

Redwall Becomes State Of The Art With Addition of Digital Line.

BROTHER DTG TESTIMONIAL

With his new Digital Line system, Jeff Meilander is producing high-quality DTG prints with peak speed and efficiency using a single operator.

Jeff Meilander, founder, Redwall, Oak Creek, Wis., added his first DTG machines back in 2015. As a high-volume, full-service decorator, he recognized the need to get into the digital space.

“We had substantially expanded our screen printing capabilities and moved into a new building. Most of our production was screen printing with some embroidery,” he notes.

His first three machines were industrial, commercial-quality printers, which allowed him to figure out the logistics and workflow that needed to happen.

“We weren’t doing true print-on-demand or even small bulk orders at that point, but our first printers got us familiar with how DTG worked,” he shares.



“And we ran into a lot of issues. Despite working directly with the manufacturer, we had a hard time. In the end, it wasn’t because they were not good machines, they just didn’t do what we needed them to do.

“After that initial period, we saw the potential and were interested in dramatically expanding our digital production. We intended to invest the capital to expand and improve our quality, but those three initial machines were not delivering what we wanted, so we started looking at other options,” Meilander says.

This is the point where Brother came in. “At first, I was hesitant because my perception was that Brother was targeting entry-level, mom-and-pop size shops, but obviously that has changed. After we first started talking with them, I really dug in and learned all I could about it.”

“I was impressed with the quality of the printer, the price point, and the ready availability of parts.

I could see similarities between Brother and the first company I tried, but the cost to run the machine and replacement parts was lower, while the ease of use was much higher.

“I also felt their equipment was more flexible and scalable than the previous models we used. They made more sense for what I was trying to do, which was to add more machines as I needed them,” he says.

“One thing I immediately noticed about the Brother printers was that the print quality was really good, and I liked the offline pretreat as opposed to inline. With the prior machine brand, the pretreat was inline and the inspection offline, so printing on a dry shirt vs. a wet shirt was new to me.

“There were a lot of reasons why I liked Brother better. The printers held detail better and output was faster. Once I started doing business with them, they got to know me well, and since then, they have been an awesome partner.”



“This single machine will do what it takes four to five other people in the old model of the pod.”

The First Digital Line

Starting in 2018, Meilander began creating pods with a three-lane Firefly dryer, a two-lane Synergy and 12 GTX printers. All of that flowed right into packaging and shipping.

“Brother first started talking to us about the concept of the Digital Line back in 2018. Essentially, it was the idea of having a monster machine that would have one operator doing all the steps. Looking at those renderings almost five years ago and seeing it come to life is pretty cool,” Meilander observes.

“We brought in the first module, the DL1000 automatic pretreat, in November 2021. It pretreated and heat cured, and the shirt was ready for the GTX printer. Then, in October 2022, we brought in the first Digital Line. We were the beta tester.”

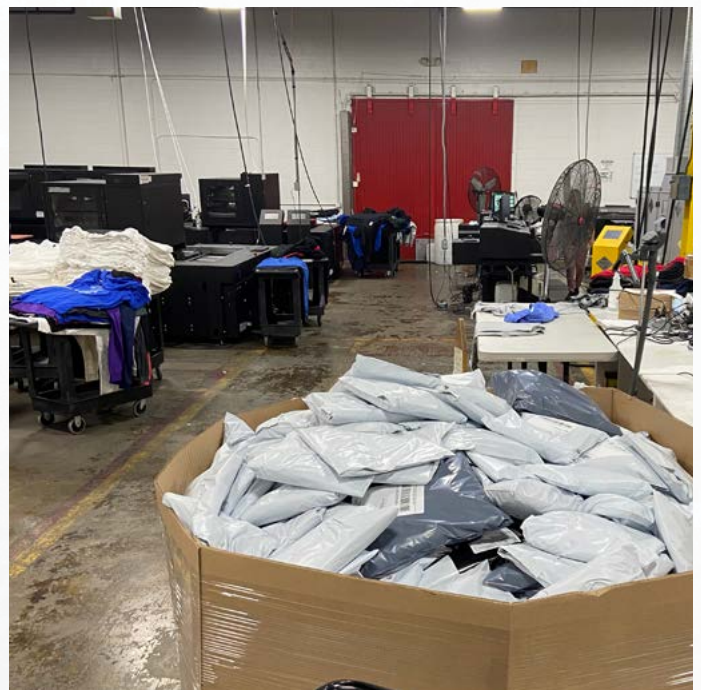
“As the first shop to have it in production, there were a lot of learning curves. It was a process, and we spent months running it and experimenting. But throughout, Brother was very supportive.”

“We had a tech from Japan and multiple other staffers at different points. Notes and videos were taken and whenever there was a problem, they’d work on figuring out what happened.”

“As a result, modifications were made to not only the mechanics of the machine but programming changes as well. They worked out all the kinks. Now, we’re at the point where everyone is comfortable, and we know how the Digital Line will work moving forward,” says Meilander.

“I have the DL2400, which has four GTX600 high-production printers hooked up to it. A shirt is loaded, pretreated, printed, and cured. Then the shirt is folded, inspected, and the barcode is scanned to produce a shipping label.”

“This single machine will do what it takes four to five other people in the old model of the pod. There’s a lot of advantages to it, but that’s the biggest one. It’s the efficiency,” he reveals.



Background on Redwall

Redwall started in 2002 in the basement of Jeff Meilander's apartment on Milwaukee's east side. In a band, the entrepreneur started out with the goal of printing shirts for his group, which eventually grew to printing shirts for other musicians.



Today, his business is in Oak Creek, Wis. and offers screen printing, embroidery, dye sublimation and digital direct to garment.

Production and administration are spread across two buildings in Oak Creek. "The main screen printing and embroidery location is approximately 100,000 square feet. Across the street is a second facility, dedicated to DTG and On Demand production, which is 35,000 square feet." He also owns a cut-and-sew dye sublimation business in Florida.

His current equipment lineup includes 17 automatic presses ranging from eight to 18 print heads, six manual presses, three computer-to-screen imaging units, one automatic screen cleaning machine and 42 embroidery heads.

His digital equipment includes 33 GTX DTG machines (of varying models), two Synergy + Firefly All-In-One Production System with Linx Software units, and one Digital Line 2400. The Synergy automatic pretreater + Firefly conveyor dryer with barcode automatic software creates a streamlined way to prepare apparel for the printers.

The shop is configured with two pods featuring 12 GTX printers in each. The Synergy + Firefly is in the middle with six printers on either side making it efficient for operators to load shirts on and off.

The Digital Line 2400 has four GTX600 printers attached and is operated by a single person. It is approximately 13 feet wide and 52 feet long. Finally, the remaining five GTX printers of the 33 are used in another pod specifically designed to do custom labeling on garments using manual press carousels.

