

Lexmark color laser eliminates outsourced printing of marketing materials for Midwest heritage destination resort.

Amish Acres bakes a recipe for success with Lexmark color lasers

The Organization

Nestled in the rolling countryside of Nappanee, Indiana, Amish Acres is an eighty-acre historic farm and heritage resort that evokes the Amish lifestyle through guided tours, family style Threshers Dinner, craft demonstrations, country shops, and musical productions in the majestic Round Barn Theatre. Its employees share the heritage of these intriguing people with its hundreds of thousands of visitors every year.

The Challenge

Though Amish Acres recalls the lifestyle of a simpler age, it has long used technology to support the marketing of its inns, restaurants, homemade foods and repertory theatre. Its online presence aside, these efforts are driven primarily by paper – reams and reams of paper.

Its special theme buffet menus require continual updates as the availability of culinary ingredients changes from day to day. Posters, flyers and mailing pieces, designed anew for each of its annual eight shows, are printed by the thousands. Colorful adhesive and string-tied labels for dipped pretzels, muffin mixes, noodles and a multitude of products sold in its shops, and by dozens of other country stores nationwide, must be kept up to date. Ingredient tags, specials on souvenirs and all in-store signage must also be accurate.

All of these printing projects designed by the Amish Acres in-house marketing team were once outsourced to local commercial printing houses. This practice invariably resulted in slow turnaround and often led to significant waste. Amish Acres had to contend with minimum print runs that far exceeded its actual use of the materials, according to Jeff Stillson, the resort's Graphics Designer. This approach also made it nearly impossible and cost prohibitive to make any changes to documents in between print runs. Although larger print runs helped Amish Acres achieve better pricing from the outsourced provider, the vast amount of waste quickly absorbed any gains the organization thought it had attained.

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AMISH ACRES®
Historic Farm & Heritage Resort
Guided Tours, Restaurants, Theatre, Shops & Inns
Nappanee, Indiana

—Jeff Stillson
Graphic Designer
Nappanee, Ind.
www.amishacres.com

Stillson used other color laser printers with limited results, even just for proofing the marketing materials. Output was often too slow and didn't reflect the quality the organization was used to and its



Amish Acres uses a Lexmark color laser printer to produce all of its marketing materials.

customers had come to expect. Aside from being expensive to operate and slow, the color from the resort's prior printer was not accurate, prohibiting its use even for proofing. "When we sent in our specifications to the print shop, we had to trust that the results would be what we asked for and they often didn't match up," said Stillson.

Amish Acres knew there had to be a better way to print these documents in-house, on demand, in the precise quantities they needed, at high quality but at an affordable price.

The Solution

To speed turnaround, reduce costs and trim waste, Amish Acres installed a Lexmark color laser printer. Able to print up to 20 pages per minute in rich, accurate color, the printer far outpaces the four page-per-minute unit it replaced in both speed and print quality. Installed in just minutes, the Lexmark color laser printer is now churning out thousands of pages of marketing materials for Amish Acres, including unique sizes and paper stock.

Today, Amish Acres has full control of its print jobs. Labels and tags for jams, jellies and baked goods are now printed in-house strictly as needed, with runs of as little as 300 and more colorful than ever. Changes to ingredient labels can be made quickly and easily and can include dates for perishable items. "This is a great improvement over the minimum runs of 1,000 to 2,000 the commercial printer required," said Stillson. "We're no longer throwing away thousands of unused pages."

Theater and audition posters, printed by the hundreds each year on legal-size heavyweight colored stock, feed through the Lexmark printer jam-free. In its souvenir shops, in-store signage, once photocopied only in black and white, now attracts customers' attention with splashes of color. Product tags and signage now carry the colorful Amish Acres logo.

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The Results

With its Lexmark color laser printer, Amish Acres has seen its document print quality, versatility and flexibility go up, while consolidating the number of output devices that it managed within the office.

"We are very pleased with every aspect of our Lexmark color laser printer, including reliability," said Stillson. "It prints thousands of pages every month without jamming and without breaking down. The minimum amount of maintenance it needs is simple – everything you need access to is right there in front of you."

The organization can now print precise quantities, make changes on demand and tackle the design of new marketing pieces with the gains it has seen in time alone. The resort now prints tri-fold brochures, letterhead and business cards in-house. Correspondence to its lengthy mailing list that once took nearly a week to produce offsite, are now written, printed and mailed within the same day. "We are a seasonal attraction and often what we do is in response to what our market demands day by day," said Stillson. "We can't afford the delay in getting the word out to our customers that often comes with getting things printed offsite."

"It's hard to believe that a color laser printer could have such a tremendous impact on our business," said Stillson. "But it truly has. And, in the process, it has strengthened our brand and helped us make an even stronger impression on our visitors that encourages them to come back and tell their friends about their visit."

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Although technology can speed communication on many levels, for Amish Acres it's paper that remains the best method of connecting the history and culture of the Amish with the people who wish to learn about it today. And as Amish Acres continues to celebrate the authentic customs of a simpler time and people, its staff expects the technology it relies on to help them communicate better and more broadly than ever before. Its Lexmark color laser printing solution is a key part of its recipe for success.