



spotlight

## Leading by Example

Access Direct invests in inkjet to ensure a successful future.

By DPS Staff

Technology can transform a business. While it is easy for organizations to stick with what they know, there are many benefits to investing in the latest technologies.

Access Direct Systems, Inc. understands the power of digital print technologies, and has made a strategic investment in inkjet in order to reduce costs and improve production capabilities. The company's goal is to flip its operations from 80 percent offset/20 percent digital to 20 percent offset/80 percent digital.

Founded in 1969, the family owned and operated full-service direct mail marketing company started out as

a data lettershop. It continued to grow as the business learned how to manage and utilize data for a range of applications. Today, the company employs a staff of over 500 and produces more than a billion pieces of mail annually. It operates out of three facilities totaling 250,000 square feet in Long Island, NY. Its clientele includes—but is not limited to—Fortune 1,000 companies in financial, publishing, and medical markets.

The management team at Access Direct combines more than 100 years of experience in direct mail marketing, printing, data management, and list management. John DiNozzi, current president/CEO, Access Direct, co-founded the company. DiNozzi offers over 40 years of experience in direct mail marketing with specialized expertise in the development and management of list processing and related direct



mail computer applications. He's joined by John V. DiNozzi, owner and EVP, and Lori Messina, owner/EVP, Access Direct. The two have each worked in the business for more than 30 years.

### Eye on Inkjet

While Access Direct is set on its digital track, it didn't start out there. About ten years ago, the company purchased a facility in Southern NJ to house its six web presses. Offset was, "a necessary evil," because at that time customers believed that if you couldn't preprint your own shells than you couldn't produce the work. "So we entered that market and stayed in it as long as we had to," admits Messina.

During this time, it operated in a pre-print environment, which included offset printed shells that were personalized with a fleet of

1. & 2. Access Direct Systems continues to invest in digital printing technology to serve its client base.

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25 toner-based engines from Canon and an in-line bindery.

According to Messina, the direct and transactional mail provider understood that something needed to change, but the challenge seemed impossible with the existing equipment on the market. "Because we are a data company, our vision was to move into variable personalization, and then color," she explains. It knew inkjet was the answer, but they needed to find the right equipment match.

Access Direct wanted a solution to drive down costs, increase speed to market, save on postage, and consolidate units. Inkjet was the answer. To make the transition, they had to change internal and customer views of digital inkjet and take on a leadership position in the industry.

The company began seeing consolidation from its competitors. "My partners and I looked at each other and said that we didn't want to be sitting ducks. If we wanted to be a leader in this industry, we have to be committed to it. As part of securing a successful future, we decided to switch the entire company to inkjet. And that's what we did," says Messina.

### Meeting Demands

Before transitioning to inkjet, the company struggled to meet customer challenges due to pricing and technology limitations within the industry. "Our customers were demanding innovation," says Messina, noting that it was industry changes driving these demands. Access Direct felt that it faced an almost impossible scenario where customers were asking for color and digital output, but at the same time procurement groups were demanding



more affordable prices, faster production and better quality.

The key to making the impossible, possible, was forging a bridge to inkjet. Access Direct decided to take its relationship with Canon to the next level, and invested in the ColorStream 3900, a continuous feed, color inkjet press. "This press allowed us to continue operations using our existing workflow. That was important," says Messina. With this new technology, the company could support its customers to a point where it made sense to say, "now we can step into inkjet." The ColorStream3900

allowed the company to start strategically selling its digital output. "Our future vision is for our customers to find value in migrating to digital variable color. I anticipate a complete 80/20 switch," she adds.

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Already a Canon customer, Messina says the print manufacturer helped Access Direct “realize the impossible.” However, they did not make the decision to choose Canon production inkjet solutions lightly.

She says that for the better part of five to ten years, cost was the primary consideration as it related to B&W output. Getting into a new technology, and color, required a lot of research. Messina says her partner John V. DiNozzi, “probably investigated every print technology that was out there. The problem is that they didn’t suit our or our customers’ needs.”

Messina explains that every time DiNozzi came back from meeting with prospective manufacturers—print samples and estimates in hand—there was always an issue. Either the technology cost too much, didn’t offer high enough speeds, or had too many limitations. “We really just kept putting an investment in inkjet on the back burner until the end of 2013. It was then we decided to go and take a look at the ColorStream 3900. By

the end of that year we installed the first machine and started taking advantage of its benefits.”

It took 12 months to transition to inkjet. In that time, the company installed four ColorStream 3900s. “We displaced 25 toner boxes by putting in those four machines,” comments Messina. “Within six months, we had the second machine on the floor and started to immediately transition work to that device. It made good sense at that point. Momentum was going. We just stayed on the train. We expanded the print room, calling it a print lab, and displaced the other machines. The whole building looks so different. You walk around and it’s incredible how much it’s changed. It’s exciting.”

In addition to the ColorStream 3900s, the print provider also owns one OcéVari-oPrint i300 cutsheet inkjet device, and a toner-based Canon imagePRESS C800.

The decision to invest in the Océ Vari-oPrint i300 was a “no brainer” according to Messina. “Everyone talks about its dependability. It is a workhorse. It doesn’t go down. But the additional benefit for us is that it’s a sister machine to the ColorStream 3900, and it’s easy to produce

reprints and things of that nature,” she points out.

Today, the company offers 100 percent digital color capabilities, including MICR. Although 80 percent of its work is still pre-printed shells, they anticipate digital to eventually come out on top.

Additionally, the company has since migrated to a near-line bindery, featuring state-of-the-art, high-speed finishing equipment including four high-speed Standard Hunkeler bindery lines. It also operates a Videk quality control camera system, utilizes advanced data and address hygiene procedures, as well as proprietary postal commingle schemes.

### Looking Ahead

In the future, Access Direct hopes to acquire more equipment as clients convert to digital. The goal is to operate at 80 percent digital color with expanded color gamut and paper selection.

Since its digital restructure, the company is able to reduce cost and labor, expand offerings, improve speed to market, and offer higher value print products. It has also helped to grow the business, since customers moving to color increase revenue. “The customers are looking to transition and we’re in that process now, looking for our own leads and trying to grow the business,” says Messina.

She says if anyone were to ask her to look back at all the things that have changed Access Direct, she would never have guessed where they would be today with an investment in inkjet. “I thought I knew everything about Access Direct, but there is no way I would have predicted that almost three years later, I’d be sitting here with such a different company. And that’s a powerful statement.” **dps**

3. Long Island, NY-based Access Direct is transitioning its operations to inkjet with the help of Canon technology.