



Cutting-Edge Finishing

YOUR HIGH-SPEED PRODUCTION INKJET BUSINESS
ISN'T COMPLETE UNTIL YOU UPGRADE YOUR
FINISHING DEPARTMENT



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Your company is growing fast. You offer a wide variety of production solutions that your competition doesn't offer. You're not bleeding edge, but you are cutting edge. You've decided to invest in high-speed inkjet printing technology to stay out in front. What's your next step? If you're Specialty Print Communications (SPC) headquartered in Niles, IL, your thoughts turn to finishing—specifically, MBO.

Specialty Print Communications specializes in high volume, data-driven direct mail and loyalty marketing solutions to Fortune 500 marketers. The third-generation, privately held, and family-owned and operated company has been in business since 1996. Its specialty is delivering high-volume, data-driven direct mail and loyalty marketing solutions in the retail, automotive, financial services, health care, travel, and hospitality fields.

SPC owns and operates four facilities. Three are located in Niles, IL. The fourth is in Benton Harbor, MI. In total, it has approximately 500 full-time employees, with operations typically running 24 hours a day with three regular shifts.

While every company uses the term “solutions provider,” this is not just a buzzword for SPC. “Our mission is to help our customers increase their response rates with direct mail campaigns,” explains Ryan LeFebvre, Executive Vice President of Sales for SPC. “We analyze the target audience's purchase history, behavior patterns, and lifestyles so our customers can deliver offers with the most value and relevance.”



The hardworking team at Specialty Print Communications, a third-generation, privately held, and family-owned and operated company, has been instrumental in the business' success.

SPC's areas of specialization include:

- New customer welcoming and on-boarding
- Loyalty card issuance and membership fulfillment
- Life-event and activity trigger marketing
- Lifestyle product cross and upsell campaigns
- Ongoing rewards marketing
- Membership program upgrades
- New customer acquisition through predictive modeling
- Reactivation campaigns

To support these communications, SPC has invested in a wide array of resources from in-house design to data development and programming to the most cutting-edge printing and finishing solutions. It offers high-speed inline web printing; inline and four-color hybrid imaging with variable print in black, full-color, or PMS; digital and offset sheetfed printing; and most recently, high-speed inkjet printing.

SPC is known for more than ink on paper. It transforms its clients' direct marketing into a "rich, multi-sensory experience" that delights all of the senses. This ranges from pop-ups and glitter application to textured UV. SPC even offers experiential elements such as scented and scratch-off coatings. Its template library includes 74 different pop-up and interactive formats such as the "Smash-and-Grab," "Bon Voyage," and "Lunar Module."

But its real expertise is data. Data, programming, and printed components converge flawlessly before its mail pieces enter the postal stream. SPC's staff of programmers and lettershop specialists put its clients' data into action via variable imaging. Its secure facility, with on-site postal verification, Optional Procedure, and Drop Shipment Management System (DSMS), is designed to give clients peace of mind.

"We do a lot of market research, too," says LeFebvre. "We pay attention to what's in people's mailboxes. We research what's pulling well. We're always looking for that secret sauce to help our customers increase their response rates and return higher ROI."

HIGH-SPEED INKJET CHANGES EVERYTHING

Before its purchase of the high-speed inkjet, SPC supported its customers' needs for high-volume, complex variable data work with high-speed sheetfed digital printing, as well as highly customized inline hybrid manufacturing. The hybrid line uses four-color inkjet imaging heads on SPC's six-color web offset presses with inline UV coating.



After much consideration, SPC decided to install a "Nearline" finishing system model which included the Unwinder UW60 pictured above.

The hybrid workflow is highly effective for short-run projects or those for which the variable elements are concentrated in localized areas in the sheet, such as when customers want to switch out company logos or offer fully variable coupons. However, over time, SPC's clients started to demand a higher level of flexibility and design on their long-run projects than its hybrid line could accommodate.

"Our clients want to be able to produce fully variable color across the entire sheet," explains LeFebvre. "We were able to offer that on our sheetfed presses, but not at the kind of very high volumes its clients often produce."

To meet this need, SPC installed two Canon Océ i300s high-speed cutsheet inkjet presses and, in early 2018, a Canon Océ ProStream Web Fed Inkjet Press. The ProStream runs at 262 feet per minute (80 m/min) at 22" (565 mm) web width, which meets the demands for fully flexible, full-color variable design at the highest speeds. With a high-capacity duty cycle of up to 35 million A4 pages per month, the press is built to meet SPC's customers' needs for both speed and volume.

"As our customers make deeper investments in fully variable, heavily data-driven pieces, they are looking for wider variety of finishes to separate their pieces in the mailbox," says LeFebvre. "We needed a partner that would give us the high-quality finishing capabilities we needed at speed."

SPC knew where to turn—MBO. The company was already operating MBO folding equipment, so it knew MBO's quality and reliability. "We turned to them to help us identify which pieces of equipment would provide the most flexibility for our clients' needs," says LeFebvre.

VALUE-ENGINEERED INVESTMENT

Because of the range of applications it produces, SPC appreciated the modularity of the MBO Finishing System. By grouping specific modules together, MBO was able to customize a finishing system that met the needs of this highly flexible company. "When you do a lot of custom work, you can't just pick a high-speed finishing system 'off the rack,'" says LeFebvre. "You must carefully analyze your needs and select the right mix. You also need the flexibility to move equipment around on the line, if necessary."

After careful consideration, MBO and SPC decided to install a "Nearline" finishing system model. This allows for maximum up time of the press, and economies of scale for the flexible finishing line. The line included the core finishing components for the web: Unwinder UW60, Web-guide WG60, Web Plow-folder PFS, Split & Merge Unit SPM and, at the heart of the line, MBO's SVC525C Sheeter with a speed rating of up to 250 Meters/Minute. The core finishing portion of the system gives SPC all the power it needs to sheet the product and pass it to the flexible finishing components at the end of the line.

The flexible part of the line is where the magic happens. By combining modules such as DFT 6 Plate Buckle Folders, HH381 Cutting/Perfing/Slitting Tables, HH850 High Speed Transfer Units and Compression Deliveries, SPC is ready to produce products that get attention. SPC can now produce products that fit the customers' needs rather than forcing the design of the customers' marketing pieces to fit a non-flexible finishing system. With the system from MBO,

SPC can now finish nearly any popular mail size product — letterfold size and up — including direct mail, letters, postcards, signatures, brochures and other commercial products. The MBO line was installed in early 2018 to compliment the installation of the Canon ProStream press.

In particular, the modularity of the MBO line gives SPC the freedom to switch out pieces of equipment to meet the always changing demands of its projects. This translates into higher productivity. “This allows us to run many different configurations with fewer touches and quicker job turn around,” says LeFebvre. “The modular nature of their equipment also means that we will be able to add additional finishing capabilities down the road.”

MBO now has robust, 24/7, modular components from nearly all of the MBO Group and its partners to give its customers far reaching capabilities. The most dramatic impact comes from the MBO Group Herzog+Heymann Division, specialists in high speed specialty finishing equipment such as card tipping, heavy stock, gluing, scoring, perfining and more.

SPC looked at other competitors and felt the equipment offered was not flexible enough for what they needed. “MBO’s line was more robust and allowed us the ability to offer a one-step production line,” says LeFebvre.

WHERE EXPERIENCE MATTERS

During the installation, MBO’s expertise and outstanding customer service really paid off. “Our current finishing employees were knowledgeable about the letter folding and traditional bindery finishing, but they were not familiar with near-line plow folding and inline finishing that came with the new line,” explains LeFebvre. “Together with MBO, we were able to overcome any issues and achieve a highly efficient process.”

LeFebvre adds that MBO’s training was important during the start-up, but that expertise became even more important on the return visits. “At that point, we knew the questions to ask, and it helped us to train others,” LeFebvre explains.

SPC’s finishing capabilities may have expanded, but it is by no means done with its finishing investment. It plans to add new capabilities to the modular system over time. “When we do, we love that MBO equipment will ‘plug and play’ with our existing line,” LeFebvre concludes.



(Left to right) Ryan LeFebvre, Executive Vice President of Sales; Adam LeFebvre, President; and Paul LeFebvre, CEO.