Company Profile

Graphic Technologies Inc. provides prepress and print production services in America's heartland – Omaha, NE. Founded in 1989 as a prepress service bureau, today Graphic Technologies employs 12 people and generates more than $2.2 million in annual revenue. The company provides digital production, including prepress; variable data printing; offset print production; and large-format imaging. It produces an array of materials in varied media, including business stationery, posters and signage, marketing materials and direct mail.

Challenge

Delivering pre-press services and digital, offset, and large-format printing requires more than “back of the envelope” estimates and an off-the-shelf accounting package. Graphic Technologies needed a print MIS solution that could manage its varied production processes and achieve a larger share of their customers’ print budgets.

Solution

Graphic Technologies uses EFI PrintSmith™

Results

EFI PrintSmith provides Graphic Technologies a seamless view into the business operation and consistent, accurate estimates. It automatically updates reorder pricing to reflect current costs and produces accurate, easy-to-use “work-in-progress” reports; all while managing offset, digital, variable data, and wide-format workflows.
Scratch paper estimates

When Graphic Technologies’ owner Robert Mayer acquired Print.com, a small sheet-fed, offset printing company, he took on an operation that needed updating. “When I bought Print.com in 1999 there were a couple of ‘old-school guys’ who did everything on scratch paper,” Mayer says, “and I wanted to know what we were spending, why we were spending it, how much film, paper, and ink we needed... all the things I needed to run my business. I had no way to get my arms around it.”

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As a prepress provider, Graphic Technologies rarely had to do price quotes. Although agency clients would get multiple quotes for print jobs, Mayer’s company was always called on to do the scans, proofs, color correction, and film. The move into printing brought with it the need to provide detailed price estimates. Doing “scratch paper estimates” simply did NOT work!

Just as challenging was the need to get a handle on work-in-progress. Orders were taken by hand on a paper form, which was then inserted into a job jacket that traveled through the shop with the job. Just like printers have been doing for decades, to get a work in progress report, someone went through the job tickets, took a stroll around the production floor, typed up a list, and posted it on the wall. It was hard to get a feel for where each job was in the workflow and how production was matching the schedule.

Sometimes it’s a small detail that closes the deal. At the time, Mayer felt he didn’t have enough experience for a thorough product analysis, but the fact that PrintSmith offered a Macintosh®-based solution tipped the scale. Introducing a PC-based application would have required changing everyone’s computer and operating system and changing the way the shop was run.

Careful analysis of business functions

Making the decision to purchase PrintSmith was a bit scary. “I think my fear of doing it was far greater than any challenges we faced once we dived in,” Mayer says. “There was no need to be afraid that installing a print management system would be hard or that I would own a product that would sit on the shelf for months. It was easy to get up and running. It’s been a great investment.”
The hardest part of the process, Mayer says, was understanding and documenting his business processes: “I had never taken a really hard look. Just having to collect the data for PrintSmith made me focus more on my business; it pulled the information out of me.”

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That meant thinking through each process. For example, what about hourly rates? Was the company charging the right amount for running a certain press for an hour? How long did it really take to set up a job? Guessimating that it took 15 minutes to do a job resulted in some surprises; in reality that “15-minute process” took 35 minutes!

Running tandem systems – the old and new – for two months did bring about an unexpected change: a new customer service representative (CSR) who quickly picked up the process. The previous CSR wanted to “do things the way we’ve always done them.” At the end of the year, Graphic Technologies soloed and never looked back!

Simple, consistent, accurate estimates

There is still a certain amount of art to estimating, Mayer says, but with PrintSmith it’s a seamless process for most jobs. Estimating is simple, consistent, and accurate. Reorder quotes can be turned almost immediately, and the application takes into consideration cost increases to update prices. Professional-looking quotes can include multiple quantities for up-sell opportunities. PrintSmith allows estimates to be cleared to a won/lost category for analysis. By researching lost estimates, sales staff can find out if and/or why they are missing their mark.

With PrintSmith every employee has a global view of the business. Managers can discover how much waste there is from a certain machine, how much ink is used, or how much time it takes to set up a press. Daily work-in-progress reports track jobs and identify when they’re due. Now everyone at Graphic Technologies is on the same page.

PrintSmith manages a variety of production processes: offset, digital, variable data, wide-format printing, and others, allowing a company to quote a wide range of products. The result: the ability to deliver projects across very different kinds of media and achieve a larger share of the customer’s print budget.

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