new digital concept

In 2013, Nosco opened its On_Demand Solutions Centre (ODSC), a fully-digital facility in Bristol, Pennsylvania, just north of Philadelphia. The choice of location was no accident: Pennsylvania is an ideal base for serving healthcare-related companies along the US East Coast.

“We have a long history with HP Indigo digital presses,” says Curran, “We knew HP could provide the presses we required for our ODSC.”

As active members of Dscoop, Nosco was up-to-date on the capabilities of the latest HP Indigo digital presses and the offerings of HP’s packaging finishing partners. Curran says he was confident in choosing the equipment best suited to Nosco’s objectives, the HP Indigo WS6600 and HP Indigo 30000 Digital Presses.

“The two series of digital presses for labels and cartons enable brands to have a consistent look and feel for their packaging,” says Curran. “They ensure all elements are finished to the same high standard and are ready at the same time.”

Exceeding all expectations

When Nosco conceived the idea of the ODSC, it had a three-pronged strategy in mind:

“First, we wanted to provide high print quality,” says Curran. “Second, deliver the fast turnarounds that brands require to get to market quickly, and third, reduce the cost of short-run production. The HP Indigo digital presses allow us to meet all three objectives.”

Curran says in its first full year the facility has brought in more new business as expected: “We were astounded. As a result, we are expanding the size of the facility increasing our staff.”

“We wanted to ensure that during the transition period when conventionally and digitally printed cartons were next to each other on the shelves that there was no difference between them, and that the look and feel was the same. Working with Nosco, the experience has been seamless.”

– Michelle Jerred, Product Development Manager, The Vitamin Shoppe



The proof is in the printing

Demonstrating the success of Nosco's strategy, Curran cites the example of two key clients, Pure Organics™ and The Vitamin Shoppe® and Earth's Daughter all of whom have transitioned their packaging printing to digital.

“All had slightly different priorities, but they were successfully addressed by Nosco and the capabilities of the HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press,” Curran says. “Pure Organics was looking for a way to reduce time to market; The Vitamin Shoppe was attracted by shorter, strategic runs, but wanted to ensure that brand colours matched what its customers were used to, whilst Earth's Daughter was looking for something unique to enhance its brand.”

The Vitamin Shoppe embraces short-runs to trial new products

The Vitamin Shoppe, Inc., is a major multi-channel retailer and manufacturer of nutritional products, generating annual sales in excess of \$1 billion. With more than 700 stores and two websites, the company sells more than 26,000 different products, from 400 of the top national brands as well as their own brand. Demand for different products is not always even. Printing equal quantities of packaging for products that sell at different speeds is wasteful.

“We needed an efficient way of changing how the supply chain worked so that we had the quantities we needed when we needed them,” says Michelle Jerred, Product Development Manager, The Vitamin Shoppe. “Whatever the solution, consistent colour and high print quality were criteria we couldn't compromise on.”

Nosco's digital printing proposition met The Vitamin Shoppe's key criteria: a lower barrier to entry, lower minimum print runs and greater ease and speed in making changes to text and graphics.

The HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press has an inline spectrometer that provides fully automated closed loop colour control, eliminating all manual colour calibration and ensuring the required accuracy and consistency. The HP Indigo One Shot Color process, which lays down all colours in a single pass, ensures perfect registration.

Nosco's HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press, with its 29 x 20inch format and ability to print 3,450 full colour sheets per hour, could easily accommodate The Vitamin Shoppe's print runs which average between 5,000 and 15,000 cartons.

Pure Organics cuts costs and time to market in rebranding initiative

Pure Organics is La Palm Spa Product®'s brand of professional manicure and pedicure products. They were unhappy with the look and feel of its fragrance packaging.

“Our packaging should carry the promise of a luxury spa experience,” explains Heather Newhouse, creative director, La Palm Spa Products®. “It should reflect the values of using natural products for a special level of pampering.”

With a rebranding of their five fragrances planned, Newhouse turned to Nosco. “Our previous cartons were litho printed. Apart from reducing the cost of the quantities we needed, we also wanted more vibrant images consistent with the values of the brand.

“Nosco,” she continues, “was able to show how using HP Indigo digital technology could print exactly the quantities needed: “Digital printing helped us get to market faster and for less cost than with litho. We saved a significant amount on platemaking costs and time. Going from our first meeting with Nosco to the shipment of our Spa Starter Kits was less than six weeks.”

Newhouse says speed and efficiency matter, but the brand could not compromise on quality. “We had a particular requirement for smooth gradients on the cartons,” Newhouse says. “Nosco showed us comparative output from different processes; the digital quality was just what we'd been looking for.”

“We’ve been blown away by the quality of the packaging – and the feedback from our customers. The colour quality is amazing. Digital print has opened our eyes to the creative possibilities with our future packaging. Anything is possible.”

– Esther Gillen, co-founder, Earth’s Daughter

“Working with Nosco, seeing the quality of digital print and understanding how much faster we can get products to market opened my eyes to the potential of doing short-runs. It was a really great experience.”

– Heather Newhouse, Creative Director, La Palm Spa Products®



Earth’s Daughter takes flight with vibrant colour

Earth’s Daughter is a personal care start-up, created by husband and wife John and Esther Gillen. To date, the one-year-old business has just two products exclusively sold online – an Aloe Vera gel and a set of blending sponges.

“Our packaging is a critical component of our brand,” says John. “It should create an immediate impression of our brand and our values with new customers.”

John and Ester knew they needed something out of the ordinary. “Our products are not generic, we spend a lot of time sourcing and developing a unique product,” explains John. “It does us no favours for the packaging to be generic.”

Nosco took a lead role in translating the pair’s packaging vision. The Earth’s Daughter folded box for the blending sponges was designed, tested and approved within weeks. “We wanted the design to feature flowers and butterflies – very colourful, very natural,” says Esther, “but the stock to feel unprocessed, slightly antique.”

“We used a traditional white card for the initial execution and although this worked fine, it was too ‘clean’. We eventually settled on an aged, brown card substrate. This has worked beautifully.”

All the print work was carried out, without a hitch, on Nosco’s HP Indigo digital presses. This enabled Nosco to not only ensure pitch-perfect, vibrant colour; but to produce multiple short-runs. “As a start-up, selling online and taking tentative steps, we have to be very careful about over production,” says John. “Digital print allowed us to produce just 1,000 boxes in the first run; now that we’ve seen initial demand we’ll be doubling this.”

Brand acceptance of the digital concept

“To be able to get brands to market in ten days or less is an amazing achievement,” says Curran. “It requires the right combination of technologies and people throughout the workflow and the supply chain.”

Nosco’s transition to digital printing has made vast differences to production rates and costs, including the elimination of printing plates and platemaking time. “There are number of secondary benefits,” says Curran. “We’re saving on redundant printing - the printing of packaging that will never be used. In turn this has a positive impact on materials, warehousing, shipping and storage.”

The HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press has allowed Nosco to introduce special decorative features such as different and multiple coatings, embossing, variable data and personalisation. Brands are getting educated and beginning to think creatively with digital in mind,

“Brands are excited by the turnaround times and the economies made possible by digital printing,” Curran says. “But it also allows them to be more ambitious with their packaging.”

“Printing strategically is a whole new concept, but it ensures brands have what they need, when they need it and where they need it.” All of which Nosco is achieving with their use of HP Indigo digital print technology.

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4AA5-9248EEW, September 2015

