

THE PRINTING INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

graphic

MONTHLY CANADA

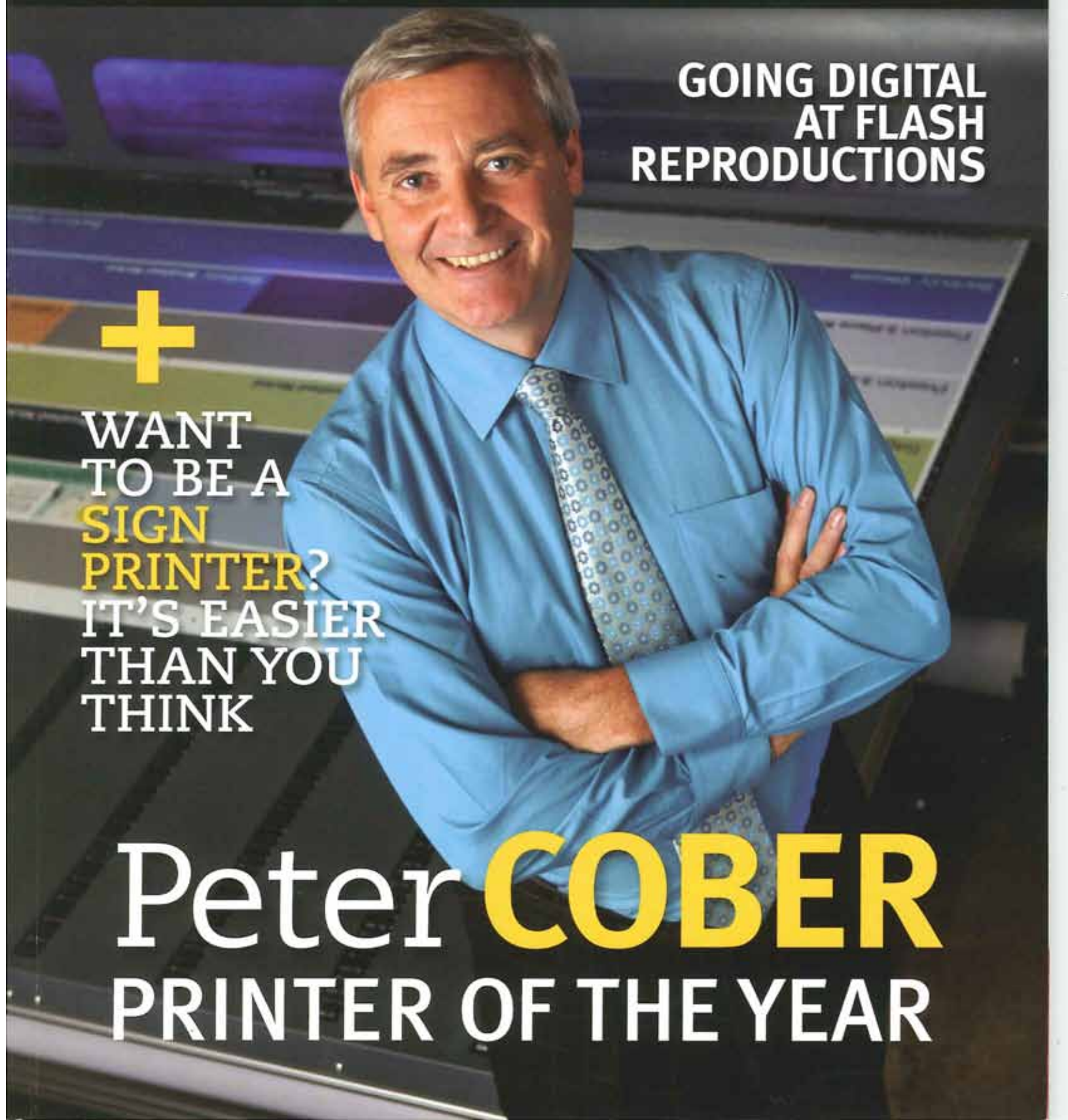
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GOING DIGITAL
AT FLASH
REPRODUCTIONS



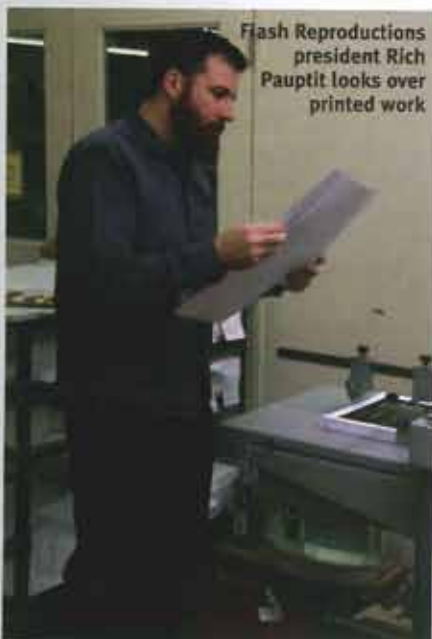
WANT
TO BE A
**SIGN
PRINTER?**
IT'S EASIER
THAN YOU
THINK

Peter **COBER**
PRINTER OF THE YEAR



Flash Reproductions: Digital in a flash

LOCATION Toronto SIZE 25,000 sq. ft. SERVICES Offset printing, letterpress, screen printing, embossing, die cutting, package construction and bindery
SALES \$7 million EMPLOYEES 36
flashreproductions.com



Flash Reproductions president Rich Paupit looks over printed work



With its oversize format of 13" x 47", the MGI Meteor is perfect for short-run tabloid publications. This market is just one printing niche that Flash has discovered since getting the press



CHALLENGE Stem loss of business to digital print

In more than 40 years of existence, Flash Reproductions has grown from a small letterpress shop to a 36-employee company that offers a range of services, including traditional offset printing, letterpress, screen printing, embossing, die cutting, package construction and bindery.

As the broad assortment of equipment on its floor indicates, Flash has tried to stay current with each of its services, even as the company grew. One capability Flash didn't have, however, was digital print. "We had pretty much ignored digital for years. Frankly, we were quite snobbish about it. We just didn't think the quality was there," says president Rich Paupit. As digital print improved, however, Paupit realized that much of the 4-colour work he was doing on his smaller presses was migrating to digital. While he wasn't overly concerned because his presses were busy, particularly for PMS, he realized that Flash would eventually be "eaten alive by digital."

More important, though, clients were asking for digital, and Flash was being forced to source the service elsewhere.

Run length, says Paupit, was the main driver. Economic difficulties meant shrinking print budgets and customers who were moving to print on demand, buying only what they needed, even if the total cost of the job was higher than an offset run.

Paupit's customers were buying digital print primarily from digital-only shops. And while the print quality was good enough, as a whole customers weren't completely happy with the relationships they had developed with many of their new print providers. "A lot of those shops don't understand how complicated a lot of those projects could be...Our customers expected a better understanding of colour and a different workflow." Moreover, says Paupit, at a digital shop "The best customers were \$10,000-a-year clients, but they might be a \$1 million client to us, and they wanted to be treated like that even for a \$300 job. Our clients wanted to partner with us, but we didn't have the gear."

STRATEGY Move to digital

It was clear that Flash would have to move to digital print. Paupit and his team looked at all the offerings available. "We were

Tabloid short runs

Some of the work that's making its way to the new MGI Meteor surprised even Flash. Short-run tabloid work is one example and though it's still in the infancy stage, this is a market that the company hopes to grow. Its first job came about when one of Flash's clients steered a publisher to the shop. The tabloid, *The Millennial Mirror*, aimed at the the advertising community, had almost ceased to exist because its circulation had dropped dramatically from thousands of copies to the low hundreds. An experiment with digital editions did not resonate with the community. The MGI, with its oversize 47" size enabled the publisher to keep the tabloid format, which was central to its identity, and run just 100 copies at an affordable price. Not only is it steady work, says president Rich Paupit, but it's a story of going paperless only to realize that physical media is worthwhile.

Gear on the floor

- Heidelberg Speedmaster CD 102, 6C + AQ
- Heidelberg Speedmaster CD 74, 6C + AQ
- Heidelberg Speedmaster SM 52, 4C
- Heidelberg Printmaster QM 46, 2C
- MGI Meteor DP60 Pro
- Epson Stylus Pro 9880
- Epson Stylus Pro 7600: 7C
- 2 x AWT (conventional or UV): 30" x 40" 1C screen press
- Sias Serifast (conventional or UV): 30" x 48" 1C screen press
- Sias Simple: 24" x 36", 1C
- Benmar Cylindrical Bottle Press (conventional or UV): 1C screen press



MGI Meteor DP60 Pro

- Weger 2C Pad Printer
- Heidelberg Cylinder (die cutting, scoring, perfling, embossing, debossing)
- Heidelberg Windmill (foil stamping, letterpress, embossing, debossing)
- Bobst Die Cutter
- 2 x MBO Folders
- Muller Martini saddlestitcher
- 2 x Bostitch Stitchers
- 2 x Challenge Drills
- Rhino Wire-O Bind Punch

PATHFINDER

impressed by the current upper echelon of print machines and what they could do. The image is now great." While digital falls down in some areas, Flash would be proud to ship some of the work produced on these presses, he says.

In the end, Flash settled on the MGI Meteor DP60 PRO. It was the first device the company saw, but, "We thought we needed something more robust, more industrial. We assumed that the other presses were that because they were physically larger."

A key advantage of the MGI for Flash was its ability to print on a variety of substrates, including plastic, polyester, vinyl, canvas, and styrene. "We print on a lot of strange substrates on the offset side. None of the other presses could print on them, and none could print envelopes...I couldn't get my head around a machine that does the work of a 52 cm press but can't do envelopes, which is half of that work."

In addition to the substrate handling capability, the MGI's oversize format (up to 13" x 47") could also deliver on unusual applications. "Plus the image looked better to us, job to job. It contended for the top

spot on image quality and had the greatest flexibility." And by controlling colour and the temperature of the fuser, Flash gets a matte-like finish as well. Pauptit also was attracted to the business model, paying only for consumables and service as needed, without click charges.

RESULT More opportunities

Although only installed in May and with just a few hundred thousand impressions in the can, Pauptit is more than satisfied with the press. "It's been great," he says. "We were late to the game on digital, but it's a good time to come in. We're able to do things that other people can't...We wanted to be able to say something to the market. Not just 'we're now digital' but we have this machine that no one else has and in a format that no one else can offer...It's opened up a lot of opportunities, things that were never able to be printed digitally we can do now."

Sometimes Flash's staff has to be innovative to produce a job on the Meteor, with its unusual format. One example is the pocket folder, an important part of Flash's business. It's no problem on a tra-

ditional small-format offset press, but the additional 4" for the pocket is problematic for the 13" Meteor. "Because we have the length, instead of coming up from underneath, we come in from the side. The end result is indistinguishable except where it's glued." This has enabled Flash to provide highly customized and personalized kits at any run length. Another new application for the company is short-run and limited-edition books. "It's gorgeous," enthuses Pauptit. "They're beautiful, over-size, and case bound."

Flash says it will continue to invest and evolve. "The future of digital is inkjet," says Pauptit. "But we couldn't ignore digital while it matured. We will still need to do envelopes and little things. We want to make the leap to inkjet. But this will be our small-format press, while we wait for a 40" sheetfed inkjet." 

John Zarwan is an internationally known consultant concentrating on business development, profit improvement, and marketing strategy. Reach him through his website, johnzarwan.com.

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UTSERTS, the standard for providing information in the pharmaceutical industry, are leaflets that are folded to a small size and secured to form closed leaflets which will not spring open during packaging operations or while affixed directly onto product containers.

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LEXIBILITY in the modular design of the MV-11 Outsert System lets you start with a triple knife-unit system to fold up to 238 panels—or a double knife-unit system to fold up to 170 panels or a single knife-unit system to fold up to 110 panels and later upgrade by adding knife and pressing units. The system can be configured as required by the job. MV-11 systems fold leaflets to as small as 1 1/8" x 1 1/8".

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DEAL MARKET to be in, because the need for pharmaceutical products is year-round.

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150-panel outsert folded on the MV-11



170-panel outsert folded on the MV-09



170-panel outsert folded on the MV-11



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