

One-Shot Solution for Color Reproduction Problems and the Improvement of Print Quality

Overall costs can be reduced by increasing efficiency

The commercial printing industry finds itself facing the demands of increasingly tighter deadlines, more stringent cost requirements and the fast-paced introduction of technological innovation. Printing factories find that they must find the optimum operational conditions simply to survive.

Nishikawa Printing Co., Ltd. worked to resolve some of these problems through the introduction of Vulcan offset printing blankets. Nishikawa not only solved a tricky technical problem, but also achieved higher print quality. Company manager Kazumasa Takeuchi provides a shop-floor view as he talks about why Nishikawa Printing installed Vulcan offset printing blankets, and the results of this installation.



An offset rotary press at the Nishikawa Printing headquarters factory equipped with Vulcan offset printing blanket, one of six offset rotary presses in its two factories.

Client: Nishikawa Printing Co., Ltd.
Date of installation: November 2002
Products: Vulcan Alto ND2 offset printing blankets, installed on four offset rotary presses (tested on two additional presses)

The Nishikawa Group owns six offset rotary presses. Nishikawa Printing specializes in offset printing at its two factories in the Musashi-Murayama area of Tokyo. The company's business, focusing on the printing of newspaper inserts, is expanding.



Manager Kazumasa Takeuchi
Nishikawa Printing factories are certified to ISO9001 and ISO14001 standards

In a sense, Vulcan was our last chance to resolve this.

Q: That does provide a compelling reason. How did the test run go?

KT: Vulcan has proven itself in our actual operations. We are now running six presses equipped with Vulcan blankets. The registration problem has been solved completely in four of the presses; the other two presses have not produced satisfactory results, so we continue to adjust both the machinery and the inks.

Q: What do you think is the problem in those two presses?

KT: The other four presses have produced good results, so we aren't looking at the other two as exceptions to the rule. We found some problems in the two presses themselves that caused damage to the blankets. Ink splatters hadn't been thoroughly cleaned, so we started by a thorough cleaning of the presses. Adjustment is more complicated because it requires expertise and an awareness of the individual characteristics of each press. Our shop workers are doing their best now in resolving these problems.

Vulcan quality justifies a higher price

Q: Tell us more about the issue of costs.

KT: We're no longer worried about cost. We are now getting increased blanket life. Blankets are items which inevitably must be replaced, and with Vulcan the replacement frequency is much longer. This means lower total purchasing costs and less work and time—and labor costs—needed for replacement. We are using less paper for test printings, and even disposal costs are lower. All in all, we think it pays to use Vulcan.

Q: Vulcan has an excellent reputation for quality; how has this worked for you?

TK: We see a definite improvement in print quality. Everyone notices the difference. In this age of ranking printing factories, we are evaluated by our facility and equipment. We believe that a factory with sophisti-

“Blanket life is, on average, 1.5 times that of domestic manufacturers' blankets—and twice as long on some presses.”

Making the decision to use Vulcan

Q: You switched from a domestic blanket to Vulcan. Why did you make this decision?

Kazumasa Takeuchi: Actually, this is not the first time that we experimented with Vulcan. I understand that Vulcan produced good results in a test that was held before I was assigned to this post. At that time, however, price was the reason for a decision not to use the Vulcan product. Vulcan is noted for its superior performance and print quality, and our print shop workers have long wanted to use their products at least once. But the reality is that Vulcan blankets are more expensive than domestic products. We thought we couldn't afford it.

Q: But this time the decision was made to use Vulcan products, despite the cost. Why?

KT: Last year we were faced with the problem of faulty registration, a color reproduction problem caused by a slight deviation in the registration of plates used in multi-color printing. We used all kinds of techniques to cope with this problem, but couldn't locate its cause.



Loading entrance of the Nishikawa Printing headquarters factory

cated equipment, quality blankets and excellent print finish win more business opportunities. We have a lot of expectations riding on Vulcan blankets.

You have to use the blanket with the belief that you can get even more out of it, and make repeated adjustments to bring out the very highest performance from it.

Since printing problems first cropped up last year, Nishikawa Printing's shop staff and management have been united in their efforts to resolve the problems. This unity of purpose is one of the factors making the introduction of Vulcan offset printing blankets so successful.

Offset rotary press blanket

Blankets in offset printing presses transfer the ink image from the original metal plate to paper. An offset rotary press is a delicate machine, needing adjustments in 0.01-mm units to respond to changes in temperature, humidity and subtle changes in ink viscosity.

VULCAN ALTO ND2

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