



CASE STUDY

Standing in front of the Canon ProStream 1800 web-fed inkjet press at Pel Hughes in New Orleans, LA. Pictured from left to right: Tim Levy, Vice President; Brian Hughes, President; Johnny Hughes, Estimator; and Jackie Hughes, Owner.

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ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

How Pel Hughes continues to successfully navigate the complex print landscape

There was a time when the project sitting in front of the Pel Hughes team would have seemed daunting. President Brian Hughes and Vice President Tim Levy and their team were looking at a direct marketing campaign targeting 500,000-plus senior citizens that required full color printing with variable data on two sides, perforating, and mailing. In the old days, this type of project would have choked Pel Hughes' workflow system.

Those were the days when the company's print technology held Pel Hughes back, creating waste and inefficiencies with pre-printed shells and labor-intensive processes. It was before Hughes and Levy sat down and made a decision that would change everything.



What Hughes and Levy found was that as the company's business evolved over the years, its press technology did not. Pel Hughes needed to find a better, more efficient way to do what its customers have come to expect from it—and that meant upgrading its equipment portfolio.

The first big move was the acquisition of the Canon ProStream 1800 web-fed inkjet press. For high volume, commercial print environments like Pel Hughes, the web-fed inkjet press offers speeds of up to 436 feet/minute and combines the print quality and media flexibility of offset with the production efficiency and versatility of digital inkjet to deliver exceptional performance.

To help with jobs like the aforementioned marketing campaign, the ProStream 1800 is capable of achieving outstanding print quality across a huge range of media, including standard offset coated, uncoated, and inkjet optimized papers from 40 to 300 gsm—all with full variable data capabilities.

"For years, we have invested in technology, both hardware and software, to give our clients the most efficient and best quality print/marketing solutions they demand," Hughes says. "We looked at both cut sheet and roll fed devices. We have traditionally been a cut sheet shop, and never had web presses, so venturing into that was a bit of a leap. But we wanted to bring that ability for our customers to leverage their data and offer true one-to-one communications, no matter how large their audience is."

Love at first sight

The Pel Hughes team first saw a ProStream 1800 sample a few years ago at a show in Dallas, in which it was immediately added to the list of devices they needed to explore. Levy says they were impressed with the quality and the substrate flexibility, and its ability to print on heavier stocks than its competitors, to print on standard offset stocks, and its uptime.

"First, there's the sheer efficiency factor," Levy says. "The ProStream can run 400,000 stunning high-quality postcards in the time it takes two of our toner devices to run just 10,000 postcards. There's no question about the night and day difference when it comes to speed and quality—not to mention the uptime, which has been only 70% on our digital toner devices versus average uptimes over 90% on the ProStream."

And, when you layer on top of that the variable data capabilities that can handle Pel Hughes' complex data matrices, the ProStream 1800 has been a game changer. After its install in May 2022, the Pel Hughes team immediately began moving offset jobs that demanded pre-printed shells, high quality graphics, and those with run lengths too short to run profitably on offset over to the ProStream. It also moved its digital toner jobs as well.

"We didn't really have a learning curve; our work was already there, we just needed a high-quality, high-speed press like the ProStream that could catch up with us and help us move into the future," Hughes says. "We call it our plug-and-play strategy; keep doing what we were already doing, but do it better, more efficiently, more profitably."

Add to it the importance that Pel Hughes places on its vendor partnerships and the Canon production inkjet team vaulted to the top of the list. *"We have always viewed our vendors as partners and an extension of our production team," Levy says. "Our vendor relationships are as important as our customer relationships. We pride ourselves on being transparent and reliable partners with both our customers and vendors, so we know the value of reliability and dependability. We truly consider our vendors integral to our success."*

When it came to the installation process, all of Pel Hughes' reasons for choosing Canon inkjet were verified. Levy says the Canon production inkjet team has been a valuable partner throughout the buying and installation process. *"During more normal times, installing a ProStream into an existing commercial print shop can be very challenging—it requires a lot of flexibility and teamwork. Imagine the patience and flexibility required by both parties who are experiencing the many supply chain disruptions that we are going through now. Canon was great to work with throughout the process."*

A legacy of commitment and excellence

The Pel Hughes family business began in 1954 with Pel and Elise Hughes. Son, Vic Hughes, and his wife, Jackie, took charge of the business in 1970, growing it from a small commercial print and mail shop to a \$15 plus million full-marketing service provider. Today, Jackie Hughes, her son Brian Hughes, and her brother Tim Levy continue to lead the business into the next generation.

The views and opinions expressed here are based on the actual experiences of the customer. Testimonials are not claimed to represent typical results, and various factors can impact different customers' results.



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The years brought on many accomplishments and obstacles, including the epic floods from Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Over the years, the third-generation, woman-owned business continued to weather the waves of changes and growth.

Today, Pel Hughes has a solid mix of local and national accounts, serving a variety of vertical markets that includes higher education, healthcare, gaming, financial, insurance, non-profit, political, retail, and more. With a core strength in database/direct marketing, the Pel Hughes team helps their clients leverage data to make their communications more personalized, timely and appealing. *"We've always been proponents of full color variable data and have had sheet-fed full color toner devices in our equipment mix for over 20 years," Hughes says.*

As important as the equipment and technological upgrades have been, the people factor has been greater. *"For those investments to be successful, you have to have a team that is capable and motivated to accept the many changes," Hughes says. "Throughout our organization, our team truly makes our operation. We have employees that have been here for 30-plus years, and many more over 20 years. Our focus has always been on providing our people the best tools/equipment and an environment that they enjoy being a part of."*

As Pel Hughes moves into the next phase of its legacy, its leadership team will continue to make the moves needed to not only keep up but lead into the future with Canon as an ally.