



The team at Premier stands with their new Hunkeler inline finishing system.
L to R: Jacob Butler, Operator; Michael "Z" Zienty, Pressroom Manager; Nick Hogan, Operator

Premier streamlines operation with production inkjet and inline finishing.

Premier, a family-run company in Portland, OR, was founded by Arnold Wheeler in 1974. Beginning as a commercial printer, the company has evolved over the years in step with market requirements, and today describes itself as a "creative production company." Premier has a diverse product offering, including a full creative department, photo studio, branded apparel, warehousing, and fulfillment services as well as direct mail and commercial print.

When faced with a direct mail client that was growing exponentially, Premier needed to scale up their operations to keep up with demand and deliver output more efficiently. That process began with the presses. "We have both digital and offset printing," said Vice President of Manufacturing Scott Gorman, "including an HP PageWide T250 HD production inkjet web press that supports our direct mail vertical. Because of the quality of that press, we anticipate pulling about 25% of our offset work to that device as well."

During the evaluation process for the production inkjet investment, Gorman explained that the company was considering using a roll-to-roll configuration with offline finishing. Gorman spoke with a number of industry contacts doing similar work, and many brought up an inline solution by Hunkeler which quickly rose to the top of Premier's considerations. "As a sheetfed printer," he said, "we are used to picking something off of a pile for quality control. So, even though the HP T250 has a lot of technology built into it, including vision inspection systems, we had a hard time accepting running multiple rolls and then finding out later that we had an issue. We

decided to go inline on that press, which gave us peace of mind, and also the added efficiency of a single-touch process."

Premier chose to configure their HP PageWide press with the Hunkeler Generation 8 Roll-to-Cut/Stack solution. The system consists of the Hunkeler UW8 Unwinder to the HP Press, and then printed output flows into the Hunkeler CS8-II Cutter, with variable chip-out capability for full bleed products 1-up to 4-up. The system also includes the Hunkeler LS8 30" Long Stacker, which supports postcards to B2 size output.

Output coming off the inkjet web press, including letters, postcards, and more, are stacked, trimmed, and prepared for inserting and/or other post-press processes. Gorman added, "The beauty of this configuration, especially for postcards, is you start with a roll of paper going through the press, into the finisher, into a mail tray, and out the door. It's much more efficient than our previous process, where we printed the postcards on our B2 sheet-fed inkjet press and then moved it to the guillotine cutter. After that, we had to hand sort them and put them into the mail trays. So, not only can we check the quality as jobs come off the press, but we eliminate time- and labor-intensive steps."

For lettershop work, Gorman noted that the press output is faster than the company's inserters. "The nice thing about the inline digital process," he said, "is that we can print one roll of a job, start that in inserting, and move to another print job. Once the inserter is almost caught up, we can restart the job for the next roll. Digital printing technology makes that easy to do."



Top: The UW8 Unwinder feeds blank paper rolls into the HP T250 press at the front end of the inline Hunkeler Roll-to-Cut/Stack Solution. Below, finished booklets coming off Premier's Horizon SPF-200A Bookletmaker.



Premier is also producing books, with collated book blocks coming off the Hunkeler line that are ready to drop into a perfect binder, as well as uncollated signatures for bookletmaking. The company uses a Horizon SPF-200A Bookletmaker with VAC collating towers, which has been serving them well for many years. "To make the signature process more efficient," Gorman said, "we are looking at adding a Horizon HOF Sheet Feeder, and that would allow us to use collated sets off the press for booklets."

The partnership with Standard Finishing contributed to the new sense of ease during the production process. "Both the pre-sale and post-sale support from Standard Finishing has been terrific," Gorman said. "We did virtual demos during the pandemic, and we trained our staff on-site with their technicians. They've done a really good job supporting us, very responsive. That's critical with the volume of work we are putting out."

Premier's investment is paying off, especially in allowing them to successfully meet the needs of their growing direct mail client. "Without the addition of the HP PageWide T250 HD press and the Hunkeler line, we would not be able to keep up with their pace of scale. Based on their current volumes, it would have taken me 27 days on my sheetfed inkjet, 20 hours per day, to produce the volumes, and then I still had to cut the sheets down. Now, with the T250 HD and my Hunkeler inline finishing, I can do this volume in three to five days, one shift, and the letters come off the press ready for inserting. It's like 20 times more efficient!"

Gorman and his team are pleased with the increased flexibility and decreased cycle time achieved since the new line has been up and running this past year. "It's hard to imagine how we got through everything before we installed the complete Hunkeler/HP configuration," he concluded. "It's really changed our business!"



Top: The Hunkeler Workflow Manager provides user-friendly and convenient operation of the production line. Middle: Printed output flows into the Hunkeler CS8-II Cutter, with variable chip-out capability for full bleed products 1-up to 4-up. Bottom: Fabricio Arellano sets up a job on the Horizon SPF-200A Bookletmaker using the operator-friendly touchscreen with advanced automation.



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VP of Manufacturing