Albert Screenprint began its life in 1962 as a small screen printing company, which started in the basement of an Akron, Ohio residence. Over the years, its founders, Albert and Margaret Falkenstein, have undergone multiple expansions to the current facility, which now has 125 employees operating in 135,000 square feet of manufacturing space and 33,000 square feet of warehouse space in a separate building. The company services many Fortune 500 companies and specializes in large format screen, digital and litho printing, also offering creative and design services as well as warehousing and fulfillment. Featured products include banners, posters, signs, pennant strings, displays, counter mats and more. Albert Screenprint offers a full array of in-house finishing, including die cutting, i-cut routing, sewing, grommets, vacuum forming and more.

Albert Screen Partners with EFI to Create Full-Service Offering

Digital Superwide Format Accommodates Short Runs, Fast Turnarounds

Challenge:

In 2007, Albert Screenprint saw increasing customer demand for a one-stop shop for entire promotional programs, including shorter run items. Dedicated to exceptional customer service and keeping up with the latest technology, Albert Screenprint began looking for a digital solution that could augment its screen printing and litho capabilities in a hybrid manufacturing model. This was to be the first of many digital acquisitions the company would make as its digital requirements continued to grow.
Solution:

After a thorough evaluation of product offerings in the market, Albert Screenprint acquired its first digital superwide format printer in September of 2007, choosing the EFI™ VUTEk® QS3200. IT Manager Joe Presto says, “We found the QS3200 to be the best fit for our company, based on price, performance, and its hybrid roll-to-roll/direct-to-rigid capabilities.

By December of 2009, more digital capacity was required, and Albert Screenprint chose to add EFI’s VUTEk GS3200. “This printer delivers even better quality than the QS3200,” he says, “and gave us significantly more capacity. We also liked the ability to achieve higher speed with its Fast-4™ capability—using the eight channels to print 4-color process twice as fast.” The extra capacity allowed the company to handle greater customer volumes yet remain a one-shift operation.

At the time Albert Screenprint acquired the GS3200, the company also opted to utilize the EFI Fiery® XF RIP to provide even more color consistency, and for faster ripping of files.

As business continued to grow, the company could see an impending need for even more digital capacity. With that in mind, Albert Screenprint agreed to be a beta site for EFI’s new VUTEk GS3250lx with LED UV-curing technology. Presto says, “We wanted to be able to run the same type of materials we could run with screen, but in shorter runs. The LED curing, lower energy use and ability to print on thinner, heat sensitive materials made the GS3250lx attractive for our business.”
Results:

From the beginning, the VUTEk superwide printers paid their way in terms of expanded product offerings, improved customer retention and a boost to both top- and bottom-line results.

“Our first VUTEk, the QS3200, introduced us to the opportunities digital could bring to our company and our customers. After adding the GS3200, we were impressed with its dual resolution capability of true 600 dpi and true 1000 dpi with selectable 24 and 12 picoliter drop sizes. That gave us high quality and maximum speed even on larger quantities of point-of-purchase materials, near photographic quality and the ability to print small text, readable down to 4 point.”

In its screen business, Albert Screenprint uses 8 mil poly for about 50% of its production, a substrate that could not withstand the heat of the UV curing process associated with its UV printers. Presto describes one critical application in which the GS3250lx has made a huge difference. He says, “We produce pennant strings for bars, restaurants and special events. We may have 25 of a 30-panel pennant string produced on our high-speed litho presses in one design and the customer may wish to customize the remaining five. It would be cost-prohibitive to customize these panels using litho or screen, but with the GS3250lx printer, we can easily and cost-effectively print made-to-order pennants.”

The GS3250lx printer’s greener technology allows Albert Screenprint to use less energy, produce less waste and use fewer consumables. The LED bulbs are also instant on/off so there is no warm-up or cool-down period, meaning that there is actually more production time in a day. Using the continuous board print mode, throughput increases by 25%. “This makes our customers extremely happy,” says Presto. “They love the faster turnaround times we are able to offer.”

With continuously improving digital technology, Presto forecasts that it won’t be long before just about everything will be run on digital equipment. He says, “Costs associated with making traditional screens will disappear as digital printers become faster and more reliable. The gap is narrowing.”
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