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Analysis

## xpedx Adds New Services to Aid Commercial and In-Plant Printers

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### Abstract

Over the past month, xpedx has added several new products and services to help North American printers become more efficient and gain competitive advantage in the marketplace. These include the development of an affordable lenticular printing system, dual-sided imposition proofing technology, new digital papers, innovative and cost-effective variable data printing options, and chain-of-custody certification programs for printers. Most of these announcements were made during Graph Expo 2007 in Chicago and enabled xpedx to distinguish itself from its competition.

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## Introduction

xpedx has introduced new initiatives, products, and services to help print professionals and their businesses become more profitable, efficient, and productive. In addition to all of the announcements discussed in this document, xpedx plans to expand its offering of traditional graphics supplies for printers within pre-press (CTP, platesetters, workflow) and the pressroom (paper, blankets, plates, inks, and pressroom chemistry). xpedx featured Kodak's All-in-One CTP package, which includes workflow, platesetters, and digital plates. The company also showed post-press products such as collators and perfect binders from C.P. Bourg, folders and folding equipment from Baumfolder Corporation and cutting solutions from Perfecta. Based in Loveland, Ohio, xpedx, a division of International Paper, says it is one of the largest business-to-business distribution companies in the U.S. with more than \$6.7 billion in 2006 revenues and operations in 260 North American locations.

## Hardware

### ***xpedx Introduces New Full-Format RYOBİ Printing Press to U.S. Market***

xpedx Printing Technologies and Ryobi showed the new full-format RYOBİ 920 Series of four- and five-color presses at Graph Expo 2007 in Chicago, September 9-12. The 8-up press is the largest ever introduced by Ryobi in the U.S. and xpedx is the exclusive U.S. marketer and distributor of Ryobi-branded presses. The RYOBİ 924, a 24" x 36" four-color press, was in the booth at the show as well as Ryobi's half- and quarter-size presses with dryers, coaters, and UV systems. The new RYOBİ 920 Series, including the RYOBİ 924, targets commercial, in-plant, and specialty printers who are looking to affordably obtain the capabilities of a full-size press. Applications for the series include book printing, pocket folders, posters, and other specialty jobs. The new RYOBİ 920 series has a double-diameter cylinder and transfer drum design, which minimizes marking. The press prints up to 24-point stock and runs at 16,200 sheets (270 ipm) per hour. Other press features include semi-automatic plate loading, suction tape feeder board, the PCS-G Printing Control Console with programmed inking, Ryobi-matic continuous dampening, ink roller, and blanket auto-cleaning. Add-on options are also available including impression pressure preset system and CIP4-ink volume setter.

### ***xpedx Helps U.S. Printers with Variable Data Printing***

xpedx introduced a new program to help U.S. printers install and produce variable data printing at their facility. The program builds on the "pay-per-click" digital press acquisition program by adding new variable data printing (VDP) software as well as training. The xpedx "pay-per-click" program enables printers to get a production-rated refurbished digital press installed in their facility but only pay for each piece produced. The digital press is typically a Xerox. "The response to the program has been strong from printers coast-to-coast because there are no capital requirements to begin producing digital print," said Dan Wish, General Manager of the xpedx National Technology Center in Twinsburg, Ohio.

xpedx expanded the program to provide printers with specialized software and training. Printers can elect to pay for the xpedx VDP solution once they start selling print jobs to customers. The program lets printers pay for only the printed piece, a flat fee per page for high-end, short run digital printing. The printer does not need to invest new capital to access variable data printing capabilities. xpedx coordinates the installation of the digital press in the printer's facility and trains staff on VDP and ways to best create and print it. The digital presses can be upgraded, replaced, or removed upon the printer's request.

A printer can choose to pay for freight, installation, and training with a monthly minimum click volume and receive a discount per click, or, a higher click for customers that choose not to pay up-front costs, but users have an option to install digital presses and add VDP capabilities with minimal cash outlay. Click pricing ranges from 1 to 55 cents per click or printed piece. The price per click depends on the amount of upfront commitment. The higher end of the range would include a higher-end digital press and a full VDP package, but the exact charge depends on what types of financial and term commitment the printer would have up front.

## Media

### ***xpedx Introduces New, High-Brightness Paper***

xpedx launched Vector Performance DI, a new coated printing paper designed for digital printing equipment. Used by commercial printers, businesses, and other high-volume printing operations, Vector is available exclusively through xpedx and is stocked in a variety of sizes and weights. The precision mill sheet meets 7- and 9-point postal regulations and is guaranteed by xpedx. The new paper is offered in gloss and matte finishes and is available in 80# and 100# text and cover weights. It is manufactured specifically for digital presses and production-rated color copiers including those from Kodak, Xerox, and HP Indigo. The high-bright sheet contains 15% post-consumer waste fiber and it is RIT certified for digital toner and ink applications. Vector Performance DI joins the other Vector products that include Vector Multipurpose, Vector Engineering Rolls, Vector Coated DI, computer forms, and other papers.

### ***xpedx Offers Special Effects Printing***

xpedx introduced Opticular, a production package for lenticular printing that gives print and creative professionals a way to produce special effects such as zoom, flip, 3D imaging, motion, and morph. Opticular is a turnkey package distributed exclusively by xpedx that costs between \$20,000-\$25,000, about one-tenth the cost of other lenticular printing systems. The equipment used in Opticular has a small footprint. Lenticular printing has unlimited applications including posters, brochure covers, packaging, point of purchase displays, mailers, and novelty items. Dan Wish, General Manager of the xpedx National Technology Center in Twinsburg, Ohio, developed the Opticular process and says there is nothing else like it on the market. xpedx also worked with parent International Paper Co., which has a patent pending in connection with Opticular.

The Opticular for digital special effects package contains a specially engineered toner-based Oki Data print engine, a custom version of special effects software, a laminator, cutter, and the specially-designed substrate. The xpedx package enables lenticular prints to be made with any photo and a few clicks of a mouse, eliminating complex steps often required by competing lenticular print processes. The cost of the sheet can range from \$6 to \$10 and the charge for a finished print can be as high as \$40 per page due to the results the print produces. Companies that have used lenticular printing in their marketing efforts report that it substantially increases sales as well as image and brand recall.

## Pre-press

### ***xpedx Improves Proofing Capability***

At Graph Expo 2007, xpedx demonstrated an online proofing technology which is available for \$1 per page with no extra charges or special software or hardware needed. Partnering with PROOF-it-ONLINE ([www.proofitonline.com](http://www.proofitonline.com)), reviewers can markup and comment directly to the proof online and the printer can post the updated proof as many times as needed. Once the print project has been fully proofed online, the printer can then create a final color-matched proof locally and send it to press, speeding workflow and reducing time and expense. xpedx customers can log onto their secure account and post projects via the Internet. Proofs are reviewed and edited with standard annotation and mark-up tools. When the reviewer is finished, they set the approval status and the proof is returned. The PROOF-it-ONLINE application tracks all changes, and incorporates time/date stamps on all activities. It provides reporting and archiving for management control. The Web-hosted solution enables companies to manage and track their proofs in a centralized location and allows their customers to markup/edit proofs in their browser and deliver approval back to the creative professional in minutes.

### ***xpedx Creates New System for Dual-Sided Imposition Proofs***

To serve the tens of thousands of mid-sized commercial and in-plant printers across North America, the new KwikFlip dual-sided imposition proofing system is a low-cost product and service that's compatible with nearly all Epson large-format inkjet printers used for proofing. Some mid-sized printers have invested in automatic imposition proofing systems, but they often run into performance troubles related to non-continuous use or varying climate conditions. Many printers do imposition proofs this way: output one page, spray adhesive on the back, output the second page, then glue them together. With KwikFlip, the cost is about \$5 a sheet. Again, Dan Wish, General Manager of the xpedx National Technology Center in Twinsburg, Ohio, invented KwikFlip and markets the product exclusively.

KwikFlip is not sensitive to humidity or subject to complex workflow connections like automatic dual-feed imposition printers. It is available for less than \$5,000, which includes installation, printer training, and related expenses. KwikFlip is compatible with five Epson models: 7600, 7800, 9600, 9800, and 10600. When combined with the EFI RIP and a fast bi-directional ICC profile, it creates accurate, backed-up four-up or eight-up low-resolution proofs. Once users are trained on how to create the alignment, they can do their own troubleshooting, re-aligning, and can fix any problem that would otherwise require technical support.

KwikFlip comes with one day of on-site set-up and training from an xpedx technician, one ICC profile of imposition media to enable faster production speeds, two starter boxes of ColorLok imposition paper media and media guides.

## Services

### ***xpedx Offers Access to Chain-of-Custody Certification***

xpedx is helping U.S. commercial and in-plant printers obtain both Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) chain-of-custody certifications. At Graph Expo, xpedx provided answers to printers who wanted to learn more about what it takes to obtain dual certification for their

print company or in-plant. xpedx does not charge for the consultation and is the only paper and graphics distributor to assist printers in obtaining full national, dual chain-of-custody certification for their printing companies.



xpedx says that businesses, non-profits, and government entities are increasingly requesting third-party certified printing papers and environmental responsibility for their paper sourcing. Printers cannot claim full SFI or FSC certification on their products without having chain-of-custody certification of their print facility, buying certified papers and using chain-of-custody certified suppliers. Printer certification allows printers to compete for print projects and contracts which require papers with total third-party certification, from forest to print shop.

xpedx said that more than 200 U.S. commercial printers have signed up for the xpedx “starter kit” to begin the process of obtaining dual certification from Bureau Veritas Certification (BVC) of Jamestown, NY which has served more than 70,000 companies in 60 nations. BVC audits and provides the chain-of-custody certification to printers and is recognized by 30 accreditation bodies around the globe. BVC provides a range of quality, environmental, health and safety, social and security related auditing, verification, and training for companies. xpedx says print companies or in-plants that receive both SFI and FSC certification can provide access to a greater breadth of papers that today’s print customers require. In 2006, xpedx became the first U.S. printing paper distributor to obtain SFI and FSC chain-of-custody certifications at all of its 260 locations and retail stores, as well as xpedx.com.-

### ***New RYOBi Demonstration and Learning Center in Kansas City***

xpedx Printing Technologies will open the first-ever Ryobi press demonstration and learning center on October 22 in Lenexa, Kansas. The 20,000 square foot center will provide education and demonstrations of Ryobi press capabilities, as well detailed information on the latest print technologies such as UV, chemical embossing, spot-metallic color, and lenticular printing. xpedx Printing Technologies is the exclusive marketer and distributor of Ryobi-branded printing equipment in the U.S. xpedx has a network of 50 sales and service dealers for Ryobi presses nationwide.

Presses shown at the Lenexa facility will rotate, enabling printers to see demonstrations and gain technical and business knowledge about specific Ryobi presses. When the facility opens, the following presses will be shown:

- RYOBi 755: 23” x 29” five-color press with coater
- RYOBi 525GX: 14” x 20” high-speed two-up sheetfed press with coater
- RYOBi 784E: Economy, 23” x 31” four-color, six-up press that requires 40 percent less floor space than the RYOBi 754. It has all the capabilities of a 23” x 29” press with a smaller footprint and a bigger sheet size.

- RYOBI 524HE: Entry level, economy 14" x 20" two-up, four-color press
- RYOBI 3404E DI: A3-plus size portrait format 4-color offset press with direct imaging.

xpedx Printing Technologies wants to showcase Ryobi print quality and press performance through Ryobi Print Test Challenges. Printers can send in their most challenging print jobs to the center where facility technicians will demonstrate how Ryobi presses can print high-lpi screens and heavy solids on challenging substrates.

The new center will double as a complete pre-production facility, with part of it strictly dedicated to managing and handling digital files. Technicians at the center will produce plates and demonstrate a variety of production scenarios and workflows. The facility is also GRACoL G7 certified to meet state-of-the-art print production standards. A full-time technician certified to teach G7 process controls for printing, including press fingerprinting, ICC profiling, and color management will be on staff at the facility. The company will also host G7-certification classes at the center to train individuals to become G7-certified consultants.

xpedx Printing Technologies has six staff members on site to educate printers as well as train new Ryobi press owners. The staff includes a technical support person from Japan on-site year-round and a newly named sheetfed press demonstrator and trainer, William Stahl, a 21-year-veteran pressman with expertise in UV production equipment, high-end bookwork, annual report production, and more. International Paper and Stora Enso (NewPage acquisition pending) are the preferred vendors of uncoated and coated papers to the Ryobi demonstration and learning center as well as for all tradeshow.

### ***xpedx and KBA Form Alliance***

KBA North America, a leading manufacturer of printing presses, and xpedx formed a joint marketing agreement under which KBA will use printing papers from xpedx and include xpedx products in its press demonstrations, education and training seminars, and print tests. xpedx experts will join KBA representatives at the KBA customer center in Williston, Vermont during customer training seminars to talk about paper performance on-press. The alliance between KBA and xpedx will result in expanded efforts to help U.S. printers obtain large-format papers, which can be difficult to source. xpedx and KBA have selected International Paper and Sappi as preferred paper suppliers for the KBA center. IP provides uncoated papers and Sappi provides coated papers.

### ***xpedx and Geodis Form Alliance***

xpedx and Geodis, two providers of third-party logistics services, recently formed a global strategic alliance that enables both companies to expand their service and geographic reach for customers worldwide. These two companies provide a range of supply chain management services to some of the world's largest companies, manufacturers, and retailers. The new alliance will offer the full range of logistics including air, sea, multi-modal transport, asset and inventory management, reverse logistics, demand planning, and Web-based custom reporting, which provides detailed information on all aspects of a customer's supply chain. The alliance enables the two companies to better serve and support their customers' needs for logistics services across North America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and South America.

## Conclusion

xpedx is continually striving to help printers profit by finding high-profit business niches with a low capital expenditure. In addition, xpedx is uniquely positioned with the power, support, and expertise of International Paper behind it to complement any business direction that the companies determine to be in the best interest of customers. Catering to its customers with these new services and initiatives should enable xpedx to reap large dividends. By supplying the components for every aspect of their businesses and providing the tools to succeed, xpedx will make its customers more efficient. This will make xpedx more important to its customers, and this is the foundation of a long-standing and successful business relationship.

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