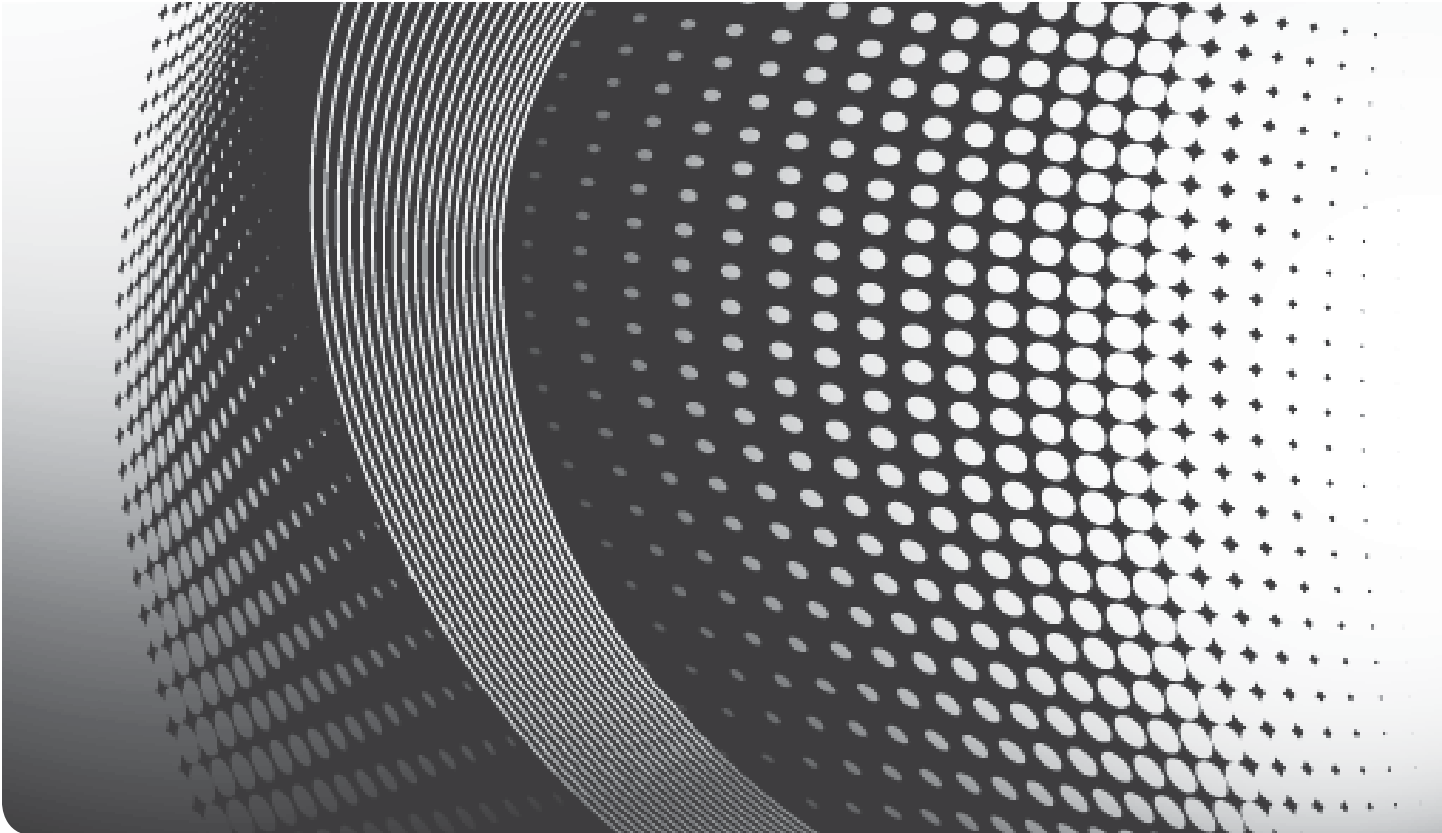




The Mailworks: Gaining a Sense of Pride from Inkjet Technology?



The Mailworks: Gaining a Sense of Pride from Inkjet Technology

BACKGROUND

Pamela Cassick founded the Albany, New York-based The Mailworks in her attic in 1984 with the goal of making \$100 per week filling, labeling and sealing envelopes. The Mailworks has experienced continuous growth since its inception, and in 2012, Cassick's daughter Brianne Baggetta Noonan took over. At the same time, The Mailworks acquired its largest customer and has since doubled its business, with help from technology, process improvement and a dedicated team.

The Mailworks now serves all facets of the direct mail marketing industry, including graphic design work and programming to create online portals and customer interfacing platforms. The company also offers a boutique division — Pretty Polite — that specializes in custom direct mail work with luxury upgrades including foil stamping and diecutting.

CHALLENGE

About ten years ago, Baggetta Noonan realized that she couldn't feel passionate about marketing The Mailworks products to customers if it meant outsourcing everything to offset printers. She wanted to feel responsible for her work and give customers something that she could be proud of. This realization is what caused The Mailworks to add its first digital printer. The fleet has since grown and consists of multiple digital presses including two varioPRINT 6000s from Canon Solutions America. But with The Mailworks' steady growth year after year, Baggetta Noonan knew that the company needed to add a machine capable of printing full-color personalized direct mail, to bring its outsourced work in-house.

"For the majority of our high-volume projects, we were printing color shells at an offset printer because we couldn't do any offset work in-house and then we were lasering with black variable," Baggetta Noonan explains. "We were faced with a lot of inventory and not being able to give customers the color personalization at a price point that they wanted."

Not only was The Mailworks not able to offer its customers the level of personalization that they wanted; it was stuck with a large quantity of inventory to warehouse.



Brianne Baggetta Noonan, owner,
The Mailworks

“The main challenge was inventory. It’s a big pain point when you’re housing all those different shells,” Baggetta Noonan says. “But it’s not just the inventory, it’s the time it takes to get that inventory in.”

In an industry where time is money, every minute counts. If The Mailworks acquired a new customer and that customer wanted their mail delivered to homes as soon as possible, The Mailworks had to give itself an extra five or six days in order to get the shells printed and cured, slowing down turnaround time and time to market.

The Mailworks also has a business model that made creating those shells risky. Baggetta Noonan explains that the company takes orders on a customer’s word. If a customer needs an order of 100,000, they don’t have to commit to buying them up front, they can be sold a portion. While this business model has helped The Mailworks bring customers in and keep them loyal, it proved to be an uncertain situation when shells were being created without the written promise that the customer would follow through with the whole order.

With all of these challenges in mind, The Mailworks needed a solution that would bring its work in-house and enable it to offer customers full-color personalized direct mail at a price point that would make customers happy, while decreasing time to market and limiting inventory.

SOLUTION

The Mailworks had a decision to make: it could either continue growing steadily in the same way it had been, or it could take a risk and add inkjet to begin fulfilling orders in-house. The company had already experienced steady growth of 20% to 30% year after year, which ultimately led to the company’s confidence to add inkjet.

“It just seemed logical that we shouldn’t continue to outsource our work to an offset printer when we could be doing it ourselves. But we never wanted to get into offset printing because that’s a completely different process than what we’re familiar with.”

After looking at other inkjet solutions, Baggetta Noonan says she was drawn to the VarioPrint i300 from Canon Solutions America because of its cost effectiveness on a per project level, its flexibility, variable data capabilities, and its inherent speed. And as a direct mailer, those aspects are key to retaining customers and bringing in new customers with success stories.

“As a direct mailer, variable data is at the core of what we do,” Baggetta Noonan says. “That’s the difference between a direct mailer and a printer: A direct mailer is a master of variable data.”

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RESULTS

Since adding the VarioPrint i300 in September 2016, The Mailworks has been able to confront its challenges headfirst and meet customers' needs.

"Adding the i300 has helped us first and foremost with our process, it has helped to shorten our time to market; it has helped us be able to be more flexible and meet customers needs on the fly," Baggetta Noonan says. "People think you're in a business to make money, but you're also in a business to feel good and like what you're doing. I've seen a sense of excitement in our employees that we can do this work now and we can do it in-house."

The press has expanded the company's full-color variable data work, which has in turn increased numbers. Adopting inkjet technology has even given The Mailworks some unexpected benefits. Since ink sinks into the substrate when printing with inkjet, it has eliminated instances of scratch-offs from optical character readers (OCR) at the post office, which The Mailworks was experiencing prior to the VarioPrint i300.

The press has also allowed The Mailworks to transition most of its self-mailer work on 9-pt. matte stock, four-card inserts and letters, which is one of the many unique offerings from the direct mail marketing firm. The Mailworks worked with a paper manufacturer to develop specialty 9"x19" converted inkjet sheets for its 8.5"x18.75" finished letters. To date, the company has printed more than one million of these letters since the inkjet press was installed.

The VarioPrint i300 has also opened up possibilities that The Mailworks wouldn't have been able to produce in-house or cost efficiently.

"Customers are pleased that they can do color card offers now," Baggetta Noonan explains.

“A lot of customers use a gift card as an incentive. To be able to use a blue card on one segment and a red card on the next segment is a huge advantage for their overall response rate.”

Although customers have noticed a change in paper, The Mailworks sees it as a positive. Baggetta Noonan explains that the flexibility and customization that the VarioPrint i300 offers on a per piece level mitigates any hesitations a customer might have when transitioning to inkjet.

Baggetta Noonan points out that prior to adding inkjet technology, she believed that the scope of work that could be transitioned would be limited, but she admits that it has exceeded expectations with its versatility and quality.

“You’ll be surprised at the breadth of work you can put on this press,” she says.

Most importantly for The Mailworks, the VarioPrint i300 has increased morale, helped solidify company culture and given its employees a sense a pride.

“It has given us a great sense of ownership for the work that we do in a way that I hadn’t felt before,” she says. “When you’re so reliant on your offset printer and you’re outsourcing so much work as a part of your process, you don’t have full control over it and full ownership. Now being able to bring all of that work in-house, it gives us control, but it also gives us a sense of pride.”

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