

First Variable-Information Piece on Firm's First Digital Press Wins Top Award for Lorraine Press and H theory Design

Creative Partnership Generates 50 Percent Response Rate with Personalized Flipbooks

by Tom Wetjen

After installing their first digital printing device and variable information software, commercial printers typically develop their new services with measured steps.

Lorraine Press of Salt Lake City, Utah, worked with design firm H theory to create its first variable piece on a tight deadline while still learning its digital systems — and captured the top prize in a major awards program. The ambitious piece, a personalized flipbook and invitation for an open house, won “Best of Show” among more than 200 entries in the 2005 Printing Innovation with Xerox Imaging awards.

“I was shocked,” said Blayne Jensen, prepress supervisor, Lorraine Press, describing his reaction to winning the award. “We had never done a variable data piece before. We were using new software, new printing equipment and



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a new RIP.” However, as the firm’s information technology manager, database administrator, supervisor of a 100-percent Adobe PDF workflow for offset printing and manager of the piece’s production, he said, “We knew from a technology standpoint that we could figure this out.”

In winning the award, the innovative piece demonstrated powerful business effectiveness, generating an astonishing 50 percent response rate with 150 of the 300 recipients attending, and was aesthetically pleasing. “We’re trying to reach a higher level of creative,” said Robert Miller, president, Lorraine Press. “I’m put off by the ‘Hi Bob!’ approach. We

want to go beyond that so that when you get something, you are interested in it and it’s persuasive. To pull this off, we need close relationships with strong creatives like H theory.”

New Way to Communicate

Lorraine Press has successfully navigated numerous industry transitions since its founding in 1946 by Miller’s father, Harry B. Miller. Today the firm has 35 employees generating annual revenue of about \$4 million. “They’re a higher end printer in Salt Lake, and their customer service is among the best in town,” said Christian Hansen, partner/art director, H theory, which counts Lorraine Press among its regular printers.

Nonetheless, Lorraine Press’s offset-based business has been essentially flat for the last few years, leading the firm to investigate opportunities in digital printing, one of the few print industry segments projected for growth. “Part of my turning to digital is to avoid the fiercely competitive nature of offset printing,” Miller said. “It’s very hard to grow in offset.”

“I see variable information as a new technology that meets an old need, to get people to pay attention to the

Lorraine Press and H theory partnered to produce this flipbook and open house invitation, which won Best of Show in the 2005 Printing Innovation with Xerox Imaging awards.





Lorraine Press is based in Salt Lake City.



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message you want to give them by targeting buyers individually,” he said. “It’s the reason we wanted to get into digital.”

Miller studied the market and its available presses before choosing the DocuColor™ 8000 Digital Press with Creo Color Server and Creo Darwin variable information software.

“We have a reputation for high quality,” he said. “The DocuColor 8000 was attractive because it didn’t denigrate our brand. The quality is equivalent to offset, and with a little massaging you can create a piece that is virtually identical to an offset piece even under the loupe.”

The Creation Process

In April 2005, Lorraine Press installed its new DocuColor 8000, Creo software and iWay Web-to-print software from Press-Sense, part of the Xerox FreeFlow™ Digital Workflow Collection. An open house to introduce the firm’s new services was scheduled for May.

Miller wanted an invitation to the open house that would not only drive attendance, but showcase the variable information capability and serve as a keepsake that recipients would share with colleagues. He selected H theory to design it, based upon recommendations from his sales team. Miller presented the agency with a design concept, but accepted H theory’s recommendation to brainstorm additional ideas.

“Most of the audience was people like us from the design community,” Hansen said. “And we felt we had a good bead on what they would think is creative and cool.” The flipbook emerged as the top concept, and

H theory engaged photographer Tyler Gourley to help shape the approach and shoot the books’ animated photos.

The piece was the first H theory had designed for variable printing, but, Hansen said, “The variable portion was easy on our part. We just talked to Blayne and said, ‘this is what we want to do, can we do it?’ He got back to us and said, ‘Yeah, I think we can. Send a test file.’”

H theory used its customary tools: QuarkXpress for layout, Adobe PhotoShop® CS and Adobe Illustrator® CS for the books’ photos. At Lorraine Press, Jensen worked with Creo Darwin to introduce variable elements into the QuarkXpress files. His greatest challenges were in learning the software while on deadline.

Ultimately, the team produced four different personalized flipbooks in a few short weeks. The shared theme: a magician performs a trick

that conjures up the name of the recipient as part of the flipbook’s animated action. Having four versions meant that multiple people at the same address each received a different book, spurring discussion.

“A Grand Success”

“The open house was a grand success,” Miller said. “We got a lot of people in here, and everyone wanted to know how we did the flipbooks.”

Several attendees have signed on

for business, including one that is running an automated Web-based program for producing posters every month. The flipbooks continue to generate buzz, Miller said, and Lorraine Press continues to use them, mailing personalized copies to new targets: marketing executives. “We get their attention, and we’ve been able to talk to people who would ordinarily turn us away,” Miller said.

For H theory, the piece is a strong addition to its portfolio, because it is “a good display of what our company is capable of and of how we achieve our communication objectives,” Hansen said. “As a creative, you enjoy a project like this one that lets you flex your creative muscle. The people at Lorraine Press were very open to our counsel — just as we expect them to be quality printers who apply their good instincts to improve the work they do on our behalf.”

Overall, Miller would like to see Lorraine Press’s DocuColor 8000 business growing more rapidly, particularly the variable portion, which accounts for about 25 percent of current volume. “But I’m not disappointed,” he said. “I think this has to be an evolution in people’s thinking. We have to partner with our customers in the thought process.”

From this perspective, the flipbook offers not only an example of a successfully executed creative and communications strategy, but valuable lessons about partnering in the thought process, as well.

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