



Annapolis Junction, Maryland

Ironmark credits Standard Horizon partnership as key element of growth.

Automation, expanded features, and ease-of-use lead to greater productivity.

Ironmark traces its roots back to 1955 when it was founded as Frank Gumpert Printing, but the company doesn't let its long history get in the way of its innovation. Ironmark prides itself on being on the cutting edge in terms of its technology infrastructure and production platform. It's a full-service operation with a wide range of capabilities, including offset, digital, production inkjet, and wide format printing along with a complete bindery operation. Ironmark also offers creative services, web development, digital marketing, mailing, and logistics. The company has grown through acquisitions – seven since 2014 – and organically, recording about \$40 million in annual revenues today compared to \$11 million in 2010. "Our model is to be the print communications company of tomorrow," said Matt Marzullo, Ironmark's President.

Around 2010, Ironmark wanted to begin developing a technology platform that would help the company continue its forward momentum and better serve emerging customer requirements. As part of this process, the company acquired its first Horizon system, the StitchLiner 5500, from Standard Finishing in April 2010 in response to landing a large piece of new business.

"We were able to consolidate the printing for a group of publications that had been using three different printers," Marzullo explained, "and we also convinced them to move to digital printing. For an efficient workflow, we obviously needed an efficient bindery, and that's when we acquired our first Horizon StitchLiner. Standard Finishing worked closely with us to configure

the StitchLiner to handle the entire suite of publications. That's probably the number one reason we switched to Standard Finishing. And the product, of course, did everything we needed it to do at the time. It wasn't overly complex; the user interface was easy to understand, and we could really leverage our talent to run it. Instead of doing the traditional multi-step process of folding the signatures and putting them on our saddle stitcher, now we could do it all in one integrated process. With new business, the publications would come in late afternoon, and we printed them overnight for delivery the following morning. It was a completely new workflow for us, and we needed a solution that would allow us to be able to flawlessly execute it from a time and workforce standpoint. The StitchLiner did just that."

When Ironmark visited Standard's Customer Demonstration Center in Massachusetts to evaluate the StitchLiner and, later, other finishing equipment, Marzullo noted that Standard Finishing staff always took the time to really understand what they were trying to do. "They were not trying to sell us a specific piece of equipment," he said. "Rather, they really took the time to put us with the right piece of equipment."

"We were typically looking for something specific," Marzullo said, "like when we installed our Ricoh production inkjet press. But the staff there always paid close attention to our requirements and educated us about other possibilities so when new opportunities came up, we could make those decisions from a good knowledge base with respect to finishing capabilities."



Marzullo noted that, beginning a couple years after installation of the first StitchLiner, Standard Finishing encouraged them to complement their existing system with the next generation StitchLiner to improve productivity even more. "We didn't believe them," Marzullo acknowledged. "But about two years ago, in part because of the difficulty in finding traditional bindery labor, we did some time studies with Standard Finishing's help that proved their improved productivity assertion. Between that study and some of the productivity enhancements they had in the interim, we cleared the final hurdles to acquire the StitchLiner Mark III Saddlestitcher with 3-tower VAC-L600H Collator, which we installed in November 2020."

In addition to its two StitchLiners, Ironmark has added other Horizon equipment from Standard over the years, including an AFC-566FG Folder, a BQ-470 Perfect Binder with in-line HT-70 Three-Knife Trimmer, and a SmartSlitter, all installed and expertly serviced by their local Standard Horizon dealer, Atlantic Graphic Systems. "And we recently traded in the SmartSlitter for an RD-4055DMC Rotary Die Cutter," Marzullo disclosed. "We loved the SmartSlitter, but we found that the die cutter offered us an expanded range of capabilities to fit very specific customer needs, such as rounded corners on business cards, and that allowed us to bring almost all of our bindery outsourcing back in-house. Between the die cutter and our recently acquired Horizon CRF-362 Creaser/Folder, it's been phenomenal. We were delighted with the consultative process we underwent with Standard Finishing to accomplish this trade-in. Our total configuration today has allowed us to develop a workflow where everything just flows through, is repeatable, and has enabled us to process many more orders per day."

"Our partnership with Standard Finishing has been one of the key elements of our growth," Marzullo stated. "The ease of use of the equipment meant that we had less reliance on traditional bindery operators and were able to bring in a new generation of talent, especially as the previous generation were approaching retirement. Ease of use and consistent user interfaces also made it easier for us to cross-train the bindery staff. Out of our 60 production employees, about 25 of them work in bindery, and all of them are cross-trained on all of the equipment."

Marzullo concludes, "The best part of our Standard partnership is the personal relationships and how they stand behind their equipment. I have never had an issue they haven't been able to solve. You can't ask for more than that!"



1. Allen Hickel, Bindery Operator, finishes a job on the Horizon CRF-362 Creaser/Folder.
2. The Horizon RD-4055DMC Die Cutter offers expanded capabilities such as rounded corners.
3. Bart Pepler, Bindery Operator (L) and Chris Marzullo, VP Operations (R) at the Horizon BQ-470 Perfect Binder.
4. The Horizon AFC-566FG Folder offers fully automated setup via a user-friendly color touchscreen.
5. Ironmark's two Horizon StitchLiners produce booklets in one integrated process with no signature folding.
6. Herman Stenger runs the Horizon StitchLiner Mark III, producing up to 6,000 booklets/hour.
7. Ironmark's Horizon HT-70 Three-Knife Trimmer runs in-line with the perfect binder for greater efficiency.

Opposite page: The team at Ironmark with their Horizon StitchLiner Mark III. (L to R) Chris Marzullo, VP Operations; Jeff Ostenson, CEO; Matt Marzullo, President

