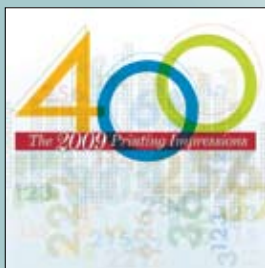


AS SEEN IN...

PRINTING IMPRESSIONS®

America's Most Influential and Widely Read Publication for Commercial Printers

FAST-TRACK FIRMS



Bucking the Trends

By Erik Cagle
SENIOR EDITOR

AS THE most challenging year since the Great Depression comes to a close, many executives and employees of printing companies across the nation are drawing a deep breath and exhaling. Well, maybe not everyone is exhaling, but a good many people are just happy to still have their jobs.

Here at the headquarters of PRINTING IMPRESSIONS, perhaps the one question on everyone's mind was: Could we still pull off a Top 400 list? After all, we once listed 500 companies; but the consolidation wave of the late 1990s/early 2000s thinned out the herd considerably, prompting us to dial back on our ranking. The fear this time around was that privately held companies might be discouraged from participating due to poor financial performances.

One thing's for certain: If your company posted a negative percent growth change year-over-year, you are not alone. In fact, of the 400 printers on the 2009 edition of the *PI* 400 list, 63 percent of the firms came in below their previous year's sales figures. In reality, next year's list should be in worse shape, since the current sales figures represent the most recent fiscal year completed, which is Dec. 31, 2008, or June 30, 2009, for most companies.

Fear not, for this list isn't going away, and neither are you! We have assembled a trio of printer profiles detailing the positive year-over-year growth enjoyed by these establishments. They're living proof that, no matter how tough times can get, there are always those companies who can see their way clear to prosperity.

HGI Co.

Burlington, WI

Most Recent

Fiscal Year Sales: \$42.29 million

Previous

Fiscal Year Sales: \$34.60 million

Change: 22 Percent

HGI is an invention of solid leadership, planning, engaged employees and a well-calculated mixture of acquisitions and a startup. Craig Faust bought the assets of web printer Hi-Liter Graphics in 2003, added commercial printer and book manufacturer Inland Graphics in 2005, then digital capabilities with Plus Digital in 2007. The following year, Tempt In-Store Productions—which specializes in the design and manufacture of point-of-purchase (POP) materials—was born.

“Our 2008 sales growth was organic, coming from a continued goal of attaining new customers and expand-



ing relationships with existing clients,” says Tom Sikora, vice president of sales and marketing. “All target market segments achieved positive growth. Our sales focus was on providing value to the marketplace through the utilization of our diverse printing platform... truly providing clients a single-source solution for their printing and finishing needs.”

HGI has utilized a three-prong attack to counter the effects of the recession, according to Faust. HGI's operations have maximized labor utilization

through cross-training and selective hiring practices, he says, in addition to capitalizing on state-of-the-art technologies to increase throughput and capacity. Secondly, the company has expanded its product offerings and sales staff to bring in new business. Lastly, HGI has maintained its price integrity/margin in addition to stricter credit cri-

teria for its client base.

Buoyed by growth, the company installed the first manroland Euroman 4x4 press in North America in November of 2007, then followed up with the acquisition of an Inca Onset large-format UV digital press this past February. Investments have also been made to shore up HGI's saddlestitching, foil

stamping, embossing and diecutting capabilities. Its communications and technology infrastructures have been bolstered across all divisions.

"HGI will continue to grow through organic sales growth, through investments in people and equipment, and through strategic operations," Faust says. **PI**

