

Printware

Short Run Companies

Offers High-Quality Forms Using CTP



Vice President of Operations Dave Puckett
with one of Short Run Companies' Printware Platesetters.

Short Run Companies has invested in new computer-to-plate (CTP) technology to enable them to provide their customers the unique benefit of offset-quality checks and forms at lower cost through savings realized with the new Printware CTP equipment. Short Run Companies has specialized in short-run and very short-run checks and forms (250 to 10,000) since being founded in 1984. They have two plants strategically located to cover the eastern United States, one at their corporate headquarters in the Cincinnati area, and the other located in the Richmond, Virginia area. Short Run Companies' products are sold through distributors, with standard delivery as fast as one week on single-part two weeks on multi-part checks and forms. With CTP, Short Run Companies has enhanced on-time deliveries, and increased its capacity for rush orders. Prior to the installation of CTP, orders would go through the three major steps in the composition departments. First, completed graphics were sent from a computer to a film imager. Next, the film was manually stripped in a mask and registered. Finally, a metal plate was burned.

With CTP the three steps (film imaging stripping, and plate making) are reduced to one. Integrated imposition software designed by Printware replaces manual stripping. Files are sent directly from the front-end computer to the platesetter which outputs polyester plates ready to mount on the press.

Short Run Companies now produces all of their orders with CTP, from software-compatible checks and forms with standard formats, to custom designs, including a

growing percentage from customer-provided electronic files.

Selecting the CTP system

David Puckett, Short Run Companies' vice president of operations, realized that to keep up with ever compressing turnaround times and offer new products, Short Run Companies need to embrace emerging CTP technology. While there was a plethora of metal platesetters, Short Run Companies' shorter run lengths did not require metal plates, and they recognized the potential cost savings of polyester silver-halide plate material. An interdisciplinary team of Short Run Companies employees evaluated the Printware PlateStream system. They ended up purchasing two PlateStreams-one for each of their plants. The systems installed in 1998 were up and running within a week. Within a few months, both plants had converted a majority of their operations to CTP.

Benefits of CTP

Short Run Companies has realized some major benefits of CTP which they pass directly through to their customers. Benefits include higher quality, lower cost, and new product capabilities. Unique products are key to Short Run Companies' growth plans. Two new products produced with CTP are EASYform and E-Check. EASYform is a new line of custom software-compatible checks and forms; E-Check is a low-cost line of business checks just being introduced. Unlike other low-cost business checks, with CTP, E-Checks will offer true offset quality and two-color printing.

Future Plans

In addition to the new products already introduced, Short Run Companies has other products on the drawing board. Whatever the product, Short Run Companies will rely on their ultra-efficient CTP workflow. Short Run Companies president Frank Hamilton says: "We're planning to load up the CTP system. It's key to our new products and our future."