

By offering both narrow and large-format digital printing services, wide-format businesses can now say, "Yes" to a wider range of jobs.

Efforts to add value to wide-format printing businesses have evolved over the past several years into a "one-stop shop" business model with specialized support — and this model has taken hold throughout the digital printing industry.

Technology is offering the opportunity to supply short runs of customized graphics, which really gives customers the option of managing a whole branding program for their company. All printing products can be printed and effectively color managed together. Utilizing this "customer-centric" approach, wide-format shops can help their customers take advantage of the best offerings that digital and traditional printing technologies have to offer.

These types of service offerings can range from packaging, prototyping, decals and labels, as well as on-demand printing. By doing so, print businesses can increase customer contact, keep print orders flowing and reduce customers' need to look to a competing business for capabilities their shop can't or don't offer. By offering both narrow and large-format digital printing services, wide-format businesses can now say, "Yes" to a wider range of jobs.



Bill Schiffner, Freelance Writer



Hawkes reports that shops that have the BN-20 in house are using either metallic or white specialty inks to produce decals and stickers for their wide-format customers.

“Today, wide-format shops are subject to market trends and end-user demand for shorter runs, proliferation of SKUs and supply chain efficiency. Narrow web platforms can meet these demands and provide wide-format shops the flexibility and versatility needed to drive profitable business solutions to solve these demands,” said Yoav Lotan, product marketing manager for the HP Indigo.

He points out that customer desire for customization has changed HP’s offerings.

“Mass production is moving to mass customization,” Lotan adds. “Our flexible platforms and versatile capabilities give brands the ability to become more profitable and reach more customers using product customization.”

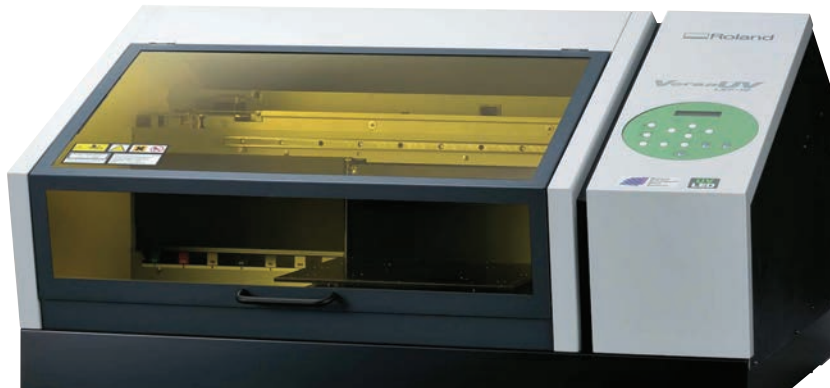
Expanded Offerings

According to David Hawkes, group product manager at Roland DGA Corporation, people are using Roland desktop print/cut devices to complement their wide-format equipment by expanding the portfolio of products that they offer.

“It is not unusual to have someone running a Roland wide-format printer one or two shifts a day for larger jobs while using the 20-inch VersaStudio BN-20 to produce items such as stickers, decals, garment decorations and other applications that do not require the larger print area,” said Hawkes. “At 12 inches wide, our VersaUV LEF-12 allows printing directly on three-dimensional objects for easy customization. By introducing devices like the BN-20 or LEF-12 into your wide-format environment, a shop can be more creative, productive and profitable while branching out into new markets as well.”

Hawkes reports that the market demand for unique and customized output has had a dramatic impact on both the narrow and wide-format markets and is at the heart of the digital printing industry.

“The explosion of specialty inks such as white, metallic and clear throughout the industry has allowed shops to explore new applications and design options and to add value to their traditional output as well,” he said. “For example, our VersaStudio comes with a choice of white or metallic ink, allowing shops to capitalize on the demand for customized output. The LEF-12 features CMYK, white and clear inks. White enables printing on clear media, opening up labeling and packaging applications. Metallic ink is a true game changer in that it turns ordinary graphics into shimmering displays that stop people in their tracks. Clear ink allows you to produce embossing and varnishing



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effects in both matte and gloss finishes. With the BN-20, users also get Roland's integrated print/cut technology, which produces graphics in any shape, all on one device. By providing these added design elements, you are giving the customer something above and beyond the norm, generating higher margins for your work and differentiating your business from the competition."

Specialty Inks are Key

Hawkes also says that shops that have the BN-20 in house are using either metallic or white specialty inks to produce decals and stickers for their wide-format customers.

"It's an easy transition for these shops because they can simply use the same artwork for BN-20 output that they use for wide-format jobs. It's an easy sell, too, because their existing customers typically have a need for these graphics. For example, we have a customer that was producing custom garments and T-shirts in Northern California and they added the BN-20. With the added capabilities, they were able to create labels for their customers in Napa Valley's wine industry. Their ability to use metallic inks and to tap into our RIP software's metallic color library allowed them to choose from more than 500 metallic colors to create premium graphics in short production runs for these high-end labels."

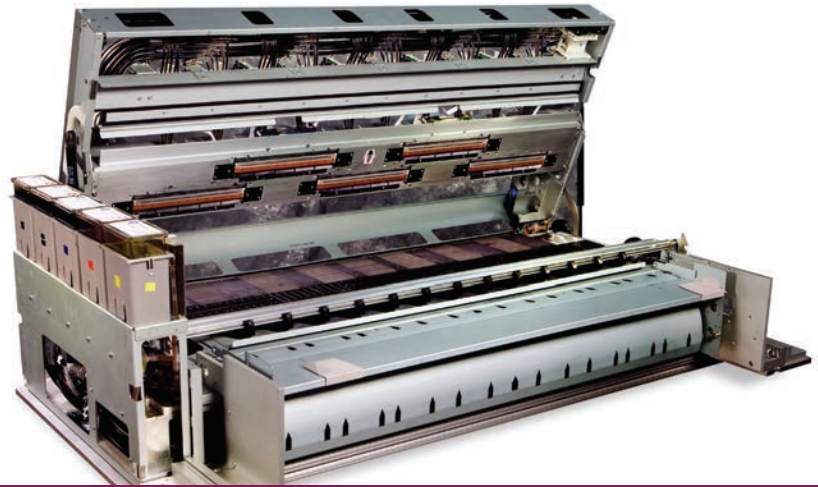
Hawkes concludes by saying that the most profitable sign shops are those offering existing customers new options. "One sure-fire way to create repeat business is to offer customers something that they weren't expecting — like metallic. When given the choice, customers go for the metallic graphic every time and they pay a premium for it."

High-Speed Color Printing Technology

Memjet is a rising global leader in color printing technologies that provide faster speeds and affordability for print shops. The company supplies printing solutions technologies and components to OEM partners across the printing industry.

"Memjet represents an entirely new category of technology that makes possible high-quality color printing at never-before seen speeds and affordability," said Kevin Shimamoto, vice president, sales and marketing at Memjet.

According to Shimamoto, the overarching benefits of Memjet's color printing technology are speed, cost and image quality. "Memjet technologies make possible amazingly fast and efficient digital



Memjet's OEM wide-format print engine. The benefits of scalable wide-format printing in remote locations are lower capital, operating and consumable costs.



Memjet technologies put more than 70,000 ink nozzles on a single printhead.



Kammann's K9-V is a universal screen-printing machine for decoration of cylindrical plastic and glass containers.



Kammann's direct bottle-printing solutions also play a significant role in sustainable printing methods, eliminating the waste associated with labels.

color print systems that combine controller chips, revolutionary single-pass printheads and ink,” he said. “Memjet technologies put more than 70,000 ink nozzles on a single printhead (more than 350,000 in a wide-format configuration) for the delivery of 1600 x 800 dpi image quality at 12 inches per second. For example, a Memjet wide-format print engine can print 12,600 square feet (1,172 meters) per hour.”

Shimamoto also reports that Memjet holds 5,000 patents worldwide for color printing technologies, with 700 more pending. “For wide-format printing, Memjet technologies provide new users the benefits of fast printing with excellent image quality at low capital costs. The placement of remote printers for on-demand personalized marketing campaigns or publications is now possible anywhere. The benefits of scalable wide-format printing in remote locations are lower capital, operating and consumable costs. Memjet technologies for small and wide format also enable color on-demand printing for folding carton packaging, corrugated boxes, architectural and engineering documents, indoor signage and point of purchase displays.”

Shimamoto adds that the technology also offers on-demand printing and variable data printing at never-before seen delivery times.

“Combining the benefits of Memjet’s technology and scalable wide-format printing opens doors for new products, new business models, new cost savings and new end-users. Memjet printing technologies help shops reduce waste and accelerate their workflow processes,” he concludes.

Specialty Options in Screen Printing

As digital printing equipment and inks have improved over the years, screen printers have been feeling the pressure to compete. But many of those shops with screen printing equipment should consider the unique strengths that screen printing has to offer. There are a number of niche screen printing applications that are not currently being addressed by digital printers that represent new markets and new areas for growth for shops with screen equipment.

“The advantages of narrow web printing screen applications is speed as well as having more control over the entire printing process,” states Steve Gilbertson, vice president, sales and marketing at Kammann USA Inc.

Over the years, Kammann has earned its reputation as a world leader for industrial

and specialty decorative printing equipment solutions. The company makes a number of narrow web screen printers and other screen printing machines.

“Traditionally we see that narrow web is still a more efficient process,” Gilbertson reports. “We see it especially in the decal and printed electronics work. Narrow is about 80–85 percent of the business among our users.”

The company also provides the screen-printing solutions for decoration of plastic and glass containers, and created the first circular, computer-based screen printer. “Our direct bottle printing solutions also play a significant role in sustainable printing methods, eliminating the waste associated with labels,” he adds.

Gilbertson also says that one of the biggest trends they are seeing in screen printing on glass is beer bottles, wine bottles and stemware. “This is a big market for us, from micro-breweries to beverage companies such as Corona and Grey Goose; our customers are worldwide. This method is also ideal for printing on promotional novelty items like coffee mugs and plastic cups. These are applications where digital printing just doesn’t fit. It’s just not fast enough. Screen printing still fits that bill in these specialty areas.”

While they make screen printing equipment, Gilbertson says they have been designing their newer printers with a digital future in mind — but there is still more room for growth.

“Screen printing is still the most repeatable, most reliable process, however, the industry is moving into the digital end of the business by offering computer controlled machinery. CNC equipment is on about 90 percent of what we manufacture. We also continue to develop UV LED curing solutions to maximize the use of digital technology for traditional analog printing processes like screen printing. This provides maximum curing efficiencies and reduces the machines energy consumption by 30 percent along with a reduction in machine noise by 80 percent,” Gilbertson said.

Indigo Keeping Print Providers in the Black

Lotan says that HP Indigo digital press technology is now being utilized for the mainstream production of labels, as well as shorter runs, enabling their customers to experience enhanced print quality and productivity.

“Additionally, HP Indigo technology ensures secure printing for anti-counterfeiting elements and the highest color matching capabilities for brand identity,” he said. “Our

customers also benefit from our vast network of industry leading partners to meet their finishing and pre-press needs to provide end-to-end solutions."

One of their solutions is the HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press, a web-based solution for labels and packaging that can print on substrates as thick as 0.5 to 18 points.

"This allows printers to have greater versatility in the types of applications they produce without limitation to reach new markets and increase profitability," Lotan adds.

The HP Indigo 20000 Digital Press is a new roll-to-roll digital press designed primarily for flexible packaging. The sheet-fed HP Indigo 30000 Digital Press offers larger format size compatible with existing offset printing presses used for mainstream folding carton applications. Both presses will be commercially available in 2014.

"Imagers can now offer new products that were never before available in their portfolio. Technological barriers can be overcome with our platforms, making innovative label and packaging solutions with variable data printing and the ability to run multiple types of applications on the same press with little make-readies for more profitability. Thanks to the wide range of compatible media and the ability to print on thicker substrates, various label and packaging applications that offer solutions to fit varying market needs can now be produced consecutively on the HP Indigo WS6600 Digital Press," Lotan said.

Developing New Markets

Lotan also points out that with HP Indigo solutions, customers are able to introduce new offerings, such as greater customization, personalization, prototyping and packaging to season and market. "The addition of new HP digital print presses provides our customers the opportunity to serve specific markets or cater to smaller print runs at competitive costs, thus increasing their opportunities to develop a new customer base," he said.

According to Hawkes, if a business is going to invest in a smaller format device, they need to make sure that they are getting the ease of use and automation needed to make the most of time and labor resources. "The great thing about the BN-20 and LEF-12 is that you don't have to babysit them, he said. "Automated maintenance features, such as our advanced ink circulation system for white and metallic inks, eliminate many time-consuming tasks and maximize printer performance. With the BN-20, in particular, our users let it run while they are involved in more labor-intensive

aspects of their business, such as mounting, laminating, shipping and working with customers. Having an additional narrow format device is like having a silent partner that makes you a lot of money."

Hawkes concludes by saying, "At the end of the day, it can be a small investment with a big pay off. These devices don't take up a lot of real estate in the shop so they are easy to implement. In the end, you are getting a great platform for expanding your business until you are ready to step up to another wide-format device."

Bill Schiffner has covered the imaging industry for more than 20 years. He has reported on the many new digital technologies that have reshaped the imaging marketplace.

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