

NEWSPAPERS & TECHNOLOGY

Reprinted with permission from Newspapers & Technology, July 2006

UV drying gaining traction among printers

By Mary L. Van Meter
PUBLISHER

ORLANDO, Fla. — Like their newspaper counterparts, commercial printers are racing to add UV curing systems to augment their production operations.

One such printer, Dallas Offset Inc., increased sales 24 percent last year after equipping one tower of its four-tower, 16-unit King press with UV curing equipment from Prime UV and Arrowlith UV ink from Flint Group, said DOI President Steve White.

"The system helped our entry into new markets and was a favorable compromise to heatset technology," White said at May's Web Offset Association meeting.

DOI produces newspapers, telephone books, classified guides and specialty programs, among other products.

White said DOI pairs coldset and UV work on the same press equipment.

The UV-equipped tower sports two 600-watt bulbs on each web for drying. Although coldset products remain DOI's largest customer group, White said he can apportion up to 50 percent of DOI's press capacity to new UV clients.

Quick ROI

"Justifying the system was easy," White said, adding that the \$50,000 to \$100,000 DOI paid for the UV equipment is much less than the printer would have had to lay out for heatset components.

Moreover, "The energy consumption requirements for a heatset system were much higher" than with UV,

White said.

To prepare for UV curing, DOI upgraded the press' blankets and rollers, adding components compatible with both UV and coldset.

The printer also ensured its Southern Lithoplate Inc. vinyl nitrile plates could be used for both UV and coldset printing, and installed ductwork necessary to eliminate the ozone produced when UV light interacts with air.

Finally, it trained employees to understand the differences between UV and conventional printing and to accommodate the increased quality expectations the coated market demands.

To that end, operators take special care not to contaminate the UV ink with coldset inks or fountain solutions. Separate knives, wash bottles and other components are also used to ensure the two printing technologies remain separate.

Papers taking note

Newspapers, meantime, aren't sitting back. Indeed, the Tuscaloosa (Ala.) News, which produced one of the newspaper industry's first UV-cured products in 2003, has been joined by publishers as varied as Blue Island Newspaper Printing Co. in suburban Chicago and Trader Publishing Co.'s. Miamisburg, Ohio, production plant in deploying the technology.

The News equipped its Goss Mercury press with a UV curing system from TEC Lighting and ink from US Ink, to produce special sections and inserts while BINP relies on a combination of Flint's Arrowlith ink and a Prime UV curing system that's attached to one of

its Goss Community machines.

Trader Publishing uses UV printing to produce a variety of its products. The printer also uses Prime UV curing, this time on a Dauphin Graphic Machines Inc. 440 tower that's equipped with Jardis in-feed controls and web guide. To further ensure accuracy, Trader bolstered the press with cutoff and color registration control from QuadTech Inc. and remote color setting from Graphics Microsystems Inc.

One of the newer entries in the UV printing marketplace is The Park Record, a twice-weekly paper in Park City, Utah. The newspaper last fall began using UV to print its section fronts on higher-grade newsprint, relying on a combination of ink from US Ink and a curing system from Prime UV, said Production Manager Matt Gordon.

The rest of the paper, produced on a Goss Community press, is printed with conventional coldset ink.

"We have limited color capacity, so we wanted to use it where it would have the most impact," Gordon said. The Record usually has three sections in the summer and four in the winter; the sections' backs are avidly sought out by real estate advertisers that want to showcase their properties on the better stock used in conjunction with UV production.

To make sure the UV ink doesn't contaminate the rest of the press, Gordon said he allocated all UV printing to one unit of the 4-unit machine. Ink is hand-delivered to the unit. "We have had a good reaction," Gordon said of the UV-produced fronts.▲