

GENERATING REVENUE WITH COLOR-LOGIC

Stafford Printing

Stafford, Virginia, USA



By Dennis Mason

Howard Owen is a man always on the move! In addition to running a thriving printing company, he was active in the Printing Industries of Virginia, serving as chairman for two years, and is deeply involved in DSCOOP, the HP Indigo user organization, where he serves on the North American Board of Directors and as editor of the DSCOOP Quarterly.

The owner of Stafford Printing in Stafford, Virginia, Owen operates a successful printing business in an industry that recently has declined due to changes in reading habits and the movement of advertising money to electronic media. He opened Stafford Printing in 1987, after a nine-year career in newspaper journalism and publishing. In its early days, the company specialized in brochures for homebuilders and realtors, capitalizing on the expansion of commuter housing in the suburban Washington, DC, area. Then, a few years after the turn of the century, Owen was hit with a double whammy:

a deep recession coupled with a precipitous decline in the housing market.

To get Stafford Printing back on track, Owen began looking at digital printing, but says: “I knew that some printers were moving to digital printing from offset, but I couldn’t get the numbers to make sense for me.” Then, in 2008, a Hewlett-Packard representative told him about a used HP Indigo 5000 for sale, and he made the leap. Three years later, after thoroughly researching the other options available, Owen upgraded to an HP Indigo 5500. Today, he does short-run jobs on the Indigo and handles longer runs on a conventional offset press. The 15 Stafford Printing employees generate about \$2 million in annual sales—roughly 60 percent offset and 40 percent digital.

But unlike many other printers, Howard Owen is not content to merely offer digital services as an adjunct to

offset. “In 2010 at Graph Expo in Chicago, I ran across a new company—Color-Logic. They were showing their metallic printing software and it looked interesting. But I didn’t buy.” Then in 2011 at the next Graph Expo, Owen was prompted by his HP representative to look at Color-Logic again. This time he bought. “I began to see the potential of using a distinctive printing technique not offered by just every printer up and down the street. This was part of our moving from a printer that used digital to profitably handle short-run jobs, to one using digital as a differentiator.”

Since adding Color-Logic to the Stafford Printing portfolio, the company has produced a number of outstanding items for customers seeking a different look in their printing. Says Owen: “Although our HP Indigo 5500 is a cut sheet machine with white ink capability, we seldom used the feature until we discovered how it dovetailed with the Color-Logic process. Using Color-Logic, we can print on metallic substrate, using

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the white ink to mask the metallic effect where we don't want it, and letting the metallic look shine through where we do. The effect is so dramatic that we can price jobs based on what they do for the customer, not what they actually cost. Using white ink and the metallic effect provides excellent color and none of the copier sheen that customers hate."

According to Owen, "A typical Color-Logic job is maybe 300 pieces, although the process can also be run on our conventional offset press when longer runs are needed. We find that customers particularly like to use the process on items such as invitations. For a local distillery open house, we designed an open house invitation in the shape of a die cut bottle of bourbon, and mailed it in an envelope shaped like a barrel. The metallic effect made the bottle look like it actually held liquid. We also did a metallic invitation for a local museum, and it received lots of attention from both the client and their customers. Until we got the Color-Logic software, we would never have tried things like these."

Another Color-Logic application used by Stafford Printing produces business cards with metallic decorative effects. Says Owen: "I have maybe a half-dozen different business cards, and

like to use them to show potential customers what we can do. My personal favorite—and that of my production manager, as well—is the card produced using the Color-Logic process. We find that buyers who really know their printing are amazed at what we can do with just one more ink on the paper. And something as simple as our own business cards has resulted in business for us."

Unlike some of their competitors, Stafford Printing offers complete graphic design service. "Our ability to render designs which will take advantage of the Color-Logic concept has been very important," says Owen. "For us, the key to success with the Color-Logic software is a couple of graphic designers who like to use the process and know how to make their designs sparkle with it. When I bought it, I turned the Color-Logic software over to my two graphic designers, who took to it like ducks to water. And our customers have learned to trust the Stafford Printing designers when they want something unusual for a special occasion."

Asked why more printers have not adopted the Color-Logic process, Owen commented: "The mindset of doing what they have always done, and the pressure of business in a down market



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both deter printers from going down new roads. But perhaps the most important factor for us is our employees. We find that when we encourage our workers to bring new things to us, they often are ahead of the owner and managers. Our employees want Stafford Printing to grow. It benefits them in the long run and makes work more exciting. In the case of Color-Logic software, our employees saw the value the minute we brought it in house. It enables them, and us, to do things we otherwise could never do."



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