



BookBaby leverages Horizon's iCE LiNK for book manufacturing automation

BookBaby, one of the largest self-publishing platforms in the U.S., was founded more than a decade ago. After a few years of outsourcing book production, they began producing books in-house in 2016. Today, the company operates with over 200 employees and offers a range of services including editing, graphic design, book layout, hard cover and soft cover book printing, eBook conversion, on-demand fulfillment, global distribution, and a suite of marketing services geared to independent authors.

Back in 2016, BookBaby's search for the appropriate finishing equipment for its new in-house book production operation was fairly straightforward. Lance Svoboda, VP of Book Manufacturing, explained, "The truth is, we were visiting a lot of trade printers to whom we had been outsourcing book manufacturing. And every one of them had Standard Horizon equipment. It seemed like the obvious choice."

Svoboda also pointed to his visits to Standard's National Demonstration Center in Andover. "We always learn something there," he said. "They always have some piece of equipment that we are thinking about, or just helpful information about the equipment that we own." With service and support from Standard Finishing and its local dealer, Northern Machine Works, BookBaby continued to expand its bindery with Horizon equipment.

Today, BookBaby's operation consists of two Horizon book binding lines for soft cover books, the BQ-480 Perfect Binder with HT-1000V Trimmer, and the BQ-500 Perfect Binder also with an HT-1000V Trimmer. The company more recently added a Horizon LBF-500 Book Block

Feeder on the front end of its BQ-500, which has greatly simplified the book block feeding process. In addition to book binding, they also run Horizon bookletmaking and folding systems.

To round out their suite of Horizon equipment, BookBaby also invested in a new software tool: Horizon's iCE LiNK PostPress Management System. With iCE LiNK, companies can monitor their entire production floor with real-time reporting into which machines are running, the status of each job, and more.

"We wanted to automate our operation as much as possible," Svoboda explained. "So, in addition to the equipment itself, we were pleased to take advantage of Horizon's iCE LiNK cloud-based system that manages the entire finishing workflow."

BookBaby uses the Enterprise edition of iCE LiNK, a full-spec plan that includes job management and advanced integration with MIS and pre-press workflows. Svoboda credited his staff of programmers and their automation team for integrating iCE LiNK, but, he added, "Horizon's system is very easy to install and use."

BookBaby's iCE LiNK dashboard shares helpful data such as machine up-time, production throughput, and more that helps the company continuously improve their operations. Their team can see at a glance which machines need preventative maintenance, or which parts may need to be replaced, as well as how many units were run on each machine and where they might increase production capacity.

iCE LiNK is also connected to BookBaby's pre-press workflow via JDF, interfacing with their Microsoft Dynamics business



system where books are set up which then communicates with the various bindery machines for finishing. Explained Svoboda, "The Microsoft Dynamics system sends JDFs to the press so we can print, and then sends JDFs to iCE LiNK with binding instructions, including book size, number of units to be bound, cover matching, etc. This is really important for us."

He continued, "The automation enabled by iCE LiNK and the Horizon perfect binders also makes training bindery staff easier. And, of course, it helps prevent inadvertent human error. They do need to learn how to manage glue and clamps for changeovers; but they don't have to do any programming; it's simply scanning a barcode to setup the machine."

"We do a lot of one-book orders – we could do as many as 1,400 of the roughly 10,000 daily book production that are one-offs," Svoboda concluded. "If we had to set up each of those books, it would take a lot of time. We do 15 different trim sizes out of three different original sizes. So, automation is key to our profitability. We literally could not run a book bindery without our iCE LiNK automation."

Top: The BookBaby team with their Horizon LBF-500/BQ-500/HT-1000V book binding line (L to R): Massiel Martinez Palacios, Machine Operator I, Thom Alexander-Pote, Machine Operator III, Yelsica Ayerdis, Bindery Manager, Matt Smith, VP of Automation Technology & ERP, Lance Svoboda, VP of Book Manufacturing, Ben Davis, Print Shop Engineering Manager

Second photo: Yelsica Ayerdis checks production data using the company's iCE LiNK dashboard.

