

44 factors to remember when adding towers

By Dario D. D. DiMare
SPECIAL TO NEWSPAPERS & TECHNOLOGY

When was the last time you heard a publisher, production manager or press foreman say, "We added a color tower about a year ago and have hardly ever used it"?

Never, I'll wager.

One of the toughest problems architects and engineers face during the press procurement process is convincing newspapers that they can't get enough color.

Yes, presses are expensive and most newspapers now require a return on investment on every capital expenditure. Savings in labor, paper, utilities, waste and other operating efficiencies are commonly used to justify these ROIs.

What's often missed, however, and frequently vastly underestimated, is the additional revenue newspapers can reap by offering better quality and more color.

Case in point: The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. At last month's International Newspaper Group conference, Special Sections Manager Dave Reszel said that since the Journal Sentinel commissioned its new Koenig & Bauer Commander pressline in early 2003, color revenues have soared.

The newspaper sold more than \$4.3 million in color ads during the first six months of 2004, he said, more than twice what the Journal Sentinel posted in the first half of 2003.

Demand for color is so strong that the Journal Sentinel next year is adding 12 KBA color couples in a bid to increase print capacity.

Not uncommon

The Journal Sentinel's growth spurt in color revenues is not unique. Based on our experience, doubling color ad revenues is a conservative estimate for papers investing in color production. Some newspaper executives forget to consider this additional revenue and, even more, underestimate it. Others are afraid to invest too much in color production for fear of not meeting a budget.

We have seen many newspapers fall short on color capacity. This results in lost revenues and even more expensive upgrades later on. As a result, we have seen newspapers, even those with new presses, being forced to address the needs of adding more color months after their new machines are commissioned.

This is without a doubt an "if you build it, they will come" situation.

Papers often are reluctant to commit to sell color and often believe they can't until it's available. Then all hell

breaks loose. One car dealer or a real estate agent buys a full-color page and the egos kick in. Advertisers then begin to demand better-positioned full-color ads. Then the process color double-trucks begin to appear. Companies then want 4- to 6-page sequential color ads. Yes, these can usually only be done when you have process color everywhere and are totally flexible with the press, but they sure make money.

Another observation: Due to the lack of color capacity and quality, many newspapers discourage the use of color by charging high premiums. For these papers, it's too much trouble to produce color and the poor quality that results forces reproduction adjustments and paybacks.

This all goes away with new towers. The amount of money the Journal Sentinel had to earmark for reproduction adjustments plummeted from \$27,470 in 2003 to about \$2,500 during the first six months of 2004.

The daily is also enjoying more intangible savings, such as the less time it now takes to make the adjustments and stronger client relationships.

Talking towers

Dario Designs has seen an impressive surge in tower installations, overseeing such projects as The Wall Street Journal's color upgrade in 14 plants. Currently, we're involved with the installation of 70 press tower or unit additions, of which 40 are 4-over-4 color towers.

That's in addition to 29 other new presses in various project stages, signs that the newspaper's appetite for technology that permits better print quality and color production is far from being sated.

We have learned a lot with our color tower additions past, present, and future. We can also say that no two projects have ever been identical. To help you in your planning, we are providing a brief list below of some of the reoccurring issues we have experienced or heard of from other press tower/unit installations across the country.

You absolutely cannot be too careful or cautious with press tower additions. Check everything thoroughly. Measure twice. Cut once. When you think you have it all figured out, check it again. It is much easier to make changes with an eraser than a jackhammer.

1. Measure twice, cut once.
2. How much color is needed?
3. Where is the color needed?
4. Do you have plans for more color beyond this project?

5. Which manufacturer's equipment will you use or consider?
6. Who will do the rigging?
7. Who will provide and install the support systems such as ink, water, control, etc.?
8. Will you package all the equipment, systems, and rigging for a single point of responsibility?
9. Will the press foundation hold the new tower?
10. Will the existing reelstand hold the new tower?
- II. Are all of the new components compatible with the existing press and press systems? (Controls, blankets, plates, electronics, registration, tensioning, inks, dampening, motors, parts and consumables.)
12. Have the local or federal codes changed, requiring additional structural capacity or reinforcing? (Seismic codes have changed a lot lately.)
13. Will the new iron have to be ductile? What about the existing?
14. Is there enough capacity in the following systems? Can the following systems be easily expanded? Is there room for the following systems new equipment and routing?
 - Electrical
 - Mechanical (HVAC)
 - Plumbing
 - Ink
 - Water
 - Fountain solution
 - Compressed air
 - Vacuum
 - Hydraulics
 - Fire suppression
 - Motor cooling
 - Dust collection
 - Automatic roll handling
15. Is the existing roll handling equipment easily modified?
16. Do you need a building permit?
17. Will the facility need to be modified to receive the units and reelstands?
18. Have the structural systems been investigated for the staging of equipment?
19. Are there rigging or maintenance rails available?
20. Do any existing building systems (electrical, mechanical, plumbing, fire protection) need to be temporarily or permanently relocated?
21. Will any new codes be affected, such as egress or OSHA pinch points?
22. What is the schedule? Will the majority of the work be done during the busy season?
23. Did you get training and commissioning in the equipment purchase? Most newspapers underestimate the amount of training needed to print properly. Do not underestimate the amount of training required.
24. Have you considered temporary weather protection?
25. Are there obstructions outside impeding the delivery of the units?
26. Have you coordinated the installation so that the delivery does not hamper your current operations?
27. Have you considered the effect on staffing?
28. Will the towers be able to be split to run two webs?
29. Are there additional angle bars or nests or formers required?
30. Is the building tall enough, wide enough and long enough for the new equipment?
31. Are parts of the old system wearing out or in need of upgrading, such as the inkers, controls, press drives, dampening, hydraulics, hoses and seals, etc.?
32. Will the operation equipment such as handling be able to with the extra tower?
33. Does the new press decking tie in well with the existing press decking?
34. Will the existing HVAC system blow air on the new tower or web, possibly causing web flutter and breaks?
35. Have you prepared a phasing plan for the project for work-arounds during installation?
36. Are you preparing pre-installation hype to begin the preselling of the color capacity?
37. If you are not currently printing back-to-back color; have you verified the basis weight and type of newsprint you will need to reduce or eliminate show-through?
38. Will you add shafted or shaftless towers?
39. Have you clearly defined what is in the scope of the press supplier and the owner?
 - Who provides the gantry?
 - Where are the utility cutoffs?
 - Is there a schedule penalty for either party? Press is late or building is not ready?
 - What are the performance criteria for final payment?
 - Is training clearly defined?
 - Who pays for the openings in the existing building?
 - Who makes the final connections to all the support systems?
 - Who is responsible for the support system extensions and connections?
 - Has the downtime been discussed or scheduled?
 - Are there designated areas agreed upon for installation and staging?
 - Have the building system requirements been clearly defined?
40. Are all the components IJL rated or certified?
41. Have you considered the timing so that you are not doing the installation during the busy season?
42. If it is a foreign manufacturer, have you thoroughly discussed file exchange rates?
43. It may sound silly, but don't forget to talk about the paint color.
44. Measure twice, cut once.

Dario D. DiMare is president of Dario Designs Inc., in Framingham, Mass. He can be reached at 508-877-4444 or dario@dariodesigns.com