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Big Growth with Bigeye Direct

A direct mail marketing firm quickly expands from a founder's home to 60,000 sq. ft. with the help of a trusted technology partner.

When Damon Smith and a friend founded Bigeye Direct Inc. in his home with no equipment and just a handful of employees in 2008, they did not know how big it would grow or the challenges they would have to overcome along the way.

Today, the Sterling, Virginia–based direct mail marketing, data processing, personalization, and printing service company has a 60,000 sq. ft. facility and produces about a million pieces of mail a day with almost 100 employees.

“We service a host of industries including nonprofits, associations, Fortune 500s, financial institutions, insurance agencies, and healthcare companies. We’ve got great relationships with direct mail agencies, marketing firms, gaming companies, and many members of Congress,” says Damon Smith, CEO.

After initial success, the company purchased two swingarm inserters at auction, obtained 8,000 sq. ft. of space for production, and then continued to grow.

According to Smith, the company positions itself as a dependable partner for organizations executing large-scale mail campaigns—ranging from nationwide distributions of millions of pieces to highly targeted smaller mailings. A critical factor in sustaining this success is its collaboration with robust technology partners. These

partnerships enable the company to effectively meet evolving market demands and navigate operational challenges, including those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was during this time that they purchased a Merlin K146c process-color cut-sheet inkjet production press from MCS Inc., a company that designs, manufactures, sells, and supports industrial inkjet imaging, tracking, and inserting systems and solutions for the mail manufacturing industry. With thousands of systems installed in the mailing and marketing industries across the world, MCS equipment has been used for mission-critical mailings, including vote-by-mail for government agencies.

The inkjet press allowed them to produce variable and personalized full-color output directly onto cut-sheet stock and integrate seamlessly with their existing cut-sheet toner-based workflows.

“Next thing we know, we’re calling MCS saying, ‘We need another K146. These are fantastic,’” says Smith.

According to Smith, Bigeye now has seven standalone inkjet lines for postcards and self-mailers, including the MCS Condor, a high-speed, full-color inkjet printer for inline envelope and mail piece personalization.

Smith notes that Bigeye’s continued growth and expansion necessitated the move to their current 60,000-square-foot facility.

Although the company has invested considerable effort into streamlining their workflow, warehouse, and inventory management system, there is no substitute for having the right equipment to maximize production, according to Smith.

“We are working on 20 to 25 different jobs a day, so we need to have the right machines for the right jobs,” says Smith.

According to Smith, Bigeye also has 20 inserters, eight of which are FlowMasters with read-and-print capability. FlowMasters are a family of high-speed mail inserting systems created for large-scale direct mail operations. Designed to enhance productivity, accuracy, and flexibility, these systems integrate advanced feeding and control technologies.

“We’ve added extra equipment [onto the FlowMasters] such as inkjets, stampers, and meters to make us more efficient,” says Smith. This includes up to three cameras, which enable various combinations of reading and printing for processing match mailings.

In addition, Bigeye utilizes the MailStream Direct, an ultra-high-speed inserter platform, optimized by MCS, tailored specifically for high-volume direct mail production.

The MailStream Direct is a high-performance mail inserter system manufactured by BlueCrest, formerly known as Pitney Bowes. The equipment is engineered to support demanding direct mail operations that require exceptional speed, precision, and flexibility. Designed to handle complex mailing applications, it is capable of processing up to 22,000 to 26,000 pieces per hour.

The system features advanced material handling technologies, including friction and rotary feeders, which enable it to work effectively with a variety of media types such as glossy inserts, folded documents, and booklets.

To ensure quality and accuracy during operation, the MailStream Direct includes integrated safeguards such as electronic double-feed detection, multiple divert bins, and optional camera-based tracking and matching capabilities. It also incorporates labor-saving features like front-loading envelope hoppers, vertical stacking conveyors, and automated setup processes, which reduce operator workload and enhance overall efficiency.

Optional modules such as inline inkjet envelope printing and real-time envelope matching further support sophisticated personalization needs.

“With the MailStream Direct [with read and print technology], we’re inserting at speeds of 26,000 an hour. This involves a two-way match, stamping, and canceling capability. Tracking is perfect all the way through with accountability on every single piece of mail,” says Smith.

According to Smith, when Bigeye enters a very busy political season or receives a big rush job from a client, its employees will pitch in, and the equipment maximizes their production.

“In one rush period, we inserted 190,000 pieces on the MSD in an eight-hour shift,” says Smith.

Bigeye continues to invest in technology. Its most recent purchase is the MCS TK500 Web Inkjet Printing System, which is built for high-speed continuous roll-to-roll web printing with inline duplex functionality, high-resolution output, and imaging that costs up to 75% less than toner systems. The system is designed to handle letters, labels, barcodes, and self-mailers on a wide range of substrates. Since that time, Bigeye has already added a second machine.

“Our two TKs give us the ability to print letters and replies at the same time and at very high speeds, which is important to our workflow. It tripled our capacity in our imaging department,” says Smith.

With technology so important to the business, prompt effective support is critical to keep production going if an incident ever occurs. In this area, their vendor has been very responsive.

“When we do happen to go down, MCS is very helpful in getting us what we need quickly. Whether it’s a replacement part or even a new piece of equipment, somebody is here or on the phone to get us up back up and running,” says Smith.

Smith credits his employees, facility, and technology vendor for his company’s tremendous growth over the last 15 years and into the future.

“We have amazing employees and a fantastic facility, but our rapid growth would not have been possible without MCS. They have been instrumental in our growth. We will continue to partner with them and invest in technology to ensure that we deliver on our promise to customers,” concludes Smith.

For a video highlighting Bigeye’s story, visit <https://mcspro.com/mcs-video/bigeye-success-story>. For more information on Bigeye, visit www.bigeyedirect.com. For more information on MCS, visit <https://mcspro.com>.

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