Company Profile

Colorado Springs School District 11 is the largest school district in Colorado Springs with 31,000 students, a staff of 3,500, and 60 sites. The Production Printing Department, staffed by 18 people, runs a main facility and satellite print centers in the district’s five high schools. It generates $2 million in annual revenue and during the 2002-2003 school year produced more than 84,000 jobs for 1,100 customers. Services include layout and design, digital color and black-and-white copying, offset printing, binding and finishing, and direct mailing for School District 11, other nearby districts, and community non-profits.

Challenge

The Production Printing Department has managed extraordinary growth in recent years. Volume is up and print runs are shorter, driving an 11-fold increase in the number of job tickets. Meanwhile, staff increases have been modest. The department needed a cost-effective, flexible job ticketing and print management system that could improve billing and deliver top-notch service and efficiency in an extreme printing environment spread over multiple locations.

Solution

The department uses EFI PrintSmith™ for streamlined job ticketing and print management along with EFI Fiery® server technology and EFI Balance™ distributed printing software.

Results

Outstanding efficiency and convenience; superior customer service; fewer errors; savings in time and labor along with increased flexibility and control, including the ability to change job tickets on the fly from any workstation. Efficient job tracking and near “real time” billing information. Fast, efficient production with outstanding document quality.
Striving for quality, efficiency and outstanding customer service

The Production Printing Department for Colorado Springs School District 11 has competitors on nearly every corner – almost 90 of them, according to the yellow pages.

Joe Morin, Department Manager, not only competes with these commercial printers, his department must act like one. The department is a profit center; revenue must cover expenses like salaries, benefits, utilities, and custodial services, as well as the cost of new equipment and cutting-edge technology. Quality and efficiency are the department watchwords.

“Our customers can go anywhere they choose,” Morin says. “We must earn their business.” Production Printing does that by sticking to basics. The recipe: the best customer service, outstanding quality, customer-driven products, very quick turn-around times, chargeback prices that run about 50 percent of commercial prices, and a team that will do whatever it takes to get the job done.

A full range of services

Eighteen staff members run the department’s main facility and satellite locations in each of the district’s five high schools. The satellite centers offer digital black-and-white copying, collating and stapling for each high school and its “feeder” elementary and middle schools.

The main facility has a high-speed copy center running two Heidelberg® Digimaster® 9110 black-and-white presses, a design center, a full service prepress department, Multilith and Heidelberg presses, and a bindery and distribution center.

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— Joe Morin, Manager, Production Printing Department Colorado Springs School District 11

Everyone in the shop is networked to the department’s EFI Fiery® server, which is paired with a Canon CLC printer/copier. The configuration allows designers to quickly and conveniently produce color proofs of their designs or print short runs of 50 to 100 color brochures.

Production volume is high. “We billed out about 57 million impressions last year (2002-2003),” Morin notes. “That’s a few train car loads of paper!” The department produces folders, NCR forms, directories, brochures, stationery items, and newsletters, among other items.
Explosive growth

While the printing industry has seen annual growth rates of 2 percent to 5 percent in the past decade, Production Printing has averaged growth rates of 11 percent to 12 percent every year. Revenue of $1.9 million for the 2002-2003 school year was twice what it was seven years ago; impressions of 57 million were up 42 percent.

Meanwhile, the number of job tickets has exploded – from less than 7000 seven years ago to more than 84,000 in 2002-2003 – an increase of 1100 percent! The reason: increased demand for four-color work and increasingly shorter runs of color copier work. Seven years ago a typical run produced 5,700 impressions, by the 2002-2003 school year, a typical run produced just 675.

At the same time, staff increases have been modest. The department’s full team is just one third larger than it was seven years ago. Still, Morin says, the department runs efficiently using EFI PrintSmith, a complete, integrated print management system that helps the department take control of estimating, production, invoicing and accounts receivable. “I love it! I’ve been in charge of this department for 11 years and I’ve been using PrintSmith since 1996.”

A better solution – PrintSmith

When Morin took over the operation, job tickets were hand-written and invoices were calculated by hand and keyed into the district’s mainframe billing system. The process was time-consuming and cumbersome, sometimes leaving harried staff with errors and lost job tickets.

When it came time to choose a new solution, Morin says, price was critical, along with flexibility. He wanted a system that would allow him to do things his way. “I had – and still have – a particular way of doing things. The application had to be ‘user friendly’ and meet my needs without too much adjustment. Nothing came close to doing what PrintSmith does – and that was Version 5!” Version 7 was launched in March ’04.

“I have to earn my customers’ business through exceptional customer service, competitive pricing, and top quality. EFI makes it possible to do that!”

— Joe Morin, Manager,
Production Printing Department
Colorado Springs School District 11

With PrintSmith, when department staff enter a job into the system, the job is automatically priced and tracked throughout the production process. Using electronic job tickets, any staff member can make changes to a customer’s job ticket on the fly from any workstation. And there are no more lost job tickets!

PrintSmith also allows the department to close its books daily, instead of every 30 days. By using the “downloader” function, a file is generated and uploaded to PeopleSoft® every night. Internal customers can see charges against their accounts the next day.

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EFI Fiery and Balance deliver outstanding control and savings

In the 2001-2002 academic year, in its main shop and satellite copy centers, Production Printing converted to digital copiers driven by industry-leading EFI Fiery server technology. Because the centers are networked together, the Fiery’s award-winning job management software, Command WorkStation®, gives Production Printing maximum control of any print server on the network. And the Fiery’s ColorWise® color management software ensures precise color consistency across devices. Now, when one of the department’s designers completes a color brochure, the designer can quickly and easily produce a digital color proof or even a short run of 50 or 100 copies through the Fiery network to any Fiery-connected output device with consistent color results.

Command WorkStation also allows a nearly “lights out operation” by allowing several jobs to queue up and run without an operator present. A real productivity improvement results when an operator can queue up 10 jobs and go to lunch, knowing that the jobs continue to run unattended. Or in the evening, an operator can queue up any remaining jobs and get another hour or two hours of work done after everyone is gone. As long as the printer is loaded with paper and the finisher isn’t full, the printer will keep producing the jobs in the queue.

Production Printing is also taking advantage of EFI Balance™, a workflow software that enables maximum productivity for production printing applications by load balancing jobs across as many as 12 devices. The copy split and color split features of EFI Balance enable large jobs to be divided across multiple machines and they automatically route color and black-and-white pages to the most appropriate device for maximum efficiency.

EFI keeps quality in the department’s future

Where is Production Printing going from here? The next step is a computer-to-plate (CTP) workflow. “We try to stay as cutting edge as possible,” Morin says. “I have to earn my customers’ business through exceptional customer service, competitive pricing, and top quality. EFI makes it possible to do that!”