

J&R Graphics: The Little Printer That Could Case Study



Based in Hanover, Massachusetts, J&R Graphics is a small commercial printer and mailing house with just ten employees. For the last four decades, the company has been providing printing services to businesses and non-profit organizations across New England. Today, the company has a turnover of around \$1.5 M and its customers include Glastonbury Abbey, The United Way and Thayer Academy. In order to stay competitive and meet the increasing quality expectations of their customers, J&R recently invested in a new semi-automated, 26-inch, 6-color Shinohara press with an aqueous coater.

“Getting the new Shinohara was a big step for us and we needed to make sure that we made the most out of our investment. We knew that the key to running our new press in the most efficient way possible was to implement a color-control methodology. We’d had our eye on a press-side color scanning spectrophotometer for a while, and when X-Rite came out with their new, affordable EasyTrax press-side scanner last year, we knew this was the right tool for us. The combination of our new press with the EasyTrax gives us the ability to offer higher speed printing with a quality image sheet after sheet, job after job,” comments Rick Fougere, J&R Graphics’ General Manager.

EasyTrax has significantly simplified the regular monitoring of J&R’s press runs by allowing their press operators to quickly measure color bars press-side while giving them fast and highly accurate density and spectral measurement data. This, in turn, shortens their make-ready time and gives them predictable, repeatable results.

“The ability to accurately specify, formulate and reproduce color can make or break relationships with customers, that’s why we have been relying on X-Rite handheld spectrophotometers for years. But I have to say that going from a handheld to a scanner was an amazing experience. The wealth of information you get from the EasyTrax in just a few seconds is unbeatable. Taking the next step in automation with EasyTrax has allowed us to move from ad hoc trouble shooting, to truly disciplined process control throughout our production cycle,” explains Fougere.

Because it is designed with simple installation and ease-of-use in mind, EasyTrax was out of the box and ready to be put to the test on the press in under an hour. “It was incredibly easy to set up — the ramp-up time was really short, so much so that we were up and running in about 30 minutes! Learning the more advanced functions was also a breeze and our press operators were able to produce two-over-two spot-color work with confidence in a matter of hours,” says Fougere.

Apart from the ease of use and installation, the short learning curve and increase in quality consistency, Fougere reports a number of unexpected benefits:

"I have to say that one of the big, unexpected benefits of having the EasyTrax has been a huge boost in morale for the team, by removing a lot of the stress out of running the press. Now we run jobs with confidence knowing that all the keys get scanned all the time, which is impossible to do with a handheld when you are running 12,000 pages an hour. Our EasyTrax automatically evaluates readings against set tolerances so we can quickly make adjustments to our ink density, if need be."

"We are also finding that by having an even ink density all the way across the sheet, not only are we achieving better color consistency, but we are also noticing a better fit between colors and proofs; we are also eliminating ink build-up so the sheets come out cleaner, thereby reducing markings," says Fougere.

Fougere also reports that the company is now much greener than ever before: "We are using less spray powder and we are achieving a better ink and water balance. With the use of the presets in EasyTrax, we are able to make significant savings in the ink chemistry so we experience less waste."

Only a few months after installing EasyTrax, J&R is now able to take on bigger and more complicated jobs. "We went from 'the little engine that could' to feeling like we are a fast locomotive since we have installed our EasyTrax. Already, we are finding that having this state-of-the-art technology is opening the door to some new business for us," comments Fougere.

With print buyers being so savvy these days, the next step for J&R Graphics is to become GRACoL/G7™ certified. "Our customers want to know that we are certified and our EasyTrax is playing a huge role in making this possible in the least painful way. While we could technically have undergone the certification procedure with our handhelds, it would have been too labor-intensive for a small company like ours. With the EasyTrax and our handheld we are able to get everything dialed in and print like the big boys. You see, we really are becoming the little printer that could!"

X-RITE WORLD HEADQUARTERS

Grand Rapids, Michigan USA • (800) 248-9748 • +1 616 803 2100 • xrite.com
© 2011 X-Rite, Incorporated. All rights reserved. (02/11)