



American Trucking Associations Transforms Digital Color Workflow and Enters VDP Market with EFI Fiery EX2000d and Xerox DocuColor 2060



Company Profile

The American Trucking Associations, Inc. (ATA), headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, is the national trade association of the trucking industry, representing every type and class of motor carrier in the country. ATA has 50 affiliated trucking associations located in every state. It helps members stay current with trucking industry business trends and developments and delivers valuable information and resources.

Challenge

As demand for short-run, quick turnaround, full-color materials surged, ATA's Business Support Services Department sent more work outside, increasing costs. At the same time, personalized direct mail projects requiring labeling and postage processes increased dramatically. The department was mandated to provide new variable data printing services for in-house customers – and cut costs at the same time.

Solution

ATA chose the Fiery® EX2000d color server and Xerox® DocuColor® 2060 Digital Color Press.

Results

The Fiery/DocuColor adds money-saving capabilities that have transformed department workflow and greatly expanded full-color variable data capabilities. The Fiery version of Atlas PrintShop Mail™ enables cost-efficient variable data 4-up postcard production, and EFI Fiery FreeForm™ technology creates job templates that make it easy to RIP and print at the same time.



Greater demand for color, speed and personalized mailings

ATA's Business Support Services Department, run by Director Glenn Morris, provides design, production, mailing, and shipping services to the organization. The busy 11-person department includes two designers who help produce a wide range of membership information materials, catalogs, invitations, business cards, postcards, member updates, newsletters, and magazine supplements. They produce a monthly volume of 150,000 to 200,000 color impressions and 100,000 black and white.

By the close of 2001, Morris and his team – Supervisor of Printing Wilbert Ross, and Key Operator John Burt – faced growing demands from customers for short-run, quick turnaround color jobs. Additionally, more customers were requesting pieces designed to be mailed – from postcards and magazines to membership surveys and catalogs. The mailing process, which involved labeling and postage work, had become very costly and time consuming.

The team wanted to explore systems that offered variable data printing (VDP), the process of aggregating data from a customer database with other objects, like graphic images and page layout files, to print personalized marketing material with precisely targeted messages. With a VDP solution, the department could streamline the production-to-post process by eliminating the need to print and apply mailing labels and postage.

"We just couldn't keep up with the quick color services our customers wanted and keep costs down," Ross reports. "We had to install new printing technology and run our shop differently. We started simply by upgrading to digital systems to improve

our black and white capacity and quality," he says. "From there, we started using spot color successfully. Then we looked at how much color we were sending out of the shop and knew we had to find a way to capture that." Morris adds, "We needed more full-color, high-speed fire power in our shop."

Quality, speed, flexibility

The team evaluated competitive solutions, but found it easy to choose the Fiery EX2000d and a Xerox DocuColor 2060. "The Xerox/Fiery system was the only one that came close to giving us what we wanted – quality, speed, flexibility. And Fiery was already part of our shop, so we were familiar with using its software," says Ross.

"It's a lot easier to get great quality color, and there are no toxic fumes and time-consuming plate-making processes. And it was easy to learn how to use the system."

**– Wilbert Ross, Supervisor of Printing,
American Trucking Associations, Inc.**

"We originally went with this solution for our color business and didn't know a lot about variable data," he says. "Now we're becoming experts at producing personalized mailing pieces that get attention and results and go directly from production to the mail stream."

The Fiery's optimized version of Atlas PrintShop Mail, a software tool that helps merge variable database information with a design, is "exceptionally

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— Glenn Morris, Director, Business Support Services Department, American Trucking Associations, Inc.



easy to use,” Ross says. “It saves us time and money on materials, production and mailing costs because the repetition feature lets us produce 4-up postcards with names, addresses, and postage automatically printed and ready to go directly into the mail stream.”

The department also uses Fiery FreeForm, a standard feature in most EFI Fiery servers, which makes it easy and automatic to create design templates that RIP separately but print at the same time – slashing production time and staff costs.

For a veteran pressman like Wilbert Ross, who’s been with ATA print services for 30 years, the transition from traditional offset printing to digital production has been a pleasure. “It’s a lot easier to get great quality color, and there are no toxic fumes and time-consuming plate-making processes. And it was easy to learn how to use the system. Xerox came in and set up the classes for us, and we were producing great-looking output the same day.”

New services, less cost, better output

The solution started generating positive business results immediately, says Morris. “For starters, we’ve greatly expanded our color services and keep work in-house, and cut our print budget almost in half,” he reports. “And with variable data printing, we’re doing a lot of new work we could never do before – like postcards and self-mailer booklets with names and addresses and postage printed right on them.”

The department is tracking the difference in response rates between traditional mail pieces that arrive in an envelope – which most recipients throw away before opening – and an attractive, personalized piece that grabs attention right away.

“We worked with one department to create individualized conference promotion packets. In the past, recipients would often just toss the envelope. But we created an attractive, personalized, saddle-stitched booklet that they could open and respond to immediately. The conference had its best turnout in years,” he says. Morris also reports increased response rates to new magazine features, like member surveys, that are produced with variable data printing.

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ATA’s Business Support Services Department output is so impressive that the team has produced a 150,000-postcard run for one department and another 100,000-run for another – in the span of two months. They’ve also produced materials designed for different states, with variable data ID barcodes on a key survey to help ATA automatically track responses.

“We can do things we never could do before, and we’ve cut production time in half,” says Morris. “We schedule jobs more efficiently and get them done quickly. We’re more productive overall.”

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“The system we use is closing the gap everyday between copying and traditional printing, as we use it more we are able to expand our capabilities to deliver high quality cost effective products.”

**— John Burt, Digital Publications Specialist,
American Trucking Associations, Inc.**

New business opportunities

Morris is busy planning the future for the ATA's Business Support Services Department – and it looks rewarding. “We’re charged with generating a profit, too, so we offer our services to the other companies in our building. Our expertise in variable data is very attractive to new customers.”

When Morris compares notes with printing industry peers, he says they can’t believe how many impressions his shop runs. “It’s hard for me to believe how much work we do, too! I praise Fieri and DocuColor and variable data printing,” he says. “This opens a new door for us to vastly improve the ATA’s marketing and member services. We’re doing a lot of things that would have cost too much money in the past. This solution works for us.”