

# Fort Dearborn has enabled a highly efficient production environment with HP Indigo press ws4000s



Wanting to be leading-edge, Fort Dearborn eagerly embraced HP Indigo press technology and is delivering better value packaging.

Fort Dearborn Company, based in Niles, Illinois, has 78 years of experience delivering packaging and labels to high-velocity manufacturers and marketers of consumer goods. It has customers that demand a wide array of labels with print requirements often differing dramatically in both complexity and print volume per SKU. For example, it has clients needing glue applied and pressure sensitive labels for over 15,000 unique SKUs, and volume requirements vary from just 20 all the way to two million per SKU.

Ralph Reichert, Vice President of Digital Print Solutions for Fort Dearborn, describes, "To efficiently meet the complex demands of many of our customers – which typically are in the food and beverage, paint and coatings, and health and personal care industries – we have deployed a hub and spoke topology for the printing infrastructure. In our Niles, Illinois, Fort Worth, Texas and Fountain Inn, South Carolina facilities we have presses for litho cut and stack output; in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania we have a pressure-sensitive label production facility; in Elk Grove Village, Illinois we have flexographic shrink film equipment; in Brunswick, Georgia we have Gravure shrink film presses; and in Hull, England we have a roll-to-roll lithography location."

The key enablers for its efficient production processes are the availability within every facility to: a business enterprise system containing all of the information needed

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to complete orders; a very robust digital asset management system that enables direct-to-plate processes; a color management system that "fingerprints" and monitors the consistency of color being output from the production devices; and a seven-color high-fidelity ink system to replicate any shade or tone.

Reichert reflects, "Over time it became clear we needed something that would make better economic sense for lower volume jobs. To fulfill this requirement, we wanted a solution from a company that is progressive about bringing technological value specifically to the packaging marketplace."

In his evaluation of potential solutions Reichert investigated HP Indigo presses. He notes, "While digital solutions provide good output today, we see that this has the potential to become an industry-changing technology. In particular, we see HP as the clear leader in the packaging market segment, with its HP Indigo presses because the quality is outstanding and the range of substrates gives us plenty of flexibility."

Fort Dearborn deployed four HP Indigo ws4000 presses – narrow web fed digital devices – one each in four of its seven existing production locations. Reichert elaborates, "We have fully integrated these presses into our operations, and HP experts were very involved in helping us accomplish this. We have calibrated the output color of the HP Indigo presses to the primary production and proofing devices in each facility. Every type of print technology has different gains, so we are applying 'curves' automatically to match the varying dot gains across the individual devices, and this helps us in our quest to have a zero "make-ready" environment, perfect for immediate printing to order."

He adds, "Once an order is placed, we select the output technologies that best fit the client's range of work. Our goal is that customers should not be able to tell if the labels were produced by different presses – the final pieces should have identical levels of quality to seamlessly maintain brand continuity – and the HP Indigo presses give us this capability."

Fort Dearborn's investment in the HP Indigo presses and their integration into the infrastructure has enabled a highly efficient production environment. "We've been able to reduce the inventory of 'safety stocks' that we used to keep to balance out spikes in demand because now we can print on a make-to-order basis," enthuses Reichert. "Just recently, operating 24x7, one of our HP Indigo presses completed a combination of short-run jobs – both cut and stack and pressure-sensitive output – and delivered a record two million impressions in one month!"

He concludes, "The biggest business impact has been from the increased speed of being able to prototype samples for our clients, and the reduction in cost to handle the low-volume complex label jobs. This technology has helped us bring better value to our customers by enabling use of the most appropriate press for the workload based on volumes per SKU, while maintaining top levels of quality. We appreciate HP's dedication to continuing to bring technological improvements to the packaging production industry, and we are enjoying being able to capitalize on the benefits."

