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## Press Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **SOUTHERN LITHOPLATE INSTRUMENTAL IN QUALITY WEB PRINTING'S CAREFULLY PLANNED MOVE INTO CTP**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. — When Quality Web Printing took the leap into the digital age, the Elkton, Ky.-based printing firm was prepared for many of the gains associated with computer to plate (CtP) technology. The company expected to reap the benefits of eliminating the film stage and creating plates from digital images, such as automated control over workflow and time savings in prepress production.

“The biggest factor was the amount of time we were working in the plate room,” recalled Mike Finch, owner of Quality Web Printing. “My son Michael and I spent 25 hours a week processing film, matching up pages and manually burning plates. We decided that Quality Web Printing couldn’t grow any further if we were tied up that much every week.”

Even so, switching from film to CtP was neither a simple step for the small company nor easy to justify.

“We were skeptical about using CtP because it is a big investment,” Finch said. “We weren’t certain it was the right move for a company our size, and we figured there were other purposes to which we could put a six-figure investment. We were especially concerned about the support we might need.”

The Southern Lithoplate CtP Alliance Solution helped ease the transition into CtP, according to Finch.

“We knew about the vendor program that Southern Lithoplate had established, and decided to depend on them to set up the system for us.”

Today, Quality Web Printing’s prepress operation is centered around Southern Lithoplate’s VIPER 830® lithoplates and the Screen PlateRite News 2000 thermal platesetter.

“We have justified the cost of CtP with the increased number of jobs we have been able to attract as a result,” Finch said.

Finch basically got in to printing newspapers through the backdoor. It was a sure way to guarantee that his own newspaper, the *Todd County Standard*, went to press in a timely manner.

“I began printing my own paper in 1989,” he said. “We were so small that every printer we went to put us on the bottom of their list. I finally decided that, instead of printing on everyone else’s schedule, I would do it myself and print on my schedule.”

With a background in journalism, Finch hired on at the 2,100-circulation weekly in 1978. One of the oldest businesses in the county, the *Todd County Standard* has reported on the happenings of the area since 1892.

Finch and a business partner bought the newspaper in 1984. They relied on other printing companies to turn the camera-ready pages they supplied into printed copies. During this time, they also produced letterheads and envelopes for local customers on a small-format press.

“Based on our experience printing various commercial projects, we acquired a two-unit King press in 1989 to begin printing the newspaper,” Finch said. “The *Standard* usually ran 14 to 16 pages, printed in black-and-white eight-page signatures, with an occasional spot color on ads and inserts. We chose analog plates from Southern Lithoplate.”

The partner eventually left the company to pursue screen printing.

In the meantime, two printing units were added to the press in 1991, enabling the company to offer its clients four-color advertisements, inserts and multipage circulars. Quality Web Printing provided printing and delivery services, and the commercial business started to take off.

Mike Finch and his son Michael C. Finch II, who also has a journalism background, ran the newspaper and the commercial printing operations until 2006, when the father and son realized they had become more interested in printing. The *Todd County Standard* was sold in the spring of the year.

“In the past five years, our annual gross sales have grown from under \$200,000 to more than \$1 million,” the elder Finch noted. “Even after we sold the paper, our gross sales have improved during the past 12 months.”

Quality Web Printing currently operates out of a 9,000-square-foot facility, staffed by six full-time and several part-time employees. Its web printing capabilities have expanded to a total of 13 units.

Quality Web Printing prints 28 jobs per month, consisting of monthly, twice-monthly and weekly newspapers. Its roster of clients includes the *Todd County Standard*.

“Most of our work is printed on 30-pound newsprint, although we do print on 50-pound bright white paper for some jobs,” Finch pointed out. “We regularly print 16 tabloid pages or eight broadsheet pages of color.”

While deciding whether or not to implement CtP, Quality Web Printing learned as much as it could about the technology.

“Our sales representative at Southern Lithoplate encouraged us to participate in the 2006 NEXPO show in Chicago,” Finch said. “We attended seminars held by the PAGE Co-op, went to workshops and visited exhibitors’ booths on the showroom floor. By the end of the show, we were very excited about the prospects of CtP.”

Still, Quality Web Printing was not ready to take the plunge.

“We reinvested some of the proceeds from the sale of the paper into a brush dampening system, disc brakes and a few other things to improve the print quality of our web press,” Finch said. “Coincidentally, we picked up three or four print jobs within a month’s time.”

The extra revenue provided the push that was needed.

“Sometimes it takes a lurch now and again,” Finch explained.

Quality Web Printing replaced an existing ECRM imagesetter with the PlateRite News 2000S and VIPER 830 lithoplastes. The company utilizes PolkaDots’ IntroFlo workflow software to automate prepress tasks. OneVision’s Asura preflighting tool allows error-free processing and correction of PDF, EPS and PostScript files.

“We output about 1,000 plates each month,” Finch said. “Tuesdays and Wednesdays are our busiest days. Since installing the CtP device, one person can do the work of two in prepress. That frees me up to perform administrative functions or run the press if necessary.”

Finch always believed that CtP would streamline workflow and enhance productivity, but he harbored reservations about the promised improvement in print quality.

“I really didn’t think we could squeeze much more out of the press after the upgrades, but I was wrong,” Finch said. “With the combination of the press improvements, CtP and the VIPER plates, the images jump off the page. We noticed the improved quality on the very first job. Our biggest client uses gradient type colors, and we saw fine dot structures we had never seen before. The images were sharper and cleaner. There was less dot gain on press.”

Registration has improved as well.

“The plates are absolutely right on target,” Finch observed. “Previously, we experienced film stretch of 1/1,000th to 1/3,000th of an inch. The precision of our registration now is very impressive. In retrospect, it is amazing how much a tiny distortion can affect quality.”

Finch added that plate remakes, though rare, are fast and precise.

“If we have to remake a plate because of web wrap or a problem with a blanket, we can go back into the queue, pull an image and send it through the platesetter,” he said. “The plate is exactly on target again.”

Despite early doubts, Finch swears by CtP’s benefits.

“Southern Lithoplate has played a big part in the process,” he stated. “I knew that depending on them was a good idea, and it has been confirmed in the months that we have had the equipment. They scramble to make sure even the slightest issues are addressed. They have always been that way, and I have no doubt that they will continue to be that way in the future.

If it hadn't been for them, it would not have been as easy to grow or even make the transition to CtP.”

**About Southern Lithoplate, Inc.**

Southern Lithoplate, Inc., headquartered in North Carolina, specializes in the manufacture, distribution and service of analog and digital lithoplates and associated products for targeted print markets. Southern Lithoplate enjoys a reputation for Quality, Value & Performance throughout the world. Southern Lithoplate provides our customer markets a full array of high-quality value-priced products. Southern Lithoplate's service infrastructure is designed to exceed the needs of their customer markets. Our state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities are located in Jackson, Tennessee, and near the world-renowned Research Triangle Park in North Carolina USA. . For more information, call 800-638-7990 or visit the Southern Lithoplate website at [www.slp.com](http://www.slp.com).

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