

{DIGITAL PRINT FOR CORRUGATED}

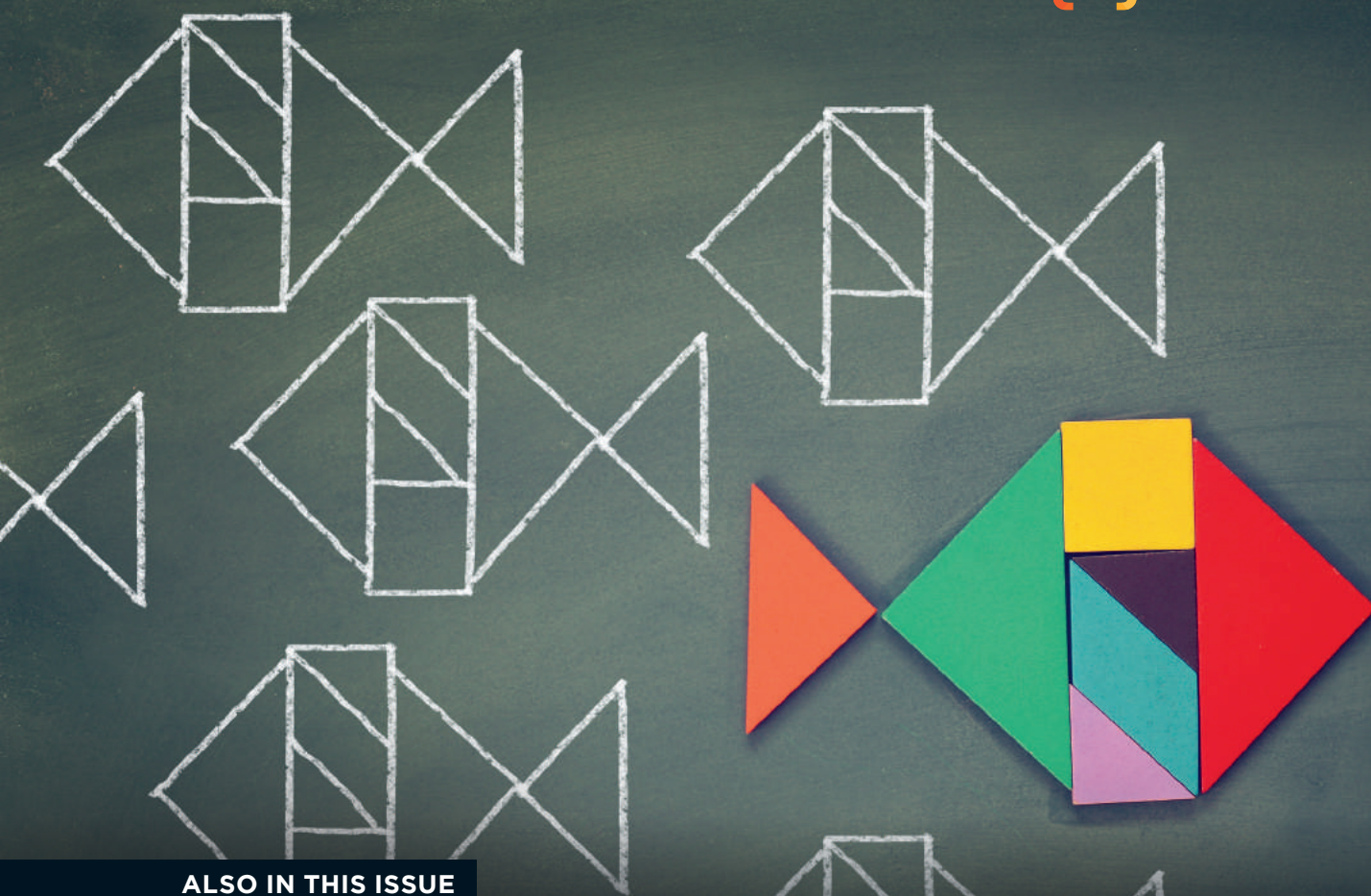
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YOUR FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS

IN DIGITAL CORRUGATED PACKAGING

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OPENING NEW DOORS WITH DIGITAL



by JACKIE SCHULTZ

LAWRENCE PAPER'S DIGITAL PRINTING CAPABILITIES OFFER CUSTOMERS NEW WAYS TO 'THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX.'

Lawrence Paper Company is encouraging its customers to "Think differently" and "See your packaging in a whole new way." Those messages were added to the U.S. company's web site after it installed an HP Scitex 17000 digital press and an Elitron Kombo TAV-R dieless cutting table.

Customers can benefit from short turnaround on small quantities as well as the option to experiment with new designs. That means the ability to trial a new look, run a short-term campaign or promotion,

personalize with names or pictures, and customize by customer, geography, or season. All in a way that's faster and more cost-effective.

"Digital printing technology has come such a long way, to the point that the differences between it and traditional are barely perceptible," says Mike Cordaro, Design and Technical Services Manager. "The upside is real — you can now be first to market with innovative packaging designs that won't blow your budget."

The HP Scitex 17000 corrugated press was installed at the Lawrence, Kansas facility at the end of 2016. It features industry leading digital printing technology that optimizes color range and output on a wide variety of corrugated media.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

The 17000's versatility and image quality has opened up some new markets for Lawrence Paper. Jobs have varied from Point-of-Purchase displays and multi-color packaging to subscription boxes. "We did a project

Mike Cordaro, Design and
Technical Services Manager





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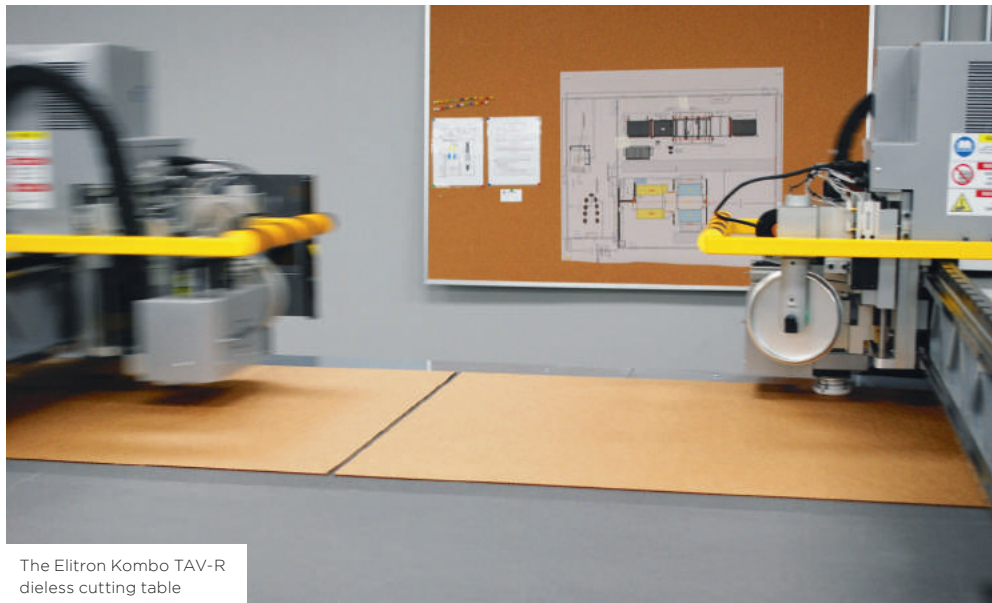
for one of the universities in Nebraska that was sending out season ticket boxes for their different sports,” Cordaro says. “We printed their boosters’ names and team schedules on the boxes. That was a pretty cool application.”

Another feature that digital printing has provided is the ability to run smaller orders that were time-consuming and cost-prohibitive on conventional equipment. “A customer would get excited about a design or a concept and would only want 100 or 200 and it would be prohibitively expensive,” Cordaro says. “Now we’re able to complete jobs like these cost-effectively for us and our customers. We can let them start small and see where they go.”

He says 1 to 500 is the sweet spot in terms of order quantity on the printer, although that number can vary depending on the job. “What we have seen so far is about 3,000 to 4,000 on the printer is making the most sense or as the threshold between digital printing and labeling, depending on the size of the piece and how it lays out on

the bed. We’ve run several orders digitally in the 2,000 to 3,000 quantity range. But we’ve also done a bunch of small 50 to 100 to 500 type pieces. It really is a pretty broad range.”

Lawrence Paper can print up to five colors on its conventional flexo equipment, while most of the jobs tend to be two- or three-color so the HP 17000 is not necessarily replacing the existing flexo jobs. About 60



The Elitron Kombo TAV-R dieless cutting table

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percent of the orders are flexo printed, 20 percent are digital and the rest are labels, however, that percentage changes from week to week.

The company has an Automatån labeler, which was installed about four years ago. "Initially, we thought the digital printer would cannibalize a lot of our litho work, and to some degree that is what we were hoping to do. But we've had a lot of large volume label jobs come in that don't make sense on the digital printer so that business has picked up," Cordaro says. "We'll still continue to use traditional litho printing for large quantities where it makes the most sense, but now we have solutions that best meet all our customers' needs."

In addition to corrugated, Lawrence Paper is digitally printing Foamcore. "Right now we have an order that prints two sides, 4,000

pieces. Originally, the customer was thinking labels, but that would have meant multiple passes through the Automatån, requiring precise registration. Digital print was the obvious direction to point them," he says. "The job has been running since the early part of last week and will probably run through the end of the week. It is for a self-standing structure that will be displayed in retail stores for the holidays. It's very different from anything that we've ever done, and it has been an interesting experience printing and then diecutting the foam. Diecutting foam is not something we traditionally do so there have been some things that we've had to learn."

The diecutting is done on a Thomson clamshell. The company also has a Bobst Mastercut diecutter.

The Elitron TAV-R was installed in September. The dual-head dieless cutting table features high-speed precision cutting, even on custom jobs. Lawrence Paper's machine is only the second one installed at a U.S. corrugated facility.

"We're definitely on the forefront of that installation," Cordaro says. "There are certainly pluses and minuses, but so far we've been happy. With other cutters you need to flip the top sheet for it to read your cuts, but with the Elitron you don't need to do that. We also liked the auto load and unload from a workflow perspective."

"The coolest thing is I went into the production room one day and both the HP and the Elitron were running while the operators were out on their break. That was really lights out production," he adds.



Press operator Cornelius Flowers

{ “See your packaging in a whole new way.” }

ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Adapting a conventional workflow to accommodate digitally printed products has been a bit of a challenge, Cordaro admits. “We’ve had a very defined and organized flow to get jobs through our traditional processes and digital doesn’t quite fit into those. We’ve had to redefine how those processes work.

“It has been a lot of work with our partners,” he continues. “We use Arden for our design and workflow management systems. Hybrid Software is our preflighting and prepress software. And then HP and Elitron from a hardware perspective. Coordinating all of those pieces has been a challenge and we’re still trying to get everything connected. Internally, it’s people thinking differently and doing different tasks, but it has been a pretty cool challenge. It’s new and it’s different and it pushes them in a little different way, which has been exciting to see people thriving in that type of environment.”

Scheduling and estimating for all jobs are done through the company’s AS400-based system, which was developed internally.

Like any new technology, Cordaro says there was some initial hesitation with digital printing. “It was one of those overnight decisions that took two years to percolate. The technology changes so quickly it was, ‘If you buy one now is it going to be obsolete at some point?’ Once we saw the HP 15500 and the 17000 and saw that the speeds were getting up there, that started to push us that way.”

Also, with competitors adding digital printing capabilities, Lawrence Paper managers and President Justin Hill decided to venture down that path as well. “We ran through some of the numbers and determined that there was still a pretty good market and opportunity for us to either convert

existing litho label business to digital and then add some potential new business as well,” he says.

Cordaro says Hill was very supportive. “If the numbers prove it, he is all for it.”

The decision to invest in an HP printer was somewhat straightforward. The company was already using an HP 750 digital printer in its design department for mockups, and Hill is a good friend of Richard Brown, President and CEO of The BoxMaker and a strong proponent of HP technology. “There was some comfort and familiarity in knowing that we had a great resource who was familiar with the machine and the different processes and that we could lean on for support,” Cordaro says. “They have been a terrific help for us.

“The printer has opened up some interesting doors for us – both some new doors as well as some doors with existing customers. I have been pleased with how it has gone.” ■

