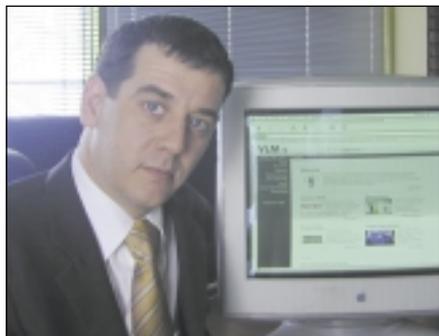


Short runs and fast Virtual Literature Management automates production of more than a thousand jobs a day with the NexPress 2100 at VLM. By Doug Sprei

Internet-enabled digital print at VLM



Declan Malone, 'Virtual Literature Management reflects our approach to digital print utilising Internet solutions as a key driver of profitable digital print.'

In 1965, a new communications company in Dublin, Ireland, called Graphic Reproduction opened its doors as a traditional prepress service bureau.

Thirty-six years later, the name has changed, and so has the business. Realising the profit potential of the Internet, the company changed its focus and its name to Virtual Literature Management, or VLM. Today VLM is a marketing services company that serves customers online – and puts digital presses to the test.

- Next-day turnaround on every job
- Production of 800 to 1 200 full colour jobs each day
- Average run lengths of 60, but some runs as large as 20 000
- Customised and localised printing today, with a plan to add full variable data in the near future.

Although VLM started with copier-based colour printers, today the successful company needs printing equipment that combines the power of a press with the flexibility of a printer. They chose the Heidelberg NexPress 2100 – four of them, in fact – to print more than 3 million full-colour impressions each month.

An automated process

VLM operates from two locations – its original Dublin facility, which employs 78



people, and its new location in Birmingham, England, which includes 22 people. Virtually all the company's employees are on the production side – prepress, press operation, finishing and fulfilment. VLM also has an in-house development and technical support team of eight – with plans to increase these numbers – that builds and maintains the company's customised web-based solutions for clients.

The key to VLM's success has been its fully automated process, which allows customers to go online, choose a template for marketing collateral, upload images, key in the text, and the system actually builds a marketing collateral piece.

One of the first markets VLM targeted for digital printing was the real estate industry, providing estate agents with the opportunity to produce short-run brochures, from one page to four pages, to hand out to prospective buyers or purchasers of homes. Today, the company produces millions of finished pieces each month, serving the real estate industry and many other markets, in particular the

financial and IT sectors.

A Heidelberg solution

When VLM was shopping for printing equipment for its new location, its primary concerns were uptime, consistent quality and overall job throughput.

'We looked at various printing machines, but decided that the NexPress 2100 would best meet our needs thanks to its quality, uptime and reliability,' said Declan Malone, president of VLM. 'We did direct comparisons between the NexPress 2100 and other competitive machines, and the quality of the output from the NexPress 2100 rated far better than other machines – in detail and sharpness of the images, back-to-back registration and dependable performance on various stocks and weights.'

Malone added that the ORC concept also was key in the NexPress 2100 buying decision. With multiple operator shifts, the self-maintenance NexPress 2100 concept allows greater control during the entire production process, enabling quick turnaround with increased uptime.

Repro Digital Print

VLM looked at various digital printing machines, and decided that the NexPress 2100 would best meet its needs due to its quality, uptime and reliability.



'Quick turnaround is important to us because it eliminates the argument of convenience of an in-house printer,' Malone added. 'We say, "Look, if you order this at 5 pm, you'll have it the next day, so why bother with an expensive in-house printer" – we can offer a competitive product at a higher quality level.'

In addition to the best possible print quality, VLM also needs seamless integration between the Internet and print process. According to Malone, the automated workflow of the NexStation front end

allows the company to eliminate manual tasks, which is key to productivity and profitability.

Even as it implements the NexPress 2100 into its business, VLM is thinking ahead to its next challenge. The company plans to add full variable data printing to its service offerings in the near future, as it continues to automate its processes and increase the volumes printed each month.

'Our goal is to become a significant player in the fastest growing area of the print world – digital print,' Malone said.

'But our company will only be a success if we have the right technology to meet the demands of the market – and installing the NexPress 2100 is a key part to realising that success.'

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Websites of interest:

www.heidelberg.com

www.nexpress.com