



Trelleborg Blankets Help Japanese Printer, Shashin Kagaku, achieve required high quality

Shashin Kagaku Co., Ltd.

One condition for the steady running of UV offset printing presses is to choose optimum materials. After introducing Trelleborg's Vulcan Sunrise UV printing blankets from Gadelius, Shashin Kagaku's Kusatsu Plant was able to solve the challenges it faced, thereby providing stable print quality and improving production efficiency. *Printing Experts* talked with members of the Manufacturing Division of Kusatsu Plant, Manufacturing Group Leader Mr. Kubo and Mr. Hattori, Group Printing Team Leader.

Introducing high-sensitivity UV presses, to improve quality and efficiency

Shashin Kagaku Co., Ltd.'s was founded in 1868. The business began in Kyoto with intaglio printing using copper plates and evolved over the years, continuing to apply advanced image processing and electronic technology. The company has become increasingly diverse over the past 30 years.

Today, the company consists of its Media Company, Product Company and Healthcare Business Department. The Printing Department is part of the Media Company, and it is located in the Printing Plant/Kusatsu Factory in Kusatsu City, Shiga Prefecture, Japan. Its main print products include brochures, company reports, product catalogs and other similar items, although the demand for candy wrapper printing has also grown in recent years.

Many of the company's clients are very critical, but the orders coming from around Japan show the consistent high quality resulting from its thorough color management. At this Japan Color-certified plant, print density, dot gain and other factors are managed numerically, while, during printing, the consistent, high-quality printed material is ensured by ongoing corrections using specialized equipment.

Printing presses at Sashin Kagaku include a Heidelberg high-sensitivity UV offset press and a Speedmaster oil-based offset press. The company used oil-based presses for many years, but to further improve quality and increase efficiency, the high-sensitivity UV press was introduced two years ago.

Lost time due to quality issues

Soon after the high-sensitivity UV press was introduced, challenges emerged. The pattern printed on the blanket immediately before was appearing on the next image, a problem known



as the phantom effect, along with paper edge marks. This resulted in an increased amount of time spent in changing blankets.

Changing a blanket takes 10 to 15 minutes each, and with four blankets needing to be changed for four-color printing, the time loss is about one hour per set. When working on a job with a short delivery time, this added work is a problem.

Shashin Kagaku wanted to prevent this issue. Mr. Hattori says that, although blankets are normally replaced after one million copies, “It wasn’t uncommon for us to have a failure after just 20,000 to 30,000 copies.”

In addition, there were also troubles with murky colors due the ‘back trapping’, causing great stress in the workplace. This didn’t make sense when the whole reason for purchasing the press was to maintain high quality and increase work efficiency. The lost time meant overtime and with system adjustments needed to guarantee quality and delivery times, times were tough times for over a year.

Taking advantage of the original strengths of the high-sensitivity UV printing press

Concerned about this situation, Gadelius proposed a new product, the Trelleborg’s Vulcan Sunrise printing blanket, in September 2017. Good results were obtained after a test run, so the blanket was introduced on a short-term basis.

Since the introduction of Vulcan Sunrise, the phantom effect, paper edge marks and back trapping problems improved significantly. At the same time, where the company previously was using some 25 blankets a month, the number dropped to just 8, and productivity also dramatically increased. Overtime also decreased, and print operators could once again focus on quality control.

“Lost time has really gone down, and I can once again see the strengths of the high-sensitivity UV press,” Mr. Hattori says. “Because the printing is quick drying, it is ideal when short delivery times are needed. Since the quality is comparable to that of oil-based inks, it now has taken on the work of reprinting materials previously printed on oil presses. With Vulcan Sunrise’s durability, I think that we could get one million runs with it. Because we want to make blankets last longer, we don’t rely solely on automatic press cleaning but use solvent for a final, thorough hand cleaning.”

Moving ahead in maintaining quality and improving systems

“We do need to work on new things, but for our existing printed materials, I really want to keep consistent high quality as our priority,” Mr. Kubo says. However, this is not just about maintaining the status quo. He notes that, every day, the goal is to always realize the highest



quality level possible, realizing intentions through craftsmanship. “The printing industry is in a tough situation now,” says Mr. Hattori about quality management. “That’s why I want to keep the printing quality level that we have maintained so far. Quality is a tool for gaining customer’s trust.”

But while maintaining the current high quality, materials and systems still can be improved. Mr. Kubo, on the other hand, says, “I’d like to try more and more good things, and look for efficiency. There are a lot of products we are trying out, including solvents. So it’s not impossible that we might replace an oil-based press with a high-sensitivity UV press. But if we do, we will of course choose Vulcan Sunrise, which we have come to trust”

For Shashin Kagaku and other printing company clients, Gadelius will continue to bring in the very best products from Europe, so that we always have a solution to meet their needs.

End

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Founded: 1868

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