

Case Study

Funeral Stationery 4U
Production Print
Commercial printing

Welsh specialist printer
carves out product and
brand differentiation
with Ricoh



The latest Ricoh production print technology and advanced 5th-colour capability is helping a Welsh printer deliver product and brand differentiation. The company,

Funeral Stationery 4U, is producing distinctive, high-quality print products, quickly and efficiently that meet the unique demands of the funeral publishing market.

Executive summary

Name: Funeral Stationery 4U
Location: Ruthin, North Wales
Size: 10 staff
Activity: Specialist funeral stationery printing

Challenges

- Unique requirements of funeral services
- Build upon product quality and brand reputation
- Upgrade existing print capability

Solution

- Ricoh Pro C7200 production press
- Advanced 5th-colour capability

Benefits

- Enhances distinctive, niche-market products and services
- Produces high-quality, imaginative, sympathetic funeral-market print
- Helps businesses differentiate brand value
- Increases staff efficiency and ability to manage tough deadlines
- Helps support development of new digital services

Challenges

Funeral Stationery 4U is a commercial printer in Wales that has been providing funeral print services for almost 30 years. It recently decided to set up the funeral business as a separate branded service with its own identity and website. Funeral Stationery 4U is an online service dedicated to funeral printing offering products such as orders of service, memorial notes and thank you cards. Customers choose from a range of customisable templates or have material specially designed. The company – in Ruthin, North Wales - serves the local community, but also customers across the UK and some internationally.

Alec Sharples, Managing Director of Funeral Stationery 4U, says, “We decided to create a dedicated Funeral Stationery 4U brand for differentiation, but also because the market has its own unique demands. We are providing a service to bereaved families, so it needs a caring and sensitive touch. It can be a very emotional and distressing time and often needs a lot of guidance and hand-holding. But it’s also got to be quick and as hassle-free as possible.”

Sharples adds that although an order of service is simply the funeral running order, it often has personal photos, poems, passages of text and readings and is something that customers want to share with family and friends and keep as a memento.

To better meet the demands of the funeral stationery business, create brand differentiation and support a new digital, web-based service, Funeral Stationery 4U was looking to improve print capability, quality and efficiency.

The company was already using a Ricoh production press and has always been impressed with the technology. When it was time to upgrade, Funeral Stationery 4U considered



other manufacturers but mainly to compare and confirm its decision to select Ricoh equipment. Sharples says, “The Ricoh printer we already had speaks for itself and so choosing Ricoh again was a bit of a no brainer.”

Solution

Funeral Stationery 4U has extended its Ricoh Production Print solution with the addition of a Ricoh Pro C7200sx Series digital press. It is a high-speed, five-colour press with the addition of a 5th-colour station for more advanced print techniques like clear varnish, white on coloured media and invisible red, as well as neon yellow and neon pink.

As part of its approach to building long-term partnerships with customers – even small businesses – Ricoh has maintained regular contact with Funeral Stationery 4U, providing updates on technology and market developments. Ricoh also invited Funeral Stationery 4U to the Telford showroom to see the full Ricoh production print portfolio. Sharples says, “We were about to buy a new Ricoh printer when Ricoh said hold back as there was an upgrade about to be released. That sort of service counts for an awful lot.”

As part of its UK-wide reach, Ricoh is providing Funeral Stationery 4U with a four-hour SLA support service using Ricoh-only engineers. Another feature of the Ricoh service, and an indication of its strategy to simplify technology is operator-replaceable units and replacement training to help customers reduce printer downtime. This is something Funeral Stationery 4U found was not available from other manufacturers.

Benefits

“You can print funeral stationery on virtually anything, but to remain a market leader, Funeral Stationery 4U needs the very best that digital print technology can deliver and that’s what Ricoh does. It’s like the Tour de France – it lasts three weeks and covers thousands of miles, but the winning margin is measured in seconds. There’re many printers out there that do pretty much the same job, but with Ricoh it’s those margin gains that mean we can do things others can’t, and that separates the best from the rest,” says Sharples.

The new Ricoh press has provided Funeral Stationery 4U with several key benefits. It is helping to meet extremely tight deadlines like completing a print job in less than 24 hours. The reliability of the Ricoh equipment, along with ease of use, user-replaceable parts and quick access to Ricoh engineers, enables the company to minimise downtime. There is also the ability to print on a variety of different paper stocks and materials including metallic, reproduce sharp and clear photographs even on textured papers, and 5th-colour capability.

continued overleaf

Case Study Funeral Stationery 4U

Sharples says, "The features of the Ricoh press give us a massive extra level of flexibility for the material we can now produce. It's about having the print technology to support a high-quality brand and product. We believe we have addressed what bereaved families were missing from elsewhere in the funeral industry – great-looking print, imaginative design and a fast turnaround with a degree of self-control."

Many of the features of the Ricoh technology are enabling Funeral Stationery 4U staff to work more effectively. The equipment is easy to use and maintain and features like high-speed and high-quality help to relieve the pressure the team often faces when fulfilling a job for a last-minute funeral order.

Because of the advanced print capabilities of the Ricoh technology, Funeral Stationery 4U has reduced much of the work it used to outsource. It means less reliance on sub-

contractors, cuts turnaround time and reduces the need to go out of region to trade finishers in places like Cheshire, Liverpool and Manchester.

"The Ricoh solution is helping Funeral Stationery 4U grow its funeral business in terms of the reliability and quality of product that goes out. We rely heavily on Trustpilot for product and service reviews and they are overwhelmingly positive. Putting those in front of potential customers is a big step up because it shows that we are trustworthy and the product is great," says Sharples.

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh consultancy & market advice
- Ricoh Pro C7200sx

www.funeralstationery4u.co.uk

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