

True Digital Label Finishing

Digital printing has grown dramatically in the label market. Today, many label printers own digital presses. Some even have several digital presses. Yet most label printers are still finishing labels with analog systems. True digital finishing can deliver a competitive edge and improved profitability through an enhanced digital finishing workflow.

Traditional analog label finishing systems flourished while label printers grappled with learning the digital print workflow. Analog finishing has some speed and volume advantages over true digital finishing. But, overall, true digital finishing offers significant time savings, workflow and capability advantages over analog that better suits today's short-run, quick-delivery and variable, market demands.

Label printers are being squeezed to produce shorter runs, with lower costs, greater variability and faster delivery—with the challenge of making money doing it. It is essential that label printers look at every way possible to reduce the number of steps in their workflow, to reduce setup time, and reduce waste in their digital label production process.



Streamlined, Die-Less Workflow

True digital finishing uses high-speed laser technology to deliver the most productive finishing solution for digital label production. In contrast, analog in-line finishing, which can connect to a digital press, still requires a die to be made before the job can be completed.

True digital finishing can deliver an improved workflow that goes from PDF files directly to printed, cut, counted rolls, or sheets, of labels that are ready to ship. In a true digital workflow the prepress department creates the print file and the die file in one PDF. A true digital finishing solution, such as SEI Laser's Labelmaster finishing machine, can read a QR code or barcode, instantly read the PDF file, and understand job cutting

instructions on the fly. Just as digital printing presses can print many different jobs of various run lengths quickly and efficiently, SEI Laser's Labelmaster true digital finishing solution can cut and finish a complete printed roll of many different jobs of various run lengths. True digital finishing's improved workflow also allows jobs to be completed on demand.

Many Production Advantages

SEI Laser's Labelmaster true digital finishing has many production advantages:

- It greatly reduces finishing make-ready time, because there is no die mounting or die adjustments. True digital finishing offers on-the-fly cutting without the need for dies.
- It reduces waste, since setup is quick, and job parameters can be set by the prepress department and memorized for each job and substrate.
- It decreases the number of steps in the production workflow.
- It eliminates the costs and time delays needed to order cutting dies.
- Printers are able to deliver jobs on the same day.
- Printers can differentiate their businesses with intricate cutting or marking capabilities.

A true digital finishing production process is so quick that many jobs can be finished by the time an analog finisher is set up for a job. This means more output in a production shift—also requiring fewer man-hours to complete a job.

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In today's fast-paced, last-minute label market, customers demand rush shipments of ever-decreasing run sizes, added variation and unique capabilities to grab the customers' attention at the important moment of truth. True digital label finishing lets label printers deliver on that promise—and with greater profitability.

True Digital Label Finishing, Continued

Product Differentiation

Brand owners are constantly looking for ways to make their products stand out on crowded retail store shelves. Digital printing has delivered capabilities that brand owners have grown to love. *True* digital finishing can also deliver unique finishing capabilities such as:

- Very intricate cutting designs, not possible with analog dies
- Marking (engraving) of only the surface layer of the label
- Micro-perforating and variable perforating that can be adjusted as needed
- Security marking
- Consistent cutting quality using job parameter memorization
- Variable numbering or marking
- Customized cutting or marking
- Cut one or one million labels

True digital finishing removes the need for job-specific tooling, so jobs can be completed on demand. The variability that true digital finishing delivers can be an important marketing tool for brand owners and label printers. Additionally, true digital finishing lends itself to online ordering and web-to-print label production.

Does *True* Digital Replace Analog?

Just as analog flexo presses and digital presses can complement each other, true digital finishing complements analog finishing. Although SEI Laser's Labelmaster with quad lasers can reach speeds of up to 350 fpm—closing the gap with analog capabilities—for longer runs, analog still is king. True digital finishing allows label printers to be more efficient, reducing changeover times and waste, allowing them to make more money on even the smallest runs of labels. But just as digital printing keeps getting faster, so too will true digital finishing.

Time to Invest?

Many label converters probably feel they already have analog finishing capabilities that will meet their needs. Magnetic-die costs are reasonable and there are ample sources. But if you are seeking to stay current with trends in the market, to maintain a competitive edge, *true* digital finishing provides a compelling solution. The flexibility and unique capabilities of true digital finishing could be reason enough to make the investment.

To see *true* digital finishing in operation and a live demonstration of SEI Laser Labelmaster, visit MATIK at booth #5803 during Labelexpo Americas 2018.

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