

Grandville Printing transforms large Midwest retailer's weekly shelf sign program



“The variable data, on-demand printing supported by HP Indigo technology has enabled Grandville to deliver a solution that transformed the operations of one of our best customers. We took a labor-intensive, decentralized process and turned it into an efficient, automated, centralized process.”
—Chris Nunez, Director of Digital Printing, Grandville Printing Company

HP customer case study: With HP Indigo press brief, printer creates groundbreaking digital solution

Industry: Printing and publishing

Objective:

Improve the labor-intensive but business-critical process major retailers use to produce updated shelf signage every week

Approach:

Centralize sign production by leveraging on-demand, variable print technology

IT improvements:

- Print production more efficient
- Scalability means clients, jobs of any size can be accommodated

Business benefits:

- Major reduction in store labor
- Color product images and logos dramatically improve the look of stores
- Leveraging HP relationship, which helps nurture digital printing business
- Scalable HP presses, servers means printer can grow as client base grows



The times are changing for Grandville Printing Company. It's almost required in today's competitive printing industry. Looking for better solutions, Grandville worked with one of its key customers, Meijer, to reduce in-store labor with a centralized, automated, streamlined workflow process, saving the company significant dollars the first year alone using HP Indigo digital press technology.

Grandville Printing Company has seen a lot of changes since its founding in 1956. Then, it was a newspaper printer. Today, the Michigan printer offers end-to-end print communications solutions, from design and database management, to marketing, to mailing and fulfillment.

Grandville now is leveraging digital printing technology to produce in-store shelf signs for retailers. “We are bringing the next generation of retail printing to market a few years early,” says Tony Trevino, VP of Customer Development at Grandville. “Having a retail advertising background and a passion for retail, I truly believe our program is the best way to streamline the weekly shelf sign process. We’re not just putting ink on paper here, we are allowing retailers to amplify their brand message directly at the point of purchase.”

Meeting clients’ quality standards

Grandville selected HP Indigo technology because the digital presses and print servers deliver the performance needed to launch a digital printing business. Grandville is a high-end print shop. Color is very important to their clients. They knew the HP Indigo press 5500 would match their other press output and meet their clients’ quality standards.

In addition to purchasing HP Indigo digital presses, Grandville standardized on HP ProLiant servers for its data center, equipped staff with HP business desktop and notebook PC systems, and implemented HP thin clients in the pressroom. The small size of the thin client and minimal internal “moving parts” makes them ideal for that location, where paper dust and summertime heat means robust PC technology is a must.

Successful pilot to 185 megastores

First, Grandville had to prove to Meijer that it could streamline its weekly shelf signage processes. It began implementing the new process as a pilot, supporting a single Meijer location and named the new program “Nexgen.”

“We designed a completely scalable solution. We can add more HP Indigo digital presses whenever we need to and our HP servers are virtualized so we can increase our data processing capability at any time.”

Chris Nunez, Director of Digital Printing, Grandville Printing Company

During the pilot, Grandville developed a propriety database software application that it calls Sign Production System, or SPS. It all begins with Meijer uploading a file with all of the pricing, product and promotion data for the following week. The software scrubs the data and flags for any discrepancies, such as a sales price higher than the regular price, in a report that goes back to Meijer.

Next, the Sign Production System software prepares the data for merging with the sign templates based on how Meijer will place the signs—by aisle or

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Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

Digital printing

Primary hardware

- Two HP Indigo press 3050
- Two HP Indigo press 5000
- Two HP Indigo press 5500 systems
- HP ProLiant DL360 Servers
- HP ProLiant DL380 G5 Servers
- HP ProLiant ML350 G5, ML370 and ML530 Servers
- HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client
- HP Compaq dx2300 Microtower Business Desktop PC
- HP Compaq 8710w Mobile Workstation
- HP Compaq Business Notebook PCs
- HP Designjet 8000 Printer
- HP LaserJet printers

Primary software

- Microsoft® Windows® 2003 Server Enterprise
- Microsoft Exchange 2003
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft Visual Studio

“Our HP Indigo presses provide the high-quality digital print technology that Grandville needed to launch its new digital print business. Equally important, HP has been there with support and resources that we’ve been able to use to gain tracking in the retail niche market we’re targeting with our new solutions.”

Chris Nunez, Director of Digital Printing,
Grandville Printing Company

department, for example. Product images that Grandville maintains in its own UPC-based image library can be integrated into the signs during this step. The software then generates PDFs of the signs and sends them to the Indigo presses.

Grandville does all the scoring and cutting, packages the signs and distributes them to the Meijer locations.

The one-store pilot went so well that Meijer asked Grandville to expand it to include another five locations. That was also a resounding success, and Meijer lost no time in contracting with Grandville to support all 185 of its stores.

Managing distribution became more critical as the program was expanded so a “hub and spoke” system was implemented that would give Grandville solid control and accountability. Boxes are picked up and sent out regionally where they meet with same-day couriers in major metropolitan areas. The couriers then deliver the boxes to the stores. Through this model, Meijer stores have their signs in hand within six hours of leaving Grandville and can be tracked at anytime throughout the delivery process.

Grandville also ramped up its digital print capabilities by adding more HP Indigo digital presses; it currently owns six, including two HP Indigo press 5000s and two HP Indigo press 5500 systems. “We designed a



completely scalable solution,” Nunez says. “We can add more HP Indigo digital presses whenever we need to, and our HP servers are virtualized so we can increase our data processing capability at any time.”

The speed of the Indigo presses is also critical. “The Indigo systems are plenty fast,” Nunez says. “We can produce a million-and-a-half signs, from RIP through production, in 48 hours. That’s the key for succeeding on this project.”

Major reduction in labor

Since the Nexgen program hit full stride, its effect on Meijer’s operations has been profound. First, Meijer reduced its inventory of consumables to support printing its in-store signs. But the biggest benefit is the reduction in time Meijer staff spends on producing and hanging the signs.

“The signs are shipped to us ready to hang,” says Russ Cole, Director of Production, Photography and Technical Services at Meijer. “The boxes are sorted by aisle, so all our staff has to do is open the boxes, pick up the signs, and hang them. It’s delivered substantial operational efficiencies to our in-store labor.”

This, in turn, means Meijer staff can spend more time focusing on the store’s guests. “Our employees’ first priority is to take care of our customers,” Cole says. “For this reason, we are always looking for ways to



increase the efficiency of store operations—which is exactly what Grandville’s sign printing services delivered.”

Grandville is also working with Meijer to produce other types of signs, including posters, it can mount by store or department entrances. “With our printing and distribution processes in place, and working with HP, it’s easy to add other products,” notes Nunez.

Efficient, automated, centralized

Grandville is working with a number of other large retailers, including national chains, on similar programs. Some companies will draw even more

benefits. For instance, the signs produced by the HP Indigo digital presses are more environmentally friendly because of the varied choice of substrates that are available.

Grandville is confident it has only begun to tap the potential of this digital printing niche. The variable data, on-demand printing supported by HP Indigo technology has enabled Grandville to deliver a solution that transformed the operations of their best customers. “We took a labor-intensive, decentralized process and turned it into an efficient, automated, centralized process. Meijer couldn’t be happier, and Grandville couldn’t be happier.”

To learn more, visit www.hp.com

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