Company Profile

Social & Health Services, Ltd. (SHS) in Rockville, MD, provides marketing and communications services 24/7 to governments and private sector organizations. Its global parent company is ORC Macro, an Opinion Research Corporation. With $20 million in annual revenue, 250 employees and facilities throughout the U.S., SHS provides services that include campaign design, media production, call center management and the production, distribution and warehousing of educational and marketing materials. SHS clients include the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO); SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; ABC/Disney; HBO; the U.S. Department of Education; and several state governments.

Challenge

SHS needed a high-volume print production solution with the exceptional color quality and the saturation range provided by its proofing solution of choice, Fiery®-driven DocuColor™ 12 printers. It needed power, flexibility and speed for an extreme printing environment where turnaround time for large, complex jobs is measured in hours.

Solution

SHS matched a Fiery Q4500 server from EFI® with a Xerox® DocuColor iGen3™ Digital Production Press.

Results

Unparalleled speed and power. Already familiar with the Fiery’s intuitive interface, production staff immediately began producing jobs with the rich saturated colors customers wanted. Productivity, profit margins and job quality increased.
An extreme environment

SHS staff respond to real-time crises, often involving health or safety issues, with immediate communications material. They may have just a few hours to write, design, print and ship literature across the country. Such quick response leaves no margin for error. Managers at the SHS in-house print facility, Digital xPress, cannot afford delays and color management problems. That is why they rely on their powerful new Xerox DocuColor iGen3 Digital Production Press and Fiery Q4500 server from EFI.

“Our experience with the Fiery has been great! The color quality right out of the box is the best there is and the interface is something our staff is used to – it’s really easy to use. So to me it’s a no-brainer.”

— Lewis Eigen, President, Social & Health Services, Ltd., a division of ORC Macro

The workload carried by SHS Digital xPress production facilities rivals that of the largest commercial print operations, in-house production facilities and contract communication providers, combined. They meet impossible deadlines – made shorter by lengthy client and governmental reviews. “We got into the print production business because no supplier was willing to work on our time frame at any price. Speed and flexibility are critical to us,” says Lewis D. Eigen, President of SHS. “We have to take jobs as they fly in. Last minute changes are par for the course.”

Long-time fans of EFI’s renowned Fiery server technology, SHS’s Rockville facility maintains two Fiery-driven Xerox DocuColor 12 devices – in its print shop and graphics department. More Fiery/DocuColor 12s are used in satellite offices. “The people in our graphics department like the Fiery workflow – very much,” Eigen says. “It’s very intuitive. They’re comfortable with it.”

In the fall of 2002, SHS managers added the power to produce up to 6,000 four-color impressions per hour and the unsurpassed color printing capabilities of the Xerox DocuColor iGen3. But initially the color quality was disappointing. “We just weren’t getting the saturation range we needed. Many of our clients were used to more saturated colors.”

Moreover, output on the iGen3 didn’t match proofs made on the DocuColor 12. “That was a big problem,” Eigen says. “As a result we were using the iGen3 as its own proofing device. That’s expensive and a huge time delay – almost like making plates.” Production operators were losing two hours a day to the proofing process.

Excellent performance – “right out of the box”

For precise color control and consistency across devices, managers at SHS requested a Fiery server for the iGen3. EFI’s Fiery Q4500 – the latest server-class Fiery designed to bring a quantum leap in power to high-level production printing environments – delivered the ease of use and color quality already familiar to staff at Digital xPress. “Right out of the box – with no adjustments, no tweaking – the color from the Fiery was almost perfect, far better than what we had been getting,” Eigen says. “It really was impressive. With
“For us there was virtually no training time because we had used Fiery servers before.”

— Ramona Arnett, Executive Vice President, Social & Health Services, Ltd., a division of ORC Macro

the Fiery we can get any degree of saturation we want from the iGen3 – from over-saturated to washed out. The Fiery makes the iGen3 perform to its full potential.”

Integration of the Fiery into the SHS workflow in September 2003 was seamless; operators began work almost immediately thanks to the consistency of the Command WorkStation™, EFI’s award-winning job management software. The Command WorkStation interface provides a gateway to the Fiery Q4500’s array of sophisticated, powerful tools. These are the same high performance color management and emulation tools available on SHS’s Fiery-driven DocuColor 12 devices, which was a huge benefit for gearing up staff.

“It’s increased our efficiency and profit margins but, what’s more important, the Fiery allows us to deliver better customer service. We don’t have to keep going back and forth to get approvals on quality. Along with saving us time, it’s saving our customers’ valuable professional time. That makes us easier to deal with.”

— Lewis Eigen, President, Social & Health Services, Ltd., a division of ORC Macro

“From an operator perspective,” Arnett says, “the Fiery is more intuitive and easier than other servers. All my operators are happier with it.”

The Command WorkStation makes job tracking and job management “particularly easy,” Eigen says, “whether it’s through automated or manual functions.”

“And from a management point of view, we like the terrific support. If you’re going to have new technology, you’d better have good support. EFI support has been excellent.”

Eigen is also impressed with the flexibility the Fiery provides. “Now with the Fiery in here, we’re getting good color output no matter what the application is. Unlike many companies, we don’t require a standardized input. This is important to us from a competitive standpoint. Frankly, we’d be using the Fiery even if the interface was terrible because of the color quality and the consistency between applications. It seems to work for all PC applications. It’s so good for what we do.”

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The powerful DocBuilder Pro™ imposition tool, which allows staff to build and edit documents on the fly, “has been very valuable to us,” Arnett says. “The functionality is significantly better on the Fiery than on other servers.”

**Productivity, profits and better service**

The Fiery/iGen3 solution will be playing a larger role in the future. “It’s our vision to have Fiery-driven DocuColor 12s in the offices of our major customers, so they can design documents, proof them in their offices, and send the documents via the Internet directly to our Fiery,” Eigen says. “It would increase our efficiency even more,” Arnett adds.

Eigen notes that the Fiery has helped increase productivity at SHS by least 10 percent, and probably more. “It’s increased our efficiency and profit margins but, what’s more important, the Fiery allows us to deliver better customer service. We don’t have to keep going back to get approvals on quality. Along with saving us time, it’s saving our customers’ valuable time. That makes us easier to deal with.”

Would they recommend the Fiery Q4500 to current Fiery users looking to add the power of an iGen3? “Absolutely,” Arnett says. “In a heartbeat,” Eigen says. “Our experience with the Fiery has been great! The color quality right out of the box is the best there is and the interface is something our staff is used to – it’s really easy to use. So to me it’s a no-brainer.”