

K/P Corp. Creates Marketing Space

Printer in Transition

These days, the ability to grow and expand your company indeed calls for a celebration. K/P Corp., headquartered in San Ramon, Calif., recently held a grand opening for its newest location in Renton, Wash. More than 250 attendees gathered there to mark the beginning of “A New Marketing Space All in One Place.”

But, like many companies, before getting to the point of being able to host an elaborate, colorful, and creative fashion show, K/P Corp. had to start somewhere.

West Coast-native K/P Corp., formerly Knapp Printing, was originally an Oregon-based family business owned by Jim Knapp in 1929. In the 1960s, the company expanded into direct mail. The 1980s brought fulfillment and distribution, and in the early 1990s, K/P Corp. became one of the first printers in the United States to embrace the HP Indigo protocol.

Over the years, the company grew through acquisition. In 2000, the company started using Web to print and creating tools companies are now using. In 2004, K/P Corp. acquired Raine Media, the “consulting arm” that focuses on marketing and analytics.

In 2008, K/P Corp. came in at \$60 million in sales. The company recently ranked number 88 on Printing Impression’s list of Top 400 Printing Companies in North America.

“We have six locations throughout California, Washington, Utah, and Oregon. Although we are West Coast focused, we do international distribution. The company has gone from family to employee owned, and we have about 400 employees,” said Brett Olszewski, senior vice president, sales and marketing.

“We started off in the digital arena with Indigos. We also used iGens. Black and white transpromo is still a big emerging space,” he informed. K/P currently uses HP, Océ, and Xerox digital printers.

During the past three years, K/P Corp. has invested in its infrastructure—databases, servers, and the fastest black and white printers for transpromo documents.

Olszewski stated that K/P has been on a path to transition for the past eight years as a digital marketing company. “If you look at technology and the way human interaction is going on, for example the social awareness of green, it’s shifting ways. Print media is being augmented in cell phones. Digital creates endless communication opportunities,” he continued.

“Digital print is making it easier to communicate with our customers. Clients are now responding to marketing messages in many ways. Inbound response is a growth area. We’ve actually created document component systems, pURLS, and ways to be relevant in both inbound and outbound at the same time.”

Both offset and digital printing have values. The values of offset are scale and consistency, while every sheet that comes off a digital printer can be different or variable. Printers need to make the most of their equipment.

“We use digital printing to augment offset, but that’s just a baby step. The real value is personalization. Look at digital content—how it is stored, how you access it, then put customers’ requests into templates and create a workflow of template creation to on demand, digital print. XMPie software takes advantage of digital workflow,” said Olszewski.

Other applications include database integration, multi-channel marketing, Web to print using interlinkONE and similar programs, and ancillary services such as mailing.

Let the Show Begin

K/P Corp.’s success has become evident in the opening of the Renton, Wash. facility, which combines marketing, printing, mailing, and fulfillment services all under one roof.

“Let’s face it, an open house concept isn’t the most exciting for marketers, so we came up with a fashion show. Many people like them and don’t get to go to them, so we thought it would be unique. We then went to local college fashion programs and found graduate fashion designers, who made garments out of direct marketing materials and concepts,” exclaimed Olszewski. The outfits, such as the “targeted marketing” jacket, were made out of fabric printed on a HP Indigo press.

The color red was celebrated at the show and became the theme. For the event, The K/P staff created a magazine called Red, which speaks of the digital changes in printing and serves as an on-going capabilities brochure for K/P, who printed the magazine itself and distributed it.

Red was also the color of a drink, the “Kosmori Perfected,” a cosmo/pomegranate juice cocktail that got its name from K/P’s new Komori press combined with the word “cosmopolitan.” “(For the event) We painted the Komori press Ferrari Red, which created the first colored offset press in the world. In marketing, it’s about differentiation,” he explained.

Plans for This Year

For 2009, K/P Corp. plans to continue to invest in areas of digital. Content management, database integration, and document services and composition will remain strong areas of focus. The company is hiring in the Web to print area and solutions consultants.

“We’re diverse at this point. It’s a matter of listening to market trends. Investments in digital and Web based tools and keeping services under one roof will keep K/P on the forefront,” he said.

Printers must be mindful of market trends. Now more than ever, the industry is changing rapidly, and everyone needs to be prepared to change with it. Listening to clients, conducting surveys twice a year, and understanding the industry make companies aware of changes.

“Ask yourself, how do we add value to supply chains? How are marketers communicating? The answer is being diversified, having multiple channels, and being aware of how you can expand, even getting capabilities enabled online,” Olszewski suggested.

He also said that K/P is in a fortunate position. The company listens to market trends and started tracking 40 companies in the graphic arts industry. From tracking the findings, K/P is finding out that it is not viable to have a 10 year plan, but rather keep a close eye on changes as they happen.

He ended on a positive note by commenting, “I’ve been with K/P for 15 years, and the printing industry is still an extremely fun industry. I like the way the industry is changing.”