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CustomXM celebrates 50 years of growth

The single-family-owned business has evolved this past half century with changing technologies and the Central Arkansas market.

NORTH LITTLE ROCK (April 26, 2016) -- In November 1966, Ira and Mary Lee Strack struck out on an adventure of a lifetime, opening their own business — Custom Printing on Pike Avenue in North Little. A half century later, that adventure continues — now with son Paul Strack at the helm of CustomXM.

“Fifty Years of Firsts ... And Still Counting” is the months-long celebration of the business’s successful past, present and future.

“For 50 years, we have taken deep pride in providing both quality work and superior service to our clients and in maintaining a professional, knowledgeable and close-knit staff,” Paul Strack said. “This combination has allowed us to thrive for five decades and to look forward to many more successful and productive years as a business in Central Arkansas.”

The roots for CustomXM’s success begin with Paul’s parents, Ira and Mary Lee Strack. Eager to put his knowledge of the craft of printing and his business acumen to work, Ira Strack knew the key to thriving would be to incorporate smart advances ahead of the competition. It’s a practice son Paul has taken to heart also.

Among the “firsts” that Custom Printing/CustomXM can boast are:

- In the early 1970s, CustomXM was one of the first commercial printers in the Little Rock area to embrace the new “direct-to-plate technology” that both eased and sped up printing processes.
- In the late 1970s, Custom Printing was one of the first area printers to install high-speed copiers, incorporating another revolutionary technology.
- In 1984, Custom Printing purchased a Kodak 350 High Volume, High Speed copier, allowing short run, black ink, letter and legal size jobs to be run on the copier instead of the press.

- In 1990, Paul Strack joined the business, bringing a wealth of energy for sales and a great knowledge of computers, enhancing Custom Printing's move into the digital world. This also may have represented the first time a CPA left public accounting to go into printing sales!
- In the 1990s, Custom Printing replaced typesetting with desktop publishing and began adding digital color printing.
- In 1996, Ira Strack names Paul Strack president of Custom Printing.
- In 2004 and the next few years, Custom Printing repositioned its business to embrace "cross-media, interactive marketing solutions" as well as traditional print. Soon after, the business's name changed to CustomXM.
- In 2007, CustomXM purchased a NEXPRESS Digital Color Production Press from Kodak, allowing the company to take the next step in the digital printing evolution. Variable data printing allowed the creation of unique versions of each printed document based on the prospective customer.
- In 2009, CustomXM added a Kodak Dimensional Printing, to become one of the first in the state to offer digitally printed images that mimicked the surface of the items in the image. In other words, an image of a football actually felt like a football.
- In 2012, CustomXM created the state's first virtual shopping wall at McCain Mall, using a product display with a QR code that took customers to an online purchase point.

The history of CustomXM is intertwined with many Central Arkansas businesses that have been customers over the years. In the early years, Custom Printing produced thousands of seed tags for the local Southern Farmers Association and prescription pads for Petty's Drug Stores. Other loyal clients over the years have included the City of North Little Rock, ABC Financial Services, Jay Stanley & Associates, Arkansas Homefurnishings Association and Little Rock Catholic High School. One of the most recent additions is the new Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub.

"We want the celebration of our history to be as much a celebration for our customers and clients as it is for our family and past and present staff members," Paul Strack said.

To that end, for the next five months, CustomXM will be offering the following specials:

MAY: 10% off Promotional Products

JUNE: 10% off Signs & Banners

JULY: 10% off Direct Mail campaigns

AUGUST: 10% off Design and Creative Services

SEPTEMBER: 10% Business Cards, Letterheads & Envelopes

Then, the celebration will culminate with a reception for past and present customers and staff members as well as friends and family in North Little Rock this fall.

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