



## Data-driven print drives Vision Direct's digital makeover

Operating out of a 70,000 square foot facility in Indianapolis with 60 employees and running three shifts, direct mail marketing innovator Vision Direct is leading the way in creating and offering cutting edge solutions to the challenges faced by its varied clients. Founded by entrepreneur Doug Switzer in 1992, the company is known throughout the industry as a data-driven direct mail and fulfillment leader with a commitment to ongoing evolution backed by consistent and strategic investment. "We produce marketing mail, statements, and operate unique fulfillment lines," explains Switzer. "It's a lot of technology and we're really proud of what we've done to both enhance our business over the years and ensure ongoing success for our clients."

Transitioning from toner-based digital printing to production inkjet was one of these enhancements. As Switzer recently put it, "We'd been watching the maturation of inkjet technology for quite some time, especially as it applied to direct mail. As the quality began to rival offset and it became possible to print on a greater variety of materials, our interest was piqued. In 2019, we acquired our first Ricoh production inkjet printer, building out a completely separate space to house the new press and the nearline finishing technology that went along with it."

In making the decision, Switzer and his Vision Direct team visited Ricoh's Customer Experience Center in Boulder, CO, as well as Standard Finishing's demonstration center in Andover, MA. Impressed by what they saw there, Vision Direct soon installed a Ricoh Pro VC60000 press in-line with a Hunkeler unwinder and rewinder, along with a near-line Hunkeler Roll-to-Cut/Stack-to-Fold solution to finish the printed rolls. The finishing system included the Horizon AFV-566F Folder which could be used in-line for folded

mailers or moved offline to finish stacked output, such as postcards or forms.

With the help of Ricoh and Standard, the team mastered the learning curve for the new equipment in time for the 2020 political mail season, helping them build volume on the press right out of the gate.

On the heels of their success with this first configuration and to keep up with the resultant growth in their variable data print business, Vision Direct recently purchased a second Ricoh press with Hunkeler unwinding and rewinding technology and a second near-line Hunkeler Roll-to-Cut/Stack system. This second press included a Hunkeler DP8 Dynamic Perforator in-line to add perforation capabilities during the print process across a variety of applications.

"These configurations give us significant flexibility," says Bryan Sherman, Manager of Data and Print Services at Vision Direct. "Many of our mail pieces feature a zip opening on the side or across the top for easy tear-off. Plus, we're also able to create engaging direct mailers that qualify for additional postal discounts."

"These are champion direct mail pieces that get opened," asserts Sherman. "The perfering capability also comes in handy for statement work and tax documents like 1099s."

Switzer notes that both Ricoh and Standard were there by their side to facilitate this new operation, adding, "For ongoing maintenance and technical support, we rely on Ricoh. But when we need second level support, Standard

Finishing is right there, sending someone out to assist when we need it. It's been a journey, but our partnerships with Ricoh and Standard have been integral to our success as we deployed the new lines and learned more about some of the new applications we could produce."

"Marketing mail is our core strength," concludes Switzer. "Self-mailers, postcards, letter packages and the like. We are not static printing – it's all variable data printed in one pass and then finished,



sorted, inserted if necessary, and ready for mailing. We can do short runs or runs of more than a million pieces – and we've never had to say no to any customer request! We feel blessed here at Vision Direct and we're dedicated to extending that feeling to our clients!"

*Top: The management team at Vision Direct. (L to R): Bryan Sherman, Manager Data, IT, & Print Services; Doug Switzer, Owner; Jack Switzer, Vice President.*

*Bottom: Vision Direct operates two Hunkeler Roll-to-Roll solutions in-line with their Ricoh Pro production inkjet printers.*

