To keep up with customer needs, Color Ink, of Sussex, Wisconsin, has continued to evolve its printing business. Started in 1975 as a family-owned design studio called Black Ink, the company successfully grew its design business and, because of customer requests, soon started brokering high-end printing jobs. By the 1980s, it made sense to go beyond brokering and begin printing in-house. With the purchase of its first four-color litho press in 1990, the company saw an average of $1 million increase in sales per year.

In June of 2009, customer demand for larger printed graphics drove Color Ink to invest in its first superwide printer — an EFI VUTEk QS3200. The investment in this press and others has helped fuel Color Ink’s growth.

The company currently employs over 120 employees and brings in $26 million in annual sales.

**Challenge:**

“We knew we had to diversify—to retool ourselves—to keep up with our customers’ requests. We needed to take an aggressive stance and invest in tools that would serve us well not only for today, but also for the future.”

— Todd Meissner, President, Color Ink

As their business grew, Color Ink’s customers began asking for wide and super-wide format graphics and for more complete, turnkey services. To accommodate these new requests, the company started by outsourcing to a couple of local imaging firms. The problem was that the mark-up on these outside purchases was insufficient to keep Color Ink profitable on those types of jobs. They soon realized that in order to stay competitive, they again needed to bring the printing capability in-house. By owning their own press, they could not only pass the savings on to their customers but also have more control over the results and offer better turnaround on jobs.
After investigating its options, the company purchased its first superwide printer, an EFI VUTEk QS3200 (a 3.2-meter roll-to-roll and flatbed printer) for its high quality and speed. They also invested in the EFI Fiery® XF RIP to help manage pre-press and print quality.

Color Ink had experience with EFI’s Fiery RIP, which drove their direct-mail printing device. “Some full color variable data projects can contain forty different elements changing on each sheet. The robust capabilities of the Fiery RIP allow us to process files quicker and to continue printing while processing. For example, with Fiery on the front end, job processing of a four-color 1,000-record VDP job has, incredibly, been reduced from four hours down to seven minutes,” said Meissner.

“The EFI VUTEk printer made such an impact on our business that we purchased our second printer from EFI, the VUTEk GS3200, which is also a 3.2-meter roll-to-roll printer but with even higher quality and productivity. This technology has revolutionized our business—we can now extend our digital printing into some litho print projects as well as complete our superwide graphics jobs faster. It’s added a missing piece to the puzzle and has enabled us to enter new markets such as retail. We are now providing in-store displays for Sears, Macy’s and Kohls department stores, to name a few,” according to Meissner.
Photorealistic Quality

What makes the EFI VUTEk GS3200 special is that it is designed to provide superwide printing with photorealistic quality. The company has greatly extended its printing capabilities through use of this technology—not only can they create the point-of-purchase displays that these stores require, but Color Ink is now able to print exhibition graphics, photographic reproduction, signage, banners, posters and commercial graphics as needed.

In fact, Color Ink recently purchased a second GS3200 printer, bringing the total to three VUTEk printers within 18 months. Meissner continues, “EFI has been a great partner, with printers at the right price point, the right capabilities, and the flexibility to print on a wide range of materials. Our direct sales have increased as a result of these printers by about $2 million with an overall impact of about $4 million because we’ve been able to capture jobs for our other presses as a result of our redefined, total capabilities.”

RESULTS:

“It’s added a missing piece to the puzzle and enabled us to enter new markets.”

— Todd Meissner

EFI Solutions

Meissner concludes, “EFI is very solution oriented, not just customer oriented. They don’t just sell devices; they have helped us find numerous ways to be more productive, and therefore more profitable.”
Beat the competition and profit with EFI’s integrated Fiery®, VUTEk®, Jetrion®, Rastek™, Print MIS and Web-to-Print solutions. Visit www.efi.com to learn more.

Print to win with EFI.

EFI™ (www.efi.com) is a world leader in digital print servers and controllers, and print MIS, Web-to-print, superwide, wide-format and industrial inkjet solutions. EFI is dedicated to giving customers a competitive edge with award-winning, scalable products from creation to print that maximize productivity and increase profits.