

# AMERICAN EXECUTIVE

Where Leadership Begins

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\$5.00 US \$6.00 CANADA

# Out in Front

AMERICAN EXECUTIVE  
VOLUME EIGHT ISSUE THREE  
MAY 2010

## Autodesk

Autodesk technology helps people who change the world through design. Architecture, engineering, and construction projects around the world are transforming not just the landscape on which they sit, but the hearts and minds of those who see and use them. The Autodesk Gallery reveals the boundless artistry, sustainable design, and technological innovation behind some of today's most inspiring building projects.

**A software vendor as an industry thought-leader?  
Jay Bhatt and his team think it's the only way to succeed.**





## Prisma Graphic

Bob Anderson explains how this commercial printing company avoided the fate of many of its competitors thanks to dedicated employees and an opportunistic outlook.



# Open to Opportunities



According to Bob Anderson, president of Prisma Graphic Corporation in Phoenix, Ariz., more than 25% of the printing companies in the US have gone under in the last 10 years as businesses have continued to move their customer communications and marketing efforts to the Web. In 2000, this boutique printer was teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, until a single rushed client request changed the core of its business.

Today, Prisma is a marketing supply chain provider for national companies that need an easy way to produce and distribute branded marketing materials while incorporating the realities of local markets. The company supports 200 online storefronts, with nearly 40,000 worldwide users in industries such as retail, pharmaceutical, financial, and hospitality.

“You have probably seen our work if you have stayed in a W Hotel, had lunch at Paradise Bakery & Café, or picked up supplies from a PetSmart in the last few years,” Anderson said.

In addition to print, the company can create and produce customized, downloadable PDFs and HTML files for electronic distribution. Its main product line, Dokshop, fulfills all the marketing needs of its customers and provides consolidated, itemized invoices by location for ROI measurement. Anderson said Dokshop has done more business in the last two years, even with the dismal economic situation, than the company did in its first 20.

“I bought Prisma as a 20-year-old regional specialty printer that was going bankrupt, and the company had just shy of \$24 million in sales last year,” said Anderson. “We were able to do that because we welcomed opportunities that challenged our idea of a traditional commercial printer and because the people here are dedicated to what they do.”

### Opportunity knocks

In early 2001, a client called to ask for an emergency supply of business cards for its CEO; the former provider had made a mistake on the original order. Prisma agreed as a favor to this long-time partner, and the customer was so pleased it wanted to hire Prisma as its new provider for all its stationary needs. Anderson said he initially balked, stating that Prisma had never been in the stationary business. The promise of a steady income for the struggling company, however, persuaded Anderson and his team to accept the challenge.

Two key differentiators for Prisma created that opportunity and then ensured the company’s future sustainability. The first was its people. Anderson said the 28 employees working for the company in 2000 were well known for their high-quality standards. Today, 22 of those employees are still with the company, and although Prisma now employs 130 people, that dedication to quality still remains. For example, the majority of Dokshop’s business has come through referrals, Anderson said.





# Kramer Ink Co.

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Santa Fe Springs, CA. 90670  
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North Highlands, CA  
San Marcos, CA  
Las Vegas, NV  
Sylmar, CA

Jim Baker, Vice President  
562-946-8847  
Email: jrbaker@kramerink.com

[www.KramerInk.com](http://www.KramerInk.com)

Second, after Prisma took that first business card order, the team suggested working with the client's marketing department online rather than by phone and fax. Back then, there were no available software programs allowing for that kind of collaboration, so the company's internal developers created a program of their own, and Dokshop was born.

"We integrate our services deeper into our client's operations than any of our local competitors. When our customers' employees log onto their company intranet to submit a stationary or marketing product request, they are redirected to our Web service, which looks and feels like it's still a part of their intranet," Anderson explains. "We take over the logistic elements of our customer's marketing department, freeing it up for strategic, big-picture work."

The company even handles warehousing, fulfillment, and inventory management for clients, tracking and delivering orders as needed. And, as companies continue to reduce marketing budgets and head counts, Anderson predicts the demand for these services will grow.

### Smooth operators

This spring, Prisma is launching a new service, Print Power, that makes its

### KRAMER INK COMPANY

*Kramer Ink Company, a 67-year-old American owned and operated corporation, has had a great partnership with Bob Anderson and his quality-minded staff for the past 10 years. It's been our pleasure to supply our quality inks to Prisma Graphics and watch the entrepreneurship of Bob and his staff grow a great organization into one of the top quality printers in Arizona.*

high-quality products available to smaller companies. The software, which is currently in soft launch, allows customers to upload press-ready files to order print materials with the same high quality standards, quick turn times, and aggregated online prices.

Anderson said since Dokshop now handles nearly 7,000 online line-item orders each month, it's easy to add a few hundred extra print orders, even very small ones. Plus, Prisma has spent the last two years perfecting its lean manufacturing processes, making production more efficient than ever.

The first step Prisma took to adopt lean practices was to make its order ticketing system Web-based and give each print operator a computer so everyone is immediately aware of any changes. Anderson said a project can be changed as many as six times from order entry to





delivery. Before making the tracking process electronic, and therefore more flexible, Prisma had a modest spoilage rate of less than 3%; today, that rate is well below 1%.

Second, the company has automated as much of the process as possible, and third, it developed standard operating procedures in the pressroom and bindery. Operators are cross-trained and can run any piece of equipment at any given time.

As a result of these practices, Prisma currently performs in the top 10% of commercial print companies, according to the Printing Industries of America organization. The increased efficiency resulting from these measures was a major part in the company's ability to fulfill its promise of complete employee retention in 2009.



"The worst mistake we could make to get through hard times would be to lay off the employees who consistently provide a great experience for our customers," Anderson said. "It's because of them our customers voted us the number one commercial printer in Arizona for the third year in a row, and they are the reason we can look excitedly toward a future of innovation." ■

—Meghan Flynn

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