

# DIGI YOU KNOW?

Your printing is very important. As you may know Beacon provides both traditional lithographic and digital print. The question is, which is best for your print job? We thought you might like a simple guide which may help you choose the right printing process for your job.

**Digital printing** is generally more economical as it's a direct-to-paper printing process. It is also usually much **faster** since no pre-press work or setup is needed (but bear in mind there may be other jobs in the queue). One to four days is a standard turnaround time for Beacon. Because digital printing is a four-colour print process, you can sometimes get slightly inferior colour accuracy. The reason for this is that there are basically four colours, cyan, magenta, yellow and black. These are printed in tiny dots that, when visually mixed together, create various colours. This, in addition to the different set-ups and settings on the machines from one press to another, batch-to-batch and printer-to-printer, can produce a wider range of different colour results, therefore you may not get as great a colour range. Digital print has some slight limitations on the brightness, saturation and range of colours available so when it is vital that the end result shows bright vibrant rich colour, or it needs to be an exact colour match, lithographic printing is a better choice. But digital technology is advancing rapidly and our Xerox Docucolour 250 press is one of the best digital presses available today, providing a very high quality result with vibrant colours. We have used it to produce a wide variety of jobs for prestigious clients who have been thrilled with the results we have achieved.

One of the greatest outgrowths of digital printing has been Variable Data Printing or VDP (also known as Variable Information Printing or VIP) in which elements such as text, graphics or images may be changed from one printed piece to the next without stopping or slowing down the press, using information from a database or an external file. For example, a set of personalised letters, each with the same basic layout, can be printed with a different name and address. Variable data printing is mainly used for direct

marketing, customer relationship management and advertising.

## **Traditional lithographic printing**

The main differentiator between the two printing processes is the Pantone Matching System (PMS). Pantone colours are mixed to precise, pre-set specifications, which are printed each year in their colour matching guides. Most companies have their logos in a precise 'individual' and recognisable 'corporate' colour and it's this **excellent colour accuracy** and the intensity of colours mixed with pigment rich inks that make litho printing so special.

However litho print is more expensive due to setup costs. For press printing 'plates' are made, then time is spent setting up and aligning the press, then washing it down at the end of each day. Also, you cannot program in a specific number of pages to be printed (as you can with a digital printer) so the machine always runs over a little and will waste more. There are a number of stages involved in press printing so it generally takes a little longer than digital printing. First plates must be made, then when the paper has been 'run' the job may need time to dry. After that it may be cut, folded or creased. There is **no limit to the range of papers** you have to choose from with lithographic print, choose from a rainbow of colours and a wide range of thicknesses and textures, specialty papers such as vellum and metallic papers. All finishing options are possible including **embossing, foil stamping** and **diecutting** to innovative formats, shapes, and sizes. Metallic inks can also be run through the press. In short, you can create materials that really stand out using these techniques.

We hope this has demystified the pros and cons of both litho and digital printing for you, but if you are still in doubt, just give us a shout and we'll be happy to advise you!