

CAMELOT PRINT AND COPY CENTERS

Commercial printer leverages the versatility and efficiencies of production inkjet to expand business opportunities and weather business downturns



Camelot Print & Copy Centers

Camelot Print and Copy Centers (Camelot), headquartered in Latham, New York, began in 1997 as a small copy shop specializing in litigation services. By growing with the changing needs of its Capital District customers, Camelot is now one of the top copy centers and print providers in the entire metropolitan area surrounding the state's capital, Albany.

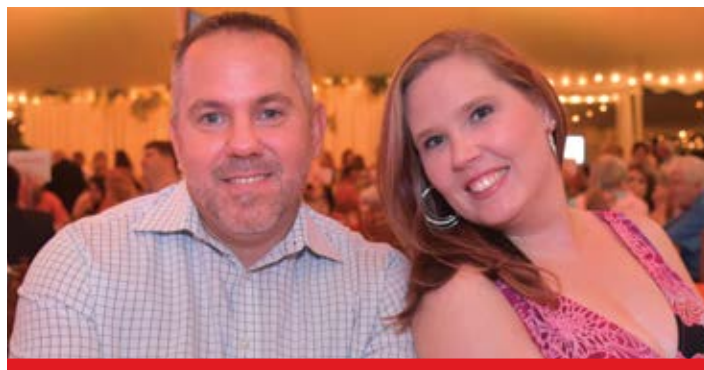
John and Cristene (Cris) DerBoghossian bought the business in 2015. Cris is now the sole owner, president, and COO, and her husband, John, is CEO. Together, they have grown the business way beyond legal document services to include engineering drawings and spec books for the AEC market, color copying, professional short-run color printing, scanning services, large format display graphics, graphic design services, a wide range of finishing services, and promotional items. One of their taglines is "We print practically everything," and they really do. With a laser focus on customer service and fast turnaround times, the Camelot team has continuously upgraded its printing and finishing capabilities to improve overall print quality and become as automated and efficient as possible. This has served the company well in three ways: (1) increased automated efficiencies and productivity enhancements enable Camelot to go after more jobs and be more competitive on

price, (2) added capabilities like variable data printing; quick, high-quality color that rivals offset; and large format display graphics enable new work it either couldn't compete for previously or had to outsource, and (3) increased automation has resulted in cost savings by dampening losses when revenue declines occur.

IT STARTED WITH A MOVE

Camelot started relying on Canon's expertise nine years ago, upgrading its monochrome digital printers with Canon varioPRINT 6000 TITAN series cutsheet toner presses with faster speeds and significantly improved uptime. Shortly after John and Cris took ownership of Camelot, the company was forced to move out of its 25,000 sq. ft. warehouse building due to an estate sale. Rather than just moving the company's existing equipment to another 25,000 sq. ft. building, John worked with Canon to streamline the layout and workflow of a new building for maximum efficiency—plus upgrade its equipment from reliance on toner-based printing to incorporate inkjet. It added the VarioPrint i300 sheetfed color inkjet press after being impressed by its color quality and affordability. Camelot replaced a toner device, which it had kept solely for printing long sheets for six-panel brochures, for the Canon imagePRESS C10000VP cutsheet color toner press with the BDT VX 370 Long Sheet Feeder. It now has two imagePRESS C10000VP presses with long sheet feeders to print up to 13" x 30" paper and an inline Canon Saddle Finisher AN2.

Camelot added a C. P. Bourg Booklet Maker inline to its VarioPrint i300 press. "Booklets are a big thing for us. We do tons and tons of booklets. The Bourg unit keeps up with the speed of the VarioPrint i300 press, enabling us to create full-bleed books inline. I was blown away," John says. In addition to saddle-stitched booklets, Camelot has many customers requesting spiral-bound booklets. Canon



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Camelot utilized Canon's expertise to optimize the layout of its new 25,000 sq. ft. space for a streamlined, efficient workflow.

recommended adding GBC punching units to two of the varioPRINT 6000 TITAN presses. "These high-speed punches are inline with the press, so we can run books 1-up rather than 2-up. This eliminates the separate cut and punch steps we had with our older printers," John says. "Now the booklets come out printed, trimmed, and punched. All we have to do is run them through a binding machine, and we're done!" And thanks to PRISMAprepare document preparation software, the image is automatically shifted on the sheet to allow for the punched area while WYSIWYG view ensures correct output the first time.

Camelot also added a Duplo Duo high-speed creasing and perforating unit. It replaced a large, older folding unit that could perf and score, but the Duplo Duo was much easier to operate. "The older folding unit was so intricate that you needed engineering-like guys to run and tweak it to make sure it ran smoothly," John says. "But with the Duo, much like with the VarioPrint i300, the complexity is reduced so that I can save 40 percent in labor costs." With the automation of its processes, increased throughput, lower running costs, and increased

productivity, Camelot was able to lower its labor costs while producing the same amount of work more quickly.

Once the team decided on the equipment configurations, Camelot was able to work with Canon to optimize the layout of its new space. Its original operations consisted of many separate rooms without an efficient workflow. "Our operations were all over the place," John says. "Nothing that made sense was close to each other." Moving into the new building, Canon helped Camelot decide where presses and finishing equipment should be located based on a smooth, continuous workflow. "Now everything moves through the building without the need to move jobs back and forth to different stations. So, we became much more efficient and much more cost-effective," he adds.

In addition to production printing, Camelot has had a large format printing capability since the beginning. It initially added large format copying as an outgrowth of its litigation copying services since many lawsuits involved engineering drawings. At first, it outsourced the large format work, but that work grew enough that the company bought its own large format printer.

Its AEC (architecture, engineering, and construction) work continued to grow, eventually incorporating color. When John and Cris attended a PRINT show a few years ago, Camelot was still using Canon ColorWave and Canon imagePROGRAF printers for its large format work. John loved the color quality and ease of use of the ColorWave series, but the TonerPearls toner it used meant its prints could not be heat laminated. When Cris saw the print quality of the Canon Colorado roll-to-roll display graphics printer at PRINT, she fell in love with it. John was impressed with the speed, production efficiency, and low operating costs of its UVgel print technology. At the time, Camelot was outsourcing work to several local sign companies. The company realized it could bring all that work in-house with the Canon Colorado printer, sell the jobs at the same price point while increasing profit, be more competitive in turnaround time, and have greater control of the overall process. Output on the Canon Colorado printer very quickly grew, necessitating the need to run two shifts, and Camelot acquired a second printer within six months of the first.



The Canon imagePRESS C10000VP cutsheet color toner press is equipped with a long sheet feeder to print up to 13" x 30" paper.

INCREASED EFFICIENCY AND COMPETITIVENESS

The ease-of-use, color quality improvements, speed, process automation, and fantastic uptime of the Canon solutions helped lower labor costs, shorten turnaround times, and enable Camelot to be more competitive than when it used offset presses. Rather than needing several high cost, highly skilled operators to maintain and tweak machine settings, Camelot has lowered its production labor cost per hour by 40 percent, giving it the flexibility to have more people able to run the equipment after training. The net result is lower overall labor costs to produce the same amount of work, faster! "What used to take eight hours now only takes four. What used to be a whole week project is now only a two-and-a-half-day project," John says. "Plus, we don't have stacks of paper on trays and rolling carts that have to be moved from one station to another for printing, trimming, folding, and punching." Some of the operators thought business was slow until John pointed out the same number of jobs were being produced, just faster and

more streamlined with fewer separate workflow steps. John did trim a few people during a slight downturn in sales in 2017 because he didn't need as many operators to produce the work. But his profitability and ability to deliver quickly did not suffer because of how efficient Camelot had become.

The speed, cost-effective production, and increased versatility of available media on the VarioPrint i300 inkjet press enabled Camelot to transfer about half of its toner-based work to inkjet. "We were able to lower our costs because there's a big difference in click cost when it comes to toner versus inkjet," John says.

The VarioPrint i300 press also enabled Camelot to compete for shorter run offset work. "Our sweet spot was between 5,000 and 50,000. We could crush the offset guys at the time in that range," John says. "Before the VarioPrint i300, we would outsource anything over 25,000 to an offset shop. But after the VarioPrint i300 was installed, we were able to bring that work in-house and make a much bigger margin. Plus, we

could do it faster — in two to three days instead of the seven to ten days quoted by the offset guys."

Describing the value of the efficiencies of the VarioPrint i300 press, John offered an example. One of Camelot's customers orders 5,000+ booklets every year. It's a mixed media job with 60-lb. and 80-lb. paper, coated cover stock, color throughout, spiral-bound with tabs. Camelot had produced these booklets on its toner-based printers — both monochrome and color — and collated the two outputs. There still were manual steps for the tab insertion and spiral binding, but switching the job to the VarioPrint i300 press enabled Camelot to print the entire job on just one machine, producing it as a complete book. "There was a huge difference in the speed of the job getting done, the amount of people needed to do the job, and it just made the job so much more profitable," he explains. "The overall efficiencies were such that we gained about 50 percent in profit on that job alone."

The ease of producing reprints is another area of much-improved



Camelot efficiently produces saddle-stitched booklets by equipping the Canon imagePRESS C10000VP color digital press with an inline Canon Saddle Finisher for a white-paper-in, finished-product-out workflow.

efficiency. Once the input and output profiles are defined and the media linearized and calibrated for the original job, there is no additional setup time for reprints. The results will be the same whether the reprints are one month or one year later. "It's a way easier process than it used to be," John says. "Before transitioning to Canon, trying to match color on our old toner-based machines three months later was such a nightmare. Now we don't even think about it. It used to be a big deal. We used to get nervous. With our new Canon presses, we simply pull up the file, send it to the printer, and it's done. Before upgrading to Canon presses, color matching used to be a huge problem with reprints. Now it's a non-issue."

Uptime on the Canon equipment has been impressive. "When Canon quotes

97 percent uptime on these machines, it's true. The various equipment we had before Canon were workhorses, but they were going down all the time. It was ridiculous. We'd go down for days on other machines. That doesn't happen anymore," John says.

NEW BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

The variable data printing capability of the VarioPrint i300 press has enabled Camelot to capture some postcard business using varying text and photos based on the customer. Using one master file from the client, the artwork and variable text are inserted according to predefined codes. The postcards are then printed, cut, and trimmed in zip code order and ready for the postal trays.

Camelot is using its variable data capability to promote its own services, too. It customizes and personalizes mailings to its customers each month, highlighting a service it knows a particular customer is not using, thereby promoting its revenue opportunities.

Camelot has grown its large format display graphics business thanks to the incredible range of printing applications available on the Canon Colorado printers. It recently won a contract with the local arena football team to produce wall murals, floor graphics, advertising banners, signage, glass coverings, and displays. It has added a third Canon Colorado printer — the 1650 model — that has a new version of UVgel ink. In addition, FLXfinish technology, a new approach to LED curing, allows the user to choose between matte or gloss modes for each individual print to achieve different finishes, removing the need to change inks or media. "Often with ink or toner, you get a gloss look no matter what you do," John explains. "The Canon Colorado 1650 printer has a way to do both matte and gloss on one printer. People love the matte look. It's really, really cool!" The result — Camelot has grown its wide format business to about 30 percent of its overall sales. The majority of that is due to the Canon Colorado printer.

BENEFITS DURING BUSINESS DOWNTURNS

All commercial printers experience some business setbacks. Salespeople leave and take customers with them, sometimes established contracts don't renew, and this year the coronavirus pandemic dealt some serious business losses.

In 2017, Camelot lost a few contracts resulting in a temporary downturn in sales. "We were still able to keep our heads above water because we didn't need as many people to get all the work

done. We were getting things done faster,” John says. Business grew over the next two years, and Camelot thought 2020 would be its best sales year ever. But the pandemic changed that prediction. “Without having implemented the efficiencies we had with inkjet, I don’t think our sales would have been as high as they are now,” he says. “We would not have been competitive price-wise. So, we probably would not have gotten some of that work. On top of that, without the efficiency gains, our running costs would have been higher. I estimate our losses would have doubled if we had not implemented inkjet.”

Due to the pandemic, Camelot had to reduce its staff by 50 percent. It turned to its staff for suggestions on how to make the company even more efficient to weather the business slowdown. They identified its PRISMAprepare document preparation software as one of the keys to greater efficiency. PRISMAprepare simplifies document makeready from composition through print production, streamlining and automating prepress workflow. Camelot Production Manager, Luis Crespo, realized he could incorporate some of the prepress department functions onto the production floor, do it faster, and have one less person touching the job. For example, he could take PDF files for booklet production, drop the files into a hot folder to automatically impose it correctly for a saddle-stitched book, and route the print jobs to the appropriate press without any manual intervention or potential errors. Print jobs could be routed to any designated Canon press automatically through PRISMAprepare. All the print operators needed to do was load and unload paper, do a quick quality check, and run the job—no additional

“ WE BELIEVE WE NOW HAVE THE CAPACITY TO SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE OUR SALES WITH OUR EXISTING STAFF BASED ON THE EFFICIENCIES WE’VE PUT IN PLACE WITH THE USE OF THE PRESSES AND THE SOFTWARE WE HAVE THROUGH CANON.”

—John, CEO Camelot Printers

setup needed. Camelot estimates it currently produces about 45 percent of last year’s numbers with 30 percent of its former staff. Camelot is that much more efficient. “We believe we now have the capacity to significantly increase our sales with our existing staff based on the efficiencies we’ve put in place with the use of the presses and the software we have through Canon,” John says.

CUSTOMER SERVICE FOCUS

Throughout its history, Camelot has not skimped when it comes to customer service. It provides a free pick-up and delivery service across the Capital District and even bakes cookies on site to deliver with each new job. In fact, Camelot is considered a bakery with its permit from the state! “I confidently believe that we’d lose 20 percent of our business if we stopped doing cookies,” John says. “And we all know how to do it. It’s part of our training!” It certainly makes Camelot stand out from the competition as well as serve as a great source of advertising.

Early on, Camelot realized it had just as many people handling customers’ needs as those producing its print jobs. Whether answering the phones in a timely manner, responding to emails,

talking customers through project questions, or job estimations, Camelot found its customer service focus made it more prevalent in customers’ minds. The company has stayed with that model. “Even though we knew our labor costs would be a little higher, we found our customers needed that. They wanted that. And we haven’t varied from that model,” John says. “COVID has made us trim down a bit, but we still have almost a similar balance going on today of people who immediately answer calls and emails and chats from our customers as we do people producing jobs. Part of the reason we can do that is because of what we’ve done with Canon. We are that much more efficient because we don’t need as many people to produce just as much work.

“We don’t sell on price. We build relationships. We tell people we’re an extension of their office. Just think of us as the copy shop inside your building. Instead of going down the hall to drop off a print job, we’ll pick it up and bring it back to you. And bring cookies to boot!”

CANON RELATIONSHIP

John very much values his relationship with his Canon sales representatives. They will always get back to him in a

timely manner. “You don’t find people like that anymore,” he says. In addition to his sales reps, John feels that Canon is truly his partner. Whatever problem he had, Canon personnel would be at his shop to resolve the issue. People would use his files in his environment to determine the solution. “Everyone was willing to help. They’d get back to you on this or that solution, or they’d call someone across the country that might have the same problem. Canon has impressed me every step of the way.”

John says he’s sold on Canon’s concern and steadfast support of his business. “I think no one can beat what Canon has been doing for me today and for the past five years. We love what Canon does for us. The relationship is amazing. It’s solid”

Just as Camelot goes above and beyond for its customers, Canon goes above and beyond for Camelot.

THE FUTURE

Camelot believes its business will increase during the second quarter of 2021 based on projections from its customers. John and the Canon team have continued to discuss ways to become even more efficient while working within Camelot’s financial parameters.

The answer is the Canon varioPRINT iX-series inkjet press. Camelot believes this new press can enable significant growth in sales without adding more staff. John thinks this press can reduce six printers to three and even produce output faster than the company is now. “We can get the same amount of output from two to three presses as we were getting from six devices, so we’re hoping to get even more efficient, not lose anybody, but not add anybody to get the work done,” John says. The varioPRINT iX-series uses a



Luis Crespo, Camelot production manager (right), and colleague are impressed with the speed, color quality, and cost effectiveness of the VarioPrint i300 sheetfed color inkjet press, which has enabled Camelot to bring previously outsourced offset work in-house.

different set of very durable inks that enable printing on heavier media (350 gsm) and a wider variety of gloss media at a higher resolution—1200 dpi versus 600 dpi. In addition, the print speed increases from 198 images per minute to 312 images per minute for all media, including heavyweight stock.

John has other ideas about streamlining the automated production of spiral-bound punched books with tabs using Canon PRISMAprepare software. His prediction is implementing these ideas

could result in a future addition of \$150,000 in sales each month without any increase in staff.

Camelot has continued to focus on its premier customer service, competitive turnaround times, and quality color to grow its business during opportune and less-than-opportune business cycles. Its focus on maximizing efficiencies in production operations has enabled it to pursue new business opportunities, capture new business, and better weather business downturns.

ABOUT US

Canon recommends forward-thinking strategies to help achieve the highest levels of information management efficiency for your unique business needs. Using superior technology and innovative services, we then design, implement, and track solutions that help improve information flow throughout your organization while considering the environment, helping to result in greater productivity and reduced costs.

Canon Provides End-to-End Solutions Like These:

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- Media and Solutions Lab
- TrueSupport
- Training and Experience
- Escalation Procedures
- Preventive Maintenance
- Canon PRISMA Workflow Software
- Resource Center Website

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