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Business Development Strategies

CASE STORY

INNOVATIVE INVESTMENTS POWER SUCCESS AT ALLIED PRINTING

EARLY CANON IMAGEPRESS C10000VP USER FUELS
BUSINESS GROWTH WITH DIGITAL

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Written for Canon U.S.A., Inc.

Canon

CANON U.S.A., INC.





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Introduction

Allied Printing Services (Manchester, CT) was founded almost 70 years ago by John F. and Betina Sommers on the credo of "Never say no to a customer." By following that core belief, this third-generation family-owned business has achieved stellar growth, loyal customers, and a solid future. A large part of the company's success can be attributed to its continual investment in technological innovations, and Allied most recently became the first firm in North America to install a Canon imagePRESS C10000VP digital press.

About Allied Printing Services

Founded in 1949, Allied Printing Services is a full-service commercial/financial printing services company that serves a national customer base of pharmaceutical, educational, financial, retail, manufacturing, and agency clients. Located close to Hartford in between New York and Boston, Allied employs 308 people, operates a 300,000-sq.-ft. facility situated on a 30-acre campus, and offers customers a turnkey solution for a comprehensive mix of services. The company produces millions of direct mail pieces, catalogs, business magazines, corporate collateral, and semiannual reports.

The company's tagline ("You can relax because Allied doesn't") is backed by a core philosophy of offering more than the competition. According to John G. Sommers, Jr., Allied's President and CEO, "We'd have 100 competitors in a one-mile radius if we only offered printing and binding services. We've reversed that to a single competitor in a 100-mile radius by offering more services, and this is conducive to growing our business and continuing to do well."

Allied Printing Services offers robust sheetfed, web, and digital press capabilities and an 85,000-sq.-ft. bindery/finishing area. Mailing, fulfillment, kitting, print-on-demand, and variable data capabilities give the company a unique value proposition.

Figure 1: Allied Printing Services (Manchester, CT)





A Long History of Investments in Innovation

Allied's long history of consistent reinvestments has enabled the firm to maintain the most up-to-date equipment in its operation. The company has been an alpha and beta tester for a wide variety of technologies. Most recently, it was the beta site for Canon's imagePRESS C10000VP and soon after decided to purchase the press, in fact, purchased seven presses. According to Allied's managers, a large part of the company's success is tied to continual investments in technological innovations.

Recent investments in printing equipment include two Komori System 38S web presses, a fourth 41", 6-color KBA Rapida press equipped with UV and conventional coating, and seven Canon imagePRESS C10000VP digital presses. In addition, the company bolstered its finishing capabilities with the purchase of die-cutting, folding, creasing, and binding equipment. Its arsenal of printing, binding, and mailing equipment produces 8 million mailpieces each month. A large volume of that mail is produced on the Canon imagePRESS C10000VP digital presses.

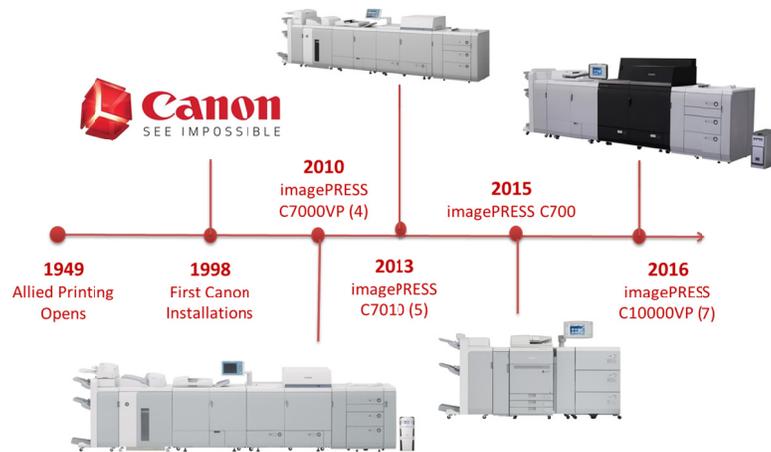
The Digital Evolution

Digital printing currently represents a major component of Allied's business, accounting for about 15% of the company's total revenues. Digital printing is used interchangeably and in conjunction with offset work.

The company's entry into digital printing started off as an idea to offer customers more services, and Sommers credits the successful evolution of its digital printing capabilities to its partnership with Canon. Allied's relationship with Canon dates back to 1998 with the installation of its first Canon branded engines. In 2010, the company added four imagePRESS C7000VP color sheetfed digital presses, an imagePRESS 1135 black and white sheetfed digital press, and 14 new MFPs. As digital print volumes increased, Allied upgraded their color digital presses to imagePRESSC7010s, which have since been replaced with the imagePRESS C10000VP presses.



Figure 2: Timeline of Canon Installations at Allied Services, Inc.



The company heard about the development of the imagePRESS C10000VP and believed that its high volume of digital printing output made it a prime candidate to beta test the digital press. A team of Allied managers, led by Jonathan Kaufman, Senior Vice President of Technical Development, met with the Canon research and development team in Japan to discuss becoming the beta site. Allied beta-tested the press and then purchased it along with four more. Kaufman elaborates, "Visiting Japan and meeting with Canon's upper management and R&D team was a mutually beneficial experience in the development of the C10000. In addition, meeting that level of management was extremely important to us in understanding Canon's direction so we could make plans for future purchases."

Investing in Personalized Printing Capabilities

According to Kaufman, a key advantage of the new imagePRESS devices is that they offer a low cost of entry for a high-color quality digital press that can produce demanding variable data printing applications. He states, "The low cost of entry enabled us to put in multiple machines so we can better balance our workload and handle peak production demands."



Quality Comparable to Offset

Byron Gilbert, Allied's Vice President of Sales, says that the level of quality produced by the company's imagePRESS C10000VP is comparable to offset and clients have no objection in moving a job from an offset press to the Canon presses. He elaborates, "There is no hesitation from customers in producing their work on the imagePRESS C10000VP. It's an easy sell because the value is great. The digital presses offer us a great deal of flexibility to respond to customers' demands for printing more jobs in lower quantities with fast turnaround."

Another important factor for Allied is the level of service that Canon Solutions America provides. According to Jim Morse, Allied's Digital Solutions Manager, "We receive an unbelievable level of service from Canon. As soon as I hang up the phone, I feel like they're already here taking care of whatever the issue is. Canon techs are always willing to give insight, try new things, test papers, and find answers to our questions. Everyone on the service/support side of Canon is fantastic."

The Canon imagePRESS C10000VP Series

Canon's imagePRESS C10000VP Series addresses the demand for digital output that meets offset print quality and color consistency requirements. The press can run a wide range of media types and weights—from 60 gsm (uncoated) and 70 gsm (coated) up to 350 gsm—without sacrificing overall productivity.

The press features 2,400 x 2,400 dpi resolution, print speeds up to 100 images per minute on supported media weights, automatic color control and adjustments, and more accurate calibration using new inline spectrophotometric sensors. A unique Gloss Optimization technology helps match gloss levels of the printed image to the substrate it is printed on. In addition, a versatile in-line finishing portfolio includes Canon and select third-party finishers.

According to Jonathan Kaufman, Allied is very impressed with the machine and its performance. The imagePRESS features a white-paper-in, finished-product-out workflow. A creasing module on the C10000 produces a high-quality appearance to half-folded leaflets and saddle-stitched booklets. Kaufman notes, "Our machines can economically crease and score inline, and other equipment brands don't offer these capabilities."

Kaufman cites another important benefit when he states, "We can take paper out of our warehouse that is untreated and print it on the Canon presses; other digital devices require the paper to be pretreated. This is a big advantage to our salespeople in accommodating customers' fast turnaround requirements."



The Bottom Line

When asked what makes Allied unique, John Sommers believes it's a combination of the company's enormous capacity and versatility paired with solid customer service and a short chain of command. All of these factors enable a large company like Allied to be as agile, flexible, and customer-responsive as smaller organizations. Sommers calls this combination the Allied Advantage. He explains, "We value every relationship and collaborate with our clients to make their visions a reality. We might be a big company, but we pay attention to the smallest details."

Vendor partnerships are another important component of the Allied Advantage. Sommers believes that a really good supplier partner is as valuable as a really good customer. He concludes, "We wouldn't be able to do the things that we do if we didn't have companies like Canon supporting us. It was an honor to be part of the testing, beta, and development of the imagePRESS C10000VP."



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