

# FOLDING IN PROFIT

**D**ue to recent changes in postal regulations that affect high-volume direct marketers, as well as the adoption of new web widths in the newspaper industry that affect advertising inserts, demand for secondary folding operations has increased dramatically over the past few years.

Often called “soft folding” or “quarter folding,” this postpress process entails the refolding of a printed piece that typically already has been collated and stitched in order to reduce its overall dimensions, usually by one-half.

Says William Calvert, owner of Calvert McBride, Fort Smith, Ark., secondary folding projects such as gatefolds routinely had been contracted to outside sources. “Doing this kind of work on our regular folders was just too slow to be very profitable,” explains Calvert. “Invariably, there was a lot of spoilage.”

Two years ago, the company saw that an increased demand for refolding represented strong growth potential. Calvert says that modifications to the firm’s bindery equipment enabled the addition of a ZK 500 knife folding attachment from Vijuk Equipment, Inc.

“Now,” he states, “instead of farming this work out, we’re actively pursuing it.” According to Calvert, unlike conventional buckle-type folders, the knife-type folder provides a smooth and controlled fold, significantly reducing the spoilage that is common to this type of postpress job. Today, he says, the company has doubled its quarter folding work.

## MATERIAL, TIME, LABOR SAVINGS

Family owned Garrity Printing, Harahan, La., also employs the use of the ZK 500. States company

Refolding system transforms a production headache to a moneymaking business pursuit.



Bob Williams of Rock Communications is pleased with the new time-saving folding system.

president Pat Garrity, “Many of our customers rely on us for their standard and tabloid-size newsletters. When new postal regulations mandated folding down to quarter size, we originally performed these operations on our standard folder. Not only was this slow, but we were ruining a lot of rollers on the folders.”

Garrity says that the ZK 500, rated at up to 20,000 cycles per hour and able to fold up to a 144-page signature depending on stock, not only has speeded up the process, but has reduced from three to two the number of workers needed to perform refolding operations. Further, says Garrity Printing production manager John Moore, “Popping stitches, which used to be a big problem, no longer is an issue.”

## QUICK FIX FOR INSERTS

Rock Communications, Ltd. provides turnkey production services for advertisers whose inserts are distributed by newspapers

across the country. In 1999, says Randy Vanderleest, production manager at one of Rock Communication’s two Newton, Iowa-based plants, newspapers began narrowing web widths to reduce costs.

“The narrower publication width meant that standard-size ad inserts would stick out,” he says. “To accommodate the new widths, the standard 12×12” inserts had to be folded down to 6×12”. At first, we brought people in to do the refolding by hand, but it was clear that we needed a more efficient method for the long term.

“We work on some tight deadlines,” he continues. “It’s the nature of the business, so we’re always looking for faster, more efficient ways to respond to customer requirements. The Vijuk knife folder helps us do just that.” Vanderleest reports that his refolding system runs at speeds in the neighborhood of 8,500 pieces per hour, a substantial increase in output compared to previously manual methods.

## GROWTH FACTOR

Another Iowa-based operation employing the ZK 500 to promote faster, more efficient refolding operations is the Iowa City Press & Citizen, a Gannett newspaper company.

“Our commercial printing operation produces a number of tabloid shoppers and similar publications, including foreign-language newspapers,” says production director Amy Sparby. “In the past, we handled smaller refolding jobs by hand and contracted out larger work.”

Two years ago, the company purchased a signature feeder, the ZK 500, and a shingle delivery unit. Sparby says the Vijuk system is used in Iowa City Press & Citizen’s print shop for sheetfed work as well as for larger jobs that come off the web press, and is capable of turning around a typical 6,000- to 12,000-run job within two hours.

“The Vijuk equipment has expanded our capabilities, allowing us to bid on a much wider range of projects, while providing substantial labor savings.”