

OVERVIEW



The Datacard CPST MJ7500™ card personalization system provides much faster output than conventional thermal printing, with comparable image quality.

Investing in best-of-breed systems

Keystone Plastics manufactures and personalizes a wide range of plastic cards for an even wider range of applications. Founded in 1984, the company provides both conventional and smart cards for telecommunications, retail, healthcare, government and many other markets. Keystone is headquartered in Toronto in Ontario, Canada, the site of the company's secure, state-of-the-art manufacturing facility.

Because Keystone produces and personalizes such a variety of card types, the company is constantly looking for new technologies to improve speed, quality and cost-efficiency. One technology the company decided to invest in was high-speed UV DoD inkjet printing. In order to maximize this investment, Keystone President and COO Bud Kronenberg was determined to find the fastest, highest-quality, most reliable UV DoD inkjet printing system on the market.

"We needed a system with very good image resolution, high-speed performance and camera verification, that was also extremely reliable," Kronenberg said. "We looked at many different systems, and the Datacard CPST MJ7500 system came up as best-

CUSTOMER: Keystone Plastics is a card manufacturer and service bureau that issues personalized cards for a wide range of markets, from retail to healthcare to government. The company personalizes between 75 and 80 million cards per year.

CHALLENGE: Enable Keystone Plastics to quickly personalize retail gift cards using UV-curable Drop-on-Demand (UV DoD) inkjet printing technology.

SOLUTION: Install the Datacard CPST MJ7500™ card personalization system.

RESULTS: Keystone Plastics improved throughput, reliability and card quality while significantly increasing gross margins.

in-class in each category — including word-of-mouth reputation. We knew we were buying the best equipment."

Big benefits for card issuers

Keystone uses the MJ7500 system to issue retail gift cards. Retailers typically demand very fast turnaround time, because the cards are often tied to seasonal promotions or emerging customer demands. As a result, the gift card market is particularly time-sensitive, which means system reliability is absolutely critical.

"We do not have a lot of time for inkjet printing, because for us, it's the final step in a much longer card manufacturing process," Kronenberg said. "We have one system performing this task, and we need it to be highly efficient and reliable. With the MJ7500 system, there is very little downtime."

Gains in throughput are even higher because the MJ7500 system uses UV DoD inkjet printing. Previously, Keystone relied on thermal printing to issue gift cards, with throughput rates that topped out at 800 cards per hour. Now, Keystone can print between 20,000 and 30,000 cards per hour.

"We used to run multiple systems for multiple shifts," Kronenberg said. "The MJ7500 system is so much faster.

In terms of scheduling, that means we can leave a very small window for the final inkjet printing and magnetic stripe encoding. So we have made a tremendous gain in throughput without losing any image quality."

Significant financial impact

Moving to the MJ7500 system has also improved Keystone's profitability in the gift card market, by reducing the total cost of card production.

"Cost-per-card is down, and we're seeing tremendous savings," Kronenberg said. "Most important is the fact that we are dramatically increasing gross margins on gift card jobs."

Kronenberg also notes the impact of faster turnaround on the sales cycle.

"Our customers used to get frustrated that it took so long to personalize a gift card using thermal print technology," he said. "The MJ7500 system has eliminated a massive logjam and made life much easier for us. Customers know the difference and they appreciate our investment. In fact, we have received new orders specifically because customers know the turn-time is so much quicker now."

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SECURE ID AND CARD PERSONALIZATION SOLUTIONS



The Datacard CPST MJ7500 system can personalize up to 30,000 gift cards per hour using UV-curable Drop-on-Demand inkjet printing.

Smooth implementation, easy operation

Datacard recommended that Keystone send a manager to the MJ7500 system manufacturing site for hands-on training, and according to Kronenberg, this made all the difference with getting the system up and running quickly once it arrived.

“With a complex piece of card personalization equipment, it’s much better to send someone to receive training in the provider’s own facilities,” he said. “Our manager was able to train on and approve the actual system that was delivered to us. He was then able to transfer that knowledge to the operators on his team. Also, the implementation went very smoothly. Every stage of the experience was positive.”

Two features the Keystone team really enjoys are batch control and data integrity with camera verification.

Batch control makes it easy for Keystone operators to separate gift cards into groups of 20 or 50, which is important because retailers prefer cards shrink-wrapped and sent to individual stores in these quantities.

Camera verification is a “must have,” according to Kronenberg, because it provides peace of mind that the system is not producing duplicates or cards that are not up to Keystone’s quality standards.

Operators also like the open configuration of the MJ7500 system, which features a single conveyor belt.

“Operators feel more in control of the jobs, because they can see exactly what is happening as the cards run down the belt,” Kronenberg said.

Service makes a difference

Kronenberg praised the post-sale service Keystone has received from Datacard with the MJ7500 system.

“As a smaller service bureau, we could only invest in one MJ7500 system, so we have no backup,” he said. “If it goes down, we’re down. Fortunately the Datacard team is fast. They give us virtually immediate help over the phone.”

For Kronenberg and Keystone Plastics, outstanding service for the MJ7500 system rounds out an excellent experience adding a new piece of technology to its manufacturing facility.

“We’re very satisfied with the MJ7500 system and would not hesitate to recommend it,” he said.

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