

Business Spotlight

Ross Printing Company

Ross Printing Company was presented with the 2009 Clean Air Award at a ceremony in January. The award is presented annually by Spokane Clean Air to an organization that has consistently demonstrated a commitment to reduce air emissions.

“The award is given to publicly express our appreciation for innovation and to encourage others to follow suit,” said Bill Dameworth, Director of Spokane Clean Air.

Spokane’s oldest printing company found that green business initiatives often overlap with the printing industry’s best practices.

In 2008, Ross Printing implemented two major pollution prevention upgrades in an effort to conserve energy while reducing air emissions and hazardous waste. The company installed a new, solvent-free flexographic plate setter—a plate making system that combines the environmental and productivity benefits of thermal processing technology with the print quality and efficiency that the digital workflow has to offer.

There will be a 100% reduction in VOCs by using this new process, compared to the traditional solvent wash process. There are four key elements that make this solvent-free technology successful:

- ◆ The specially-formulated thermal photopolymer plates
- ◆ A digital (computer to plate) image setter

- ◆ An Ultra Violet (UV) exposure unit that sets the image into the plate with massive amounts of UV lights.

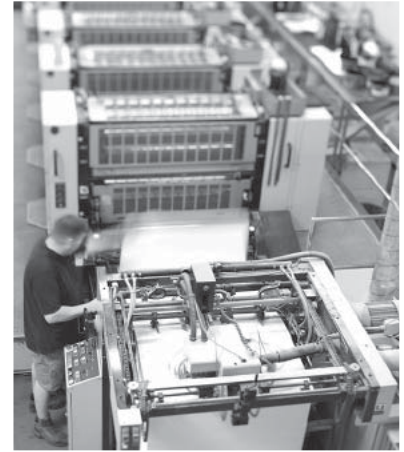
- ◆ A thermal developer that creates the relief structure on the printing plates without the use of solvents. The thermal process melts and removes the unexposed regions of the plate by the use of an absorbent development medium.

The second upgrade was a collaboration with Avista Utilities and Cougar Mechanical to install an energy efficient heating and cooling system in the company’s 35,000 square foot production facility. In the first six months of operation, an 8% reduction in electricity consumption and a 25% reduction in natural gas consumption has been achieved. Ross Printing is also looking at retrofitting its lighting ballasts to use low-energy bulbs.

“Our industry as a whole is probably cleaner now than any other time in its long history,” said Alan Ross, President and General Manager of the organization.

The effort to reduce their environmental impact doesn’t end there. Ross Printing has implemented additional waste and energy reduction measures over the past few years:

- ◆ Switched to low-VOC, soy-based inks and an alcohol-free press wash. When comparing emissions data from the past two years, Ross Printing had a 50% reduction in VOC emissions, from 1.5 tons to 0.8 tons per year.
- ◆ Recycled 34 tons of paper waste annually.



Going green isn’t just about cost savings. “We know this issue is important to our customers,” explains Benjamin Ross, Sales Manager for Ross Printing.

“We’re seeing more customers ask about papers made from 100% post-consumer material and we’re very excited to be able to meet that demand. We want people to know we’re thinking about these things,” continues Ross. “When we evaluate a new or existing process, one of the questions we’re asking is whether there is a green alternative and whether we can make it work for us. We take sustainability very seriously.”

Ross Printing provides digital, flexo and litho printing to customers in the Inland Northwest and across the United States. Located in Spokane’s historic East Sprague business district, the company has been a family-owned operation since opening in 1917.

Kudos and congratulations to Ross Printing! ■