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2007

## Del. daily turns conventions upside down

*Delaware State News parent wraps up first year of printing with press that some thought was too big, but really fits just right.*

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After chalking up more than \$1 million in commercial revenues in less than three months and producing consistently high quality newspapers and periodicals, Delaware Printing Co., and its parent, Independent Newspapers Inc., is exactly where it wants to be with its year-old production plant in Dover.

And that's exactly how INI executives and managers planned it.

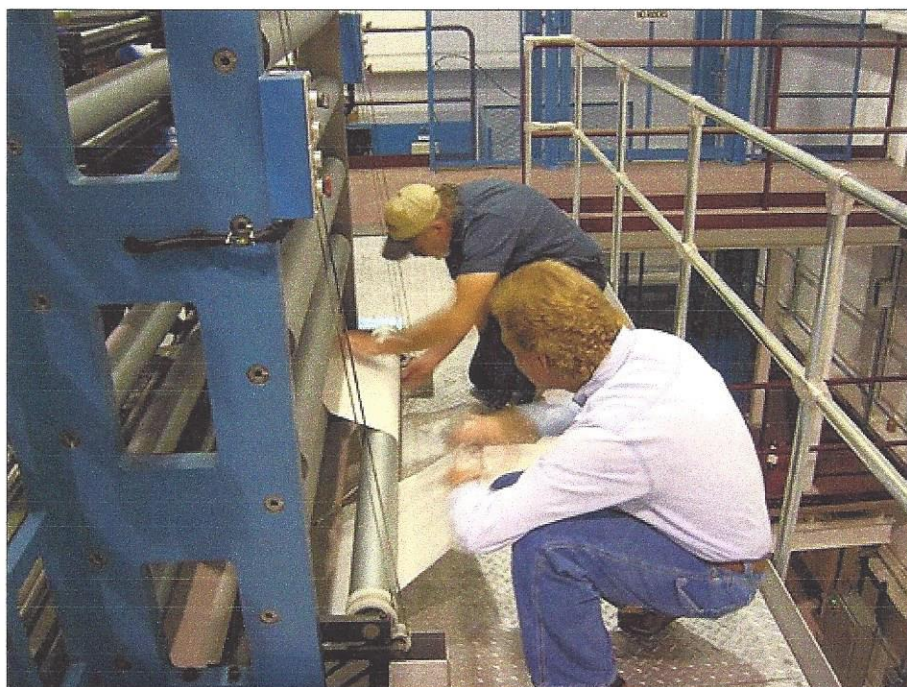


Photo: DPC

**Sam Wagner of Web Offset Services works with a press operator at Delaware Printing Co.'s facility.**

DPC, which prints the Delaware State News and a variety of other publications in the Delmarva area, quietly went on-edition with its Koenig & Bauer AG doublewide Colora press last May.

That, after almost four years of planning that included everything from constructing a

new building to house the press to a painstaking training regimen that required every press operator to become thoroughly familiar with the press.

"We were at a crossroads," said Ed Dulin, president of operations at INI, about the decisions executives had to make in late 2002 as they plotted out their strategy for a new machine to anchor their production.

"Do we do more of the same or do we take a leap forward in technology, not only to provide commercial printing but to print everything on a scale that's superior. I was skeptical that the press (could satisfy our demands) but it has proven to be exactly what was promised."

Dulin gives a lot of the credit to consultant Sam Wagner and Web Offset Services, which INI retained to coordinate the press selection, design and installation.

Wagner began working on the project in 2002, with a primary goal to build the infrastructure that would support not just newspaper work, but commercial production as well. "We wanted more quality, more color and more capacity," he said.

To that end, Wagner drafted a proposal for a 21-inch cutoff five-high doublewide, double circumference press with variable web width up to 50 inches, inline stitching, quarterfold capability, automatic register and cutoff control, and a host of other options that, while common today, were considered fairly radical five years ago.

"It flew in the face of conventional thinking," Wagner said of the concepts INI discussed with vendors, which were as basic as why a small publisher even needed a doublewide 75,000-copy-per-hour press after years of successfully using two singlewides, to as novel as requiring a configuration sporting a single five-high unit tower equipped with right-angle folders and singlewidth former boards.

Additionally, Wagner wanted straight-across plate and blanket cylinder gaps to enable the use of single, full-width plates and blankets.

"By using a 50-inch plate, we get rid of registration problems," he said, adding that the approach also sped up makereadies and maximized the full use of the tower by running multiple image formats.

## **All automated**

Controls and automation were also key. "The software had to control the machine but also have the capacity to preset every adjustment with little or no operator input," he said. The goal was to simplify and minimize the makeready and changeover process as much as possible, Wagner said.

"It was much different than vendors were used to."

After mulling over vendors' responses to INI's proposal, the company in early 2003 picked KBA to supply it with a doublewide Colora.

The 4-by-2 press sports a distinctive design, configured as a single five-high tower with two reelstands and a KF 3 jaw folder attached at a right angle.

By engineering the press this way, Wagner said, DPC cut by 75 percent the amount of space, press, consumables, auxiliary equipment and other components an equivalent 20-unit singlewide press would require.

"Not only does this (design) reduce the footprint by 50 percent, it lets DPC use the fifth unit for additional pages or on commercial jobs for non-stop plate changes and with the right angles, they can put the web anywhere on the press," thus maximizing efficiency by running the web size and format best suited for the job, Wagner said.



"It's basically a 2-man press that's sitting in a 70-by-40-foot box. Everything is sitting right in front of you, and from a manning standpoint" it's a very efficient design, he said.

The Colora enabled DPC to dramatically boost color and paging capacity, and the variable web width — DPC can produce products ranging from 20 inches to 50 inches wide in half-inch increments — allows DPC much greater flexibility in the products it can produce.

### **Great flexibility**

"It can print a 32-page newspaper with 16 pages of full color as a 4-by-2 or it can print a 40-page paper with 20 pages of full color as a 5-by-2," Wagner said. The press is being used as a 3-by-2 and a 2-by-2 machine as well, depending upon need.

The press' control software and consoles, engineered by EAE, cloaked the machine with automation features DPC never had before with its decades-old singlewide machines.

DPC had the press programmed with a built-in catalog of more than 475 preconfigured presets for both newspaper and commercial jobs.

That simplifies the makeready operators have to perform before printing, Wagner said, eliminating guesswork. "It's as close to a one-button process as there is today."

KBA began building the press in 2003, but had to delay delivery until late 2005 as INI built a new production plant in an office park about five miles from its former downtown headquarters.

Once the press was installed, DPC took the next four months to commission the machine, refusing to go on-edition or to let KBA hand over the press until "we had it fully debugged," Wagner said.

"We took a very in-depth look at what we needed to do, and we wanted to make sure the press was fully tested and that we knew everything there was about operating the press before shutting down the old machines," Wagner said.

### **Keep the keys**

"We didn't want KBA to turn the keys over to us until our crews completely learned the machine," he said. "Our people did everything, from changing plates and installing and setting all the rollers to calibrating the fountains and testing the various configurations. We did everything ourselves so that the operators had intimate knowledge of the press."

DPC went live with the press May 4, and in the 12 months since, the machine has performed without a hitch, said Tom Bugbee, DPC's general manager.

"We have all the presets, we flip the turn bars, it works perfectly," he said. "We can get a new job ready in less than 30 minutes and that includes washing the blankets after every press run. Job after job goes through this press and I've never seen quality like this," he said.

Startup waste has dropped to below 400 copies for the bulk of the jobs DPC produces, and the associated Kodak thermal computer-to-plate system, stochastic printing (Kodak's Staccato app) and Nela Vision plate bender "gives us perfect plates."

## High quality

"We just don't have registration problems," he said, citing the 50-inch plates. "We can do a five-wide product, if need be, without a gutter."

Bugbee said DPC is now printing more than 130 different job per month, ranging from The News to an assortment of commercial products, with runs as small as 10,000 copies.

In the first three months of 2007, he said the press had only a single glitch, and operators easily fixed that.

"We're just getting started" on the commercial work, he said.

Next up is an assessment of DPC's postproduction infrastructure, which is based on older equipment. It's also examining when to add a stitcher/trimmer. Currently, DPC farms out stitching and trimming to a third-party production facility.

"We may also need to expand the building and expand the pressline down the road," Bugbee said. "We'll outgrow what we have here pretty quickly and we'll want to grow the building for commercial products."