

Case Study

production

VISOgraphic Inc

An Expanded Ricoh Digital Infrastructure Meets Shifting Market Demands



"We wanted reliability. We wanted ease of operation. We wanted to be able to run these digital presses and not have our technicians come back to me every hour with issues. The Ricoh digital presses deliver on those expectations because they simply run reliably, consistently and without headaches."

—John Dahlke,
Chief Operating Officer,
VISOgraphic Inc



ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

In 1979, Bob Dahlke left his job in IT management and purchased a company that had been in the printing business since 1946. After his two sons, Bob Jr. and John, graduated from college, they joined the business. Over time, the company has grown to serve a diverse customer base that ranges from SMBs to large Fortune 500 corporations.

About six years ago, the company noticed a shift in demand. Customers began asking for shorter run applications and it was becoming expensive and time consuming to handle these jobs on a conventional press. Additionally, the companies VISOgraphic served were gaining more sophistication in their ability to gather data on their own customers and in how they wanted to present that information in their printed materials. VISOgraphic has always believed in a continuous reinvestment in its business and the technology that drives it. The Dahlkes decided it was time to add digital capabilities.

CHALLENGE

"It puts a big strain on your company when you're producing smaller, shorter runs on a four-color 40-inch offset press. For example, just to produce business cards we were making plates, stripping them and doing the makeready required to run them. With the print quality finally available in the digital market, we decided to invest in digital to assess the difference it would make in both efficiency and cost," said John Dahlke, VISOgraphic's chief operating officer.

With a larger percentage of its market shifting to smaller runs, VISOgraphic purchased two RICOH Pro C901s and started running smaller jobs such as business cards on the digital presses. The team discovered that jobs that used to take 30 minutes to set up for offset now took only five minutes. Soon, many of the short run applications were migrated from offset to the digital presses.

CHALLENGE

- Accommodate requests for shorter runs efficiently
- Establish web-to-print capabilities
- Create new processes to streamline production workflow

SOLUTION

- Two RICOH Pro C9110s and the RICOH Pro 8120
- EFI Digital Storefront
- Web portals that drive work to digital

RESULTS

- A significant increase in productivity
- Around-the-clock access to print services
- Ability to meet customers' diverse print needs

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“Our customers began to ask for more one-to-one marketing applications. For example, we used to run a million generic mailers for one customer and send them all over a certain region. However, because this customer was now collecting better data on its buyers, they asked for 100,000 mailers personalized to the individual and their buying habits. We recognized early that part of this digital revolution was organizing your company properly, which meant we had to look at putting procedures and systems in place to handle the growing requests for short run jobs effectively,” said John.

The company saw establishing web-to-print capabilities as a way to drive work to their digital presses. Having web-to-print portals would create an automated workflow enabling clients to easily navigate through all their print applications in a single, centralized platform, helping them to reduce spend and administrative burden. To support the web-to-print capabilities VISOgraphic chose the EFI Digital StoreFront™ (DSF), an intuitive and powerful web-to-print solution. Compatible with Ricoh’s digital presses, DSF provides VISOgraphic’s customers around-the-clock access to print services and a customizable branding experience.

With web-to-print providing a path to continue growing VISOgraphic’s digital offerings, Bob Dahlke Jr. set out to sell these capabilities, and requests for variable data applications soon exploded. “With the combination of opening new opportunities with variable data and our automation processes in place to push more jobs to digital, we began to experience expanded volumes. We were simply ready for a more robust digital press that offered the ability to handle a higher level of production,” said Bob Jr.

Additionally, the company still has a significant demand for black-and-white work as well as hybrid printing applications. Their current machine didn’t have the screening capabilities or the quality VISOgraphic needed. Once again, they looked to Ricoh for the right solution.

SOLUTION

The company saw the Pro C9110 as the perfect solution for handling the types of jobs that were now coming through the door. It is an affordable, heavy-duty production color digital press that offers powerful performance on all levels—productivity, durability, media support and image quality.

“Ricoh has developed the next generation of an extremely robust digital press,” said John. “We are able to run the machine for extended cycles and we can leave it completely unmanned. With the ability to add extra drawers, a feeding system and delivery system that is extremely solid, we can start the machine and walk away without worrying about it. It will run until the paper drawers empty out. Two other things that are great about this new digital press are that it can run on an amazing variety of substrates, from linens to felt stocks, and it duplexes automatically.”



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The ability to successfully meet customer demand for long sheet capabilities, aggressive turnaround time and quality that rivaled offset at a competitive price point only increased demand. Within nine months, VISOgraphic purchased its second Pro C9110.

“With our digital volume increasing so quickly, we want to ensure redundancy. Now that we are able to automate our processes, we can drive more jobs to digital than we have in the past,” said Bob Jr. “Our internal systems are in place, too. When materials get ordered, they go through our workflow process and are sent directly to the Pro C9110s. There is no waiting.”

VISOgraphic also purchased a RICOH Pro 8120. Offering a maximum monthly cycle of 1,000,000 pages, advanced scanning capabilities and easy-to-use features, it simplifies production tasks for the company’s high volume of black-and-white applications.

“When it comes to our investments, we evaluate where the profitability is and let that drive the changes to our technology infrastructure. Digital is now a large part of that. Ricoh is fast becoming the leader in the production market. The best part is we know Ricoh will watch over us. We have a partnership based on trust.”

RESULTS

“We wanted new options we could bring to our customers and the Pro C9110s gives us that flexibility as well as the opportunity to automate and push more work through our plant,” said Bob Jr.

VISOgraphic is realizing these goals. The company’s ability to offer complex variable data print has expanded exponentially with hundreds of jobs a month that are now fully variable. With over 50 web portals in place, customers go online and log into their own personalized system. To order, they hit a button and the job goes into the automated workflow straight to the Pro C9110s and is then sent right to bindery and delivered.

The Pro 8120 is proving to be a workhorse as well. “Our original plan for the Pro 8120 was to do all the black-and-white work on it, not the hybrid work. However, we found this machine was so easy to operate and so stable, we started moving our hybrid work from offset to the Pro 8120. It offers the same high quality print and productivity as a traditional press,” said John.

“I wanted reliability. I wanted ease of operation. I wanted to be able to run these machines and not have my technicians come back to me every hour with issues. These new presses deliver because they simply run reliably, consistently and without headaches,” said John.

“Litho is still a big part of our business and definitely in our world as it is not going anywhere,” said Bob Jr. “However, it’s the value of the product mix that we look at. When it comes to our investments, we evaluate where the profitability is and let that drive the changes to our technology infrastructure. Digital is now a large part of that. Ricoh is fast becoming the leader in the production market. The best part is we know Ricoh will watch over us. We have a partnership based on trust.”

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