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Hybrid print finishing – Your answer to rapidly changing market needs

The increasing demand for ultra-short runs, customized printed matter, photo books and on-demand book orders means that many printing houses are switching to digital printing and finishing systems. Digital printing processes take into account the needs for both customization and short runs.

Since a complete conversion of printing processes from offset to digital is not a viable option for everyone, the tendency is to make gradual investments in digital printing. This often leads to a situation where both printing processes are used at a printing company. Print finishing that can handle intermediate products from both printing processes is the right answer in such circumstances. Hybrid solutions combine the benefits of offset and digital printing and enable printing plants to respond quickly and easily to changes in demand.

High print quality meets customization

Companies that have built up a customer base with a high level of quality awareness in the past are reluctant to implement digital printing systems. At the same time, equipment is optimized for either conventional or digital printing processes. This prevents many customers from taking the plunge into digital printing.

Hybrid finishing allows the new possibilities of digital printing to be combined with the familiar values of offset printing. Flexibility and individuality thereby meet tried-and-tested quality.



Why an integrated, hybrid solution is preferable

Today, companies that were previously exclusively active in the offset sector sometimes rashly upgrade to digital printing presses, without thinking about process and workflow matters. As a consequence, time-consuming manual interventions need to be made during production and finishing. This in turn leads to considerably longer production times, more errors due to manual intervention in the production process and therefore frequent, additional shifts.

In order to describe finishing as „hybrid“, it should allow a high degree of flexibility – format flexibility, a higher degree of automation for fast changeover times, and product type flexibility – but also meet high quality demands. Two examples of such machines from Muller Martini are the [Vareo](#) perfect binder and the [InfiniTrim](#) three-knife trimmer.

The example of our customer, Printondemand-worldwide, illustrates the effects of contemporary finishing. Not only can the number of necessary steps be reduced by up to 60 percent, it leads to an astonishing improvement in productivity. In fact, the reduction of manual steps also allows the efficiency of the production line-up to be increased to Optimized Equipment Efficiency (OEE). As a result, the return on investment (ROI) can be [achieved much faster](#).

Muller Martini's US customer DS Graphics describes its Primera MC Digital saddle stitching system as an „individual machine solution“. In fact, the modular concept allows a tailor-made configuration that is hybrid in two respects. On the one hand, the Primera MC Digital allows efficient processing of all conventional (large) orders - i.e. also customized, digitally printed products through to variable bundles optimized for postal routes. On the other hand, it enables the line itself to produce hybrid end products. Individual, digital content is combined with offset printed, generic content to significantly increase cost efficiency.

Keeping all options open

Hybrid systems, however, not only have advantages when it comes to flexibly meeting current market needs, they also keep all options open for printing houses to react quickly and cost-effectively to future trends and new technologies. Thanks to flexible accessories, the equipment can be configured to match customer needs or expanded on demand through extensions in line with requirements.

In addition, the [Connex workflow system](#) connects production facilities with higher-level systems using a standard interface. Products and services from Muller Martini support the development of fully integrated print finishing to allow maximum flexibility in the short, medium and long term.

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