



# Melter: A Commitment to Customized Communications

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A Ricoh Commercial Printing Business Case Study

# An Informed Inkjet Investment

Melter, one of Germany's largest manufacturers and service providers for personalized dialogue marketing, has been leveraging inkjet technology using inkjet heads on offset equipment for more than 20 years. They made the move into full digital production inkjet with a RICOH Pro VC70000 in September of 2019. Before making the investment in the press, the firm did a comprehensive analysis of customer needs, the equipment's fit within their operations and its business benefits. This case study details the steps Melter followed to support its investment decision, the key market factors driving the investment and the benefits inkjet is delivering to the company today.

## melter

### A Leading Provider of Dialogue Marketing

The Melter company is a family-owned business founded over 100 years ago. Today, the firm is one of Germany's best and largest manufacturers and providers of dialogue marketing services in print. The company sends out more than a billion personalized print products annually and is committed to delivering highly personalized communications. Melter serves a broad range of industries, including mail order firms, retailers, non-profits, insurance and banking, publishers and automotive suppliers.

According to Director of Sales, Daniel Melter, "Our business is based on long-term cooperation and partnerships with our clients. We provide our customers with in-depth advice on everything from innovative technologies to options for improving mailings as well as ROI metrics. Our customers benefit from our flexibility as well as our unbeatable comprehensive service, which covers the full range of options from technical concepts to data handling, printing, personalization, finishing, lettershop, fulfillment and postal delivery."

### Markets Served



Financial



Insurance



Publishing



Automotive



Retail



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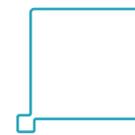


## The Inkjet Decision

The biggest influencer on the Melter company's inkjet investment was changing market dynamics. Melter explains, "We started to see the market changing very quickly. Our customer base has significantly more data that they wanted to incorporate into their mailings while maintaining high quality. The run lengths were getting shorter and shorter. It was time to evaluate our options."

The company is no stranger to printing personalized communications, having initiated its journey into personalization in 1996 with a combination of toner-based equipment and traditional offset with inkjet heads. Melter recalls, "At the beginning of 1996, 90% of our work had no personalization, while 10% was personalized. Today, it is exactly the reverse. Ninety percent of our work is personalized, data-driven marketing communications."

Melter managers continually assessed production inkjet technology and in 2019 saw that the output quality would meet the stringent requirements of their customers. The company conducted a detailed evaluation. From a financial standpoint, the Melter team reviewed a number of test jobs and calculated the cost of the offset process (including ink, plates, quality, time and labor) against shifting the work to a production inkjet press.



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– Daniel Melter,  
Director of Sales

# The Inkjet Benefits

The analysis revealed that not only would inkjet be cost effective versus offset technology for handling the rapid increase in short-run work, but would also yield the following benefits:

1. The opportunity to offer improved one-to-one marketing applications for their customers.
2. No limits on the personalization of print products.
3. Faster response time for short-run work.
4. Capitalizing on the change from long runs to small runs with many versions.
5. A platform to enter into the automation of printed direct mail campaigns.

Melter summarizes the value by saying, "Inkjet will be our future." He continues, "We evaluated all technology options available on the market and decided on the RICOH Pro VC70000."

Melter production staff ran a series of test jobs to understand the quality, productivity and cost effectiveness of available presses in the market. The firm needed a viable alternative to offset printing and believed that the Pro VC70000 delivered the benefits of digital printing and data-driven communications without compromising on affordable media choices, image integrity and speed. A key consideration was the ability to print on offset coated paper with no priming or pretreatment.

Ricoh's proprietary extended gamut inks and advanced drying technologies gave the Melter company the ability to run the same stocks on offset presses and the Pro VC70000.

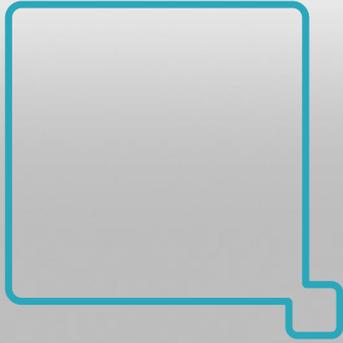


# Additional Investments

Some firms need to make significant software investments to drive volume to inkjet presses. Its long history with personalization and variable data meant that Melter was already well entrenched in software investments with solutions like Quadiant® to automate customer communications workflow.

**A big area of focus for Melter was streamlining finishing operations.** The company invested in a Hunkeler roll-to-stack line that combines the CS8 cutting module and LS8 offset stacking module to convert a continuous web into one or multiple offset stacks at speeds up to 590 ft/min. In addition, Melter acquired a Hunkeler DP8 dynamic perforation module. This device combines perforation in the vertical and cross directions along with punching in one unit. “Dynamic” refers to the ability to change the punching, perforating or hole pattern from sheet to sheet, particularly useful for transpromotional applications or personalized mailers. It opened the ability to integrate coupons, payment slips and other elements into a broad array of direct mailers.





**RICOH**  
Pro VC70000

## Inkjet: Delivering Results

According to Melter, the Pro VC70000 has exceeded the company's expectations. The print quality has proven to be exceptional and customers perceive it as comparable to offset printing. Layouts with heavy coverage are easy to produce. Almost all of the paper stocks that the company uses for its offset work run well on the Pro VC70000.

Melter says, "The Pro VC70000 is a perfect fit for our company. We can do traditional offset with black personalization. For very short-run, variable-data jobs, we use our RICOH Pro C9210 and, as our customers move to full variable print and want high quality, we use the Pro VC70000. It has positioned us to be the partner that can satisfy their needs today and take them into the future."

# Recommendations to Peers

Melter offers the following tips for making a successful investment in inkjet technology:



1. The initial installation shouldn't be done under time pressure. Melter had only four weeks to get the press up and running to complete a critical customer job and would not recommend that type of timetable to peers.



2. Truly understand your customer base and where it is headed. That was the critical factor in Melter's decision to invest in inkjet.



3. Find a partner that understands your business and not only has strong technology, but also backs that with service and support.



4. Take the time to train employees.



“We get far more support than we ever expected and that includes service after the sale. Ricoh experts have helped us on an array of topics that are helping us push our business forward and that includes everything from technology to marketing strategy.”

# The Bottom Line

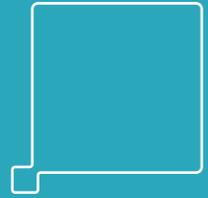
In wrapping up, Melter says, “Inkjet is pivotal to our future growth and expansion. Our customers want to leverage their customer data to do customized and personalized communications with variable text and images. The VC70000 provided the right platform for us to meet changing customer requirements.”

The inkjet investment gave Melter’s customers confidence that they had chosen the right partner. It gave them the quality they expected in combination with a partner that could help them satisfy future creative marketing requirements.

Investment in production inkjet requires a clear understanding of what customers want, skills to meet emerging customized communication requirements and a partner you can rely on. The key is that both you and your customers reap the benefits of production inkjet.

## Why Ricoh?

The Melter company conducted an extensive evaluation and Ricoh met its stringent demands for quality as well as a very broad media selection. Melter reports, “The technology delivers the expected level of quality, but of equal importance is Ricoh’s dedication to service.”



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