

Case Study

commercial and industrial printing

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Cirrus Visual

Ricoh's advanced production print systems and support give Cirrus Visual the confidence to go all digital



"As our company needs have changed over the years, Ricoh has evolved with us. Quite simply, Ricoh gets it. They have provided us with the tools to become a full-service visual communication company."

– Brandon Blair
President
Cirrus Visual
Tucson, Arizona



ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Cirrus Visual, located in Tucson, Arizona, began more than a decade ago with the vision to merge graphic design and commercial printing under one roof. Founded in 2003, they had a promising start designing and producing a wide range of materials, such as brochures, trade show displays, print advertising and much more—for clients around the world, on traditional offset presses.

But much has changed since those early days. Digital presses have made impressive inroads into the commercial printing market. Cirrus has become a "brand manager" for their clients, adding web design and event marketing to their original graphic design and printing offerings. And they've wrapped their total package around the concept they call "Cloud 9 Service."

"We're not just a commercial printer or graphic design firm," said Brandon Blair, president of Cirrus Visual. "We actually serve as advisors to our clients to help them determine what their needs are."

When it became clear that digital was the way forward for production print, they turned to Ricoh. Cirrus started with a solid introduction into digital color printing with Ricoh's earlier production presses and evolved into our latest advanced black-and-white and color systems to grow their digital business. With new digital capabilities and a stable of state-of-the-art production print units, Cirrus has been able to move completely away from offset printing—to become the thriving, all-digital, full-service visual communication company they are today.

CHALLENGE

- Traditional offset technology
- Desire to be a full-service visual communication company
- Need to add on-demand, digital printing
- Desire to go completely digital

SOLUTION

- RICOH Pro C5100s color production printer
- RICOH Pro C7100 color production printers
- RICOH Pro L4160 wide-format color latex printer

RESULTS

- Confidence to shut down offset presses
- Powerful digital fleet
- 500 percent growth in wide-format business
- Process agnostic customers

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CHALLENGE

Five years ago, everything was shifting. To keep up with their customers' marketing and communications requests and multichannel campaigns, Cirrus had to morph into "information acrobats."

Accepting files and returning static printed pieces no longer cut it. Their customers were counting on them to show them how to work smarter, become better marketers and communicate more effectively. Cirrus knew they needed to add variable data printing (VDP) and on-demand digital printing to their traditional offset capabilities.

"We had a long-term relationship with Ricoh and knew that as a company, they could provide the support and service we needed," said Blair.

With that in mind, they chose a Ricoh color production printer for their first foray into digital printing. At the time, it met all the specifications Cirrus needed for paper stock, speed, reliability and quality.

"It was a really great tool for variable data, direct mail, posters and brochures," said Blair. "For quality on-demand, it was perfect."

Their digital business grew rapidly and Cirrus decided to add a second Ricoh digital color printer that offered superior color quality and precise accuracy. Shortly after, they purchased yet another Ricoh color digital production printer to do specialty banner sheet printing and complete their initial digital fleet.

"For a while there, we had all three running as a nice suite—a big workhorse, a great color printer and a specialty unit," said Blair. "We were able to grow our volume of digital printing. In fact, we grew our business so much we expanded and bought a new building."

With a larger space and a proven track record in on-demand digital production printing, the question then became—what's next?

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SOLUTION

Cirrus was clearly on their way to transforming from a graphic design and commercial printing shop to a full-service visual communication company; however, when they moved to their new building, they weren't quite ready to completely abandon offset printing.

By adding a third Ricoh unit to their line-up, they gained exposure to the more advanced capabilities we were engineering into our latest line of digital production print technology. But they didn't yet have the experience or confidence to move all their offset jobs to a digital system.

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“We were only keeping the offset presses up and running for occasional jobs like printing on foil,” said Blair.

Before the move, Cirrus retired their original Ricoh color digital printer. Once settled in, the second Ricoh device was doing the lion’s share of the digital printing and the third Ricoh printer served as a back-up or specialty unit. Wanting to eventually move away from offset altogether, we introduced them to our latest innovation—the RICOH Pro C7100 digital press.

Cirrus was particularly impressed that this new system had a fifth color station. It opened up possibilities for their designers to apply white or clear toner. Along with the additional color station, the Pro C7100 produces 1,200 x 4,800 dpi near-offset image quality. It can print oversized pieces such as posters, signage, window clings, etc. There are a variety of inline finishing options. And, it can run a wide range of media including synthetics and heavily textured stocks.

“We bought two Pro C7100 systems and were able to shut down our offset presses entirely,” said Blair. “We were a little nervous at first, but there hasn’t been a single day I’ve looked back since.”

They decided to add two Pro C7100 units so the fifth station could be dedicated to white on one system and clear toner on the other. They also chose to equip the presses with booklet finishers and a large-capacity stacker. Both printers are vacuum-feed systems that minimize paper jams, and one features an oversize-sheet bypass where they can run even larger output. The systems also come equipped with powerful Fiery E83 Pro controllers that enable them to rip large VDP runs quickly and efficiently.

“The Pro C7100 presses were much more sophisticated than anything our operators had worked on before,” said Blair. “They can make the printers do things we haven’t been able to do before. And the Pantone® color matching is so accurate and the color maintains its consistency even in longer runs.”

Ricoh provided extensive training to enable Cirrus operators to harness all of their new digital capabilities. Our technicians worked hand in hand with them, ensuring they were comfortable with their new digital production print systems right from the start.

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“It’s a true partnership. Ricoh hires and trains the best technicians in our market,” said Blair. “There’s no one else in our market that provides the level of support that they do.”

The good news is that Cirrus rarely needs an unscheduled service call. Through proper preventative maintenance performed by Ricoh technicians, their Pro C7100 systems seldom go down.

Last year, Cirrus decided to expand their digital printing capabilities even further by adding a second wide-format digital press to their fleet. A competitor had provided their first wide-format unit and after comparing our offering to the competitor’s, they went with the RICOH Pro L4160 wide-format color latex printer.

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“We’re learning every single day what we can do with that printer. There are so many media options to consider,” said Blair.

For example, Cirrus had a request from an interior designer to produce custom wallpaper. With the Pro L4160 system, they can print on wallpaper and now all they need to do is find a partner to support installation.



RESULTS

Blair credits Ricoh with making it possible for him to shut down his offset presses and become the successful, all-digital company they are today. He believes we’ve listened to the needs of the market, developed the advanced digital systems that commercial printers want and bundled it with expert, attentive service and support.

“Ricoh’s digital presses are just as capable as offset systems, they’re priced very competitively and their service is better,” said Blair. “I’m a member of a peer group and commercial printers are coming over to Ricoh in droves.”

Process agnostic customers

It used to be that customers cared what type of system—offset or digital—was used to produce their jobs. But customers’ attitudes have evolved right alongside digital production printing.

“The quality of the Pro C7100 digital press is just as good as offset, so it doesn’t matter to them anymore,” said Blair.

Powerful digital fleet

Aside from their original Ricoh color digital printer, Cirrus continues to run all of our production print units purchased through the years. The Pro C7100 systems are used to print training manuals, VDP, direct mail, service reminders, calendars, event materials, name badges, bulletins, agendas, newsletters and more.

One of the older units remains a vital part of the fleet, but they now use it primarily as a proofing unit. Because it’s similar in color quality to the Pro C7100, Cirrus is able to produce proofs that are as close to a true color match as possible prior to production.

“It may seem like overkill as a proofing system, but it allows us to establish accurate color standardization before we print jobs and gives our customers assurance that what they see as a proof will be what they get on delivery.”

The addition of the Pro L4160 wide-format printer has spurred 500 percent growth in this business segment in less than a year. Cirrus is growing this side of their business by producing more signage, building and vehicle wrap banners, trade show materials, posters and more.

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