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Still Ruling Short-Run Kingdom

King Printing's tenacious pursuit of inkjet technology is only one reason it has thrived in a pool of imitators. Quality customer care allows independent publishers to focus their efforts on writing, not manufacturing, their books.

The ownership team at King Printing includes Adi Chinai (standing) and his father, Sid.

OCTOBER 2010 PRINTING IMPRESSIONS GRAPH EXPO 2010 POST-SHOW COVERAGE SHORT-RUN DIGITAL BOOK MANUFACTURING

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Have Inkjet, Will Dominate

By Erik Cagle
SENIOR EDITOR

ANY GOOD idea that's worth actualizing is certainly worthy of being mimicked, replicated or just plain ripped off. Often, competitors will seize on the opportunity to take someone else's recipe, replace certain ingredients and then pass it off as their own. That holds true in the kitchen and in the board room.

King Printing, the pride of Lowell, MA, has been printing books since 1978 and is no stranger to educational and trade book manufacturing. On the educational side, King Printing has forged long-standing partnerships with publishing heavyweights such as Houghton Mifflin, Pearson, McGraw-Hill and Harcourt to offer short-run, fast-turnaround services.

Right around the turn of the millennium, Siddharth (Sid) and Adi Chinai—the father and son brain trust behind King Printing—decided to take their product to the Internet. The company now boasts a clientele list of more than 8,000, many of them small and independent publishers. Though adibooks.com may not have been the very first independent/self-publishing vehicle on the scene, it had plenty of company within a few years.

Undaunted, King Printing has been able to differentiate itself from the larger dotcoms in the marketplace—AuthorHouse, Xlibris and Lulu, among others—with a more personalized approach that provides guidance to authors who, quite obviously, are more adept at writing books than manufacturing them. That's when King Printing steps up to the plate, on a global level,



In June, King installed an HP T300 digital color inkjet web press to answer its short- and medium-run book printing needs.

providing assistance to authors nationwide, as well as in the United Kingdom, Germany, South America, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Author-Friendly Model

"When independent authors look to publish a book themselves, they want someone to show them the right path, and we've been very honest and helpful in guiding independent authors," Sid Chinai remarks. "We offer these authors a source for inexpensive, high-quality books that they can then pass on into the marketplace.

"We offer direct service and maintain a staff that will walk the independent author through the process—help them get an ISBN number, contact booksellers and advise them on building distribution.

We don't offer distribution as a service, because there are other people who specialize in those services. That differentiates us from the current offering for self-publishing sources, because they try to offer distribution as a service and then charge more money. Our cost model works for authors who can publish a book inexpensively, sell it and retain the profit for themselves."

Tom Campbell, the senior vice president of sales for King Printing, points out the company's print range for independent authors is as low as 50 and as high as 20,000 books in soft and hard cover versions.

"Many of our customers are well-known media and professional people who have the means and platform to sell their books," Campbell says. "This segment continues to grow as independent publishers expand using Amazon and other Web services.

"Adibooks is the only book print provider that can offer one- to four-color, short-run inkjet/digital printing, offset printing and a full in-house bindery for the quantities indicated, along with the

direct, hands-on customer service that this segment demands."

For those who aren't dazzled by customer service, King Printing has the technology end covered, as well. The company has been on a veritable capex bender the past three to four years, adding capacity and capabilities via some of the newest inkjet printing devices on the market. In fact, King Printing has become a bit of an inkjet melting pot, with three different makes and models under one roof.

Inkjet Potpourri

In June, King installed an HP T300 digital color inkjet web press to answer its short- and medium-run book lengths. The company touts print runs of one to 50,000 copies, although Adi Chinai notes that the sweet spot is about 1,200-count runs. In conjunction with the new T300, King Printing also splurged for a Sigma line from Muller Martini to reap streamlined, in-line finishing that augments throughput.

"Our color and page volumes were dramatically increasing, and the T300 offered a logical growth path for us," explains Adi Chinai. "It gives us the output that we needed to maintain our advantage of offering fast turnarounds. Having had previous inkjet print-

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King Printing lays claim to having the first Kolbus BF512 casing-in line in the United States. Shown here, King's case binding lead prepares the line for another job.



King Printing

(Continued from page 22)

ing experience, we were able to come up to speed rather quickly, and that allowed us to put the T300 through its paces early on. Now, we're running full production seven days a week, three shifts, on the press."

On tap for installation at some point this fall is a Kodak Prosper 5000XL color press that incorporates Kodak Stream inkjet technology. Sid Chinai sees the Prosper addressing the needs of a specific, exciting new publishing niche for the company, though he's not at liberty to divulge plans.

Kodak technology is hardly foreign to the Chinais; they have a NexPress 2100 digital production press, multiple Digimasters, as well as Insite and Prinergy workflow systems. And, counting its Screen Truepress Jet520 continuous-feed inkjet press—installed in 2008—King Printing will house a trio of inkjet systems from different manufacturers.

"We're able to talk to just about every engine through the software that Adi had our IT people code internally," Sid Chinai notes. "The prepress department basically runs

lights out. There's a lot of automation that allowed us to grow, and add volume and capacity. As the engines have come on board, the work is also waiting for them. We fine tune the nuances to make them work for us."

The Same, but Different

Actually, each of the three inkjet systems, while essentially performing the same task at a higher level, have their own opportunities to shine individually, according to Adi Chinai. "Certain engines perform well on coated media versus uncoated stocks. They also handle files differently and plug into finishing lines differently," he says. "We felt that having the diversity (of devices) would give us an advantage, and that investing in only one technology would limit us."

Sid Chinai doesn't consider his company to be on the bleeding edge of technology—an argument could



The company is proud of the fact that it offers case binding, soft cover and mechanical binding—all under one roof, validating its status as a single-source provider.

be made to that effect—but rather views King Printing as a solutions provider. Blame King Printing's formative years; the company had long associations with the high-tech industry in the '70s and '80s. Much of that business faded with the dotcom burst, though, so the firm gravitated more and more toward publishing.

This is a printer that isn't shy about submitting purchase orders. King installed its first Heidelberg press, a five-color Speedmaster CD 74 perfecter, in 2007 to produce book components. Later that year, it added an automated DGR KM40 ultra-short-run binder, the first of its kind in the United States at that

time. The company is proud of the fact that it offers case binding, soft cover and mechanical binding—all under one roof, validating its status as a single-source provider.

The new Prosper 5000XL press isn't the only piece of machinery en route. The Chinais expected to take delivery of the Muller Martini Sigma line by the end of this month. "We're looking at augmenting our finishing capabilities, adding equipment that will increase our efficiency," Adi Chinai notes.

Clients have certainly taken notice of King Printing's dedication to the book printing trade. Adi Chinai believes his company has set a standard for short-run book manufacturing, and the firm's publishing partners view them as a segment leader.

The Value of Ink on Paper

"With the team we've built here, our knowledge base, and understanding our customers and their markets—along with the equipment—combine for a powerful recipe of success," he says.

But what of the bane known as electronic readers? Amazon is going off-line with its Kindle e-reader, offering it at big box retail stores such as Staples, Target and Best Buy (which also offers the Sony Reader and Barnes & Noble Nook) in time for Christmas, at a lower price point. In other words, the e-reader is positioned to break away from its niche status and join mainstream technologies.

Adi Chinai doesn't appear overly concerned about this trend. "We don't particularly view it as a major threat," he says. "A lot of publishers are finding that digital rights management is very cumbersome, and is a very low-margin business. There's still value in putting ink on paper and producing printed books. (Publishers) are able to maintain a profit level that can sustain future business. E-books, right now, actually help to drive print. People will read free chapters on their electronic readers or computers, but they inevitably decide to buy books."

Riding the crest of double-digit growth over the past five years, and aided by a proud tradition of never having laid off an employee, the owners of King Printing feel they have struck a balance with their position in the book manufacturing marketplace.

"We tend to control our growth; we don't bite off more than we can chew," Adi Chinai notes. "We think we've found a happy medium." **PI**

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WHO'S THE NEW "H" IN TOWN?



SPEEDY 56



GH524



GH474

HANS GRONHI is the largest small offset press manufacturer in China and is expanding at a rapid rate. Domestically they have 70% market share for 20 inch format presses with more than 1100 machines installed in China. Internationally they have installations in the UK, Italy, Canada, Netherlands and other countries in Asia. They have developed a worldwide sales and service network covering all areas of the globe including South America and Australia.

Gronhi was established in 1974 and integrated with the Hans group of companies in 2006. Hans company is the largest producer of laser components in Asia and 3rd largest worldwide. Included in this group is sister companies which produce CTP systems, laser cutting equipment and electronic components. This beneficial array of technology is complementary to Gronhi's manufacturing capability allowing them to offer a complete workflow solution including their CTP products.

Throughout the recent economic crisis, China maintained double-figure economic growth, and this success was matched by the performance of Hans Gronhi. With Japanese and European press manufacturers cutting production and output, Hans Gronhi is growing and investing heavily in expansion. The company produces in excess of 400 GH series presses per year at a rate of one plus per day. This success has led to the construction of a massive state of the art 4,144,105 square foot factory located in Yingkou city.

A common misnomer is Chinese manufacturing is inferior to that of the West. A large number of global names now manufacture and assemble various products in China and expect the highest standards. Hans Gronhi's ISO9001 certified facilities employ the latest CAD/CAM systems and a high level of automation including the newest CNC equipment. All levels of the manufacturing process are strictly monitored for quality control. Each machine built for the export market is CE approved and the majority of electrical components have UL certification.

In this era of economic uncertainty Hans Gronhi offers the highest quality presses and thermal CTP systems at the lowest prices available. This affords printers to increase their productivity with new equipment and not a business draining investment.

HANS GRONHI

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GRONHI GRAPHICS INTERNATIONAL is the U.S. import and distribution company for Hans Gronhi's line of equipment. Dealer inquiries are welcome. Please contact Keith Tweten. Phone: (909) 390-0100 • Email: ktveten@aol.com

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