



Linemark's unique growth model leverages conventional and digital print, online media and customer service

Since 1985, Linemark has expanded the concept of a general commercial printer and today it's an advanced supplier of conventional and digital print, and online marketing solutions. From photobooks, school yearbooks and direct mail to corporate web-to-print collateral, and web-based marketing, high quality and service characterize Linemark's work.



Industry sector: General Commercial Printing

Business name: Linemark Printing, Inc.

Headquarters: Upper Marlboro, Maryland, USA

Testimonial from: Steve Bearden, president; Dave Ashton, vice president, sales and marketing

HP solution: HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press; 2 x HP Indigo 7800 Digital Press

Website: linemark.com



Challenge

"At Linemark, we invest in where the market is going, not where it is now. We see web-to-print and personal communications as major growth areas, and our HP Indigo digital presses give us the platforms to respond to that growth, add value and offer new applications."

David Ashton, vice president, Linemark Printing, Inc.



Building a new model for commercial printing

In April 2016, Linemark Printing, Inc., of Upper Marlboro, Maryland, installed an HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press and two HP Indigo 7800 Digital Presses. Even though the new presses replaced some legacy equipment, such a dramatic increase in capacity is unusual for a print service supplier (PSP) with 110 full-time employees.

"When setting up Linemark in 1985, we had three principles in mind," says Steve Bearden, president, Linemark Printing, Inc. "First, we wanted to create higher value through exceptional customer service, and we have remained intensely customer-focused. "Second, we wanted to use equipment and technologies that added value," he says. "Third, those platforms had to be solid and scalable, but never compromise quality."

Linemark installed its first digital color press in 1999, the Indigo TurboStream. The company recognized the coming trend of shorter runs and personalization when it saw how much data was being gathered by mid-sized and smaller companies.

"CRM was set for enormous growth and we believed that digital printing would have the ability to handle and print that data," Bearden says. "Digital printing quickly moved on to make many more applications possible, like the photobooks and yearbooks we print today."

Since then, in addition to growing its digital capacity, Linemark has maintained its conventional print capability with six litho presses ranging from an 18in. format to a six-color (with coating) to an 40in. press. Two decades after first investing in digital printing, it's clear that Linemark's assessment of its potential has paid off, and the company was ready to take another major step.

Solution

"When looking to upgrade, we wanted a platform that would deliver not only the highest quality, but also the workflow efficiency that could give our digital business a competitive advantage. HP Indigo delivered."

Steve Bearden, president, Linemark Printing, Inc.



Harmonizing output

With the recent addition of the HP Indigo 7800 and 10000 Digital Presses, Linemark continues to meet its original objectives while being in a position to anticipate 'where the market is going'.

Linemark began printing calendars in 2000, subsequently moving into photobooks, and then yearbooks. The advanced capabilities of its HP Indigo 7800 Digital Presses, and the larger formats possible with the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press have enabled the company to develop these new markets, not usually handled by general commercial printers.

"The HP Indigo presses deliver the quality and throughput needed in this market, and give us the capacity for heavy seasonal demands," says David Ashton, vice president, sales and marketing, Linemark Printing, Inc.

"Since installing the first digital press, our revenues have grown from \$3.5 million to \$21 million. About half that growth is attributable to digital," he says. "Our biggest growth driver is web-to-print," Ashton continues. "Our conventional business continues to grow, but at a lower rate. Digital growth is double-digit."

Linemark's web-to-print business is built on proprietary software that processes jobs through its own websites as well as through third-party and corporate sites used for ordering branded collateral.

"Customer service and quality are still number one at Linemark," says Bearden. "Our online business is fast-growing, and ensuring SLAs is extremely important. We rely on Net Promoter Scores to make sure that customers are getting the best results from the time a job is instigated to delivery."

Result

"On the offset replacement side, our design agencies now have a whole new line of creative products to offer. It has been awesome to see some of the products that the creative teams have imagined and we have produced on the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press; they could not have been manufactured on any other machine affordably."

David Ashton, vice president, Linemark Printing, Inc.



Adding value and ensuring service

Linemark's direct mail business utilizes the personalization and thick substrate capabilities of the HP Indigo presses, while the opaque white ink enables special effects and printing on films, which can contribute to higher response rates. Linemark also works with customers to provide personalized URLs (pURLs) that integrate print and online media to maximize value and responses.

"The HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press B2 format has enabled us to print large photobooks, oversized brochures, pocket products and also to migrate some work from the conventional presses," Ashton says. "We have also been printing hybrid products, imprinting and overprinting conventionally printed blanks digitally."

A recent prestigious job for leading Washington, D.C. design firm, Kinetik, drew on Linemark's combination of digital and conventional expertise.

"We were asked to produce an event brochure with variable data for The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company," explains Ashton. "It was a four-color job comprising a die-cut vertical pocket folder along with 12 to 20 pages of text stitched in. Printing the pocket folder was possible with larger format of the HP Indigo 10000 Digital Press, and we used a 29in. conventional press to apply an aqueous coating. With this combination we were able to print, coat and finish all eight versions within a week."

"Working with HP has been like working with a partner, not a vendor," Bearden concludes. "From sales support and installation to aftercare and service, everyone we deal with is genuinely interested in what we are doing and wants to help contribute to our success."