



IN-PLANT PRINTING AND MAILING ASSOCIATION

# INSIDEDGE

A Newsletter for In-House Printing and Mailing Professionals

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## Manager Discovers Dramatic Savings by Bucking the Trend

Chad Simpson went against the trend and lots of advice from vendors by moving all of his shop's digital finishing from in-line to near-line. "I made the choice because most, if not all, in-line finishing systems slow the engines down significantly. This means you have to buy a lot more engine than necessary because it only runs at say 70% efficiency."



He explains, "For example, our 6250 booklet maker has a cycle time of around 6 seconds. If you run a 28-page signature, it won't slow the engine down and becomes very efficient and convenient. However, when producing books that have 8- or 12-page signatures, the engine slows down a ridiculous amount, less than 50% of what it is capable of doing because it can still only produce 10 booklets a minute."



Simpson, who serves as the Print Shop Manager for East Baton Rouge Parish School Board in Louisiana, has also found even more advantages by moving to near-line. "You don't have to buy the same equipment over and over again," he notes. "With in-line systems, you buy the same

system for every engine and then you buy it again every time you replace the engine. If you start adding up the cost, there is a significant savings by buying one piece of finishing equipment that all of your equipment can utilize."



As a bonus, he says, you get extra capabilities such as the ability to finish full bleed pieces, which is a rare feature for in-line finishing. In addition, he has found there's just less potential for something to break on the printers, translating into a lot less service calls.

For Simpson and his print team of six full-time and 2 part-time employees, they keep a constant eye on the bottom line always digging for additional savings. Recently when their shop's printer contract expired, they decided to explore the possibilities by putting out an RFP to several vendors. "We awarded the contract to Océ; we saved about 50% a month by making the change and haven't lost any capabilities." Based on his experience, he urges others, "When doing an RFP set your specs as generic as possible so that you get as many vendors as possible vying for your business. In the end I truly believe this drives down costs, and it should make vendors look harder at what is the best fit for you."



He has found his current blend of equipment to provide efficiency as well as savings for the district. Below is a summary of his experiences with various machines.



Océ Varioprint 6250 -- the best printer I have ever used. We put 1.7 million on it the first month and have had only one or two jams and no service calls. The interface is the slickest I have ever seen and a two year old child could operate it. It took a while to get used to how quiet it is. With all the noises in the shop it is hard to tell when it is running which is probably why they put the light bar on the machine.

Océ 665 -- runs just as good, maybe even better than what we had before and the color has been much better when it comes to solids and banding. Also the Creo controller is much easier to navigate than the Fiery.



Océ 9522 -- runs very well, but offers a couple of wrinkles. Only one operation can be done at a time. If you are printing and scan something to a folder, it will not send it until it is finished printing. The other wrinkle is the large capacity tray loads from the top instead of a drawer that you pull out and fill.

Heidelberg QM46-2 -- great for quick turnaround jobs. On really long runs you do get ink migrations and service calls are quite expensive.

Ryobi 2800 -- mainly runs NCR in our shop. The quality is not that impressive, but maintenance is inexpensive.

Simpson's next goal is to move to an automated workflow driven by web-to-print. "But that looks like it will be about a year away." Currently, he is planning to get involved in wide-format printing. "Schools are requesting posters and the local shops around here are extremely greedy on their mark-up. I have seen vendors charge as much as \$18 a square foot for a simple poster." He hopes to offer a good quality product at a fraction of the cost – just another way this in-house operation is passing along savings to the school district.