

:Azura
on :Acento

Choosing the Right Chemistry-free CtP System

Company: **H&S Graphics**
Type: Commercial Printer
Size: 10 employees
Location: Lodi, NJ USA

Getting What You Pay For

Lower Cost of Entry, Justified with Better ROI, Quality and Speed Improvements and Concern for the Environment

For the last 85 years, a member of the Santangelo family has been putting ink on paper. While the way they have done business has evolved greatly since the early 1920's, there is one thing that they feel has never changed. That is their belief that printing is a true art form, practiced with skill, and a knowledge that has been handed down from one craftsman to another.



John Santangelo, H&S Graphics

The late Anthony Santangelo began this printing heritage when he started his apprenticeship as a compositor in the early 1920's. His son followed in his footsteps, when in 1954, John Santangelo Sr. entered the New York School of Printing. Upon completion of his degree, John ran the print shop on board the aircraft carrier USS Lake Champlain from 1957-60. Following his tour of duty, John worked for a sheet-fed printer, a web house, and became night plant manager at one of the world's largest pre-press companies. He eventually opened up his own business, H&S Graphics, with his wife Patricia and his son, Mike in 1986. Shortly there after John's other son Thomas Santangelo joined the business and in 1998 the youngest son John A. Santangelo came onboard.

Finding the Right CtP Solution

Originally the prepress at H&S was outsourced. It was brought in-house, in 2000, when H&S installed its first imagesetter. “It was a Fuji Celix running a harlequin Rip from 1996 with no in rip trapping.” said John A., vice president of Sales and Marketing, who at the time was the only one capable of running the



John A. Santangelo

system. “We trapped everything postscript, then imposed the trapped postscript and shot it to the rip, then imaged film. It was abysmally slow.” It wasn’t long before a better way of doing prepress work was needed.

Based on their need for increased speed and efficiency H&S looked to upgrade its prepress operation. With all that had been written about CtP offering quality and throughput improvements, it seemed the way to go. But which system to choose? The Santangelos knew they needed a system that could give them the freedom to run varying amounts of plates on any given day.

“On some days we’d run a handful of plates, others we’d run 40 or more,” said Tom Santangelo, H&S Graphics’ president. “The issue for us became the cost of chemistry as we had to constantly pump and dump to keep a consistent output. It wasn’t long before our cost for chemistry and disposal was just too high of a percentage of our overall plate cost.”

With this knowledge in hand, the thought was to look into a chemistry-free solution. In 2004, H&S purchased a system from another vendor. That, John A. said, began “several months of pure frustration. “

The system just didn't meet H&S' requirements. There were quality and consistency issues, and the system as a whole did not perform with any measure of reliability or repeatability. After eight frustrating months the decision was made to uninstall the troublesome CtP unit and install Agfa's :Acento thermal platesetter running :Azura chemistry-free plates.



The Santangelos (L-R): John A., John, Mike and Tom

John A. had heard about the new system through various industry websites and had gone for a demonstration in Agfa's Technology Learning Center in nearby Ridgfield Park, New Jersey. "After what we had gone through, we were skeptical that a chemistry-free system could work but the upside was too great to ignore." After seeing promising results from the Azura running demos on our own press the thought process was, "Let's take one more stab at the chemistry free plates and if this system fails we can switch out the processor and run a chemistry plate and we would have to absorb the extra chemistry costs." Luckily that was not the case. "The day the :Acento came in, all the nonsense stopped and we were finally able to see the true ROI benefits of CtP," Mike Santangelo vice president of Finance said. "In the end we may have initially paid more for the Agfa system but that initial extra investment has paid off ten fold in gains in productivity and lower consumable and disposal costs."



David Herche

Pleasant in the Pressroom

The initial transition to CtP didn't go very well and turned out to be more of a headache than it was worth for H&S. That all changed with the installation of the :Acento running :Azura plates. In the pressroom, efficiency is the key. One of the benefits H&S most appreciated from the new CtP system is the ability to re-run a plate from a stored, RIPed file without having to repeat the ripping process. This gives them the ability to re-run a job without having to re-proof as the file has already been ripped.

Its simplicity was also part of its charm. H&S' newest employee had only been out of school and on the job a few months and he was able to quickly learn and master the :Acento system. Stephan Sylvester, a pre-press apprentice, and other members of the H&S production staff, learned the :Acento system in no time flat.

"If we need re-prints, we have them immediately. It is our savior," said



Stephan Sylvester

H&S Graphics' pressroom manager Dave Herche. "I like the grain of the :Azura plate. It behaves like a normal litho plate. There is no doubt, the quality is there," Herche added.

:Azura is a grained and anodized aluminum thermal plate that uses patented ThermoFuse technology to physically bond images to the plate without any chemical processing. A clean-out step follows the non-ablative imaging process to enhance contrast. The result is highly stable and predictable thermal imaging, without any compromises on press. Because it eliminates water and developer from the CtP process, the :Azura system is environmentally sensitive and beneficial to a printer's bottom line.



H&S recognized that Agfa's chemistry-free CtP was the way work needed to get done.

Covering the Bottom Line

The environmental properties are all well and good, said Thomas Martinelli, H&S Graphics' technical sales representative, but ultimately, customers come to H&S, as they always have, for other reasons.

"Customers like that we are chemistry-free, but it still all comes down to quality and price," Martinelli said.

While H&S initially soured on the idea of chemistry-free CtP – and CtP in general – following their first experience, the company recognized that CtP – Agfa's chemistry-free CtP -- was the way work needed to get done.

“You do have to stay up with technology in this business. Things change so fast, you’ll get left behind if you don’t,” said John Sr. “But you can’t ignore the craftsmanship and art that goes into putting ink on paper. You’ll be a great printer when you recognize that.”

:Acento and :Azura technology help H&S Graphics put the ink on the paper, but having three generations’ worth of experience guiding the way doesn’t hurt.