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CTP big part of New York Post's success story

By Tara McMeekin
Managing Editor

As part of the New York Post's operations at its new 430,000-square-foot production facility, the newspaper implemented a computer-to-plate workflow. The equipment was already in place when the newspaper was forced to take up operations early at its new facility — located in the Port Morris section of the south Bronx — as a result of the events of Sept. 11, 2001.

CTP was implemented at the new plant in succession with the startup of the new Goss Newliner presses at the plant, affectionately called "Postliners."

"CTP was a part of the big picture," said Joe Vincent, vice president of operations for the newspaper. "Sept. 11 forced our hand to use not only the new presses, but all of the equipment."

There were some press installation issues that had delayed startup, but by September, the Post was getting ready to make the move to the new facility. Because the old production facility was virtually inaccessible after Sept. 11, the move came earlier in the month than anyone had anticipated.

The Post tested the CTP units and the parent company, News Corp., had internal consultants on hand to help out with the plate chemistry and bringing online the last of the four DiamondSetter 435 CTP lines from Western Lithotech, now a Lastra Group Co.

None of the employees that remain at the Post were involved in the CTP vendor selection.

"There's been a complete change of management here," Vincent said.

The Post was struggling when Vincent first came on board, but in addition to Vincent, News Corp. brought in people from some of its other papers, including newspapers in Australia and England, to help with the transition.

"One of the great things about this company I work for ... they've been able to take good, talented people out of their high performing units and move them to locations where they can use those talents — maybe to a weak area."

Prior to coming to the Post, Vincent had been the director of operations for The New York Times' College Point printing facility and he witnessed several problems during their implementation of CTP. For the Post, however, the transition to CTP was a very smooth one.

"I just haven't seen an installation go this smooth," Vincent said. "I feel like Western has partnered with us — they've put an engineer here. It's not like you call and somebody shows up a week later. They've gone out of their way. If you look at the building as a whole, to come up from nothing to printing 800,000 (copies) a night on three presses, the plateline has to work."

Western Lithotech also customized parts of the application specifically for the needs of the Post.

Western Litho 'steps up to the plate'

The Post is running about 15,000 plates per week and has just begun its first dayside printing operation.

"We'll walk, crawl and eventually run," Vincent said.

The Post uses Western Lithotech's LY-8 plates and Western's Optical Punch Bender. Plates are processed on Glunz & Jensen InterPlater units.

Although Vincent wasn't involved in choosing the CTP units, he said he has been very pleased with the service and support the newspaper has received.

"Western stepped out of the plateroom and actually helped us with registration issues on the press. They looked at pins, they took engineering measurements," Vincent said. "They didn't have to do that, it's not really their issue whatsoever. I really think that's stepping up to the plate."

CTP, in tandem with the process color capability of the Goss presses, has enabled the Post — which formerly printed only black-and-white and spot color — to increase its color capability.

"It's given us the ability to go from a newspaper that never printed color ... to having probably the best color reproduction in the United States right now, and if it's not it soon will be," Vincent said. "You can compare us with basically any newspaper that's printed — they're not in our league anymore, and the Western CTP definitely ties into that."

Vincent said the DiamondSetters have reduced the number of variables in the Post's production process because they do not experience plateroom issues since the move to CTP.

He said there are no bad plates coming out of the machines and they have not experienced any issues with plate washout, which is sometimes an issue with CTP.

"You can listen to our production reports night after night and you do not hear plateroom issues."