

Consolidated Graphics Ltd., Houston, Texas (USA)



Tommy Greene and Mike Schaffer make final adjustments to the StitchLiner 6000 Digital at AGS. Preprinted rolls are converted to cut sheets and then booklets in a single pass with no touch points.



Joe Dziedzic is AGS Lead Digital Production Specialist. He monitors the finishing requirements of a customer booklet through the Hunkeler CS6 cutter.

Consolidated Graphics' Purchasing Manager, Ude travels the country, staying apprised of new technologies as they come to market.

„Jeff is our digital and mailing expert“, Davis notes. „He spends a lot of time on the road, looking at new equipment as it's being developed. We do a lot of beta testing for new equipment. So when someone says, 'Hey, I need a stitcher for digitally produced books', Jeff knows what that solution looks like.“

Finishing: Where It Counts

In recent years, CGX companies have become vested in digital print, including digital inkjet web technology. „We get excited about how many feet-per-second a press can print“, Davis acknowledges. „The presses are speedy, but it's what's in front of it, and the finishing on the back end, that really matter. After all, we're not shipping a roll of paper to anyone.“

When it comes to finishing equipment, Davis suggests that 'flexibility' is top priority. It's why most of the CGX finishing operations adhere to a near-line model, with one exception.

„Sometimes the way the workflow gets from Point A to Point B is different“, Ude explains. „For example, White-Plains, Maryland-based AGS' needs are different from those of Veritas Document Solutions, located in Buffalo Grove, IL. We purchased Hunkeler equipment for both locations, but in different ways. At Veritas, we went in-line. We hadn't done that before with inkjet, but in this case, it was a good fit.“

Though the workflow requirements may vary, both AGS and Veritas have heavily, but strategically, invested in finishing solutions.

At AGS, a new Horizon BQ-270 Perfect Binder has found a home. The Kodak Prosper 5000XL wide-web inkjet press has been complemented with a Hunkeler PF7 Double Plow-Folder. And a Hunkeler UW6 Unwinder, a CS6 Cutter, and a Horizon StitchLiner 6000 Digital makes for one lightning-fast saddlestitching workflow.

Meanwhile, Veritas was installing Hunkeler roll-to-cut stack solutions on the back ends of digital presses from HP and Xerox. Also new to Veritas' production floor are a StitchLiner 5500, a BQ-470 Perfect Binder and an HT-70 Three-knife Timmer from Horizon.

CGX organizations like Frederic Printing (Aurora, CO), CDS Publications (Medford, OR) Maximum Graphics (Chaska, MN), Mercury Printing (Memphis, TN), and The Hennegan Company (Florence, KY), have all recently installed Hunkeler or Horizon equipment.

Perhaps CGX's greatest challenge is not only identifying, testing and implementing solutions that meet an existing need, but in forward-thinking about the future of an operating company, as well as the future of the investment itself. Ideally, every piece of finishing equipment is capable of growing with the company, but in cases where it may be outgrown, there's the chance at a second life.

„With our inkjet finishing lines, for example, we'll make several changes over the next cou-

ple of years, and that's part of what we like about the Hunkeler equipment. You can pull one piece of equipment out of the workflow and replace it with another“, Davis suggests. This enables CGX to move equipment from one company to another that may have a new or growing need for a particular capability.

Matters of Distinction

Equipment flexibility may be a top priority to CGX, but nearly as critical is the need for sound investment in technologies that differentiate CGX operating companies from competitors.

„We're going to do the jobs that other people may shy away from“, Davis concurs. „We're going to do the hard stuff – the stuff that's very quick-turn and very high quality.“

The investments made in Hunkeler equipment have proven wise. „Total cost of throughput is really important“, Davis suggests. „What are the throughput numbers? What is the down time? And how difficult is it to train somebody? We look at all those things, because at the end of the day, we have to put product through and get it out to our customers“, he concludes.

„Often, we have conversations with suppliers and we express our needs – what we need a piece of equipment to do, or how we need it to fit into a workflow – and they come back to us and say: 'Well, we've never done that before.' „To me“, Davis asserts, „that's no answer. Just because you've never done it doesn't mean that it shouldn't be done. Hunkeler gets that.“

Consolidated Graphics, Inc., Houston, TX

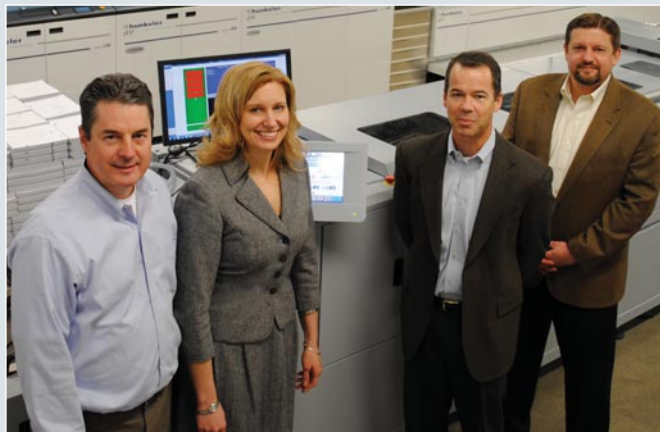


Achieving Distinction with Hunkeler Systems

Consolidated Graphics, Inc. is a global group running 70 operating companies. Several locations work with Hunkeler equipment. Production lines were recently installed at the Maryland based AGS and at Veritas Document Solutions, located in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. Roll-to-cut stack solutions went into operation at Veritas. At AGS, a Kodak Prosper 5000XL press equipped with a Hunkeler roll-to-roll solution feeds a 30 inch wide Hunkeler book solution with PF7 double plow folder and a roll-to-cut line with dynamic perforator connected to a Horizon StitchLiner.

„We have 70 different operating companies. And that’s what we call them – operating companies – because each one of these companies has a President with a lot of autonomy in how they run their business“, according to Ric Davis, Executive Vice President, Purchasing and Operations, Consolidated Graphics, Inc., Houston, TX. The 70 companies that comprise Consolidated Graphics (CGX) span the globe and represent more than \$1 billion in annual sales.

Sharing a common mantra
Despite the operational autonomy, CGX operating companies share a common mantra: Customer service is paramount.



CGX broadens its capabilities by strategically strengthening its finishing solutions. The AGS and CGX Management team: (Left to Right) John Allem, AGS VP of Operation; Katie Kriemelmeyer, AGS President; Ric Davis, CGX Executive VP of Operations; Jeff Ude, CGX Purchasing Manager. (Photography courtesy of Jenn Winkowski, AGS)

It’s this customer-service focus that also drives Consolidated Graphics’ equipment investments. „Rather than have the operating company Presidents become equipment experts, we free them up to be customer experts. So we can say to them, ‘You guys define what your customer wants, and we’ll work with the manufacturers and figure out what’s best“, Davis says, explaining the role his Houston-based Purchasing and Operations group serves to support the individual CGX operating companies.

Solution expertise
It’s Jeff Ude’s mission to ensure that the CGX operating companies are matched with the best solution. As