



Lead Operator Paul Releford (left) operates the Standard Horizon StitchLiner 6000 Digital high-speed saddlestitcher integrated with Standard Hunkeler's UW6 Unwinder and CS6 Rotary Cutter, while Anna Benitez and Teresa Reyes (right) prepare finished booklets for shipping.



Houston, TX printer prides itself on listening to its customers and finding solutions

Customer Focus Drives Investment Strategy for Alliance.

ALLIANCE
PRINT EVOLVED

Hunkeler/Horizon Roll-to-Booklet Solution serves new niche.

"Many of us in the printing industry spend too much time talking to our customers about our equipment," said Jeff Birmingham, President of Houston-based Alliance, a firm that tags itself as Print Evolved. "You don't ask a restaurant

what kind of stove they use." Birmingham's approach is to listen to customer requirements and find the most effective way to deliver against those requirements.



Jeff Birmingham, President

"We are historically a commercial printer," Birmingham continued. "But a customer wanted us to help them with labels and we invested in flexo, rapidly evolving that to digital label presses. When an air conditioning manufacturer asked us to help with their instruction, warranty and parts booklets, we looked around for the most efficient way to produce those booklets. You need to find your niches based on customer demand, and perform in those niches well and profitably. You can't be everything to everyone anymore."

Birmingham looked at three different vendors of production inkjet presses as he sought a booklet solution. "The interesting thing," he said, "was that all three recommended that we work with Standard Finishing, Horizon and Hunkeler for our finishing needs. That made the decision much easier than which inkjet press to choose! It gave me a huge boost of confidence."

Ultimately, Birmingham worked with local Standard Horizon dealer LSS Digital to install and support an off-line Roll-to-Booklet solution. The system consists of the Standard Horizon StitchLiner 6000 Digital high-speed saddlestitcher integrated with Standard Hunkeler's UW6 Unwinder and CS6 Rotary Cutter for production of up to 6,000 high-quality booklets per hour. This line was installed alongside the Canon ColorStream 3700 inkjet press, which runs with a Hunkeler Roll-to-Roll solution and provides the printed rolls for processing into booklets.

"This customer drives a lot of volume," Birmingham explained. "We could have used our traditional presses and finishing to produce this application, but we would have needed a significantly higher equipment investment to get up to speed, and a lot more people. It would have taken six to eight people and a 24/7 operation to produce the volume traditionally. With our digital configuration, we are able to meet the demand in an eight-hour shift with one operator and a helper!"

As Birmingham has done with other investments in the business, he views the air conditioning company as an anchor that justifies the investment, and he is now looking to add additional volume from other customers. "While the anchor work is monochrome, we see opportunities with other clients to produce digitally printed booklets, adding color as appropriate. This configuration, because of its cost model

and efficiency, makes color cost-effective."

Birmingham was also impressed with the Standard Finishing customer demonstration center in Andover, MA, the company's range of offerings, and the support he was convinced he would receive with Standard as a partner. "The company is large enough to know what they are doing, but it has a family atmosphere and you know they are going to take care of you.

"The training was amazing as well," he enthused. "They came on-site for the training, and it was head and shoulders above any other training I have ever been involved with. Not only did they make sure our operators could operate the equipment under normal conditions, but they actually caused major failures and had the operators work through how to correct them."

That being said, Birmingham has been very impressed with the reliability of his Roll-to-Booklet solution. "With the inkjet

press, basically the only moving part is the paper," he said. "But with bookletmaking, you have stuff moving at every turning point;

it's complex. This equipment just keeps churning out high quality booklets. It's a very solid machine, and I have a local representative that can service it if needed. Very seldom do you get to say, 'hey, I made the right decision, unequivocally.' This is one of those times."

Three different print manufacturers recommended we work with Standard.