Sugar House recognized the need that their customers had for full-color printed banners, so in 2004 the company invested in a large-format solvent printer and began selling printed vinyl banners wholesale. With a rapidly growing business and expanding nationwide customer base, the company kept up with the evolving market and demand by adding more equipment and services each year.

In 2007 the company bought a used UV printer to expand their product line. Although the speed and resolution were not ideal, the used machine was affordable and would introduce them to a new market. Unfortunately, while the used UV printer worked well for some applications, most of their resellers were not satisfied with the print quality and would send their rigid printing needs elsewhere. When Sugar House did supply its customers with rigid signage, it meant printing to adhesive vinyl and mounting that to the rigid substrate.

Sugar House Awning & Canvas Products was founded in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1941 as an awning manufacturer that supplied boat covers, boat tops and other custom-made canvas products to its customers. The company later started selling blank canvas banners to local resellers, which they continued to do for nearly forty years before moving into selling vinyl products.

The company prides itself in meeting tight deadlines even if it means working 20 or 30 hours straight. The company’s policy, as stated on their website, is that if the product is not on time, the customer will not be charged.

Sugar House employs 40 people and has annual revenues of $4-5 million, with $1.5 million in revenue coming from its digital division.

CHALLENGE:
“We found that the equipment that had the right speed and quality was too expensive, and that the equipment we could afford didn’t have the speed or quality.”
—Mike Peterson, large-format manager, Sugar House Awning & Canvas Products

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“Our workaround was much more expensive and time consuming than just directly printing to the rigid substrate,” says Mike Peterson, large-format manager, “but we did it to just keep our customers from moving the work to other vendors.”

When it became clear that the UV printer wasn’t meeting Sugar House’s quality or speed needs, and the workaround wasn’t saving time or money, they began shopping for a new UV printer.

“In 2009 when we started looking at new machines, we found that the equipment that had the right speed and quality was too expensive, and that the equipment we could afford didn’t have the speed or quality,” explains Peterson. “Our solution was to just continue as we were—printing and mounting way too much.”

Stuck in a stalemate of not being able to afford what was needed, and not needing what they could afford, Sugar House abandoned their search for an affordable, high quality UV printer.

EFI’s Rastek H650 is an affordable wide-format UV hybrid flatbed that delivers best-in-class image quality and quick-turn service. It quickly and easily handles a wide range of rigid and flexible materials up 65 inches wide and 1.8 inches thick, including Fome-Cor, PVC, corrugated plastics, plywood, aluminum and glass. It can print at resolutions up to 1200 dpi in High Quality Mode and speeds up to 230 square ft/hour in Billboard Mode. It is ideal for producing applications such as banners and flags, display graphics and signage, Point-of-Purchase advertising, membrane-switches and packaging applications.

When EFI introduced the Rastek H650, it had the speed, quality and price that made the purchase possible for Sugar House.

“We went to a demonstration where new printers were up and running, and while we were of course impressed with the speed and the quality from EFI’s Rastek H650, it was the price that really made our jaws drop,” says Peterson. “Although we had given up on our search for a new UV printer, the Rastek H650 was too good to pass up, so we went ahead and made the purchase.”

In just the first few months that Sugar House had EFI’s Rastek H650, the system proved to not only be a huge time and cost saver, but it helped the business grow.

“We were able to win back some of the business that our customers were sending elsewhere, plus we can now offer more products than we could before,” says Peterson. “One big improvement is that we can do Point-of-Purchase-quality prints. The ability to print white has allowed us to do more window graphics by reverse-printing on a clear decal or static-cling, and backing it with white to keep the colors from being washed out.”

SOLUTION: “We were of course impressed with the speed and the quality from EFI’s Rastek H650, it was the price that really made our jaws drop.”

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RESULTS:

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“We have always printed on coated polyester fabrics with our solvent printers, but were never very happy with the final product,” says Peterson. “The inks were absorbed into the fabric too much, leaving the colors dull and muted. We now print those same fabrics on the Rastek with fantastic results. The colors are bright and vibrant and the print is very scratch-resistant.”

“We were also nervous about ink flaking off when we went to trim prints, because we saw this happen on other printers we investigated, but we’ve found that we can print and cut without any problems—no flaking on the edges,” continues Peterson. “Likewise with vinyl car-wraps, EFI’s UV inks conform and stretch with the vinyl without any cracking. We never expected the UV inks to be so pliable.”

Sugar House even has a customer that asks for printing directly onto ceramic tiles—usually bringing photo files and a box of tiles from a home improvement store. “The prints turn out beautifully and the customer is so much happier with the high quality print of the H650.”

“We honestly didn’t think we would need the ability to print white, and we weren’t sure that we would use the roll-to-roll feature very often,” explains Peterson, “but because this was all included in the base price, not an upgrade for an additional cost, we got the white-ink and roll-to-roll capabilities, and have quickly realized how valuable those features are on the H650.”
Print to win with EFI.

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