



Esser printSolutions generates growth with bold move to 100 percent digital production

Esser Druck, of Bretten, Germany, was a 100+ year old, 'very traditional' printer that in 2013 reinvented itself as Esser printSolutions, a completely digital print service provider. The addition of new equipment, employees and services has attracted new and larger customers, changed the buying patterns of existing ones, and enabled the company to grow by 35 percent, from €3.9 to €5.2 million, between 2012 and 2015.



Industry sector: General Commercial Printing, Publishing, Direct mail

Business name: Esser printSolutions

Headquarters: Bretten, Germany

Testimonial from: Diana Esser, managing director

HP solution: HP PageWide Web Press T230

Annual turnover: €5.2 million

Website: esser-ps.de



Challenge

“We had been in digital print since 2001 and were comfortable with the technology and knew its possibilities. By 2012, we realized that there was no growth potential in offset printing. We needed to do more than compete on price.”

Diana Esser, managing director, Esser printSolutions GmbH



Following the value

In 2012, Esser printSolutions was a family company in its fourth generation employing 35 people. Its early investment in digital printing technology had enabled it to extend its services and grow the business using a five-color HP Indigo 5500 presses and single color sheet and web-fed presses.

“Short-runs and variable data were what people were looking for, and we were able to attract new customers with short-run books, manuals and photo-books,” says Diana Esser, managing director, Esser printSolutions. “At the same time, we were producing long-runs on our offset press that we installed in 2007. We had a computer-to-plate processing capabilities in-house, as well as finishing and binding equipment, so we were completely self-contained.”

Esser printSolutions understood that data handling and efficient workflows were essentially the key to success in digital printing and employs two IT specialists to develop software, ensure integration and keep production running smoothly.

“By 2013, the market had changed and offset printing was nearly completely price-driven,” Diana Esser explains. “Competition from China, Eastern Europe and other places meant that the profits from our digital work were supporting our conventional printing. It was time to make some big decisions.”

“There was so much we could do with digital,” she says. “New products, services, and a solution that reached across the entire supply chain, from our customers to the end-users. This is what drove our decision to become a fully digital company.”

Solution

“For a small company to invest in the four-color HP PageWide Web Press T230 was a huge leap of faith. On the other hand, it was the obvious thing for us to do.”

Diana Esser, managing director, Esser printSolutions GmbH



Focusing on flexibility

“We’d watched the development of digital inkjet for a number of years, but while it was good for black and white, the color quality wasn’t there,” says Diana Esser. “By the time we were ready to make the leap, the HP PageWide Web Press T230 was available and offered the speed, quality, capacity and flexibility that we wanted. It could also produce color work at an attractive price.”

“In the past, four-color work cost four times more than one color, but inkjet printing changed the economics, so four-color work is a lot cheaper,” she continues.

The removal of the offset press and the computer-to-plate equipment left a lot of space that’s been taken up with something else:

“Paper! Paper. Paper. Rolls and rolls of it!” Diana Esser says. “We are able to supply or match the stocks our customers want. The HP T230 press gives us enormous flexibility in the substrates we can print on, including coated and uncoated stocks from 40 – 215g/m².”

“We’re like a speed-boat: Small enough to move quickly, but with a lot of power,” she says. “We can react much faster than larger companies, but deliver the same quality and print volumes. That’s a very strong USP. The press is so fast we have given it the nickname ‘speedy.’”

The company prints roll-to-roll on its HP PageWide Web Press T230, using an unwinder and rewinder from HP Finishing Partner Hunkeler.

“Having near-line finishing means that we don’t go to customers and tell them what we can do; we ask them what they want,” Diana Esser says.

Result

“We have proprietary production software with intelligent hot folders that order jobs to minimize roll changes. We run the press 11 hours a day, five days a week – profitably – proving that you don’t have to be a big company to have an inkjet web press.”

Diana Esser, managing director, Esser printSolutions



Managing a dynamic supply chain

“Digital print has a different heartbeat from conventional printing,” explains Diana Esser. “Everything is different: how you work, what you print, how you think and how you work with your customers.”

“To give you an idea, we have printed for Neff GmbH, the appliance manufacturer, for more than 80 years. Today, our software is linked to its production system with the planned day’s output. We automatically begin printing packs of instructions, manuals, warranty and service information and other documentation to match Neff’s production schedule,” she explains. “It might be long-runs in one language, or it could be for a dozen different products in as many languages. We print it seamlessly, finish, collate and deliver to them four times a day.”

Up to 7,500 packs might be printed and delivered in one day, each with approximately 6 different items. Esser printSolutions has all the content in its databases and manages the sequencing, print and on-time delivery.

“It’s a dynamic process,” Diana Esser says. “At 8 am, the plan might be to produce first 20 X ovens and 30 Y ovens and after that 40 Z ovens. The plan can change if Neff have not received a part from a supplier and they may switch their whole production plan for the day. Perhaps they only do 15 Y ovens and then 80 A ovens. Our job management software, the HP PageWide Web Press T230 and our finishing line can keep up with that.”

“So you see, we’re not just about print: we focus on the whole solution for the customer,” Diana Esser concludes. “It’s all part of that different heartbeat.”