

Customer Case Study

Hachette UK Ltd

Watkiss PowerSquare
Nearline Booklet Making System

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Me & my...

Watkiss PowerSquare

Hachette UK's in-house print facility has discovered that this bookletmaker has boosted its productivity and attracted new business **Words Jon Severs**

If someone asked you what Hachette UK did, you might struggle to even recognise the name. But if someone then reeled off the famous imprints of this international publisher, things would quickly become clearer. Under the Hachette UK umbrella you have such book publishing heavyweights as Orion, Hodder, Octopus and Little, Brown.

"It's the biggest publishing company in Europe with more than 800 staff," says Dan Jones, print manager at the company. "And in the UK, we handle all the office print requirements with our in-house print facility and also manage the fleet of more than 180 office printing machines."

Jones joined the company nine years ago, when much of Hachette's reports, letterheads, marketing material and other print were handled by external print service providers. Jones' job was to start bringing that work in-house. Over the course of the next few years, this is exactly what he did, to the extent that, last year, he could justify a complete remodelling of the pressroom and some new investment.

"We now have a fleet of larger Xerox machines than we had before, running a 1000, an 8000, a Color 560 and four 4127s," he explains. "We also have a raft of new finishing kit."

One element of that finishing kit investment was a Watkiss PowerSquare bookletmaker. It was a purchase that arose out of an off-hand comment by Jones to his Xerox suppliers, Xenith Document Systems.

"We previously had a Morgana DocuMaster, but it wasn't a good fit with the work we were producing," says Jones. "We do a lot of thick catalogues on a wide range of different stock, and for that type of work we found that the DocuMaster wasn't quite right. We told Xenith this and the guys there introduced us to Chris Page at Watkiss, as they thought the PowerSquare might be a better fit."

As soon as Jones saw it in action, he was certain the Xenith suggestion was right. He says he had never found a bookletmaker that could do what he wanted it to do while being able to fit into his cramped printroom. The PowerSquare did both, so he felt no need to seek out alternatives.

That's not to say he did not test the PowerSquare out fully. He went down to the showroom to put it through its paces

Specifications

Max speed

Dependent on book size and pagination. Around 800 booklets/hr

Max book thickness

10mm (200 80gsm sheets)

Stock weight range

70-250gsm dependent on paper type and quality

Stock size range

200x203mm to 340x500mm

Stitching

Up to six stitches, evenly spaced on the spine of the book

Max foredge trim

28mm

Price

£75,500

Contact

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and also visited the factory, which proved an inspirational experience.

"We went down to the factory and saw the machines being built," he recalls. "I was massively impressed. I am not one to go on about British build, but to see a factory manufacturing machines in the UK was great and that does have an impact on the decision-making process. The build quality was so impressive; they were building them like tanks!"

Four in one

The Watkiss PowerSquare combines the four processes of stitching, folding, spine-forming and trimming to produce square-backed booklets and books. Settings for different book sizes and paginations are automated, with a maximum book thickness of 10mm (200 pages of 80gsm), and a minimum of eight pages. The machine is available in online, nearline and offline configurations.

The PowerSquare has a single stitch head that inserts up to six stitches in the spine of the book. The stitch head and clincher are static and never need to be moved, which, says Watkiss, ensures that alignment and stitch quality is consistently good. Watkiss also says the machine is easy to use as it is able to automatically set the stitch position, the wire draw length, the amount of spine form required and the trim dimension.

The machine was bought through Xenith Document Systems along with a PowerSquare sheetfeeder, but the installation, training and service was all handled

"Having something like the PowerSquare enables us to show people how we can improve the products we get printed"

Dan Jones Hachette UK

by Watkiss. The machine arrived on site last September, just as Jones had completed some remodelling.

"We have a very tight space and when we were updating all our kit, we realised we would have to redesign the whole press room," he explains. "So we knocked out walls and rebuilt from the ground up. The PowerSquare was the first bit of kit that went into the newly redesigned room. Which was fortunate as it is quite a signifi-



cant machine – once it is installed you would not want to move it!"

A significant machine though it may be, it was installed in a single morning by the Watkiss engineers. Training was equally efficient and so Jones and his staff are all very clued up on using the machine. What's more, they enjoy using it.

"It is really popular with the operators," he reveals. "There have been machines they really did try and avoid, but they are extremely happy with the PowerSquare and find it very easy to use."

Admittedly, there are not that many people to please, as Jones runs his print business with just three staff. This means, as he explains, "a lot of automation is needed". It also means the machines have to be completely reliable. Fortunately, the PowerSquare has turned out to be just that.

"Reliability is a massive factor as we have such a lot of time sensitive work coming through," says Jones. "We also put a lot of pressure on the machines as every single job we do is different, with changes in size, stock, thickness and run length.

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Jones: "we have increased our production capability by 50%"

Considering the latter, this machine is incredibly robust and reliable. Of course, you always get teething problems, so the occasional sensor going down and the like, but these were fixed quickly and weren't a massive issue.

"We have also been so impressed with the service. Chris Page is the most technically aware sales person we have dealt with, he really knows the machine back to front. So when he pops in to do visits, he can always answer our questions."

The machine has had a big impact on Jones' work and the company. He says the quality and speed of the work coming off the machine has convinced a lot of people at Hachette who used to have thermal-bound A4 products, such as accounts books, to have saddlestitched booklets instead. It has also encouraged more work from the numerous Hachette businesses the print site serves, including some on-demand book printing for proofing copies of Hachette titles.

Business building

"I think the companies under the Hachette umbrella now understand what we do a lot better and having something like the PowerSquare enables us to show people how we can improve the products we get printed," says Jones. "Some people do still get products produced outside of the company, and we want to try and get that business. We can get a really great spine on the PowerSquare for books and can produce 500-600 copies, so we can now do that work and they are giving it to us."

Company profile

Hachette UK is one of the largest book publishers in Europe. The group is made up of several companies and imprints including Headline Publishing Group, Hodder & Stoughton, John Murray, Orion Publishing Group, Octopus Publishing Group, Hodder Education Group and Little, Brown Book Group. The pressroom in the UK head office is run by Dan Jones, and he and his team operate a raft of Xerox press equipment and assorted finishing kit.

Why it was bought...

Jones felt his current bookletmaker was not up to the task of producing high-quality thick booklets and books, and wanted a machine with the speed, quality and flexibility to handle different stocks and sizes that would enable the in-house team to handle more work that the group was outsourcing.

How it has performed...

Jones says the machine has had a massive impact on the company, bringing more work in-house and changing the perception of the pressroom for Hachette staff. "We can get a really great spine on the PowerSquare for books and can produce 500-600 copies, so we can now do that work and they are giving it to us," says Jones. "If you want a good quality thick book, it really is perfect."

Being so cost-effective and quick with booklet work is a big part of the print facility being used more. Jones explains how previously booklet work would be sent out to a printer in Manchester first, then down to a printer in Oxford to be finished. Now it is all done in one place, within the building it is being used in. He adds that, despite all this work coming in-house, the printroom is more than capable of coping.

"This is our busiest time of the year and we are usually really manic, but this year, however, we are very relaxed," says Jones. "The reason for that is we have the PowerSquare. We have increased our production capability by 50% so it really is significant."

Overall, then, Jones is very happy with his purchase. "Like any of the bookletmakers, there are things still that could be improved such as issues with static, but this is by far the best bookletmaker we have had," he says.

As to whether he would buy another, he says he would have to double his volumes to warrant the purchase – and find some more space from somewhere. But if both those things happened, then he says he would happily make a second purchase.

"If you want a good quality thick book, it really is perfect," he concludes. **PW**

Watkiss PowerSquare

The Watkiss PowerSquare 200 is a unique and innovative complete book making system for digital and offset print applications. In a single machine it combines the four processes of stitching, folding, spine forming and trimming to produce SquareBack books up to 200 pages thick.

Key features

A Single Solution

The PowerSquare is a single solution for books from 8 - 200 pages.

SquareBack Books

SquareBack books can carry print on the spine, just like a perfect bound book. They are easy to handle, stack and pack.

Double Book Thickness

10mm (200 pages of 80gsm paper) is twice that of conventional machines.

Automatic Sheet Rotation

Sheets are automatically rotated into the correct orientation for booklet making.

Insert 1 - 6 stitches

Multiple stitching allows 2-up or 3-up production. The static stitch head ensures consistent alignment and quality.

Instant-On

There is no warm-up time, so the machine is always ready to run.

Fast and precise set-up

Job settings and memories are easily set in the colour touch screen panel.



Offline PowerSquare (hand-feed option)



Nearline PowerSquare with PowerSquare Sheet Feeder and high capacity Book Stacker



Online PowerSquare, compatible with a range of printers



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