



Kodak solutions drive high-volume plate production at The Villages Daily Sun

Nothing has a more voracious appetite for litho plates than a newspaper offset web press.

CUSTOMER

The Villages Daily Sun, is a US-based printing company.

CHALLENGE

When in full production, The Villages Daily Sun required over 200 plates to run per hour at 1,200 dpi to meet their requirements. The printer needed a device with faster output speeds for a wide-format plate to keep up with their high-volume plate production and the variety of products the press produces.

SOLUTION

The extensive automation of the KODAK GENERATION NEWS Platesetter reduces labor dependency while enhancing production, allowing long periods of continuous operation without operator intervention. Reducing startup waste and previous manufacturing defects, KODAK SONORA XTRA Process Free Plates also significantly reduce maintenance, and improve quality and overall performance.

The Villages Daily Sun, a newspaper and commercial printer in Central Florida is keeping its web offset equipment well fed on a diet of KODAK SONORA Process Free Plates served up by a pair of KODAK GENERATION NEWS Thermal CTP Platesetters – a combination that gives the pressroom the volume and the versatility it needs to stay ahead of a rising demand.

The Villages Daily Sun has a long-standing reputation for quality as a coldset web offset printer. Its flagship product, The Daily Sun newspaper, grew from a small hometown paper into one of the largest daily papers in Florida.

The main press at The Villages Daily Sun is a Koenig & Bauer Commander CT web with a total capacity of 96 plates in three printing towers and a top speed of 90,000 copies per hour. Keeping up with it in prepress created a demand for plate throughput that the plant's two original CTP devices were far from being able to satisfy.





“When we are in full production, we require just over 200 plates per hour at 1,200 dpi to meet our full replacement requirement,” says Steven A. Infinger, Director of Operations. Working in tandem in Z-speed mode, the GENERATION NEWS Platesetters are more than up to the task with their doubled outputs of 115 plates per hour at that resolution in a 36-inch plate format.

“We needed faster output speeds for a wide-format plate, and GENERATION NEWS Platesetters was the only choice for our new facility,” Infinger says, referring to The Villages Daily Sun plant in Coleman, FL, where the Commander has been in operation since April 2021. “We run a 36-inch plate, and that allows us to put three 12-inch broadsheet pages across a single plate. It was a clear choice for us because the other equipment that we looked at didn’t meet our needs for speed and output of that size plate.”

Within that pagination, says Infinger, “we can produce a 12-inch, an 11-inch, and a 10-inch broadsheet and tabloid format. That gives us six significantly different types of formats, which is unusual for most presses. We can also produce an 18-inch long tab and similar products that are quarter-folded.”

“ We moved to thermal process free plates many years ago. We preferred the quality, the reduction of maintenance, and the overall performance of process free plates.”

Automated high efficiency

The extensive automation of GENERATION NEWS Platesetters enables them to hold up to 1,600 broadsheet plates in four cassettes for fully automatic loading and long periods of continuous operation without operator intervention. According to Infinger, this is a capability that the Village Daily Sun’s pressroom is taking full advantage of.

“The auto plate loading of the cassettes in GENERATION NEWS is the most beneficial aspect, so that we have a larger number of plates that we can put through,” he says. “It has four cassettes that let us run different sized plates for our presses inside one machine. The GENERATION NEWS will pick the right size plate for the job.”

Built for the large dimensions of newspaper printing, the Kodak devices can easily accommodate the Commander CT’s 72"-inch, double-wide plate cylinder configuration. This feature is the key, Infinger explains, to the variety of products the press is capable of producing.

Printing in web offset’s collect mode – two plates around the cylinder, as opposed to one in straight mode – the Commander CT can produce a 72-page broadsheet for a total of 144 tabloid pages in a single production run.

The common printing denominator for all of these products is the SONORA Process Free Plate, the only type used in the GENERATION NEWS Platesetters and the two older devices that remain in service. The SONORA Plate’s unique technology eliminates the need for wet processing along with the costs and the harsh chemicals that go with it, maximizing savings and efficiencies in prepress and the pressroom.

Early adopter of process free

“We found that our startup waste was significantly reduced with SONORA Plates,” Infinger adds, noting that the manufacturing defects encountered in other brands – for example, emulsion and graining problems – are not issues with SONORA Plates.

The plant that houses the GENERATION NEWS Platesetters and the Commander CT is a 100,000-sq.-ft. facility built as a greenfield project in the Governor Rick Scott Industrial Park in Coleman. Business is brisk, and the key to handling the workload, according to Infinger, is the plant’s ability to turn out more than 200 SONORA Process Free Plates per hour on its twin GENERATION NEWS Platesetters.

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