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## Direct mail that works

MSP gears up for the holiday mailing season with HP Indigo digital presses

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**"We're speaking to them as individuals, instead of using traditional mass marketing techniques."**

Jim Young  
MSP Digital Direct  
General manager

### HP Indigo opens doors

The holidays are busy for almost everyone: shoppers, storekeepers and mailing operations included. At MSP, one of the country's largest direct mail facilities, nearly half of the company's annual revenue is earned from September through December.

Family-owned MSP (formerly Mailing Services of Pittsburgh) is a full-service direct mail marketing company. MSP is unique in that it operates a digital printing division, MSP Digital Direct, which depends on HP Indigo digital presses to offer customized products. MSP sets itself apart from the competition by offering extra value to its clients through innovative ways to personalize direct mail





products.

A large portion of MSP's business includes nonprofit fundraising for clients such as March of Dimes and several chapters of the Salvation Army. Between holiday cards and donor letters, MSP gets extremely busy around the holidays.

"Obviously, you need a lot of capacity to do half of your business over a four-month period," says Jim Young, general manager of MSP Digital Direct.

That capacity includes two HP Indigo press 5000s. The presses are easy to operate and deliver beautiful quality, but more importantly, they expand MSP's ability to personalize pieces to each recipient through variable data printing.

### Growing business

For nearly four decades, MSP has provided top-quality production services to a variety of direct mail clients. But as increased competition began to erode profit margins, MSP was quick to see that it needed a way to differentiate itself and add value.

So, about 10 years ago, MSP created a full-service, in-house agency to provide its clients with everything from creative and strategic consultation to database development, printing and mailing. And nearly four years ago, MSP developed a digital printing division. Those two strategies have been significant drivers of the company's growth since 2000—and HP has been a big part of both. In addition to the HP Indigo presses, MSP uses an MCS Array system featuring HP inkjet technology.

"We are an HP customer on two fronts—through inkjet and digital technology," says MSP President Richard Bushee, whose grandfather founded the company.

Rather than offering a direct mail campaign at a low price, MSP sells one-to-one marketing concepts, helping clients develop an overall creative strategy, manage data and segmentation and produce the finished product. MSP's concepts sometimes cost more per piece, Young says, but deliver a much greater response rate and greater lifetime value per customer.

One example is a holiday greeting card the Salvation Army sends to its donors. MSP uses its HP Indigo digital presses to print personalized messages inside the cards, referring to a specific chapter, a previous gift amount or a signature from a division commander. All this makes the card more familiar and unique to each recipient, offering more value than a standard greeting card. MSP also uses HP Indigo presses to print fundraising letters with a perforated reply portion at the bottom. The press can prefill the

### HP Indigo Press 5000

The ideal digital printing solution for commercial productivity, profit and quality

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specific donor information onto the form, making it easier for the recipient to complete and send back with a donation.

When one-to-one marketing first emerged, name personalization was the big thing. But now, Young says, the relevance of the message is more important. That relevance includes both text and lifestyle images that correspond to the recipients.

"We're speaking to them as individuals, instead of using traditional mass marketing techniques," Young says.

One highly successful application, printed on one of MSP's HP Indigo digital presses, was a brochure for American Insurance Administrators offering an upgrade policy. MSP helped AIA segment its data into groups. On the face of the brochure, MSP printed photographs associated with each segment—pictures of young children, a traditional family or a middle-aged couple. Within the brochure, MSP created a chart that identified the payment for the upgrade policy. A highlight bar floated on the chart from piece to piece, based on the recipient's gender and age bracket. The customer response rate was overwhelming, jumping to 11 percent, compared with 1 or 2 percent the company was previously getting on the application.

"When you see success like that, it really fires you up," Young says. AIA was so impressed with the results that they ran the brochure again and again.

The HP Indigo digital presses are also easy to use. MSP's operators say it would take hours to set up a job on a commercial offset printing press. With HP Indigo, they can literally set up in minutes. Young says they also have the ability to interrupt a job to print a proof for another job. "You would never even think about doing that with other equipment, but it's easy to accomplish with an Indigo," he says.

### **Adding value, assuring quality**

Often, MSP uses its HP Indigo presses in combination with equipment from MCS, HP Specialty Printing Systems' OEM partner. The MCS Array system features HP inkjet technology that's clean, easy to use and geared toward demanding industrial applications.

Inkjet supports the personal touch MSP specializes in. For example, with systems including the MCS Perfect Match™, MSP is leading a trend in the direct mail industry: integrating laser-printed letters with inkjet-printed, closed-face envelopes. More personal than the usual window envelopes, these envelopes also deliver higher returns for MSP's fundraising customers. The technology is highly accurate in matching addresses on the letter and envelope.

Together, the HP Indigo digital presses and MCS equipment work wonders. For the Salvation Army's holiday cards, MSP developed a handwritten font to print the inside of the card. Then, using MCS equipment, they duplicated the handwritten font to address the outside of the envelope.

"We're not selling a commodity anymore," Bushee says. "We're selling value and results."

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