



PHARMA INSERTS MANUFACTURER IMPROVES SUPPLY CHAIN EFFICIENCIES WITH CANON'S COLORSTREAM SERIES

Objective

A long standing manufacturer of pharma packaging developed an innovative supply chain solution to achieve just-in-time delivery, while including quality control within the production process. Clients benefit from shorter lead times, complete data integrity, reduced stock and freed up capital.

Challenges

- Comply with Good Manufacturing Practice and regulation within the pharmaceutical sector
- Ensure efficient and lean end-to-end print production to meet quality requirements on light weight paper and streamline cutting and folding ready for immediate insertion
- Integrate quality inspection to achieve just-in-time delivery capability

Approach

Through a collaborative partnership with Canon, the pharma inserts manufacturer invested in an ColorStream series continuous feed inkjet press with an integrated inspection system and a nearline cutting and folding solution. Canon's trusted consultancy expertise and knowledge of customised end-to-end solutions led to the client purchasing the complete workflow from a single technology provider.

Benefits

- Timely production scheduling, with integrated quality and data integrity inspection, reduced delivery time from 20 to three days
- On-demand workflow capability, ensuring availability while substantially minimising capital tied up in stock
- Meeting print quality requirements of pharma inserts using new high-speed inkjet printing technology, while guaranteeing zero-defect production

Canon



Meeting market demand for faster turnaround

Active in the printing and packaging sector for almost 70 years, a specialised leader in pharmaceutical packaging was looking to increase operational efficiencies for the production of pharma inserts.

With five production plants in Europe and working in a highly regulated industry, precision and reliability are critical to the company's logistics and printing operations.

The business was using a conventional offset sheetfed press to produce black and white pharmaceutical inserts for niche prescription-only medicines. However, the client was struggling with increasing demand from customers to deliver different language versions in a shorter time period, as a consequence of hospitals reducing order quantities in a bid to minimise stockholding.

With its existing analogue print production workflows and the established quality inspection processes, the company was not able to reduce lead times below 20 days and therefore could not meet market demand.

In 2015, the company decided to switch partially from analogue to on-demand digital production, with a view to gaining production flexibility, increasing cost-effectiveness of short-runs, and offering a more secure and reliable service to existing and prospective customers, and approached Canon to explore the possible solutions.

Collaboration is key

Canon's consultancy team worked closely with the company to address all of its security requirements to ensure it remained compliant, bringing in specialist partners to devise a complete workflow solution that could handle production, from file preparation to print, cutting, folding and delivery, and that could also meet tight customer Service Level Agreements, such as service support time within just two hours.

The decision was made in favour of the ColorStream series digital press on the strength of its productivity and print quality along with the possibility to integrate a Hunkeler camera inspection system and a cutting and folding solution from GUK.

With its production speed of 100 metres per minute, the ColorStream inkjet press meets the required capacity to fulfil demand for tight production timelines. Empowered by Canon's DigiDot and Multilevel print technology, the ColorStream delivers high precision print quality for font sizes as small as 1.5 point and detailed Asian language characters, as well as ensuring offset-like quality and lowest shine-through on lightweight paper.

Positioned above the ColorStream printer, the Hunkeler automatic camera control system checks each print, sheet by sheet, in real-time to ensure it matches the PDF of the original job file. The quality control workflow between the printer's production management system, PRISMAproduction, and the web inspection solution meets Good Manufacturing Practice, verifying that products are consistently produced and controlled according to quality standards.

A key benefit for the pharma printer was that Canon supported the business with a complete end-to-end workflow solution for optimal production efficiencies, taking out the complexity of handling numerous siloed technology vendors to install and integrate the workflow solution. Working with a single solutions provider to manage the whole production process was a crucial consideration for the company, so that it could fulfil all relevant industry audits with ease and ensure it met regulatory compliance required by the pharmaceutical sector.



Supply chain optimisation

In the previous offset production process, checks were performed at random to ensure each leaflet was accurate. Now, every single leaflet is checked against the 'golden master', giving the customer the confidence to confirm they meet data integrity requirements. Since the end-to-end solution was installed in 2016, the Canon customer can guarantee that there are no production errors, as the camera reads both the text and format to make sure there is no discrepancy.

Using barcodes to identify each packaging insert, the business can now also track and control all pharmaceutical leaflets across the operation, ensuring full compliance with the exhaustive quality assurance policies required by the pharmaceutical industry.

The remedy to success

The business now has the flexibility to print a variety of different types of packaging inserts every day, on lightweight paper as light as 40gsm, and in multiple languages, including German, Russian, French and English.

Moving from analogue to digital print has resulted in less manual intervention between job changes, substantially speeding up production and increasing operational efficiency. The company has also recorded 90 to 95% uptime with the ColorStream series, measurably increasing productivity.

In addition, with the transition to an on-demand business model, the business has been able to improve production scheduling to print only what is required by the customer, resulting in less wastage and minimal warehousing costs. With on-demand printing, it has also been able to reduce delivery from three weeks to three days.

The company's customers benefit from quicker turnaround times, while being offered the high levels of security required by the tightly controlled pharmaceutical industry. With 100% secure validation, the pharma client has been able to extend its service offering beyond production, removing this pain point from its customers by having complete control over data integrity.

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