



Océ Case study

From Copy Shop to Short-run Champ



Océ helps Alexander's Print Advantage create professional book "factory"

Alexander's Print Advantage began almost 30 years ago as a walk-in copy shop with one copier and a pallet of paper. Today, the business couldn't be more different, and even now, Alexander's continues to evolve in response on a changing market.

"In 1992, we converted to an on-demand digital printer offering services to business customers," said Vice President of Operations, Doyle Mortimer. "At that time, our major customers were software companies needing short run documentation manuals. We enjoyed great success, but as more and more companies discontinued hard copy documentation, the need to change our offerings was critical.

"Because of our experience in book publishing, we began to put extra emphasis on offering short run, on-demand printing to book publishers." Although Alexander's developed a good business, their cut-sheet printers limited the book sizes they could efficiently offer to the industry. "When we sold a 6" x 9" book, we had to tell the customer we would need to undercut the book by 1/8" on all sides. This solution lacked the professionalism expected in the book industry."

Always-innovative Alexander's soon solved this problem, too. In 2006, Alexander's added an Océ VarioStream® 7450 Twin digital system with the optional Enhanced Print Quality module. "This machine lets us offer 'true-size' books and be more price competitive in larger quantities," said Mortimer.

"The great part of our success with Océ is due to the reliability of the finished product and the run speeds. Prior to purchasing our Océ 7450 Twin system, we generally only offered print quantities up to 500 books. Now, we promote print runs of up to 2,000 books and sometimes print even higher quantities if our customers are under tight deadlines. Also, because we are can run the Océ VarioStream at full speed 24 hours a day, we can provide very short turn times for our customers."

Turnaround Reduced 30%, Labor Costs by 50%

Alexander's still prints lots of software documentation and seminar manuals on the Océ system, but now the majority of the work is short runs of 100 to 1,500 books. "Our workflow changed because we can run 500 or 1,000 books in a shift and bind on the next shift, greatly reducing turn times," said Mortimer.

Océ dependability has contributed to faster turnaround. "With our old cut-sheet equipment, down time forced us to add one or two days to our turn times just to make sure we could meet deadlines. With few exceptions, we now confidently offer turn times 20 to 30 percent shorter than before. In some instances, we have turned print runs of up to 1,000 books in 24 hours."



“At the run speeds we hit on the Océ system, our labor costs per page are reduced by about half, and we pass the savings on to our customers.”

Benefits for Publishers

The benefits of digital for short-run books explain why customers are flocking to this offset alternative. “Our commercial publishing customers can print shorter runs, so they spend less on inventories,” Mortimer explained. “By expending less money per book title, publishers can print many more new titles per year, thus increasing their chance of finding the “best seller” that every publisher needs to support the business.”

Books are available faster, so they can be sold sooner, and revenues are often collected before the printing bill is even due. With

print on demand, publishers can keep books in print longer and lengthen the book life. This makes both author and customer happier.

Growing in a Growth Market

“Having a professional-looking book factory and professional output helped us obtain work from more commercial customers,” he noted, but there is also a growing group interested in a different type of publishing.

“In our market today, we have developed great relationships with several publishers, but we also do quite a large business in self-publishing. This market continues to grow, and we intend to add editing, graphic design and marketing consulting to our list of services,” Mortimer said.

“Book publishing is still a growing business, especially self-publishing. I’ve always said everyone has a book in them they would like to write. With our solutions, including the Océ system, we make dreams come true for self-publishers without them having to mortgage their homes.”

The story of Alexander’s Print Advantage revolves around responsive change and insight into new opportunities. It’s a formula that’s worked well for many years, and now it’s helping Alexander’s take a leadership position in one of the hottest applications in the marketplace.

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