

Automation and ease-of-use is key

The AFC-566FG Folder can be set up with a push of a button, and can also perform a right-angle fold with slitting — both features that set the equipment apart, according to ProList. Likewise, the SmartSlitter can change from one job to the next on the fly with minimal operator intervention.



Randy Rettig uses the icon-based touchscreen on the Standard Horizon AFC-566FG Folder.



Chris Jordan quickly handles changeovers on the Standard Horizon Smartslitter.

Premium marketing services provider based in Frederick, Maryland

ProList Brings Digital Printing and Finishing In-House.



ProList is a growing premium marketing services provider with over 100 employees. Founded in 1989, the bulk of ProList's work is direct mail for non-profits, associations, colleges/universities, and, periodically, some election-related work.

Before 2018, ProList's focus was on leveraging its advanced data management capabilities while outsourcing any necessary print work. Then, the company made a calculated shift and acquired two Konica Minolta AccurioJet KM-1 digital printers along with a Horizon CRF-362 Creaser/Folder. Shortly after, ProList decided to expand their capabilities even further and began looking for additional finishing equipment to complement their new printers.

"We had some limited finishing before," explains President & CEO David Lokos. "We could do basic perfining and scoring, but we found that customers wanted more than that. For example, a perf-out membership card with rounded corners."

Working with its local Horizon dealer, Atlantic Graphic Systems (AGS), the ProList team began to explore finishing options. "AGS represents a number of brands, and we visited their showroom to see what might meet our needs," David Mawyer, Operations Manager, notes. "To be honest, we really didn't know much about finishing equipment; we hadn't worked with that type of equipment. But after looking at what

they offered, and the various brands they represented, we decided to pursue Horizon solutions."

AGS accompanied the ProList team to Standard Finishing's Andover, MA, showroom to get an even closer look at Horizon's available solutions. "Their showroom is very complete, and we got to see everything they had," says Mawyer. "We needed equipment that was automated, had a reasonable footprint and was affordable."

Lokos adds, "The other thing that helped us decide was talking to

friends and colleagues in the industry, as well as visiting their plants. Several of them had great things to say about their Horizon equipment. Considering all of those aspects, we felt the Horizon equipment would be a good fit for us, cost-, footprint- and capability-wise, and that was affirmed by others having a good experience."

After their visit to Andover, ProList decided to move forward with a robust suite of Horizon finishing solutions including: an RD-4055 Rotary Die Cutter, a SmartSlitter, and an AFC-566FG Folder. "Our goal was to be able to simulate what can be done in-line on a web offset press, but to use digital printing and near-line finishing instead," says Mawyer.

ProList worked closely with both AGS and Standard Finishing on installation

and training, and they continue to work with both companies for any ongoing support needs. "We had on-site training with AGS after their people installed and certified the equipment," Mawyer explains. "They were very flexible in meeting our needs to train both first and second shift operators, and they gave us additional training as needed. We haven't had much call for technical support — the equipment is very reliable, and we have had few problems. But when there has been a need, the support has been excellent — either a quick fix suggestion via phone or an on-site visit if needed. With short lead times, that's critical. You can't really afford downtime."

Always a concern these days is the ability for printing companies to attract talent, and ProList kept that in mind as well, as they selected the most automated and easiest to use systems. "For example," Mawyer says, "with the SmartSlitter, we can dynamically do different types of perf and score, such as multiple horizontal and vertical perfs, L and T perfs, and we can perf and score at the same time. The system basically sets itself up with minimal operator intervention, and it can change from one job to the next on the fly. And with the [RD-4055] die cutter, we can also secure dies for very specific applications, such as member cards with rounded corners."

Lokos concludes, "We are not a high-volume shop. Our typical job is not a half million pieces, although we can do jobs with hundreds of thousands of pieces; but our average is more in the range of 20,000 pieces. The more efficient you can be in transitioning from one job to the next, the more productive you can be. Those are the types of capabilities that are helping drive business growth for us."



Standard Horizon RD-4055 Rotary Die Cutter and CRF-362 Creaser/Folder