

Making a Difference with Color-Logic

AccuLink and AccuFlex Packaging Using Color-Logic to Open New Markets



By Dennis Mason

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AccuLink—a printer in Greenville, North Carolina—strives to be different. With some 115 employees and pre-Covid sales of nearly US\$19 million, the company blends creativity, technology, manufacturing, and fulfillment services to serve clients in all 50 US states and many overseas areas. In a 100,000 square foot facility on a 12-acre campus, AccuLink provides high value-added solutions for marketing campaigns, fund raising programs, employee benefit initiatives, self-publications, and packaging—in addition to traditional printing, finishing, and lettershop services. AccuLink handles an extensive array of production services for agencies and corporate clients, providing creative talent to tailor individual jobs to the specific equipment available.



Tom O'Brien, the president of AccuLink, is known in the printing industry as an early adopter of new technologies. He was an early user of HP Indigo presses, as well as HP Latex wide format printers. He installed one of the very first



Tom O'Brien (L) and Tim Mages inspect Color-Logic Output from their HP Indigo 20000 Press

Scodix digital enhancement presses and was an early licensee of Color-Logic, the software used by designers to achieve metallic special effects without expensive foiling or the unpredictability of trying to match Pantone colors on metallic substrate. As an early Color-Logic adopter, AccuLink has often used the software to create metallic special effects on jobs run on the earlier HP Indigo presses. According to O'Brien, however, substrates have long been an issue in his use of Color-Logic software. "We have tried several metallic substrates in our Indigo cut sheet presses but finding reliable sources that can provide sheets in the quantities we need has been difficult."

The latest AccuLink venture on what O'Brien terms "the bleeding edge" involves using an HP Indigo 20000 press to print flexible packaging and pouches, using Color-Logic to create the metallic special effects desired by brands to put sparkle on supermarket shelves. The project began when O'Brien showed Tim Mages, an

experienced flexible package printer, the Color-Logic output from his commercial presses. According to O'Brien, upon seeing the Indigo output, Mages said: "That will knock the socks off the brands in the flexible packaging industry." His excitement about O'Brien's business expansion plans and use of Color-Logic resulted in Mages becoming the president of AccuFlex, a division of AccuLink dedicated to producing short- and mid-range flexible packaging on the HP Indigo 20000 digital press. The new AccuFlex facility includes a postpress electron beam laminator/coater, as well as slitting, pouch making, and spout insertion capabilities. Says Mages: "As the only HP Indigo 20000 user currently capable of using Color-Logic on flexible substrates, we make metallics a standard part of our demonstrations to brands."

Speaking specifically about metallics and flexible packaging, Mages commented: "Brands are well aware of the appeal to consumers of metallic decoration on packages, but metallic substrates and



metallic embellishments such as foil stamping make flexible packages virtually impossible to recycle. And while metallics remain a difficult issue, major brands such as Unilever and Proctor & Gamble are working with Greenpeace and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to make their packaging recyclable and eliminate packages going to landfills by 2025." This fact led O'Brien and



The potential of the AccuFlex Packaging approach was verified when these self-promotional pouches won the top award in the Flexible Packaging (Toner/EP) category of the Printing Impressions 2020 Excellence competition



Mages to partner with NatureFlex, a subsidiary of Futamura, to introduce the company's biodegradable cellulose film substrates to the packaging market. Traditionally, metallics are anathema to brands offering their food products wrapped in flexible film or sold in pouches, because foil stamping and actual metallic substrates are not accepted by recyclers. But NatureFlex markets a metalized substrate which meets European (EN13432) and American (ASTM D6400) standards for industrially compostable packaging. And because of the unique AccuFlex ability to treat printed flexible package material with electronic beam technology after printing, AccuFlex offers the market flexible packaging with metallic features that are biodegradable and potentially home-compostable—thus overcoming the single largest objection to metallics among packagers.



Tom O'Brien and Tim Mages are innovators. Tim's background in flexible packaging, coupled with Tom's knowledge and experience in working with digital platforms and penchant for investing in technology that will address market needs offer a winning combination for their brand clients. The AccuLink experience and

knowledge of the Color-Logic metallic color communication system, in conjunction with the ability to create embellishments in a fraction of the time and cost, enable even the smallest brands to take advantage of metallics that in the past could only be afforded by large brands who could absorb the cost, delay, and waste involved.





AccuFlex Packaging HP Indigo 20000 Infeed

Tom O'Brien and his team offer not only technology and experience, but the attitude required to help clients. AccuLink and AccuFlex define Win-Win Attitude. O'Brien's passion, willingness to share knowledge—and most of all his genuine interest in providing the best experience for his clients, his staff, and his technology partners—make him a delightful business partner. When the AccuFlex concept was only an idea, Tom O'Brien asked Color-Logic to take part in its introduction. Asked whether he had clients asking for low-volume metallic pouches, he responded: "No, but they have not seen them." Today, clients can see the results. And the results are amazing.



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