

SQUARE ONE

A direct mail production firm relies on inkjet from Canon to offer nationwide customers a combination of data management, personalized messaging, and integrated print and digital multichannel campaigns.

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As a nationwide direct mail production resource, Square One has a reputation for reliably and efficiently delivering a wide range of integrated print and digital communications that generate high response rates.

With more than 30 years in the industry, Square One leverages multichannel campaigns and automation platforms to provide swift data intake and speed to market for some of the nation's largest financial, insurance, and nonprofit institutions. The company has built a reputation for artfully combining print and digital outreach to create integrated brand experiences and amplify engagement. Driven by a commitment to boost response rates for its customers, Square One leadership also prides itself on embracing print industry innovation. Thanks to two Canon varioPRINT iX-series production inkjet presses, the company has expanded mail piece volume while improving operational efficiency and ensuring top quality and consistency.

STARTING FROM SQUARE ONE

Leadership at Square One has always been forward thinking, seeking new ways to improve operational efficiency while also embracing technological innovation. Led by siblings Drew and Jill Townsend, who are company partners, Square One's most recent leap forward was no roll of the dice. The decision was driven by data on production inkjet innovation from Canon.



Siblings Drew and Jill Townsend are quick to credit Canon technology with helping drive Square One's success.

In explaining why Square One was compelled to make the move to Canon production inkjet, Jill describes their decision-making process:

“We analyzed our entire production process prior to inkjet implementation and found that it consistently took seven to eight steps. After solid analysis, we realized Canon production inkjet could cut three or four of those steps outright. This streamlined our ability to meet growing client demand and offered a tremendous increase in speed to market.”

Reaching this result was based on a level of manufacturer research

some might find painstaking but is a hallmark of Square One’s commitment to making the most informed business decisions possible. In gathering and reviewing information from every manufacturer of inkjet presses, Jill and Drew completed a series of site tours, performed extensive print-quality and color-consistency testing, and oversaw their own internal comparative price testing between offset and inkjet. When the dust settled, the varioPRINT iX inkjet press from Canon was the clear winner.

Square One immediately recognized this revolutionary press’s operational advantages. Based on proven iQuariusiX technology,

the varioPRINT iX-series is designed to produce more in less time — a Square One strength. In addition, its breakthrough print speed, adaptability to varying paper formats, plus predictive and fast production with minimal calibration help deliver maximum output and attract more business.

Square One purchased its first varioPRINT iX press near the end of fiscal year 2021, and a second at the beginning of 2022. This pair of presses fueled a 34 percent jump in total mail pieces produced by year’s end and anchored the ability to create and deliver more than 200 million pieces of mail.

“We were able to decommission six toner devices,” explains Drew. “We increased uptime and decreased costs to a degree that allowed us to expand our services with larger direct mail customers, where the expectation of accommodating tight schedules and ensuring error-free production are critical.”

This reassuring accuracy and consistency contribute to new efficiencies that also help save on labor requirements and costs and accelerate turnaround. “We spend so much less time on press running shells,” he adds, “and we’ve eliminated the need for laser personalization. We’ve cut four steps out of the shell-and-cut print process.”

EMBRACING INNOVATION

Jill and Drew credit their willingness to adopt new technology, along with a constant effort to comprehend current and emerging industry trends, as a major component of Square One’s growth and success.

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— Drew Townsend, Partner



Square One's leaders are convinced the Canon varioPRINT iX-series sheetfed inkjet press was the right decision for meeting the company's own demanding criteria for improved performance, reliable quality, and optimal efficiency.

"As an industry, print production can appear set in its ways," Jill observes. "But my father, who founded the company, as well as myself and my brother Drew, have always been big proponents of investing in technology. We never shied away from it."

Adding to that, Drew highlights the strategic thinking behind seeking out print industry advancements such as inkjet technology. "Anything that lessens human touchpoints means greater speed to market. We've always had a commitment to print quality. Today, that's matched by a fixation on optimal uptime and fast production turnaround."

ACKNOWLEDGING INKJET'S IMPACT

Square One's confidence in its inkjet technology and workflow processes is a dramatic departure from typical toner-based operations, where simply keeping the presses working at a serviceable capacity can require tremendous effort.

"For us, toner devices could be down as much as 50 percent of the time," Drew says. "We had to have nine presses on the floor to ensure a sufficient level of operational potential, knowing that at any time only four were online while the others were being serviced.

"When you combine that with the slower speed of toner devices, the time it took to ensure all processes and variations were clearly identified and verified, plus the notorious lack of color consistency, it makes the game-changing impact of our move to production inkjet readily apparent."

EVOLVING WITH CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS

According to both Drew and Jill, Canon production inkjet was the right decision for Square One because it not only met the company's own demanding criteria for improved performance, reliable quality, and optimal efficiency, but also more demanding customer needs.

"We are in an era of integrated, multichannel, hyper-personalized outreach," says Jill. "New technologies – production inkjet chief among them – are on pace to meet new marketing industry objectives and expectations. Today's younger print customers are much less fixated on how we do what we do. Instead, they're driven by price, straightforward delivery, meeting brand standards, and expectations of quality that are really only attainable with production inkjet technology."

For Square One, Canon production inkjet has proved to be the winning solution, capable of enabling lower cost of operation versus toner presses. "Square One has experienced improved hours of operation from an overtime standpoint, with a reduction of as much as 90 percent of the work once done on toner devices now converted to the Canon varioPRINT iX-series inkjet presses," Jill reports.

QUALITY COLOR ON EVERY PAGE

According to Drew, “The consistency of production inkjet is now so reliable it’s expected. Though we remember a world where toner meant the first and the hundred-thousandth sheets could be totally different, our newer print customers can’t understand it was once such a challenge! Now we provide phenomenal color consistency, from the first to the hundred-thousandth page and beyond.”

“Once it gets to the Canon, we have an expected quality color representation every single time,” adds Jill.

EXPANDING MULTICHANNEL CAPABILITIES

Drew and Jill add further explanation of today’s customer as someone who understands that leading-edge digital technologies can complement, rather than compete with, the power of

printed direct mail. It’s a strategy that’s becoming standardized, creating truly integrated, multichannel approaches to marketing.

“The data-driven sophistication of today’s outreach campaigns hinges on fast response and rapid turnaround,” Jill explains. “The old approach, that you print a million pieces of direct mail and hope for a two percent return, has lost its impact.”

Quick to elaborate, she details how today’s integrated campaigns demand a speed to market expectation that production inkjet can consistently fulfill. “For our customers, contact management capability and diverse outreach methods and messaging have created more effective, multifaceted campaigns. Production inkjet enables Square One to meet those expectations and allows direct mail to become a more nimble,

adaptable component of an integrated campaign.”

The Canon varioPrint iX presses provide Square One a new level of confidence in both the company’s capability and decisiveness when it comes to agreeing to and then meeting demanding SLAs in this new era of enhanced direct mail marketing.

“We have an absolute understanding of our ability,” says Jill. “We know what the Canon inkjet technologies can deliver and how that can be tailored to customer price points. We can manage variations and messaging within multiple segments, which allows us to help them improve return on their marketing campaigns.”

MEASURING CUSTOMER RESULTS

With the ability to competitively offer a complete suite of integrated marketing – print, email, SMS,

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personalized web pages, personalized QR codes, etc. — Square One’s impact on customer MROI is measurable.

“We track and analyze performance on all these channels and report to our customers,” Jill explains. “Production inkjet delivers the critical fast turnaround and helps us ensure the precise audience targeting essential for direct mail to be most effective.”

“It doesn’t matter how our clients want to connect with their customers,” she continues. “Our technology allows for detailed evaluation of total campaign effectiveness. Even if we are dealing with what looks like a traditional print campaign, we are creating mailers that have unique, scannable identifiers that we can track on our servers. It allows us to report results at the individual level, revealing who has actually

had an interaction with their direct mail piece.”

According to Jill, this all represents a new level of direct marketing performance that can microtarget down to the individual recipient. And this is proving to be a powerful performance driver. “We see when we’re doing multi-touch campaigns that there’s a 30 to 40 percent increase in response rates compared to one-channel communications.”

“We’re running 700,000 to 800,000 postcards a week and we get SLAs approved and ready to be in the mail within 24 hours,” Drew adds. “All with less labor, less manual intervention, and we still have the capacity for more work and larger jobs.”

Both Jill and Drew give credit to the production consolidation afforded by Canon production inkjet technology as a reason why Square One has

become more cost competitive. It has helped the company win larger jobs across generalized market segments, as well as within smaller diversified segments.

“Our robust production technologies equip us with the ability to effectively compete and win in a highly demanding market,” says Drew.

CAPITALIZING ON CANON EXPERTISE

While the varioPRINT iX press earns praise for its performance from the Townsends, another factor also sets Canon apart — commitment to customer success, including access to industry insight and expertise that helps the company get the most from its Canon production inkjet solutions.

During onboarding and beyond, Canon’s Project 360 provided critical guidance for Square One. The team of print experts worked



During onboarding, Canon’s Project 360 team of print experts worked with Square One to help identify ways to improve operational efficiency, increase print volumes, and maintain focus on bottom-line growth.



Two varioPRINT iX inkjet presses help Square One run 700,000 to 800,000 postcards a week with less labor and manual intervention, plus provide additional capacity for more work and larger jobs in a highly demanding environment.

with leadership to identify ways to improve operational efficiency, increase print volumes, and maintain focus on bottom-line growth.

“From an implementation standpoint, it was fantastic,” says Jill. “We love data and reporting, and we were able to see detail that ensured everyone was accountable and held to implementation benchmarks.” She adds that Project 360 went beyond readiness from a physical plant operation standpoint to emphasize training the Square One team to be ready for successful operation as soon as the presses

were running. “Right from the beginning, we were ready to win more projects.”

And while Project 360 got Square One off to a strong start as an inkjet user, thINK—an independent community of Canon inkjet customers, partners, and industry experts—has proved to be an invaluable, ongoing resource for support and information.

“Taking advantage of the knowledge available through thINK has helped open our eyes to where we need to be going. It has allowed us to branch out so we can visualize what the industry as a whole is doing,

where the technology is going, and what new opportunities are ahead for Square One.”

CONTINUING TO ADVANCE

As the company moves forward, it’s easy to summarize Square One’s winning strategies. Emphasizing innovation. Demonstrating a deep understanding of today’s accelerated client expectations. Maintaining an enlightened and evolving vision of direct mail marketing’s role as a customizable part of larger outreach initiatives. All are helping Square One deliver on fully integrated, creative marketing experiences for its clients. But Drew and Jill are quick to credit their data-driven decision to invest in Canon’s industry-leading production inkjet solutions as truly pivotal to realizing the company’s potential for sustainable growth and profitable diversification, now and in the future.

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— Jill Townsend, Partner

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