

LARGE PROFITS WITH LARGE FORMATS

Novachrome Digital Design and Imaging

St. Louis, Missouri USA



By Dennis Mason

Located in Brentwood, Missouri, a Saint Louis suburb, Novachrome Digital Design and Imaging is an all-digital shop where designs are executed on a variety of wide-format, flatbed, photographic, die cutting, and other finishing equipment. Founded in 2008 by four partners—Jim Varney, his wife Chris, Beverly Faries, and Melanie Coyne—the Novachrome stock in trade is the ability to print a wide variety of items at a consistently high quality. The Novachrome customer base consists primarily of large commercial businesses and museums, for which the company provides trade show signage, corporate identity material, point-of purchase items, museum exhibits, and fine art reproductions.

The Novachrome owners invest time and money in color management and are always on the lookout for new and innovative techniques that their customers can utilize and that will differentiate the company from competition. Novachrome is a member of IDEAlliance and has been G7 certified for wide-format UV printing

for several years. Jim Varney spends a great deal of time investigating new printing methods and equipment, particularly those that would enable the company to produce better quality or special effects useful to clients. He became intrigued with metallic printing a few years ago, when he first learned about Color-Logic, a plug-in for Photoshop and Illustrator that produces a variety of metallic special effects. Says Varney: “I was pretty excited about Color-Logic until I learned that the metallic images it produces can be printed only by licensed printers. But then I saw a few generic samples, showed them to employees and clients, and bought a license based just on everyone’s reaction. We had confidence we could produce eye-catching images, for our own sales pieces if nothing else. Color-Logic just looked too good to pass up.”

The first Color-Logic images printed by Novachrome were strictly in-house experiments in which the company modified existing designs to create metallic special effects. Then, says Varney: “The most amazing thing

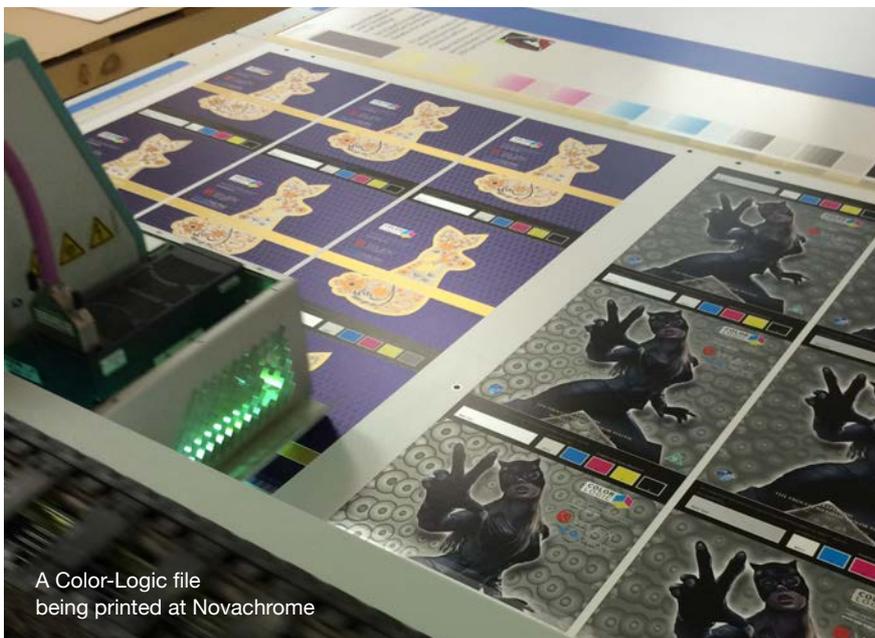


“With white ink on metallic films and board, we can achieve beautiful metallic effects, even on runs of just one piece.”

Novachrome’s Jim Varney next to his Fujifilm Acuity flatbed printer.

happened when our corporate customers saw the results using Color-Logic. They inevitably began to consider how they could use Color-Logic in their own designs. We also quickly found that photographers—both advanced amateurs and professionals—are always looking for techniques that will make their work more appealing at art fairs and gallery exhibitions, and they took immediately to Color-Logic. The typical reaction from our photographer customers is: ‘I’ve never seen anything like it!’ And then they immediately ask how to incorporate the metallic effects into their prints. For photographers, as well as marketing directors at big clients, the Color-Logic has a great tool—called the FX-Viewer—which enables our designer to review files and view his work at the concept stage rather than repeatedly printing them out to see the metallic effects.”

A key differentiator for Varney is the ability of Novachrome to print using white ink. He noted: “With white ink on metallic films and board, we can achieve beautiful metallic effects, even on runs of just one piece. In our



A Color-Logic file being printed at Novachrome

business, however, one piece might measure eight by 15 feet, so the payoff potential is large. With Color-Logic, we learned how to control ink in ways that were not apparent before. We thrive on special customer requests that require us to do something no one else has done. We do things that would be

Commenting on the Novachrome-RTape relationship, John Danio, Vice President of Marketing for Nekoosa Holdings, the parent organization of RTape Corporation, said: "Using Color-Logic software when printing on RTape VinylEfx substrates creates dramatic special effects that stop shoppers dead in their tracks. Our customers are excited about what they get when they use Color-Logic on our materials. As a result, we are seeing growing use of the Color-Logic process in window displays and point-of-sale materials. With Color-Logic, graphic designers now have an easy and foolproof way to create attention using their current digital print devices.

impossible on an offset press using silver ink, and that capability opens up opens up markets for clients that want striking effects on just one or two pieces."

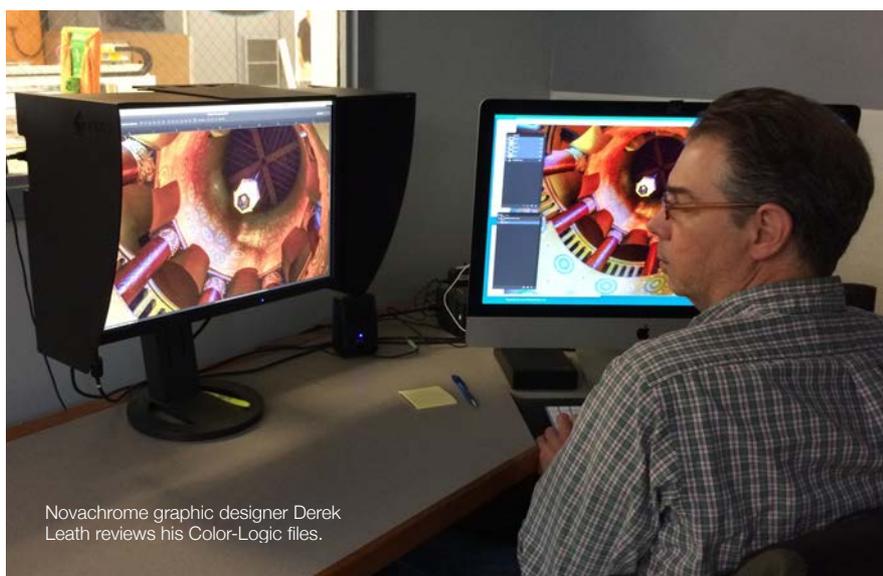
Design software is only part of the equation for a printer like Novachrome. Media is equally important. In looking for ways to capitalize on his Color-Logic license, Varney became intrigued by the look and feel of RTape VinylEfx films. "I made an inquiry to RTape, and after seeing what we were producing using Color-Logic, they were as excited about the process as my customers were. Soon, RTape and Novachrome were partnering to explore how the films could be used in designs with the Color-Logic process. Some of the first results of the collaboration were RTape sales books and trade show materials. RTape took the materials to a Las Vegas trade show and were astounded at the response they got from customers and prospects. Interestingly enough, RTape quickly became both a supplier and a customer."

Varney says that his focus on color management and G7 certification have proven a great benefit to Novachrome. "Since communicating color is all about process control, we benefitted from being a G7 certified printer. Once we printed our own metallic swatchbook based on Novachrome printing standards, our designers and customers immediately know that the metallic hues and effects on the Color-Logic swatchbook would be reproducible time after time." As positive as he is about Color-Logic, what really excites Varney is the



A Novachrome metallic fine art image

profitability of products printed using the process. He says: "Specialty printers like Novachrome are looking not only to differentiate their businesses from others, but to do so at a profit. Color-Logic fits the bill on both counts. Color-Logic is not something designers can learn in 15 or 20 minutes, however. Although metallic special effects can be generated with just one or two mouse clicks, great images are the result of advance planning by designers. But once they understand the concept, designers will find Color-Logic is a great sales tool and will bring customers through the door. We know not all printers will buy Color-logic, and that just helps differentiate us from competitors. Because of our experience, we now have perhaps a one-year jump on any local competitor that might become a Color-Logic licensee."



Novachrome graphic designer Derek Leath reviews his Color-Logic files.

"The Color-Logic FX-Viewer enables our designer to view his work at the concept stage"

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