

QTI PROFILE



QTI Finishing Technology Proves Valuable for Short-run Printer

Dartmouth Printing Company (DPC) in Hanover, New Hampshire, has undergone significant transition periods in its 150 plus year history, according to Dave Hewitt, Executive Vice President. The company's origins can be traced back to a printing enterprise established in 1841. However, as Hanover's largest printing firm, it continues a printing tradition that began in 1778 and has existed continuously since 1793.

Early printers in Hanover were concerned with college publications and newspapers for the company's namesake, Dartmouth College. DPC still prints college publications, but today the company specializes in short-run trade and newsstand publications. DPC has enjoyed steady growth since Dave and his partner, Mike Smith, company president, purchased the firm in 1978. Their commitment to new technology and to their market has brought sales into the \$25-30 million range, up from \$6 million in 1978.

"The tools used to service the market have changed, but the market itself is the same," Dave explained. "We have a focused approach to marketing. We cater to smaller publishers, for example those with one to three titles, who need the consultative services DPC provides." The company currently prints 250 different titles for 150 publishers.

According to Dave, the company started moving into offset and away from sheetfed letterpress in the 1970s. Next came web presses, electronic prepress, list processing, and fulfillment services. Now in the late '90s, the company is moving into ink-jet printing.

Ink-jet Printing Provides Valuable New Production Tool

"Smaller publications want what the larger ones have. We have to stay in pace with the industry to retain our customers and gain new ones," commented Tony Thurston, Manager of the Finishing Department. As customer interest in ink-jet printing increased, DPC began the search for an appropriate vendor. Because ink-jet printing technology and its related capabilities were totally new to DPC, the company wanted a vendor with a breadth of knowledge and experience.

"We had to learn the whole business, but saw it as a transition to get another tool to better serve our customers," Dave explained. "We were counting on our vendor to show us the ropes and help us use whatever equipment we purchased to its fullest extent," added Kathy Lowell, Traffic Maager.

DPC made its vendor decision based upon QTI's print heritage and hands-on experience with using ink-jet printing in innovative ways. In December '96, DPC received a QTI stand-alone File Management System (FMS), a Finishing Control System 1000 (FCS 1000) and a Solvent Recovery System, along with a Buhrs poly-wrapper machine.

"The Buhrs and QTI equipment offered solutions to things that had been a problem for us. They solved a bottleneck," Dave said.

Risé Tremblay, Mailing Coordinator, uses the FMS daily. QTI added special features to the FMS software enabling it to interface with DPC's computer system and allowing DPC to use existing address tapes. The FMS is also



accessible from a second remote PC.

FMS Effectively Automates Bindery Functions

Risé characterizes the FMS as an effective tool for automating mailing functions in the bindery. Risé takes customers data and creates an address file. The address file is imported into the FMS computer where a setup procedure is run. This setup file contains all the data the FCS will need to perform the addressing function.

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Dave Hewitt
Executive Vice President

Ink-jet addressing was totally new to DPC, and none of the company's employees had any previous knowledge of it. Therefore, they relied heavily on QTI to teach them the intricacies of ink-jet printing in addition to training them how to use the FMS and FCS. Risé was very pleased with QTI's training. “It gives you an overall feel for the system. It's very helpful so you're not overwhelmed,” Risé said.

“Training was done on site at Dartmouth and in order to fully support our implementation of ink-jet printing, QTI's field instructor stayed an extra week to help support us during the running of our live jobs,” Kathy said.

QTI's level of support during this period was excellent, according to Tony, Kathy and Risé. “QTI was very responsive to everything we requested,” Risé commented. “One of QTI's greatest strengths is communication. We have gotten answers quickly and receive regular updates from them,” Kathy added. DPC is using the FMS/FCS mostly for labeling, but its customers are asking for messaging on inserts. DPC is also looking at inside/outside ink-jet capabilities.

FCS 1000 Yields Cost and Labor Savings

Glenn Elder, crew leader and a key operator on the FCS 1000, said it actually takes longer to place the ink-jet head in position than it does to set up the FCS. Some might consider this a remarkable statement considering that



Glenn Elder, crew leader and a key operator on the FCS 1000, goes through his job setup procedure.

Glenn had absolutely no computer experience prior to learning the FCS 1000. His training started out in the classroom and was accompanied by hands-on experience.

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Kathy Lowell
Traffic Manager

“At first, operators were overwhelmed with this new equipment. However, after working with it for awhile, more and more operators started expressing a preference for ink-jet printing,” Glenn commented. “The positive way people's attitudes have shifted reinforces our decision,” Tony added.

“QTI's equipment has cut turnaround time by more than 50%,” Glenn said. “Since our runs are so short, we make money by having the shortest possible setups. We went from the Stone Age to the '90s. The enthusiasm for the new QTI equipment is evident throughout the plant,” he said.

Although DPC is still in the early stages of the implementation process, the company is always looking to add value by adding service. “We are asking customers to look at what they are sending out from their offices, such as renewal and membership notices. They can gain some economies by sending these out with their magazines,” Kathy explained.

Customer Awareness Leads to Increased Utilization of FCS 1000

“We are encouraging associations to redesign these pieces as single sheets so they can be blown in and polybagged with the magazine. Since some associations send out these types of



(from left to right) Dave Hewitt, Executive Vice President; Kathy Lowell, Traffic Manager; and Tony Thurston, Finishing Department Manager.

to contact people who make decisions directly affecting our customers," Kathy explained.

DPC's unwavering focus on its customers is evident in other ways also. First, there is the company's customer survey program that started in 1992. DPC works with an outside firm that conducts detailed phone surveys. The results are reported by department, giving all functional areas a measure of how they are performing. DPC does repeat surveys with some customers and is able to directly compare those results.

"The most important thing is what you do with the information," Dave said. "You have to directly respond to the customer."

Employees Play Integral Role in Company's Success

Second, there is the company's employee suggestion program. DPC's program goes beyond the typical in that the company has identified key people in management to assist employees in researching and developing their ideas for actual implementation. Once an idea has been thoroughly researched, a small committee composed of management and employees reviews it. For each idea that is successfully put into practice, the employee who first suggested it receives 50% of the first year's savings.

Every department has had participants, and some like Risé, continue to offer suggestions regularly. A variety of ideas covering such diverse areas as billing, office administration, and production have saved the com-

pany time and money. Since the first suggestion in October '94, more than 250 suggestions have yielded close to \$350,000 in savings.

Being a printer of short-run niche publications in the '90s requires just the right mix of quality, service, and technology – a del-

"QTI's equipment has cut turnaround time by more than 50%."

Glenn Elder
Crew leader and key operator

icate balance that Dartmouth Printing Company has excelled at maintaining. The company also exemplifies the success that companies can attain when they understand technological changes and embrace them in the best interest of their customers.



Risé Tremblay, Mailing Coordinator, checks a file on the FMS.

mailings first class with no presorting, onserting can cut the cost to a few cents per copy," Kathy said. She has worked with DPC's sales staff to familiarize them with the many opportunities at hand with the firm's increased finishing capabilities. DPC's customers have recently begun to take advantage of these new tools.

"We have found ways to merge lists, feed two versions, and co-mingle into a single mail stream," Kathy said. "Dartmouth's customers mail an average of 15,000 copies. When there are two to three version changes, it really cuts into the density." DPC's customers are mostly publishers of monthlies with circulations less than 70,000, according to Kathy.

In order to keep abreast of postal regulations and act as an advocate for DPC customers, Kathy is a member of the local postal customer council. "This gives me the opportunity



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