

ifolor answers customer demand for photo products with Xerox® iGen4® and Matte Dry Ink

Quality, quality, quality is driving new business and increased customer loyalty



“In the end, and to be focused on the customer, only three things are important. First, quality. Second, quality. And third, quality. That’s what customers are looking for.”

– Markus Wirth
CEO, ifolor group

Background

Switzerland. It’s a land recognized around the world for excellence but in seemingly conflicting ways. Technology and natural beauty. Science and artistry. Perhaps more than anywhere on earth, in Switzerland, they exist side by side and come together in one place, to remarkable results.

In 2004, Photocolor, which became ifolor in 2007, took a look at the photo marketplace and saw opportunity—and the means to capitalize on it.

“We needed to partner with someone who would be strong and reliable and who would allow us to fulfill our customers’ needs, which are foremost quality, a competitive price and a short delivery time,” says Gilles Lamère, ifolor’s Production Manager.

“We were able to launch new products, like photobooks, calendars and cards...so we were able to fulfill the requirements from the customer side in the best way,” adds Markus Wirth, CEO of ifolor.

The Challenge

Since its early days as a silver halide photofinisher, ifolor’s customers have been interested in quality—the beauty of the images capturing their surroundings, their families and the moments of their lives.

And for many years, there was only one way to achieve that quality.

For as long as there have been photographs, consumers have come to expect a certain look from their processed photographs. And they expect that look and that level of quality whether their photographs are developed with silver halide or printed offset or digitally.

At the same time, the desire has always been there to do more with photos than make 4 x 6 in. prints and place them in a shoebox or photo album. But the demand for quality was always a limiting factor. Consumers want to turn their photographs into gifts and keepsakes, but they only want to give gifts or cherish keepsakes that have the look and the quality they expect.

So for years the demand went unanswered.

But a change was around the corner, driven by customers who wanted to turn their images into mementos in small quantities and with exquisite quality.

And by companies who listened to them.

The Solution

The solution for ifolor and for consumers actually started a number of years ago with a dramatic change in digital color technology and a dramatic shift in the ability to produce consumer photographs.

The Xerox® iGen3® Digital Production Press revolutionized digital color and the economics around short-run color. At first, that applied primarily in B2B applications, but in time that began to change as printers saw new opportunities and applications for the innovative new technology.

And in keeping with the long history of not only its company but its culture as well, ifolor used that innovation to achieve new levels of quality. “We made a comparison among three or four companies and in the end we recognized that iGen3, at the time, was covering our requirements best,” says Wirth.

The years since have shown that it was the right choice—the only choice—to delight customers, produce more jobs, reduce costs and grow its business. The presence of iGen3 had an immediate impact and capitalized on the change in the marketplace as customers began to want their photographs less as prints and more as the high-value jobs that can create a whole new way of doing business.

But for innovation to be truly innovative—for quality to remain on the forefront—Xerox could not stand still.

And it hasn't. The iGen3 became the iGen4® Press and the quality that impressed ifolor's customers around Europe took a leap forward with dramatic innovations in color consistency, repeatability and workflow.

The legendary iGen4 productivity and reliability proved itself through the peak demands when failure is simply not an option. For ifolor, like many printers who compete in the photo marketplace, huge percentages of business and profits come in a short time around the holiday season. iGen4's automation, reliability and productivity assure that the press is up and running and that demand is answered.

But consumers will tell you that their concerns are all about quality. And the latest innovation took the quality of iGen4's photo output to unprecedented levels. iGen4's Matte Dry Ink looks virtually indistinguishable from offset and rivals silver halide processing when producing consumer images.

It allows ifolor to produce high-value jobs with astounding quality. Combined with other iGen4 image innovations, enhanced flesh tones and blue skies print better than ever and open a world of opportunity in printing consumer photos.

Matte Dry Ink and iGen4 provide the smoother picture that is so important in showing emotions. And there's no shortage of those in a land as beautiful as the Land of the Alps.

The Results

Together, the productivity and reliability of iGen4 and the quality and precision of Matte Dry Ink have given customers the quality and the unique products they seek and put ifolor in a unique position in the marketplace—one where customers are willing to pay a premium for photo keepsakes because they know they will display premium quality.

“The quality and the technical reliability of the machines are very high,” says Lamère. “This enables us to focus on our customers, leaving the technical stuff to the company that masters it. Xerox.”

Indeed. As a result, consumers might not be able to pinpoint why, but they have seen that their digital images and the keepsakes they create from them are more true to life...like the mountains and moments that surround them.



iGen4 tops the list in photographic quality

In its comparative evaluation of photographic image print quality produced by today's digital presses, this independent printer evaluation laboratory deemed the Xerox® iGen4 Press as “one of the best options available today” with regard to photographic image print quality. Here are some of the other key findings from the lab's analysis:

“Out of the several high-quality options available in the market today, the four-color Xerox® iGen4... emerged as overall best of the digital presses...”

“Our summary finding is that the Xerox® iGen4 offered the overall best photographic image quality among the tested digital press solutions for photo book applications and is a competitive option to conventional photo processing.”

“Compared to the very high-quality standard set by conventional photo processing among currently available options for consumer photo book production, the iGen4 provides competitive overall output quality at a significantly lower price.”

Source: SpencerLab Digital Color Laboratory, White Paper, 2009.
For full report visit: http://www.spencerlab.com/reports/SpencerLab-iGen4_WhitePaper.pdf

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