

# A quiet confidence permeates Hannaford & Dumas Commercial Printers

By John Scibelli

If there is a radar detection system for the printing industry, Hannaford & Dumas Commercial Printers has flown under it for years — unintentionally it seems.



That is changing. Print buyers throughout eastern Massachusetts are taking notice of this Woburn, Mass. company for all the right reasons. There is superior color printing and turn-around times from a suite of small to mid-size format presses, consistent beginning-to-end servicing of long-time and recently acquired accounts; and conservative, but rock-steady growth in a challenging business environment. All of this points to a bright future for the firm.

Since moving to its present location in 2005, Hannaford & Dumas has grown to 40 full-time employees, its annual sales have been on an upward trajectory for years, except this past year, and a quiet confidence permeates the workplace.

A combination of a still new, two-year-old Ryobi press that cranks out work with ease, and a professional



The firm is led by Vice President and Owner Stephen Bryer, left, and General Manager Dick Ronan.

sales team that has hit its stride, allows Vice President and Owner Stephen Bryer time and space to plan while General Manager Dick Ronan focuses on day to day operations.

### Started as a copy shop

The husband and wife team of Andrew Hannaford and Michelle Dumas founded a Minuteman Press franchise in Lynn in 1976 and provided retail copy services to a walk-in client base in the early years.

A new chapter emerged by 1983 after the couple invested in a high-speed copier from Kodak and broke into trade work by producing proxy statements for financial services firms.

Contacts with well know commercial print shops such as Daniels Printing in Everett led the Minuteman franchise to transition away from retail copying and into full-fledged trade work.

In 1987 the shock of a lifetime happened. Andy Hannaford, who handled production and most client work, died suddenly at age 48.

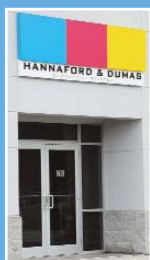
Michelle picked up the pieces. Along the way, she asked her nephew Stephen Bryer to join her.

He joined the company immediately after he finished his senior year in the electrical program at Northeast Regional Vocational Technical High School and spent the next six years immersed in learning every aspect of print manufacturing that he could.

By 1991, they dropped the Minuteman Press name and rebranded their company Hannaford & Dumas Commercial Printers to reflect the broader range of their service offering.

### COMPANY OVERVIEW:

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The loss of her husband was difficult, but Michelle kept the company on track. Six years after Bryer joined his aunt, who still serves as president, they moved the business into a 10,000 square foot facility in Malden. The company also completed its first acquisition, buying Delta Printing in Lynn in 1999.

"We bought Delta Printing because I was looking for management help," Bryer said. Delta's co-owners, brothers Mark and Roger Sirois, are key Hannaford employees today. Mark is the company's production manager while Roger is a sales representative.

The acquisition added 15 employees to the payroll, but it increased printing capacity by 75 percent.

"It turned out to be a very positive way to grow," Bryer said. "Based on that experience, I would consider future acquisitions as a way to grow or expand."

In 2005, with Bryer having taken more leadership responsibilities, the company bought the building that is Hannaford's present home, a 20,000 square foot single-level building just off Route 38 near Woburn Center.

Bryer closed another deal earlier this spring with the purchase of 11,000 square foot building across the driveway from the main plant. He anticipates setting up mailing and fulfillment services and using some space for paper storage.

"I don't want to move again. I was here for the move to Malden, and the move to our present location. We're not planning on moving again," he said. "This is a good location for us. We have room to grow. The building next door became available, and it made sense for us to buy it."

"We've grown from five employees in 1989 to 40 employees today," he said. Of that amount, nearly 30 are devoted to production. They work in two shifts, five days a week.

The company has four sales representatives and one customer serv-



*Shop Foreman Mark Sirois, foreground, and Angel Anaya on the Prism cutter in the background.*

ice representative. Three other employees provide the accounting, front office, and administrative support to Bryer and Ronan.

"We run the operation as lean as we can," Ronan said. Both men are proud that there has never been a layoff due to lack of work during the company's history, and that has held true throughout current slow economic stretch. "The leaner we stay, the better off we all are."

Ronan says the worse thing management can do is add staff unnecessarily in good times only to be forced to trim positions in slow times. "That's not fair to people and it's not good for the company. When we get busy, people pitch in to get the work done. We grant overtime when necessary and our employees like that."

In the company's last fiscal year, which ended March 31st, business dropped slightly. Within the same 12-month period, however, the company made \$500,000 in capital expenditures, proof that Bryer will spend judiciously when he sees opportunity.

In addition to the 2007 Ryobi press purchase, the company has

upgraded its platesetter to become more environmentally astute, added a perfect binder, a Horizon stitch-liner and die cutting equipment in recent years.

"We're trying to be as automated as possible," Ronan said. "We're also trying to keep as much work as possible in house."

#### **Market focus changes once again**

Up until 2005, the vast majority of the company's revenue came from trade work. Two envelope presses were always in use producing jobs of all shapes and sizes. There was no sales team. All sales were referrals.

A chance encounter in 2004 helped shape the next chapter in the 31-year-old company's history. A printing sales representative from another company who was looking to make a move approached Bryer about a job. Shortly thereafter, Toni Carpenito became the company's first sales representative to thrive.

"For years we always tried to find qualified sales reps to come to work for us, but it never worked out. We hired Toni four years ago and it has worked out tremendously. Based on that positive experience, we began



Since Dick Ronan joined the company in 2007, Vice President Steve Bryer, above, has been able to focus more of his time and attention on strategic decisions and long range planning.

to aggressively look for good people. Three years ago, Drew Nastri joined the company,” Bryer said. The rest of the sales team is rounded out by Jim Morris and Roger Sirois

“It’s like pitching in baseball,” Ronan said. “You can never have enough good, qualified professionals.”

Customer Service Representative Laurie Hill supports the sales team. Bryer and Ronan also interact with clients in supporting roles to Hill. Bryer still handles some accounts

even as his role shifts to overall executive leadership.

With a staff of four sales representatives, the revenue mix is completely different from just four or five years ago. About 70 percent of the company’s sales come from retail clients and the balance from trade work.

“The client base continues to evolve,” Bryer said. “We’re finding more and more that clients need printing that we can produce in 23 by 29-inch size.”

The company has about 300 clients — of which 50 provide regular and repeat work. Clients are in the bread and butter industries that keep many printing presses across the region spinning — financial services, medical and health care, education, as well as various consumer retail industries and more.

Hannaford still does trade work, and here’s one reason why: Years ago, Alliance Print Group in Boston turned to Hannaford & Dumas — a company unknown to them — after another printer botched an important envelope job.

Bryer took the job on a Friday night and baby-sat it all the way through to delivery.

“We noticed a typo after the job was proofed and ready to print,” he recalled. “It was late at night.



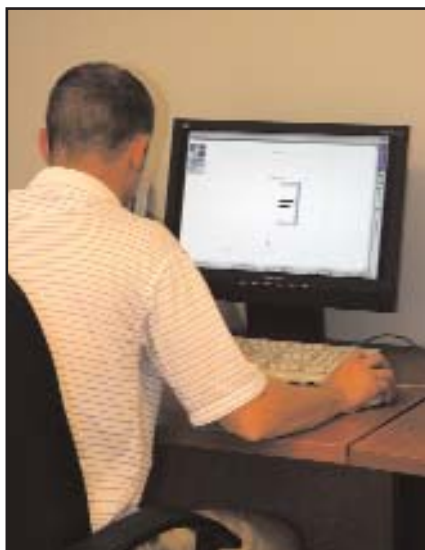
Account Executive Toni Carpenito. She was the first sales representative hired by the company.

Alliance President Kitty St. Sauver was here to check on the job. I told her we would fix the typo and deliver the job on time. We did.

“That was in 1995. That was the first job we did for Alliance and the first time I met Kitty. She was grateful and said she would remember how we came through for her in an emergency. Today, Alliance Print Group is one of our largest and most consistent customers.

“We enjoy working with brokers like Alliance who work on behalf of their clients as well as their suppliers and bring added value and expertise to the equation,” he said.

“Over the past few years, we’ve moved away from brokers who don’t add anything to the process, who only are order takers. It’s helped in



Prepress Manager Rob Hannigan at work.



Pressman Jeff Osborne at the Ryobi 755 press which can print six colors at a time and has a coater.



*Lynn Horsky of Process Corporation, a Hannaford & Dumas client, checks a press proof with General Manager Dick Ronan before the job goes on press.*

our move toward a client base of designers, marketing professionals and end users.”

#### **New opportunities for a new press**

Before transitioning away from a trade-shop business model, Hannaford produced a lot of two-over-two color work, with little demand for four-color work.

“We realized we needed a coater,” Bryer said. “Before the new six-color press, the day shift was doing most of the printing and the night shift was running the same work through a separate coater. It was not an efficient process.”

The need for a new press became more evident after Carpenito joined the company and the client base began to change.

Bryer bought his first new press in 1995, a two-color Ryobi that exceeded expectations then. With a sales rep on board, and demand for color work growing, he began toying with the idea of a new multi-color press with coater.

The idea was nurtured through the spring of 2006, and blossomed into a full-blown strategic decision following Graph Expo that fall after

Bryer went to Chicago and saw the Ryobi 755 on the show floor.

“I realized right away that the 23 by 29 inch sheet size was perfect for us. We wouldn’t have to change the whole shop to accommodate this press,” he said.

A new press was ordered by December, installed by April 2007, and producing crisp multi-color work immediately.

Ronan joined Hannaford in January 2007, and once he got a handle on overall operations, he agreed with Bryer that buying a multi-color press with coater in the mid-size range was a good move.

“Looking back, if we didn’t have that press, I don’t think we’d still be in business,” Bryer said. Since the new Ryobi came online, more and more work being

run through older two-color presses has been moved to the new press. Hannaford has run two production shifts regularly since the new press was installed.

“We are so much more efficient than we were before this press,” he said. “It has freed resources for other needs.”

Bryer said about 70 percent of all work run on the Ryobi 755 is four-color work. About 20 percent is two-color work, and about 10 percent is five-color work. In January, the company ran a job that produced 3.8 million color brochures for a financial services client that resulted in 600,000 impressions on the press. The job took 72 hours to complete.

“One client for whom we were doing a fair amount of work told me back in 2005 that we needed a press that could handle more colors and coat as well,” Bryer said. “It’s ironic, but work from that particular customer has dropped off, but he was right about the press. The new Ryobi has been our main production press since it was installed.”

“Now, we’re doing work for clients that we never thought we’d do,” Ronan said. “And we’ve gotten so much more efficient. It has made us a more efficient shop.”

In all, the company has nine presses including the two envelope Jet presses.



*Pressman Mike Rizzo pulls ink from inventory.*

As Ronan said, most of the presses are ideal for business cards, letter-heads, small brochures, and the Jet presses produce lots of envelopes.

“While this work may not sound exciting, this is what helps pay the bills and keep us going,” the general manager added. “We have a history of doing this kind of work and we look forward to continuing to do it.”

**The future**

“My goal for the next year is to hold on to the



*Pressman Khabn Tran runs a job through a T-Head duplicator.*



*Angel Anaya moves a bin filled paper to get it ready for pick up.*

getting more involved in the local community, having hosted an open house for a local women’s business executive group recently.

“We know our sweet spots in terms of what we produce well,” Ronan said. “We know what we have to do, and we set out to accomplish that everyday. The challenges aren’t easy, but we have a strong team here with dedicated employees who are willing to do whatever is necessary to grow the company and succeed.



*Cindy O’Grady pulls customer samples that have been sealed and are ready for shipping.*



*Jet Press Operator Peter Pessolano checks and envelope at one of the large format Jet Presses.*



*Mel Satterwhite manages one of the company’s folders. The machine is constantly in use.*

work we have and continue to focus on making our customers happy.” Bryer said. “Next year at this time, I want to be able to say that we still have all of our employees that we have now.”

In addition to continuing to focus on building the retail side of business in the short term, Bryer and Ronan hope someday to expand into mailing services, fulfillment and to expand their digital reproduction capabilities in the new 11,000 square foot building a stone’s throw across the driveway.

For now, the focus remains on short-term goals. The broader plan is to continue to grow the retail side of business. The vice president and general manager are confident they can do that with the sales team they have in place and with the equipment investments they’ve made.

Additionally, they recently hired a marketing manager who has started out part-time to help build a plan for the company.

A four-color brochure — produced in-house of course — is a starting point. The company also is

“We print as well as anybody. If there is one thing that perhaps we haven’t done well in recent years, it is getting our name out there and letting people know about us. Now we’re setting about to change that.”

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