

Why Hudsonville Ice Cream Switched to Squid Ink

Significant cost savings, massive ROI, operational and safety benefits

CASE STUDY



Hudsonville Ice Cream: Real ice cream since 1926

Founded almost 100 years ago in Hudsonville, Michigan, Hudsonville Ice Cream is a family-run ice cream manufacturer that makes dozens of ice cream products and flavors that consumers love.

Hudsonville
ICE CREAM



In 2003, Hudsonville Ice Cream moved to Holland, Michigan, into a state-of-the-art facility. Hudsonville is more than just an ice cream company; it is a cutting-edge manufacturing company.



Hudsonville enters the novelty business

Seeing the trend in novelty ice cream bars, in early 2022, Hudsonville decided to tap into this trend by entering the novelty business. This meant adding a new manufacturing line dedicated to novelty bars and offering some of Hudsonville's most popular flavors as ice cream bars.

Novelty bars has been a successful addition to Hudsonville's product line, as sales of novelty bars have been strong.

Mid-2024, a printing crisis is averted by Squid Ink

In 2024, around July 4—a popular time for ice cream—Hudsonville was at risk of having to shut down its novelty line. At the time, Hudsonville was using a thermal inkjet (TIJ) printer to print the barcode, traceability, and plant data on the side of a master case of novelty bars. But Hudsonville's vendor was not able to provide TIJ ink.



"We were within a day or two of having to shut down the [novelty] line," said Chris DeShaw, manufacturing engineer for novelties at Hudsonville. "If we can't code the side of boxes, then we can't run the line."

While scrambling for a solution, another vendor referred DeShaw and Hudsonville to Squid Ink. DeShaw hadn't previously worked with Squid Ink, but he trusted the recommendation and contacted Squid Ink.

Squid Ink representative Jim Clem immediately sprang into action to help Hudsonville put out this fire. Clem loaned Hudsonville a printer and installed it within one day, and the team at Hudsonville had

it running within one hour. Both the equipment and Squid Ink's Orion software were intuitive and super easy to use. Crisis averted.

Replacing the TIJ Inkjet with Squid Ink's CoPilot Max LT

DeShaw had been impressed by Squid Ink's customer service during a crisis. Once the short-term ink crisis was resolved and Hudsonville's novelty line was running again, DeShaw had other issues he wanted to address.

First, one of Hudsonville's major retail customers was demanding larger barcode heights, which would go into effect in 2025. Second, DeShaw wanted to see if any cost savings opportunities existed.

After learning more about Squid Ink's CoPilot Max LT Hi-Resolution Printer, DeShaw was convinced that the CoPilot Max LT could provide the larger barcodes this major customer was requiring and could deliver significant cost savings and ROI.

DeShaw did some analysis of costs and projected a potential ROI from the CoPilot Max LT of 6X to 8X. This cost savings was based on significantly lower ink costs due in part to using less ink.

Based on the CoPilot Max LT's ability to print the larger bar codes and the projected cost savings and ROI, Hudsonville purchased and implemented this technology in late 2024.

It turns out, the cost savings and ROI have been even greater than were initially projected, it has been easier to operate and maintain the new equipment, and there have been multiple other benefits.

The benefits include:

- **Hard ROI.** The ROI, based on lower ink costs, has been even more than was anticipated. The **actual ROI has turned out to be 10X to 12X.**
- **Soft ROI.** Previously, with the TIJ inkjet, the operations team at Hudsonville had to spend 20 to 30 minutes per day interacting with the printer and cleaning the print head. Now, with the CoPilot Max LT, the team only needs to spend about 30 minutes per week interacting with it. Even if the printer is idle for a few days, it immediately starts up and runs perfectly, which was not the case with the TIJ inkjet. This time savings of team members wasn't even factored into DeShaw's cost savings calculations.
- **Health & safety.** The TIJ was solvent-based and solvents had to be used to clean the print heads. Solvents are problematic and can have health risks. Because the CoPilot Max LT is an oil-based printer, there isn't a need to use harsh solvents, which creates a safer, healthier environment for employees.
- **Print quality.** Not only is the barcode bigger, but the print quality is darker, consistent, and doesn't fade over time, which had occurred with the TIJ inkjet printer.
- **Test cases.** Another benefit of the CoPilot Max LT is that it provides tremendous flexibility and allows test printing on a variety of different surfaces.



CoPilot Max LT



Looking forward—an opportunity to eliminate labels

As Hudsonville looks to the future, one area the company is exploring is eliminating labels. Printing on and applying labels can be highly problematic. Labels are expensive and at cold temperatures, have a tendency not to stick. Labels can fall off, which can subject the company to fines from customers. Also, labeling machines, which use adhesives and glue, get jammed up and aren't reliable.

Now, Hudsonville is working with Squid Ink to explore printing directly onto shrink wrap, instead of on labels. Initial projections indicate that this will produce cost savings and an ROI of 3X to 4X. It can also produce soft ROI through time savings and elimination of customer penalties.

Hudsonville is currently in the process of working with Squid Ink on the necessary integration of equipment and systems to make this a reality.

Key takeaways from working with Squid Ink

Having now worked with Squid Ink on multiple projects over several months, Chris DeShaw offered the following takeaways:

1. **The Squid Ink team is extremely responsive.** They are willing to help out when needed, have jumped through hoops, and have exceeded expectations. This is in stark contrast to many other vendors.
2. **The printer performance is reliable.** The equipment works extremely well. It is easy and intuitive to use, and requires minimal human intervention.
3. **ROI exceeds expectations.** Just looking at the hard ROI from ink savings and label savings, Squid Ink produces significant hard ROI. In practice, the ROI has proven to exceed ambitious estimates. And this doesn't even include the soft ROI of time savings and higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Additional Information

Learn more about [Squid Ink](#) and the [CoPilot Max LT](#)

Learn more about [Hudsonville Ice Cream](#)

