IMAGE DIRECT DOUBLES DIRECT MAIL VOLUMES WITH THE CANON ColorStream 3900

Meet Canon inkjet customer and thINK member from Image Direct

Dilip Parthasarathy, Owner and President of Image Direct Group, LLC., a minority owned business (MBE) with 70+ employees, proudly represents his family's third generation in the print industry. He reminisces of fond childhood memories growing up in India working in the print shop his grandfather established in 1945.

Dilip credits his father for his success today, sharing that his father led him by example. He explained, "My father is an extremely intelligent, savvy businessman, and placed a high importance on the art of continued learning and staying current in your industry, and that philosophy has been a big part of my success."

At the young age of 23, Dilip came to America to get his master's degree in Print Management and an MBA in Strategic Management, after which he began working as a solution architect focusing on supply chain strategies for the manufacturing industry. Dilip also worked for several years in IT before the print world called him back, and in March 2018 he purchased Image Direct, a 26-year-old print and mail company based in Frederick, Maryland. The business had a great customer base but outdated legacy equipment.

"When buying a business, you acquire all the good and bad parts and it takes time to stabilize, but with my extensive experience both in and out of printing I had acquired a well-rounded mix of skills and I knew that would serve me well in leading the company to higher growth and increased profitability," Dilip said. "In the early days, with rising labor costs and expensive maintenance on legacy machines, I hardly made any money. I knew I had to take swift action to replace the legacy equipment and grow the company. I devoured the learning in an inkjet book that a Canon inkjet sales rep gave me ("The Inkjet Edge"), began researching the future of the print industry, and visited several successful print and mail shops to learn how I could best modernize and streamline our technology and processes. Then, I called in my father."

Armed with research and knowledge on the direction of the print industry and technology advancements, Dilip and his father attended the PRINTING United Expo and met with many equipment manufacturers, solidifying what they knew already from their research —Canon inkjet was the right decision. "We invested in a Canon ColorStream and MBO folding machine and inserters that insert 13-14k an

hour," Dilip shared. Shortly after install they experienced a rapid increase in mail volume, going from 6-7 million to 10-12 million direct mail pieces a month. "Today we mail out over 100 million pieces of direct mail each year, and we are seeing continued growth."

"The Canon ColorStream was the right choice for us. The quality and speed in which it can print anything from monochrome to full-color applications enables us to meet customer requirements for a wide variety of applications including TransPromo, Direct Mail, or books and manuals," Dilip said. Currently Image Direct primarily prints and mails political and nonprofit fundraising campaign materials, transactional mail (financial and medical statements) and commercial advertisements (postcards, self-mailers) in the Baltimore and DC area markets.

"Canon inkjet was the clear leader throughout our learning and buying process. From arming us with the information we needed to do our research, to laying out a solid finance package that would enable us to be successful in our transition, to providing complimentary membership to the thINK inkjet user group and all the tools, training and resources that comes along with that. Across the board, the Canon team leads, not only in their inkjet technology but in the way that they engage with their customers to help accelerate our success," Dilip stated.

When asked what recommendations he has for others entering the inkjet market, Dilip replied, "I believe in knowledge. It's a powerful tool. Empower yourself with the art of learning and stay current in the industry so that you can excel in what you offer to your customers—there's no surer way of succeeding."

"Image Direct's success is a direct result of Dilip's dedication to understanding where the print industry is headed and how to best serve his customers. Inkjet is the future of print and Image Direct is well positioned for continued success, and we look forward to supporting them every step of the way," said Francis McMahon, executive vice president, Production Print, Canon, Inc.

Canon has led the evolution of print for nearly a decade, with industry-leading web-fed, sheetfed, and total high-volume inkjet market share in the U.S. reported in 2021. They support their inkjet customers in multiple ways, including through their Executive Sponsorship of thINK, an independent community of Canon inkjet customers. Canon offers their inkjet customers complimentary membership to the inkjet user group, which is led by a board of Canon inkjet customers and offers tools, training and educational resources designed to accelerate success with inkjet. Canon inkjet customers can request membership by visiting thINKForum.com.

"I wholeheartedly agree and subscribe to Dilip's philosophy of continued learning, and the thINK community is designed for exactly that, with inkjet tools, training and resources available on thINKForum.com to all members and networking and learning opportunities at our annual thINK Ahead conference. I encourage all Canon inkjet customers to join this dynamic inkjet user community," said Lori Messina, thINK Board president and president at Access Direct.

ABOUT thINK FORUM

thINK is an independent community of Canon inkjet customers, solution partners, and print industry experts, and Canon is a proud executive sponsor. Led by some of the most successful inkjet service providers in the country, it provides a forum for members to network, gain knowledge, discuss common challenges, and share best practices. For more information, **visit thinkforum.com**.

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