Utilizing HP Indigo presses Shutterfly offers its customers many options to preserve precious memories

“With the HP Indigo presses we have been able to drive costs in the right direction so that we help meet the profitability needs of Shutterfly. Our relationship with HP has been a great collaboration, and I’m personally excited about continuing into the future.”

– Jeffrey Housenbold, President & Chief Executive Officer, Shutterfly, Inc.

Founded in 1999, Shutterfly (www.shutterfly.com) is the leading independent photo service company that is helping people stay connected to their loved ones and friends through the powerful medium of photographs. Shutterfly offers its customers many options to capture precious memories. For example, via its service’s web site, users can crop images, remove red-eye, order pictures in a variety of sizes, and transform them into a photo book or calendar. The Company makes it simple to send prints and personalized gifts, or to share pictures online too.

Andy Young, Chief Marketing Officer for Shutterfly, described, “Customers appreciate Shutterfly because it offers them a lot of convenience. It’s a single place they can store their images and it is free to set up an account. They upload images into private albums and pick the ones that they want to print. Our checkout process is simple and fast. Prints are developed and mailed within 24 hours.”

Jeffrey Housenbold, Shutterfly’s Chief Executive Officer, stated, “Shutterfly is riding the momentum of digital camera penetration and the adoption of broadband connectivity. That powerful combination is in part fueling the growth of our company and in return, fueling our need for new innovative machinery that can meet our specific requirements.”

Growing in a competitive environment

Shutterfly wanted a print solution that would open up opportunities for more diverse substrates and products onto which photographic images could be transferred.

Jeannine Smith, Chief Engineering Officer for Shutterfly, elaborated, “4 x 6 inch prints are an important entry point for our customers. This is how they first learn about Shutterfly – it’s their first experience with us – so the ease of ordering, the quality of those 4 x 6 prints, and their timely delivery is important.

“Once customers are comfortable with the online ordering experience, then we offer them a wider variety of products; photo books, calendars, and other items they can’t get at retail locations and they can’t easily create for themselves at home. Through our customer advisory boards and user surveys, we’ve determined that customers really have a strong interest in more and more products.”

While searching for a new print solution, image quality remained one of Shutterfly’s most important selection criteria. Smith noted, “Customers expect that if they have a favorite image – they’ve seen it typically on a 4 x 6 print and then they want to put it on a greeting card or a calendar – they want the image to look the same, the colors, the sharpness, are all characteristics that are important to them, and it’s actually a fairly challenging process to keep that output consistent.”

Reliability was another concern for the Company because its peak output is during the winter holiday season. Smith recalled, “December 10th is typically the peak day of the year and it is crazy. Everybody is focused on consistent quality output, getting the orders out on time and exceeding people’s expectations for holiday cards and gifts.”
HP delivers quality and reliability

“When we decided to expand Shutterfly’s product offerings, we needed to go out in the market and find a new printer technology beyond silver halide printing, and HP was clearly a leader in the market. It’s very important for customer satisfaction that the image looks the same as they first saw it on the original print. Our primary consideration was image quality and the HP Indigo press does a great job there. HP is very good at working with us,” reflected Smith.

Young agreed, “Quality is exceptionally important to Shutterfly and quality was a big factor in our decision to go with HP and with the HP Indigo presses.”

The Company deployed HP Indigo presses, primarily the model 3050, which has up to seven color printing options with PMS and custom color capabilities, and tremendous flexibility for short and mixed runs — including variation by content, images, and print media.

Expanded product lines

Today, the Company offers a unique collection of “design-it-yourself” photo gift items, which provide the opportunity for favorite pictures on calendars, thank you note cards, greeting cards, photo books, and many other options.

Smith noted, “It has been important to Shutterfly’s success that we offer a wide variety of photo products in addition to the silver halide prints and HP Indigo presses have been a key component of that. We started with cards in 2001, and most recently, the photo books – these products have been possible because of the HP Indigo press.”

Young observed, “It’s allowed us to introduce a range of products to our customers that we wouldn’t have been able to do cost-effectively otherwise. Our customers are saying that they really appreciate that there’s now a lot of things they can do with their digital images.”

The HP Indigo press also has proven its reliability and ability to deliver consistent color output. Smith commented, “During the peak season, the HP Indigo presses have to be printing 24 x 7. Our 2004 holiday season went very smoothly. The HP Indigo presses performed very well – overall we were very happy with how things went.”

By leveraging the flexibility of substrates, and being able to rely on the color quality and consistency of the HP Indigo press, Shutterfly has been able to deliver greater quality, more creativity, and more flexibility, in its product lines. Simultaneously eliminating the need for customers to worry about the expense and hassles of home printing.

Housenbold enthused, “With the HP Indigo presses we have been able to drive costs in the right direction so that we help meet the profitability needs of Shutterfly. Our relationship with HP has been a great collaboration, and I’m personally excited about continuing into the future.”

Challenges

• Satisfy customer requests for additional product offerings.
• Grow business in a competitive environment.
• Select an output device that provides highest quality and consistency.
• Need unaltering output reliability during peak seasons.

Solution

• Multiple HP Indigo presses, model 3050s.
• Multiple HP Indigo press UltraStreams.
• HP Financial Services.

Results

• Broadened product portfolio helps Company meet current customers’ needs and grow further.
• Increased competitiveness through HP Indigo support of quality, reliability and innovation.
• High quality output maintains consistency across product lines.
• HP partnership ensures reliable printing during critical seasons.