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CASE STUDY

DIGITAL PRINTING IS ON THE RISE AT BADGERLAND PRINTING

CANON INVESTMENTS DRIVE PRINT VOLUME GROWTH

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

Canon

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contents

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Badgerland Printing: Thriving Since 1993	2
Digital Printing Investments	2
Benefiting from Canon's imagePRESS Color Quality	4
More About PRISMAsync and G7®	5
Raising the Bar	5
The Bottom Line	6

List of Figures

Figure 1: Steve Gerrish, Badgerland Printing	3
Figure 2: Comparing Color Quality of Canon imagePRESS Print Output	4



Introduction

During a time when some companies in the printing industry are experiencing mergers/acquisitions, closures, and general consolidation, savvy businesses are recognizing that the print market still contains pockets of growth. These firms are experiencing success by identifying and responding to unmet demands to better serve their existing customers while also attracting new ones. This article explores how Badgerland Printing has achieved sustainable growth by assessing community needs, making strategic investments, and offering innovative services to an expanding customer base. Even in today's digital age, print remains an important growth driver for firms with the right mix of services.

Badgerland Printing: Thriving Since 1993

Badgerland Printing (Elk Mound, WI) was founded to fill a market gap in the Chippewa Valley area, which lacked a provider of high-quality, affordable commercial printing services. Nearly a quarter of a century later, Badgerland has grown into a 20-employee company that provides customers throughout the region with a wide variety of printing services, including long-run offset printing, short run digital printing, and wide format services (including wide format roll to roll and flatbed UV printing). This commitment to services expansion has enabled Badgerland to achieve a 20% year-over-year growth in the past ten years—a level of success that is unattainable for many in the mature printing industry.

Steve Gerrish, President and Owner of Badgerland Printing, attributes this stellar growth to continual investments in high-quality digital printing technologies as well as a highly motivated sales team. Much of this success has come from digital; digital printing growth alone has experienced an uptick of nearly 60% in the past three years. Badgerland's mission and secret to success is simple: Providing customers with affordable prices, a wide range of printed products, and fast turnaround times. Gerrish explains, "Budgets can be tight, and timelines can be even tighter in this industry. We recognized that our local businesses were experiencing these pain points, and we devised a way to alleviate them. Today, we have a fleet of cost-efficient equipment, highly trained staff members, and a large facility. This enables us to provide lower costs and faster delivery times than our competitors, all without sacrificing quality. I firmly believe that when our customers look good, Badgerland looks good! This mantra has become a cornerstone of our offerings, and it has enabled us to prove to others—and ourselves—that print is alive and well."

Digital Printing Investments

To achieve long-term growth in a maturing industry, Gerrish understood that an investment in digital technology was a must. Badgerland Printing had established a strong high-quality offset business over the years, but the firm faced high costs when outsourcing digital printing services to meet client demands for shorter run lengths on tight timelines. Over time, the



number of requests for short run printing work outweighed the benefits of outsourcing digital printing. Badgerland made the decision to bring these services in-house, and it became one of the very first printing companies in its geographic market to invest in digital printing. Shortly after the investment, however, Gerrish found that the quality and operating costs of the digital printing device were not meeting the high standards of his company nor his customers. Shortly thereafter, Gerrish contacted EO Johnson Business Technologies (Wausau, WI), a Canon Authorized Production Dealer to learn about other options for digital printing technology. After reviewing Canon's portfolio, Gerrish realized that the quality of Canon's technology was superior to that of his current digital printing capabilities. He decided to make an investment in Canon's equipment, installing a Canon imagePRESS C7010VP digital color press in 2012. In 2017 Badgerland Printing upgraded to a Canon imagePRESS C8000VP with PRISMAsync, and added a Canon imagePRESS C850 with PRISMAsync to its fleet. In addition, PRISMAprepare was implemented to help streamline the preparation of digital print files. Gerrish elaborates, "The quality was exceptional, so we no longer had to have complicated discussions with our clients about relying on offset printing and possibly missing a deadline or sacrificing quality by using digital technology. With Canon's imagePRESS and PRISMAsync, we can just print our jobs based on the required specifications without being concerned about quality issues."

Figure 1: Steve Gerrish, Badgerland Printing



The imagePRESS C8000VP digital color press enables Badgerland to produce a wide range of applications, including booklets, postcards, posters, business cards, and high-quality

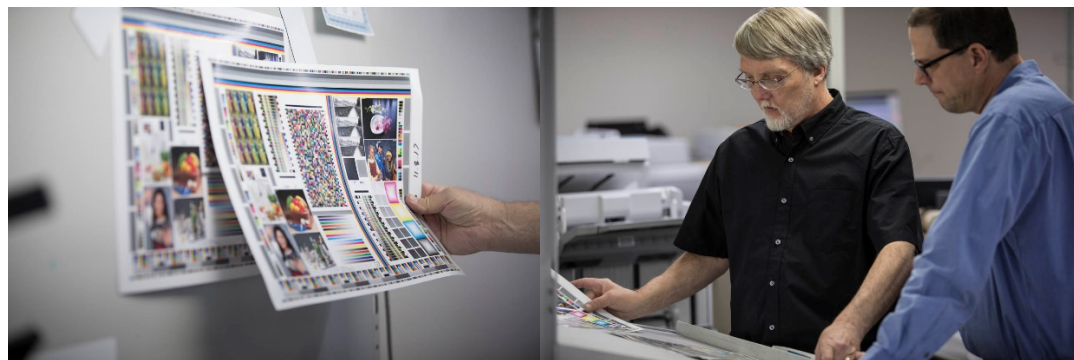


marketing collateral. The recent investment in the imagePRESS C850 digital color press has enabled the company to further expand its digital printing services to include envelopes and oversized collateral (using 13" x 30" press sheets). Gerrish notes, "Many of these applications would have been run on our offset press in the past, but now it makes financial sense to print them on our imagePRESS C850. For example, a six-panel fold-over brochure can be printed in short runs at an affordable cost."

Benefiting from Canon's imagePRESS Color Quality

As Badgerland's range of applications has expanded and more requests for work have come in, the company has transferred more and more jobs from its offset presses to its digital devices. Since making the decision to invest in digital, Badgerland has realized a number of benefits, including quality short-run print, new applications, increased production efficiency and faster turnaround. Although the company fully expected to enjoy faster and better print quality once it upgraded to the Canon imagePRESS C8000VP, the results far surpassed its expectations. According to Gerrish, "Because we're G7® certified and our colors match so well from offset to digital with the Canon devices, we're now able to intermingle jobs. Certain jobs will have different specifications for substrates, finishing, and scheduling, but we can seamlessly handle multiple phases of the printing process on the device that makes the most sense for the task at hand. For example, we might print the cover of a document on our offset press and the inside content on a digital press, but you wouldn't be able to see the difference unless you had a loupe."

Figure 2: Comparing Color Quality of Canon imagePRESS Print Output



Gerrish has found that his customers don't care about the brand or type of presses that his company has—they only care that he can produce the quality they expect on a consistent basis, day in and day out. By relying on its Canon imagePRESS digital color presses for daily output, Badgerland is able to deliver on these expectations.

Certified as a G7 Master Printer since 2010, Badgerland Printing takes its color matching capabilities very seriously. Gerrish shares, "Before acquiring our Canon presses, we could never really achieve that true gray balance color match from offset to digital. Now that we



have PRISMAsync on our imagePRESS', that's no longer a concern. In fact, we selected the PRISMAsync for our imagePRESS's almost entirely for its embedded G7 capabilities. We use a third-party vendor for our G7 certification and are now G7 certified for our Color Contract Proofs, offset and digital presses, so these capabilities have been put to the test. The vendor was blown away—he was simply amazed at how well the imagePRESS with PRISMAsync printed to G7 specifications."

More About PRISMAsync and G7

G7 is a method and calibration technique from Idealliance. It is based on ISO 10128 standard methods for producing visually similar neutral grays across different CMYK imaging processes/devices. The G7 calibration process uses software to create simple one-dimensional curves that adjust the raw device output to a gray balanced state called G7 Grayscale, which can be used as a process control baseline. When combined with color management, G7 Grayscale can help users achieve higher compliance levels like G7 Colorspace. Because of this, Badgerland Printing can intermingle jobs and still achieve consistent matching across devices.

PRISMAsync is a print controller used to drive Canon imagePRESS digital production color presses. PRISMAsync versions 4.1 and later are Idealliance-Certified G7 systems that offer new and experienced users two efficient pathways toward G7 compliance: G7 embedded calibration workflow and G7 external integration to allow streamlined communications with third-party G7 calibration software. The PRISMAsync G7 calibration and Embedded Profiler, added to an Advanced Color Management feature set, combine two very useful functions — G7 grayscale calibration and color profile creation for the Canon imagePRESS digital color presses. Since Canon develops the print engine and the PRISMAsync color print controller, both steps can be accomplished efficiently.

Raising the Bar

This story doesn't end with quality color printing at Badgerland. Gerrish and his team are raising the bar for great customer service in digital printing and finishing services. Shortly after Badgerland invested in its digital UV spot coating capabilities from Duplo, the company decided to host its first Digital Print Symposium event. The driver behind the event was to showcase the company's capabilities for digital print while educating customers and prospects on the technology. Gerrish recalls, "Our Digital Print Symposium event was an opportunity for us to interact with and educate our customers. We brought in partners, including our dealer EO Johnson Company, Duplo, Canon, the Mosaica Group, and Midland Paper."

As most print service providers can attest, getting customers to understand and learn how to make the most of today's technologies can be a challenge. Gerrish continues, "The speakers



echoed what we had been saying all along, but we believe that our customers really listened and learned a lot as a result of the event. Our customers had nothing but good things to say afterwards, and several prospects have e-mailed us asking for invitations to our next event... so it's definitely something that we plan to keep doing!"

The Bottom Line

By increasing its offerings and keeping up with technological innovations, Badgerland Printing has been able to expand its customer base and achieve long-term growth. Although the printing industry is maturing, pockets of growth still exist for businesses that are able to stand out from the competition by offering something extra. Gerrish concludes, "We're a sales organization as much as we are a print organization, and sales are all about personal relationships. These personal relationships are what set us apart from all of the other printing companies, and they've enabled us to experience outstanding growth. Although print is now only one component of a much larger ecosystem that includes a variety of digital channels, it is most certainly not dead. As a matter of fact, our successes have proven that print is alive and well at Badgerland Printing!"



authors



Nichole Jones
Consultant
+ 1 781-616-2191



Nichole Jones is a Consultant for Keypoint Intelligence – InfoTrends' Business Development Strategies Consulting Service. Ms. Jones' responsibilities include managing the promotion and distribution of InfoTrends' content and assisting clients and channels in building business development programs. She also develops curriculum and content for InfoTrends' e-Learning programs, which deliver online sales training.



Eve Padula
Sr. Research Analyst
+ 1 781-616-2170



Eve Padula is a Senior Research Analyst for Keypoint Intelligence – InfoTrends' Business Development Strategies and Customer Communications Consulting Services. Her responsibilities include the promotion and distribution of InfoTrends' content, assisting clients and channels in building business development programs, generating service content and multi-client studies, and managing the editing cycle for many types of deliverables.

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