

SEEING THE FUTURE OF BOOK PRINTING AT ROTOLITO LOMBARDA



Shorter run and high-quality requirements met by HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press

For Rotolito Lombarda SpA, of Pioltello, Milan, Italy, its investment in the first HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press in Europe was an important step into a new technology offering cost-effective, short-run, high-quality book printing using inkjet technology. Since its establishment in 1976 as a small business specializing in the production of comic books, Rotolito Lombarda has grown to a leading publications printer with four locations around Milan and space totaling 100,000m².

Rotolito Lombarda's production capabilities include offset litho web and sheet-fed presses, gravure presses, specialist book presses, an HP Indigo digital press and the HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press. Rotolito Lombarda operates one of the most advanced binderies in Europe with saddle-stitching, perfect and case binding as well as Dutch binding for special editions. The HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press uses an in-line finishing system from Muller Martini that together form an essentially independent production unit. Full-color covers for short book runs are produced on a variety of substrates using Rotolito Lombarda's HP Indigo press.

Automation and the deployment of the latest technologies form a key part of Rotolito Lombarda's competitive edge. Its four sites are linked via an intranet that enables staff to track the progress of each job as well as monitor supplies of paper from the company's unique "Paper Cube" warehouse. Ensuring that its presses are continuously supplied with the right paper, the automated facility can house 25,000 tons of paper and move up to 50 rolls per hour.

High-quality, short-run book production

With a customer base comprising national and international book and magazine publishers, leading brand fashion and general retailers for catalogue production, Rotolito Lombarda is sensitive to customer requirements as well as technological developments.

Demands for shorter production runs and lead times have become more frequent as marketing and distribution trends have changed, and Rotolito Lombarda recognized the growing need to be able to meet these requirements cost-effectively and profitably.

"We have been monitoring the development of digital printing since its debut on the market," said Emanuele Bandecchi, digital business developer, Rotolito Lombarda. "We always thought that digital printing represented a strategic solution for the future, but we needed to identify a system that could address the specific needs of book production. After having extensively tested the HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press, we realized that we were making the right choice installing it."

Rotolito Lombarda's HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press was the first to be installed in Europe, with the decision taken in the summer of 2009, in the midst of the uncertainties of the financial crises.

At a glance

Industry sector:
Publishing

Business name:
Rotolito Lombarda SpA

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CHALLENGE

- Meet demands for shorter run publications from leading publishers
- Maintain quality
- Enable efficiencies through the supply chain
- Develop new business and revenue streams
- Maintain leadership position as publications printer

SOLUTION

- HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press using water based inks
- HP Indigo digital printing technology

RESULTS

- Expand its offering including high-quality, cost-effective short-run (500 - 3000) publications, as well as value added services such as personalization and variable data printing
- Increase production flexibility with easy switching from mono to full color
- Satisfying major international clients expectations with high quality books
- Offering their customers base affordable solutions such as shorter, more frequent runs while helping reduce stockholding costs
- Reduced waste levels

Ecohighlights

The HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press delivers a range of environmental benefits to print service providers and end-users that help them reduce their energy use and carbon footprint.

- With wholly digital prepress and no need for plates, films or chemistry, energy is saved.
- Start-up waste is dramatically reduced because ink coverage and register are virtually immediately achieved.
- Water-based inks contribute to a better press room atmosphere.
- On-demand printing of only what is required saves delivery and storage costs, and cuts the volume of unused printed products. For book publishers, it is not unusual for some 25 percent of books that are printed conventionally to be destroyed, unread. This figure can be cut tenfold by using digital printing.

"We have always been able to distinguish ourselves because of our commitment to technology," Bandecchi continued. "Investing in the 'solutions of the future' is part of our vision and it has helped Rotolito Lombarda to establish itself as one of the main players in the Italian and European book-printing markets. Therefore, we had no doubts in proceeding with the HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press, which we saw as ideal to fill the gap in our production."

Downstream benefits

Rotolito Lombarda's inkjet web press is enabling it to print book runs between 500 – 3,000 copies profitably and affordably for its customers. The company considers 3,000 copies as the cross-over point⁽¹⁾ for most book projects, though variables such as the number of pages in a book can alter the cross-over point by several hundred copies.

"We showed our customers the opportunities they had for applications such as personalization and variable data printing, which they saw as added-value services," continued Bandecchi. "This is certainly a new market we are opening, with several customers already asking for these applications."

The benefits to customers of digital production go beyond cost-effective short runs.

"Publishers are trying to reduce the costs for stocks and warehouses," Bandecchi explained. "They are putting in shorter, but more frequent orders. With the new HP T300 press, we have been able to address these requirements, cutting production time while delivering the results customers want. With the inkjet web press, the quality is in most of the cases the same as conventional, sometimes even better, as digital printing can guarantee stability and continuity in the results."

"Today's run lengths, book sizes and the paper stocks are all well suited to production on the T300 press," said Bandecchi. "The other important factor is that the HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press produces books of the quality that major international customers expect – which can be difficult to tell from offset."

Customers using the HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press include Gruppo Sole 24Ore, one of Italy's main publishers in the financial sector. For Gruppo Sole 24Ore, Rotolito Lombarda prints financial and legal books (mainly text) in runs between 900 – 2,500 copies, with perfect binding using covers printed on the HP Indigo press.

Other benefits noted by Rotolito Lombarda are the environmental ones of less paper waste, the water-based inks and the take-back program⁽²⁾ for recycling printheads. These features are of particular interest to some of its customers who ask for their print to help reduce the impact on the environment.

"The HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press has enabled us to address short-run demands, including personalization and variable data production," Bandecchi concluded. "We want to concentrate in these areas as we have seen huge opportunities in this sector."

⁽¹⁾ The number of copies below which printing digitally is more cost-effective than conventional printing.

⁽²⁾ Program availability varies. Please check www.hp.com/recycle for details.

"We knew we had a gap in our flexibility to respond to demands for short runs with our existing equipment. We needed to go digital and when we tested the HP T300 Color Inkjet Web Press we discovered that this was the solution we had been waiting for."

— Emanuele Bandecchi, digital business developer, Rotolito Lombarda SpA

To learn more, visit www.hp.com/go/graphicarts

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