



Marathon Press offers a broad spectrum of services to professional photographic and commercial markets

Marathon Press' 'can-do' spirit enables it to forge close relationships with customers and develop a comprehensive portfolio of services to create the best solutions for their businesses. Originally a commercial printer, Marathon moved into the professional photography market with digitally printed products that now account for half its business.



Industry sector: Photo Specialty

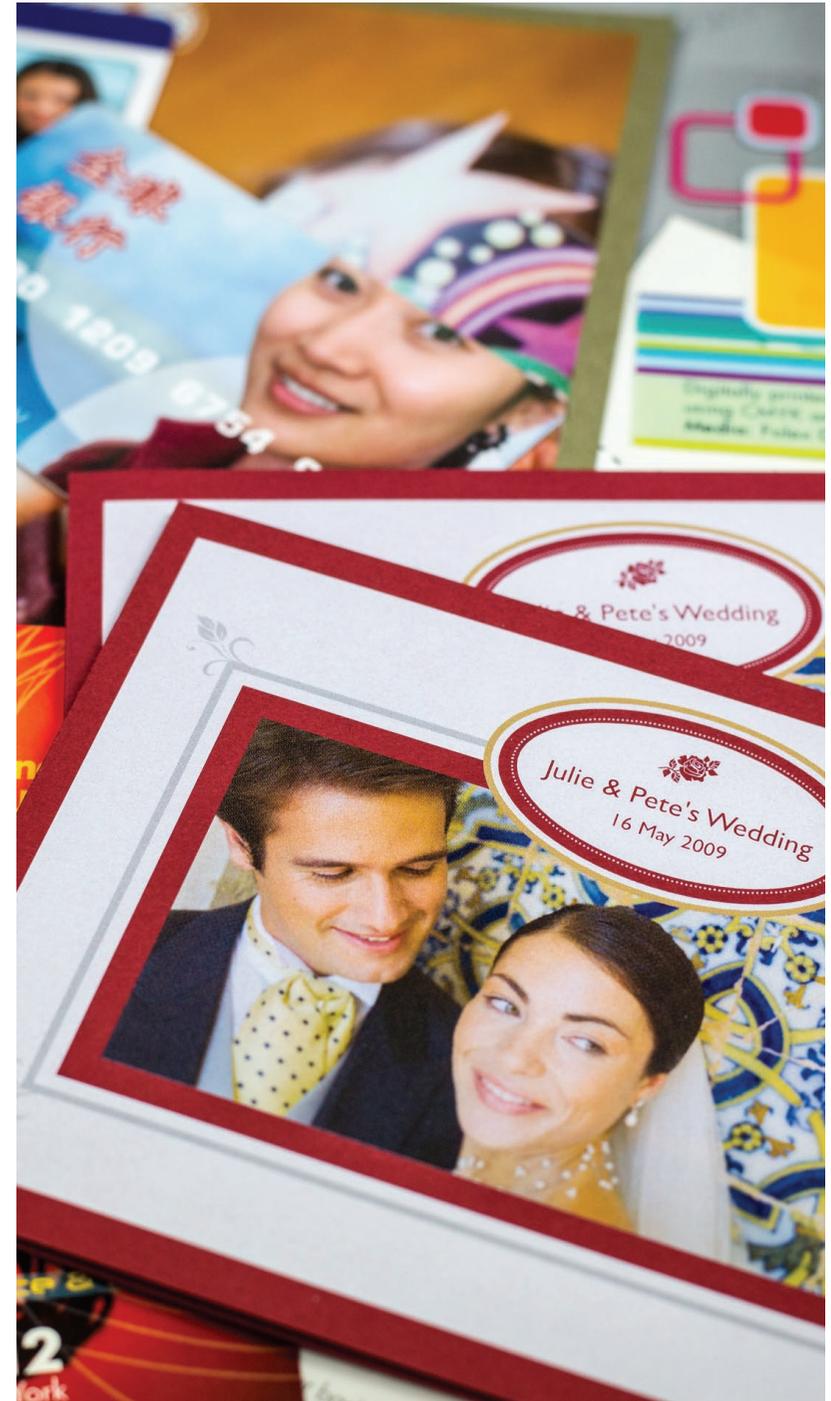
Business name: Marathon Press

Headquarters: Norfolk, Nebraska

Interviewees: Max Alewel, director of operations; Bruce Price, president

HP equipment: HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press, HP Indigo 7000 Digital Press

Website: marathonpress.net



Challenge

“Our goal is to deliver quality products and services that were created through long-term, collaborative relationships and the application of the best technologies.”

Bruce Price, president, Marathon Press



Keep creative, cost-effective and competitive

A look at the Marathon Press website will instantly show the diversity of the company's activities. Photographic specialty printing for professional photographers; commercial products for small companies and large corporations; web interfaces for online ordering, and order fulfilment services are just a part of Marathon's activities.

“We go where our customers lead us,” says Max Alewel, director of operations, Marathon Press. “Increasingly, however, we work in partnership with them to help them determine the best solutions for their challenges. That means we have to be imaginative and have the best technologies to deliver the results.”

Marathon Press' business is evenly divided between commercial and photo-related work, with HP Indigo presses handling myriad photo-products. The company installed the HP Indigo 3000 in 2005, one of the first in the United States, to offer customers services they couldn't get elsewhere and to differentiate itself in a competitive market. Its digital capability attracted business from smaller companies requiring cost-effective short-runs and print variable data products more efficiently than imprinting conventional print using laser technology.

Marathon upgraded to HP Indigo 3050 and 7000 Digital Presses before concluding that a larger, more productive press was needed to keep its edge.

“We wanted to restate our difference in the market, and also wanted to drive down costs and implement production efficiencies,” says Bruce Price, president, Marathon Press.

Solution

“The quality of HP Indigo printing for photographs is such that people no longer ask whether we use silver halide. When your customers are professional photographers from across the country, that's a pretty good indication that the quality is high.”

Max Alewel, director of operations, Marathon Press



You only have a technological edge when people know about it

To further consolidate its market position, Marathon Press chose the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press. Its larger sheet size would triple Marathon's digital capacity, printing at 3,450 29 x 20in full colour sheets per hour. Reductions in turnaround times and increased throughput for both commercial and photo work deliver the desired production efficiencies.

“While the press was doing good things for us, we wanted a way to promote it that was more than just saying, ‘We have a new digital press,’” says Alewel. “We developed a branded service called Bella Art Prints which showcased the key features, high qualities and larger 29in format, of the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press.”

Bella Art Prints, a web-to-print service, offers professional photographers prints on luxurious acid-free papers, in sizes no one else can offer.

“We held a hospitality evening at Imaging USA, a professional photography show, held in February 2015, in Nashville,” explains Price. “We printed a few thousand samples to show what could be done.”

The response was very enthusiastic, Marathon were swamped with requests and the samples flew off the table. “The archival properties of HP Indigo ElectroInk were particularly attractive as photographs exposed to normal daylight would last far longer than silver halide prints,” he continues. “We offered 10 free prints, any image, any substrate – no strings, no watermarks – and the response was enormous with many real job queries following.”

Result

“We have the ability to speak differently to our different audiences. Whether professional photographers, small businesses or large corporations, because we use a language they understand, we can develop solutions for them.”

Bruce Price, president, Marathon Press



Putting power into digital photographic printing

The HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press can handle the huge amounts of data that photo-heavy work requires,” says Alewel. “For example, we are one of the major printers of school and college yearbooks in the country. We also print school photos. These comprise of thousands of jobs that are of very short-runs, but digital makes them cost-effective, affordable and profitable.”

Another job where the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press demonstrated its abilities was in the production of two books for The Professional Photographers of America (PPA) the world's largest non-profit photography association organised for professional photographers, by professional photographers with close to 28,000 creative members in more than 50 countries.

“The first volume was the PPA Loan Book,” explains Price. “It's a 9 x 12in book of just under 500 pages. This year, we printed it twice as fast because we could print the pages two-up. We also printed the PPA Showcase Book, which has about the same pagination, but because it was 9 x 9in, with the larger format of the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press, we were able to print it three times as fast.”

“The fact that a leading professional photographers' organisation like the PPA would use digital printing for its books says it all,” Alewel explains.

“Working with HP, we have confidence in the presses and in the support we receive. All new technologies have their challenges, and with HP we have a partner that helps us meet them.”