Express Imaging increases productivity and offers higher image quality applications thanks to the HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter

At a glance

Industry: Repro Houses & Copy Shops

Business name: Express Imaging

Headquarters: Layton, Utah, USA

Website: expressimaging.us

Challenge

- Offer large-format, high-quality colour graphics for indoor display to capture existing demand and deliver higher quality black and white output from a single printer.

- Achieve higher productivity to conveniently deliver higher volumes for multiple applications from a single printer while respecting current service levels.

- Expand into new, higher margin, high quality applications to grow business.
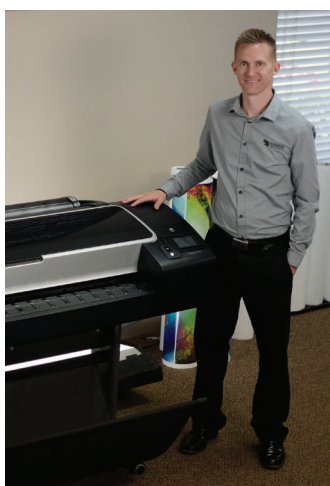
Solution

- HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter with multi-roll for high-quality, large- format graphics.

- HP Premium Instant-Dry Satin Photo Paper, HP Everyday Adhesive Gloss Polypropylene and HP Everyday Matte Polypropylene.

Results

- Output volumes have increased thanks to the addition of high image quality, large-format colour graphics for indoor applications.

- Turnaround schedules have halved thanks to productivity features including multi-roll for smart media switching, USB port for walk-in customer USB flash drives, and HP Instant Printing Pro application for free preview and handling of common file formats.

- Three shades of HP Photo Black Ink ensure smooth grey tones and neutral black and white images that stay neutral under all lighting conditions.

- Value added design services grew almost 10 per cent thanks to higher number of applications offered.

- Offer greater range of high-quality products and applications with support for broad range of substrates.

> "The combination of high-image quality with speed means that we can complete orders quickly and with greater confidence. Customers are seeing us expedite orders in half the time and that helps them move forward too."
>
> — Brandon Harrop, art director, Express Imaging

Located on the main street in Layton, Utah, Express Imaging is a copy shop offering professional graphic design and printing, shipping services and packaging to local retail stores, businesses and walk-in customers.

Brandon Harrop, art director at Express Imaging, describes their business philosophy: "At Express Imaging, we aim to set ourselves apart from the competition by offering the best quality at the best price, and with exceptional customer service from the order through to delivery."

He explains the typical challenges copy shop businesses face. "Our clients are a broad mix. They include construction companies needing black and white large-format line drawings; businesses requiring stationery or promotional posters for tradeshows; a local food chain that demands indoor signage; and walk-in customers with a variety of printing demands. Until we got the HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter, there was one request we couldn´t satisfy, it was for large format colour output with high image quality," Harrop says.

Express Imaging has been using the new multi-roll HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter to produce high quality graphics up to 44-inch wide.

Shorter turnaround with multi-roll flexibility

The multi-roll feature with smart media switching offers Express Imaging the flexibility of having two different media types loaded in the printer, allowing for faster response to demands from different customers. The feature also makes it possible to have two different widths of media loaded on the printer, enabling Express Imaging to optimise media usage according to the print size required and minimise media waste. Two identical rolls can also be loaded to achieve extended unattended printing.

"We have halved our schedules for turnaround thanks to the multi-roll. We leave our main printing material in the printer all the time so we're ready to go. We install a second media type on the other roll and the printer switches between media automatically," explains Logan Malan, project manager at Express Imaging.

"This week we printed close to 200 36 x 48-inch blueprints for construction companies. This would normally have a two-week delivery schedule to allow us to manage other jobs, and at peak printing times, we used to ask walk-in customers to come back for their prints in a day or two. This is because we would have to interrupt printing every time a customer walked into the shop, change the printing material, set up the job and then print it. Then we would have to unload the media again, reload the original material and restart printing the interrupted job," Malan says. "Now we offer turnaround in half the time and still manage walk-in customers without disrupting our schedules by slotting their jobs into the queue and letting the printer manage switching between media on the multi-roll, thanks to the smart media switching benefit of the HP Designjet Z5400."

Increasing printed volume with higher quality applications

"Our weekly printed output volume has increased now that we can offer more products and at a better quality. Thanks to the multi-roll and the printer's great productivity features, we can achieve it comfortably," Harrop exclaims, offering the example of a local art gallery that organised an exhibition of reproductions of sketches and comic-style illustrations that Express Imaging printed on 36-inch HP Premium Instant-Dry Satin Photo Paper. Harrop describes the results. "The artists' response to the black and white images said it all. They were amazed by the smooth grey gradients and especially the absence of any sheen or gloss, as should be the case in the reproduction of a sketch. The three shades of HP Photo Black Inks really did the job. Colours are phenomenal and consistent print-to-print. The reproductions have an amazing level of detail and impressive smooth tones."

Customers move forward with workflow productivity

"Customers walk in and ask me to print the images they bring on their USB flash drives, we simply insert it into the printer's USB and preview it on the touchscreen so they can review and approve everything. We don't have to worry about setting paper sizes and automatic nesting saves us time and paper. We have complete control, avoiding errors. It's so intuitive and fast," Malan says, highlighting how the HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter boosts their productivity. He adds, "I love using this printer. We go to the touch screen and it has the recent print jobs - you can open one to look at the preview to check the dimensions and print it again."

Express Imaging also appreciates the HP Designjet Accounting Tool. "The HP Designjet Accounting Tool is a fantastic tool to track printer usage. We can enter the costs of ink and media and fine tune our pricing to become even more competitive," Malan says.

Greater application capabilities expand business

"We can now print the signage for local food chains, which is a great example of how we have been able to expand our offering to include indoor high quality graphics by using the HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter," Harrop explains. "Our design work has already grown by nearly 10 per cent and is gaining speed as word gets out there. We used HP Everyday Adhesive Gloss Polypropylene. Prints are dry off the printer so we can immediately mount and finish them, saving precious time. Our retail customers now display vibrant, attention-grabbing point of sale posters."

Harrop believes that Express Imaging has only explored a small fraction of the applications now available to them on the HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter. "We are certain our profit margins will expand as we develop and sell higher margin applications such as backlit menus for local restaurants or durable banners in Tyvek®. We can offer a choice of 40 or 50 types of substrates that are supported by the HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter. Our choice of paper before was restricted to four or five types," Harrop says.

"Now we can offer more products with better quality than with either of our previous printers. We knew our printing setup was incomplete. The HP Designjet Z5400 PostScript® ePrinter brings it all together," concludes Harrop.