

Case Study

Foremost Magnets & Print
Specialist print finisher
Commercial & Industrial Print

Ricoh helps world-leading specialist print finishing firm expand business, deliver 1st-class products and services



Foremost has become the UK's top fridge magnet maker and one of the world's leaders in medical trial documentation by delivering a fast and high-quality service to customers. At the core of its business operations is Ricoh digital colour print technology which

has helped the company master complex and demanding print work accurately and efficiently as well as reducing production time and opening up lucrative new business opportunities.

Executive summary

Name: Foremost Magnets/Foremost Print
Location: Banbury, Oxfordshire
Size: 13 staff
Activity: Specialist print finisher

Challenges

- Maintain reputation for fast, high-quality products
- Meet demand for complex, specialised printing
- Remove the need to outsource print operation

Solution

- Ricoh digital colour print technology

Benefits

- Delivers a high-quality, cost-effective specialist print capability
- Expands business opportunities - builds strategic partnerships, enables new online products and services
- Improves quality control with in-house, end-to-end print and production
- Helps reduce standard job turnaround from 15 to 5 days
- Ricoh print technology seen as "head and shoulders" above competitors

Challenges

Foremost Magnets & Print is a specialist print finisher offering a one-stop-shop for two main business operations – fridge magnet production and medical trial documentation. In the UK Foremost Magnets is the leading fridge magnet supplier with around 60 percent of the market. Foremost Print is one of the global leaders for producing medical trial documents with clients in the US and Europe.

Printing is fundamental to both areas of the company's business, but it is also complex and specialised. Foremost Magnets supplies the promotional products trade and its service includes manufacturing and distribution as well as printing. Printing fridge magnets is a demanding process because usually every single magnet requires different text and images.

For example, a recent job for an animal charity involved producing 480,000 individual units each with the name of the person who donated to the charity as well as different animal pictures. The process also involves printing on to laminate material which is then transferred onto the magnet. Foremost produces around six million fridge magnets every year.

Although Foremost's medical trial documentation is low volume, it also requires complex, high-quality print. A typical information pack has literature for both clinicians and patients and includes recruitment material; tabbed, wire-bound booklets; leaflets; posters; appointment reminder cards; and other communication literature. Print runs usually range from as little as 10 to a few thousand but they often require up to 30 different language versions. As well as printing, Foremost also packages the documentation and distributes it around the world.



Foremost has built its UK and global market-leading position by delivering fast, accurate and high-quality products and services. When the business started in 2007, it quickly decided to bring all aspects of production in-house to ensure speed of turnaround and quality control. This included magnet manufacturing, printing and packaging as well as the complete process for printing, cutting, binding and compiling medical trial document packs.

Lee Woodcock, Managing Director for both Foremost businesses, says, "Our core business is being a specialist print finisher, so we do everything in house that our clients require from manufacturing and printing to packaging and world-wide distribution. This is why we are able to make and print millions of magnets and pull together very complicated medical documentation and get them out correctly and on time. Printing is the ground-level process of all that we do, and it allows everything else to happen, so if we can't print we don't have anything to finish."

Solution

Foremost was launched in 2007 as a fridge magnet manufacturer, but quickly realised the importance of having all operations, including print, in-house. Acquisition of a local print firm and its medical trial documentation business reinforced the need for high-quality print equipment.

To find the best print resources, Foremost carried out extensive market research and technology evaluation. For example, consistency is a key part of Foremost's reputation for quality. One selection criteria was to test supplier products with a trial job then repeat the same job a month later to see if the print equipment could reproduce the same quality each time.

"From the start we decided to use Ricoh technology and we've stayed with Ricoh ever since because it continues to deliver what it promises. Ricoh delivers high-quality print, but also flexibility in the post-print process. A key reason for choosing Ricoh over its competitors is the ability to handle laminates much better. We print on a plastic lamination then glue this to the magnets, but heat in the print process can impact the image and melt the glue," says Woodcock. "The first printer we got was the Ricoh Pro C720 and it was by far the best at negating that problem. But the latest technology from Ricoh – the Ricoh Pro C7100 – is even better. It allows us to run litho laminates – which are cheaper than digital ones - on the Ricoh presses which is a real bonus and helps us keep costs down. Also, the out and out print quality of the latest generation of Ricoh digital print technology is really, really good."

continued overleaf

Case Study Foremost

As well as the Ricoh Pro C7100, Foremost also has a Ricoh Pro C901. Both devices sit alongside a whole suite of print finishing equipment. In addition to the equipment, Ricoh provides training and on-going support, working alongside Foremost to come up with new ways of using the presses for complex jobs.

Benefits

The Ricoh technology has been a key part of Foremost's ability to provide its customers with a fast, high-quality and reliable service.

"There are high-quality printers out there if you've got the money, but the improvement is not relational to the cost and size of those machines. From our experience and the amount of time we've spent researching print technology, going to shows, visiting different showrooms and evaluating devices, the absolute quality of the Ricoh digital print equipment for footprint and value for money is just head and shoulders above everything else," says Woodcock.

And for the company, Ricoh quality is more than print on paper. Woodcock says, *"It's not just how well the Ricoh presses puts the ink on paper, it's also the positioning of the image which is so important for us. The tolerance of how that image goes down is just so accurate it allows us to do everything else in the production process so much better."*

Quality is also a key factor in helping the company develop new business opportunities. Foremost Magnets recently formed a partnership with Photobox to enable Photobox customers to have their photos printed on to fridge magnets. The ability of the Ricoh print technology to provide high-quality and consistent reproduction has been critical to

the partnership. Woodcock says, *"Quite simply, without the Ricoh presses and the high-level reproduction and imposition they provide, we would not have been able to get the Photobox contract."*

The Ricoh technology has also had a hand in helping Foremost improve production turnaround. For example, by using the Ricoh presses and refining post-print processes, Foremost has managed to cut the industry standard of 15 days for fridge magnet production to just five days.

Another reason why Foremost values its partnership with Ricoh is the complementary attitude to business. Woodcock says, *"Our business approach is to build relationships with customers and then keep them for a long time which is a good reason why we partner with Ricoh. It has a similar philosophy of building relationships and looking after customers after closing a sale, rather than leaving to chase after the next opportunity."*

The Ricoh technology is an important part of Foremost's future business development strategy. The company is about to launch a new, online service for its fridge magnets. It has set up a website portal for customers to create their own fridge magnets by selecting size and shape and uploading a photo. It is a facility that Foremost is offering to its clients which they can then incorporate into the services they offer to their customers.

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh Pro C901
- Ricoh Pro C7100

"There are high-quality printers out there if you've got the money, but the improvement is not relational to the cost and size of those machines. From our experience and the amount of time we've spent researching print technology, going to shows, visiting different showrooms and evaluating devices, the absolute quality of the Ricoh digital print equipment for footprint and value for money is just head and shoulders above everything else."

Lee Woodcock, Managing Director, Foremost Magnets & Foremost Print

