Company Profile
Herron Printing & Graphics is a commercial print operation in Gaithersburg, MD, offering high-speed black-and-white and color copying, graphic design and desktop publishing, spot color and four-color process printing, and complete bindery and mailing services. The business, which started as a quick print franchise, now employs 11 full- and part-time staff. In 2003 it reported $1.5 million in sales – up 13 percent from the year before.

Challenge
The company found it difficult to maintain the high level of customer service that was its hallmark. It struggled with inconsistent price quotes, handwritten work orders, lost and late jobs. Invoicing was cumbersome. It needed a management information system that would streamline order-taking and workflow; ensure consistent pricing, improve job planning and tracking; deliver faster, more efficient customer service and invoicing – without additional staff.

Solution
Herron Printing & Graphics uses EFI PrintSmith™ with EFI PrintSmith Site™ and EFI Fiery® servers.

Results
EFI PrintSmith provides efficient order entry, consistent pricing, labor savings, improved job tracking and more efficient customer service without additional staff. Integrated workflow management, invoicing, accounting, and data collection. Increased revenue. EFI Fiery technology replaces expensive match prints with digital proofs and supports competitive pricing on short-run color.
Integrating quality requires an integrated solution

Competition among commercial printers in the Washington, D.C., metro area is stiff. But Herron Printing & Graphics manages to maintain long-term customer relationships. Clients send thank you notes and cookies. The secret – quality service. “I remind my staff that what really makes us different is how we treat our clients,” says owner Randy Herron. “We have to ‘wow’ them with service.”

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— Randy Herron, Owner, Herron Printing & Graphics

But delivering quality service became a challenge as the newly independent company tried to grow. It relied on a collection of manual and stand-alone business systems that bred problems. Customer service representatives issued varying quotes for the same job, even though they were using the shop’s computerized estimating system. Creating manual work orders and job jackets was time consuming. Job tracking was poor and sometimes chaotic as jobs were lost or delayed. When a job was finished, staff calculated an invoice manually and keyed the information into the company’s accounting application at night, after the close of business.

Herron Printing & Graphics needed a fully integrated plant and business management solution. Randy Herron chose EFI PrintSmith, a complete print shop management solution that includes powerful estimating, point-of-sale functionality, account management, production management features, receivables and sales analysis. Now with EFI PrintSmith, he can set standards that ensure consistent pricing no matter who is doing the estimate.

When work comes in “over the counter,” job specifications are entered into the system and an estimate is faxed or e-mailed to the customer. The accepted estimate is converted into an invoice and a work order is automatically created for the pressman. Since the work order comes from the invoice, the job is ready to be billed on completion. At close out each day, the totals go directly into the company’s accounting package. “PrintSmith is so efficient that at the end of the month all the reports are ready for the accountant before the monthly bank statement arrives.”

Efficient reporting keeps jobs on schedule and saves management time

Good customer support means delivering jobs on time, which requires accurate, real-time job tracking during the production process. The daily production meeting includes review of a work-in-progress report that shows all the jobs in the shop, where they are located, and when they’re
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due. The old way required a manual check of where each project was in the workflow – a process completed before the start of business each day. That daily morning walk-through took 40 minutes, more than 165 hours a year!

Now at production meetings, staff review every job – up to two days out. Everyone knows where every job is; PrintSmith takes away the guesswork. It’s clear what needs to be done, and if it looks like there will be a problem with any particular job, it can be resolved ahead of time. No surprises.

The efficiencies provided by PrintSmith have made it possible for Herron Printing & Graphics to produce more revenue without increasing staffing. “Four years ago, the business generated $1.2 million in revenue; it has grown to $1.5 million,” the owner reports. “Supporting that kind of growth without PrintSmith would require one to two more staff people.”

PrintSmith Site adds on-line convenience to repeat orders

The company has also implemented EFI PrintSmith Site, an Internet application that allows customers to enter data in a custom-configured Web site hosted by PrintSmith and branded for Herron Printing & Graphics. Customers enter re-order details, which are automatically downloaded into the PrintSmith management system.

Now when an order comes in through PrintSmith Site, it’s already in the system. The invoice is automatically created and priced and requires only an e-mail acknowledgement, providing a 15-minute time saving on each job. That adds up!

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Staff are working to educate customers to the convenience of PrintSmith Site. The application is appropriate for any type of reorder job and as much as 70 percent of the company’s work could be processed through the site. Saving 15 minutes on each job would mean doing the same amount of work with one less staff member. “If I could get everybody who orders reprints to order online,” Randy Herron says, “I could move one person from customer service order entry to marketing or other projects.”

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Fiery technology provides flexibility, contract color and savings

Other EFI solutions have also helped the company increase revenue. Herron Printing & Graphics has used Fiery technology for more than 13 years to create significant savings for the company and its clients. The EFI Fiery server technology transforms printers and copiers into networked devices that easily and economically print documents in color or black-and-white. EFI’s award-winning job management software, Command WorkStation™, provides a gateway to an array of sophisticated and powerful tools for job tracking, color control and emulation.

Randy Herron is impressed with the Fiery’s powerful workflow tools. “We can print a single proof of a 1000-copy order and produce the remainder when ready. Fiery keeps the quality consistent and doesn’t tie up the computer while operators check the proof.”

For short run color printing, the Fiery provides flexibility, allowing operators to quickly switch from one production method to another. For example, a customer recently needed 500 business cards in one day for an out-of-town meeting. It wouldn’t have been possible to make negatives and plates, print, cut, and box the job in that time frame. By putting the entire process on the computer and printing through the Fiery to the Canon color copier, the job was completed in less than five hours and delivered at a competitive price. The result: a very satisfied customer!

Customers also save money on color proofs. Rather than requesting – and paying for – a $60 Matchprint™, more than half of the company’s clients take advantage of savings afforded by digital contract proofs printed on a Canon copier/printer driven by a Fiery server. With the ColorWise, color management software, the color through the Fiery to the Canon is that good!

Randy Herron is very pleased with the quality, efficiency and reliability that EFI solutions provide. “I love PrintSmith and Fiery. I know something is good when I don’t have to deal with it all the time – when it’s just something that we use. It’s ‘out of sight - out of mind’ because it works and it never takes away from what we should be doing. PrintSmith and Fiery help us make a little more money and, when you get down to it, that’s what we’re here for.”