

## PRESS COMMISSIONING

### Fort Wayne ushers in new era in newspaper production

**Publisher's \$35 million production plant gives News-Sentinel, Journal Gazette new color, print options.**

*By Chuck Moozakis Editor-In-Chief*

Fort Wayne (Ind.) Newspapers in September capped off its \$35 million, 47,000 square-foot press facility downtown.

So far, so good, said Michael J. Christman Jr., publisher of The News-Sentinel and FWN's chief executive officer. Despite glitches that slightly delayed two production runs in the first weeks of operation, "The startup has been similar to others around the county," he said in mid-October. "We continue to work out the minor bugs and everything is working out as planned."

FWN, which prints the afternoon News-Sentinel and morning Journal Gazette (combined daily, 93,303; Sunday, 117,777), under a joint operating agreement, built the plant around a TKS (USA) Color Top 7000CDH 4-by-2 press. The machine, configured as six 4-over-4 towers, eight reels and two 2:5:5 jaw folders, replaced a 50-year-old letterpress and a decades-old flexo press.

#### Forefront of technology

"It's a great investment and we are now able to operate a state-of-the-art press," Christman said. "It puts us at the forefront of technology and gives us lots of opportunities."

The new plant, designed by Dario Designs Inc., was initially commissioned by Knight Ridder, which owned The News-Sentinel and controlled the JOA.

The paper and JOA today is operated by Ogden Newspapers, which purchased The News-Sentinel and controlling interest in the operating agreement last year.

FWN expects to fully mine the prospects associated with the press' color capabilities, which allow the publisher to print as many as 48 pages of back-to-back color in straight production. The old presses limited color to only eight pages an edition.

"We now have color way beyond what we used to have," Christman said. "This will give us a lot of options."

#### Commercial Options

Among those options is commercial printing, Christman said. FWN now prints only the core newspapers along with a few other niche products and a TMC. Once the new press and prepress foundation are firmly in place, Christman said FWN will concentrate on attracting commercial accounts.

"It's a bit early for a concerted effort, but we will be examining commercial printing," he said.

In addition to the TKS press, FWN upgraded its prepress, tapping Kodak and Nela for various equipment and software.

Kodak supplied two Trendsetter 100 thermal computer-to-plate systems in addition to workflow production software. Nela supplied punch-bending equipment. Although the publisher didn't purchase new inserting equipment for postproduction, it did buy new gripper conveyors from Ferag, mailroom conveyors from K&M Newspaper Services and stackers from Quipp Systems Inc.

Upon going on-edition with the press, FWN altered the format of the newspapers, shrinking the pages from 13.5 inches to 12 inches. Cutoff is 21 inches. Christman said the press has been engineered to accommodate a further web-width reduction to 46 inches if necessary.

In the meantime, FWN's new building was won accolades from local business leaders for its look and from government officials for its downtown site.

"Community involvement is a big part of our strategy," said Christman. "We value the community and we look forward to remaining involved."