CHALLENGE:
“We were trying to standardize on a single MIS solution and embrace best practices across all facilities, in order to leverage the skill set and information we already had in place. This included common reporting from all plants in order to gain insight into the acquired plants’ operations and to enable us to better utilize all available capacity for optimized performance.”

—Greg Myers, vice president of information technology, Multi-Color Corporation

Multi-Color Corporation has grown through a series of mergers and acquisitions and consequently faced the challenges associated with managing five different plants running on disparate and, in some cases, manual systems. In 2004, the organization implemented the EFI Radius solution for packaging to standardize operations across all of its plants in order to maximize efficiencies and gain visibility across the entire production process.

As part of the company’s continued growth strategy, Multi-Color Corporation acquired NorthStar Print Group, Inc., in 2005. According to Greg Myers, vice president of information technology, for the organization to realize the full potential of its acquisition, it was imperative that they integrate the three NorthStar plants to enable transactions and visibility across all eight plants.
One Radius System Leads to Countless Benefits

Leveraging EFI Radius to integrate the three additional plants with the existing five was a logical step. EFI Radius has been specifically designed to be a fully integrated, industry leading MIS solution supporting best practices for packaging: flexibles, labels and folding cartons. Multi-Color Corporation is leveraging the entire EFI Radius suite, which consists of: estimating, order handling, production scheduling, shop floor data collection, material purchasing and inventory control, and job costing.

By leveraging one system across multiple plants the company benefits from having visibility into capacity and materials at any given plant and gains the agility to modify processes or move materials from plant to plant in order to maximize production efficiencies. “We knew this level of integration would help us to make better use of the capacity available to us, regardless of location,” says Myers. “We also benefit by gaining visibility into some of the critical key performance indicators (KPI) around our production processes at a given plant. These metrics help drive some of our lean initiatives because we leverage that knowledge to introduce those best practices and standardize on processes across all plants.”

Dennis Linnevers, manager of production applications for Multi-Color Corporation, explains that the company completed a successful multi-plant implementation process by taking a phased approach. “We did it one plant at a time, starting with the largest plant to maximize the gains of integration and minimize the risk of the legacy systems. Overall, it was a smooth process; the third plant had the fastest implementation we have ever done.”

SOLUTION:

“It is imperative that our MIS solution is able to support all of our various production processes, and EFI Radius does just that. It is a competitive advantage to be able to quickly and easily do what we need to do and provide customers with the kind of service they are looking for. That is what it is all about in the end.”

—Dennis Linnevers, manager of production applications, Multi-Color Corporation

“Besides standardizing on a single system, we were also driven by the need to mitigate our risk,” says Myers. “The existing systems within the NorthStar plants were relatively old and had little support. We needed to eliminate systems where the risk of failure with a difficult recovery process was a real possibility.

“Finally, compliance is very important to our organization,” continues Myers. “We are a publicly traded company and are mandated to meet Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) and other financial requirements. It is crucial that we have control over and visibility into our processes and information.”
According to Myers and Linnevers, EFI Radius was able to successfully support their multi-plant rollout initiative due in large part because it was developed specifically for the printing industry. “The terminology that is used, the processes that are supported out-of-the-box, they all fit the nature of our business,” says Myers. “For example, the solution offers modules for estimating and scheduling that fit the business of printing labels. You aren’t trying to force fit the terminology of a generic industry or another industry onto the business people here. It makes sense to the users and that is critical for success.”

The solution also offers the flexibility the business needs to support customer demands and business change. “EFI Radius is flexible enough to handle several different types of printing technology that we use to produce our labels,” says Linnevers. “For example, there are different ways you can apply ink to a substrate, different types of presses and finishing operations. The system is flexible enough in its design to easily support those differences in production.”

This flexibility has translated into a competitive advantage for Multi-Color Corporation. “We are one of the few companies in our industry that runs the gamut with regards to the technologies of the products we deliver,” explains Linnevers. “That is true on two fronts. One, in regards to the printing technology itself, we make sure we are using the print technology that best fits the customer’s needs, whether it be flexo, litho, rotogravure, digital, and so forth. Two, with regards to the product technology itself and the type of label that is delivered, we are one of the few in the industry that can offer our customers a solution on in-mold labels, heat transfer labels, cut and stack labels, pressure sensitive labels, or shrink sleeve labels. So we cover just about every technology across the board. It is imperative that our MIS solution is able to support all of our various production processes, and EFI Radius does just that. It is a competitive advantage to be able to quickly and easily do what we need to do and provide customers with the kind of service they are looking for. That is what it is all about in the end.”
RESULTS:

“With Radius in place, we have been able to realize efficiencies from the online scheduling system. We can react much more quickly in moving jobs around and making the most effective use of our capacity.”

—Greg Myers

With EFI Radius integrated across all eight plants, Multi-Color Corporation has streamlined business operations from estimating and ordering through to delivery. Besides no longer doing manual scheduling in the smaller plants, Multi-Color Corporation has also achieved visibility across its multiple plants. “Prior to the implementation of EFI Radius in the additional facilities, we had limited visibility into the NorthStar plants. They were independent and we were not comparing ‘apples to apples’ when we looked at some of the metrics across all plants,” says Myers. “Today we can run standard reports, such as the waste report, for each plant, break things into standard categories, and allow an even comparison of the performance at each facility.”

Myers also notes that they have significantly reduced the use of Excel in tracking and passing data. “Prior to the implementation, there was a lot done offline in Excel that required somebody to do something manually and send it off to the next person to do something manually; you lose control that way. We lacked visibility into the information we needed to make decisions in a timely manner.”

Multi-Color Corporation’s goal is to continue leveraging existing and new technology to improve the business. “We have an ongoing project that we call Process Optimization,” explains Myers. “IT reviews all of the standard business processes we are supporting in the system today. We work hand-in-hand with the business to identify opportunities to improve our efficiencies or optimize those processes. Because we are on a single, integrated platform using EFI Radius, once we identify those areas we want to make changes to, we can immediately push those modifications out to all eight plants versus managing the roll-out of those changes eight different times. All of our facilities simultaneously realize the benefits from those changes and, as a result, are in a position to better serve the needs of the business.”

EFI (www.efi.com) is a world leader in digital print servers and controllers, superwide format printers and inks, wide-format printers, industrial inkjet printing systems and Web-to-Print, Print MIS and Proofing solutions. EFI is dedicated to giving customers a competitive edge with award-winning, scalable solutions from creation to print that maximize productivity and increase profits.