"We are able to move product directly from the HP Indigo 10000 to the Horizon SmartStacker. This has eliminated any need to collate, and its dynamic cutting gives us a lot of flexibility."

— *Rick Bellamy, CEO*

(L and R) Jon Venske, Bindery Operator, loads the SmartStacker and monitors production.

Seattle-based RPI Print finds amazing growth in stationery product offerings

Leveraging Horizon SmartStacker to Increase Stationery Product Throughput.

Automated back end with intelligent accumulation and stacking, and end-to-end JDF control.

Seattle-based RPI Print, with additional production facilities in Atlanta and the Netherlands, found its niche in highly personalized photo products and has leveraged this product category to deliver significant growth. While this business segment continues to be a growth area for the company, its stationery product offerings are surprisingly growing even faster.

"We are seeing amazing growth around our stationery products," said Rick Bellamy, the company's CEO. "Increasingly, consumers want more and more variability in sizes and finishing options, increasing the complexity of the operation. At the same time, in order to be profitable, we needed to cut labor out of our workflow. We added HP Indigo 10000 presses to take advantage of the larger sheet size, and we chose the Horizon SmartStacker to automate the back end after looking at a number of options." With the SmartStacker, RPI can convert a B2 size / 20" x 29" sheet into up to 28 individual cut sheets, with intelligent accumulation and stacking, and end-to-end JDF control.

According to Bellamy, the SmartStacker has fulfilled a number of needs. "We are able to move product directly from the HP Indigo 10000 to the Horizon SmartStacker. This has eliminated any need to collate, and its dynamic cutting gives us a lot of flexibility. We now have a very dynamic line that has taken what was four steps into a single automated process. The end result is finished product ready for the shrink wrapper that has given us a 35% increase in stationery product capacity with less labor."

RPI also uses Impostrip, an imposition software solution from Ultimate Technographics, to impose the files for more efficient layouts. Bryan Constable, Director of Engineering, described the workflow: "As we approached the 2016 peak season, we knew we needed to improve productivity for these products in order to meet demand. A key decision factor for us in the SmartStacker acquisition was its ability to use a JDF workflow. With the HP Indigo 10000, doing a 12-up imposition of 5x7 greeting cards leaves blanks. We print a top sheet with the job that maps where the

(L to R) Dung Nguyen, Operator; Bryan Constable, Director of Engineering; Victor Bailly, Manufacturing Engineer; and Patrick Quiton and Purushottam Deo, Product Engineers

blanks are. That data is also sent to the SmartStacker server. The SmartStacker reads a barcode to set the job up, retrieving the JDF instructions from the server, and ejects the blanks, delivering stacks of cut greeting cards at the back end. Before, we used a guillotine cutter and had people around a table pulling out blanks. That's one thing when you are printing 4-up, and entirely another when you are dealing with 12-up. The HP Indigo 10000 produces 2.5x as much work as its earlier generation, and the SmartStacker can keep up with two HP Indigo 10000s. Now that's smart!"

Constable points out that in one sense, the SmartStacker acquisition was high risk, saying, "We didn't install it until late October. It can get really stressful when you see a 10x increase in workload in November and December. It's not normally a time when you want to introduce new equipment, but since we can process as many as 300,000 cards per day in our peak period, we knew we needed to do something to better automate the process. Luckily, with the support of Standard, HP, and Ultimate, it all worked beautifully."

Constable also stated that the company made a last-minute acquisition of a Standard Horizon RD-4055 Die Cutter. "That was a superstar," he said. "It hit the ground and started running. We just flipped the switch and never looked back. It's another example of great engineering from Horizon."

Constable reports that RPI Print uses Horizon equipment in all of its facilities. "We use tons of Horizon equipment, and they have always been right there to support us," he says. RPI's installed base of equipment from Standard includes seven BQ-470PUR Perfect Binders, an HT-30 Three-knife Trimmer, and an AF-566T4F Buckle Folder from Horizon, as well as two Hunkeler Roll-to-Stack lines.

"The SmartStacker has been such a hit," Constable concluded, "that we will likely replicate the line in our Atlanta facility, where we are seeing even more growth in stationery products."