



The right finishing gear is essential for tapping into the lucrative market for short-run, perfect bound books such as photobooks. Photos: On Demand Machinery



Finishing Makes the Difference

Use bindery and finishing capabilities to provide value added services to customers. *By Karen Lowery Hall*

More than ever, printers are focused on finding ways to attract new customers and maximize the business they get from existing customers. Despite all the talk about QR codes and marketing services, one of the most important weapons in your arsenal is still one of the most basic: your finishing department.

Everyone is working their way back from the recession. Your customers need to stand out from the crowd and maintain brand awareness with their own customers. Provide an attractive and creative finish that makes their marketing collateral pop, and you help them achieve their goal. In turn, you

achieve your goal of building customer loyalty and bringing in more business. It's a win/win formula.

State of the Art

Part of the reason finishing has moved into the spotlight is the advancement of the technology. There are many more automated or semi-automated options now; mitigating the labor intensive work that was once the hallmark of postpress operations. This has been driven primarily by the trend toward significantly shorter runs, as several manufacturer representatives observed.

"The transformation in finishing has mirrored changes in the larger print market," explains David Reny, executive vice president, Standard Finishing Systems. "As digital printing takes hold in more segments, nearly all suppliers have responded with complementary finishing solutions. Shorter run lengths in conventional offset have also sparked new developments that help customers finish efficiently and effectively. In general, heavy iron, manual setup bindery equipment is giving way to a new breed of highly automated finishing equipment that is equally durable, but better suited

to shorter run lengths through advanced digital control.”

“The increased shifts towards shorter run lengths, quicker turnaround times, and a lower experience level operator have guided manufacturers to alter their development strategies,” adds Alex Esnaola, director of sales, Graphic Whizard. “Equipment today has the advantage of being much simpler to operate while reducing make-ready times.”

Susan Corwin, marketing manager for Rollem International concurs. “With the dramatic growth of digital presses, finishing solutions have adapted to smaller formats, new types of paper, and the ability to handle output challenges, such as compensating for shifting images and scoring stocks with no fiber cracking,” she says. “Customers are requiring shorter runs and faster turnaround times, so the speed of the equipment is important, but combining multiple functions and offering in-line and near-line solutions is the real game changer.”

Si Nguyen, who heads National Business Development for Duplo USA, observes: “Finishing equipment has become increasingly multi-functional over the years as print service providers look for more cost effective methods to complete their production processes all in one pass. What is interesting is that printer manufacturers are also offering in-line finishing with multifunction processes and are now offering what used to only be available on their higher production presses on their mid- to low-end print solutions as well. Everyone is looking to do more with less.”

David Spiel of Spiel Associates points out, “Most of the requests we get are for machines to handle runs of 50, 100, and 1,000. This requires machinery that changes over quickly and machinery that does not produce any waste. Manufacturers are increasingly pressured to produce short-run machines that require no tools and that are as foolproof as possible.”

The economy also factors into the equation. “I think the market has demanded machinery that is simple, automated, and of a low capital investment,” notes John Jacobson, Jr., president, On Demand Machinery (ODM). “I see a migration towards automated machinery to help eliminate the human element of the binding process. As markets become more competitive, this is becoming a mandatory step for U.S. companies in order to stay competitive in an increasingly global marketplace.”

On the Shop Floor

Many printers recognize the opportunities offered by upgrading to newer postpress equipment and have reaped the rewards of doing so. Jim Corliss, one of the owners of Braintree Printing in Braintree, MA, says that his company has invested heavily in bindery equipment upgrades over the past 24 months. Included in the new equipment list is a Horizon BQ 470 perfect binder, Horizon HT 30 three-knife trimmer, a UV coater from Fergesen Systems, and a Scott 5000 tabber.



Many newer pieces of bindery and finishing equipment offer at least some level of labor-saving automation. Photos: Rollem International

“We can now produce many hundreds of books in a shift. Also, the three-knife trimmer allows us to successfully bind more technically challenging books – like extremely thin or thick books, or books that bind on the short side,” says Corliss. “Both the perfect binding equipment and the tab divider equipment drive color volume on our two Xerox iGen 4s and other printers.”

He adds, “Before adding this equipment we used local trade binderies who always did a great job at a good price, but doing it in house improves turnaround, eliminates the cost of pick up and delivery, and keeps revenue in-house.”

While high-end services contribute to the concept of providing value added services, the most popular finishing services are often very basic. “Although we provide UV coating, perfect binding, coil binding, laminating, and many other finishing products, our best selling finishing service is saddle stitching,” says Joe Davis, president of Gerald Printing in Bowling Green, KY. “This service is popular because it is economical and provides a very nice looking finished product. We are able to insert return envelopes in books and newsletters when required as well.”

Edie Goldberg, who, with her husband Lou, owns Goodcopy Printing & Digital Graphics in New Haven, CT, also finds plenty of business from the basics. “Folding is the most popular because almost every job requires some kind of folding – from the simple half fold to a job we have in house now that is an eight-panel fold down to 2.25x3.75” finished size.”

And in Pittsburgh, Bob Weingard, president of Print Tech of Western PA, says, “I think plastic coil binding is our best
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finishing service, with Duplo book-letmaking being a close second. I think it's popular because it looks better and is less expensive than GBC plastic binding. Also, it lays flat and is easy to open and close."

Make It Special

Although simple services are the most popular, the most memorable jobs are anything but simple. Those jobs illustrate how important finishing can be to making your company stand out from the crowd.

Goldberg says her most memorable finishing job was for a high end appliance wholesaler which involved unusual die-cutting and folding. "We won first place in PrintImage Excellence Awards for die-cutting," she relates. "The customer loved the finished product, and they also won an award in their industry."

At Gerald Printing, Davis takes on the annual challenge of designing commencement program covers for a local college. "This year...we chose Knightkote Matte Crème Cover 80-pound, printed a gradient metallic gold swoosh effect at the bottom of the cover that bled off the sheet, then simply printed the text in black ink," he explains. "What made it pop: the school's seal was not only embossed into the sheet, but also we added spot UV coating to the seal. The results were impressive and many compliments were received."



Folding is one of the simplest finishing services, but it is still one of the most popular - and most profitable options.
Photo: Rollem International

But Weingard's favorite job points out that service is still a key ingredient in any job. His company produced the media guides for the Pittsburgh Steelers during last year's playoffs. "The media guides were several hundred pages thick and were coil bound," he says. "These were produced after each playoff game victory. If the playoff game was on a Sunday it was all hands on deck Sunday night. The updated files came to us about 6:00 p.m. on Sunday and the guides had to be

ready Monday morning for the news conference. It was pretty exciting because the Steelers kept winning the playoff games and eventually won the Super Bowl."

That never could have happened if Weingard had relied on outsourcing his finishing services. "With their investment in the right finishing automation, printers can enhance the value of their services by providing their clients with a one-stop shop," states Duplo's Nguyen. "This all equates to quicker job delivery times and higher customer retention."

"There is money to be made in the bindery," David Spiel concludes. "Too many printers send out their work when they can do it themselves for far less. I often speak to quick printers who could pay for a machine with the money they spend sending out their work in a year or two. Does that make sense? Furthermore, you can bring in outside work to bind and bring in more revenue." ▀▀

Small-Format Finishing **PRODUCT ROUNDUP**

Information used for this product roundup has been provided by the vendors, whose claims or features have not been verified. As always, buyers should thoroughly research all products before making a purchase.



Transfer Station

On Demand Machinery auto-feed transfer station is now available. Cased-in hard cover books come off the Super Sticker conveyor belt and are gripped and lifted 90 degrees upright onto the transfer station's conveyor belt. An electronic eye aligns each book for transfer into the Super Smasher for hydraulic building-in. The transfer feed station can delivery up to 600 cased-in books per hour.

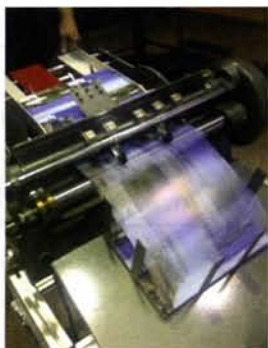
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Kompac EZ Koat 15

Kompac Technologies has released the Kompac EZ Koat 15, a small footprint, high powered UV and aqueous coater capable of coating a sheet size of 14.5" wide by virtually any length. It is suitable for both digital output and offset. Made in the USA, the coater features solid state UV, which is environmentally friendly and replaces outdated, potentially hazardous ballast/mercury relay systems used in curing UV coatings. The unit can apply UV, aqueous, and specialty coatings and primers with variable speed and UV intensity. Patent pending shutter technology prevents over curing when the coating process is interrupted. Coating change and clean up take less than five minutes with the patented Kompac Vac.

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Champion 990 DS

Roller's dual-feed Champion 990 DS delivers perforating, scoring, and slitting at speeds up to 18,000 sheets per hour with a small footprint. This system is designed for smaller shops or those not requiring a high level of automation. Its manual dual feeding trays are ideal for lower volume runs. With the double head design, the first head lightly scores while the second head follows with a deeper score. This reduces the chance of ink cracking, regardless of coverage, grain direction, or stock weight. The Champion 18" and 24" models are the most common sizes for digital finishing, but wider models are also available — in 30", 36", and 42".

WWW.MYPRINTRESOURCE.COM/10007767

MBM Aerocut Slitter/Cutter/Creaser

The newly introduced MBM Aerocut slitter/cutter/creaser features an air feed system that eliminates marking and double feeds. Stocks, including gloss, laminated, and UV-coated, can be creased without cracking, even with full-bleed ink coverage. An on-line perforating unit snaps into place. The touch screen control panel features addition and preset cutting modes and comes pre-programmed with 83 cutting templates. Up to 50 additional custom programs can be entered and stored in memory. Crease depth can be adjusted using a five-position crease depth dial located on the front of the machine.

WWW.MYPRINTRESOURCE.COM/10006599



Duplo DC-745 Slitter/Cutter/Creaser

The DC-745 Slitter/Cutter/Creaser from Duplo is an all-in-one digital color finisher. Performing up to 10 slits, 20 cuts, and 15 creases in a single pass, it eliminates white borders and toner cracking on digital color documents at speeds of up to 50 sheets per minute. The unit also offers a user friendly PC controller for quick job changeovers, new cross- and micro-perforation options, as well as increased feeding capacity and elevator stacking function. It is capable of finishing full-bleed digital color applications, including jobs such as business cards, brochures, greeting cards, catalogs, and photos.

WWW.MYPRINTRESOURCE.COM/10005029



Standard Horizon BQ-270C Perfect Binder

The Standard Horizon BQ-270C Perfect Binder features high quality production perfect binding with fully automated operation and push-button simplicity. This single clamp binder is designed for single-person production of up to 500 books per hour, and requires minimal operator training. Standard features include an ergonomically situated digital caliper that measures book thickness and automatically transfers the settings to the binder for quick, automated changeover, color touch screen control console, efficient single-edition POD book production, automatic air-suction cover feeding with in-line scoring, job programming, and same-location loading and unloading for easier single-person operation. The BQ-270C is positioned to meet the demands of the short-run, print-on-demand book market.

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