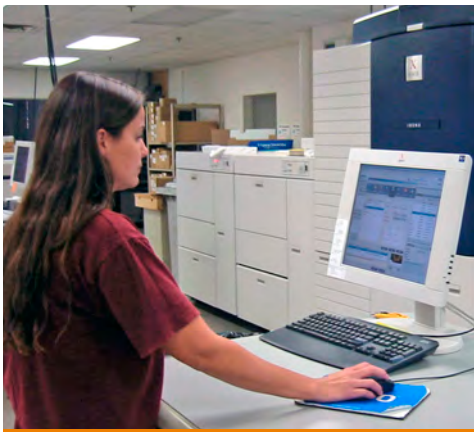**xerox** ®

Spotlight shines on profits with "lights out" productivity
Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager® helps Ai work round the clock

"The open architecture enabled by Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager with MAX integration has allowed us to create unique workflows. On a regular basis, we can add to or alter those workflows without having to do a lot of programming. And Process Manager is easy to use—nontechnical staff can participate in the creation of those workflows."

– Jeff Booth
   IT Manager, Ai

Background

Founded in 1973, Wilmington, Delaware-based Associates International (Ai) has been a leading regional commercial printer for over 38 years. In 1997, Ai expanded into digital printing and mailing services, beginning its transition from a traditional print service provider to the successful marketing service provider it is now. Today, Ai offers personalized, on-demand and conventional printing as well as web-based document management to both large and small customers. A long-standing Xerox customer, its digital division includes two Xerox® iGen3® Digital Production Presses and one Xerox® iGen4® Press, all with CREO Color Servers.

With a keen focus on continuous improvement and lean manufacturing principles, Ai has ramped up its efforts to automate manual functions and increase productivity while increasing revenue. In 2007, Ai set out to win the print collateral business for a large U.S. pharmaceutical company. Requirements included producing customized sales literature, pads, booklets and personalized materials such as labels and appointment cards for a 7,000-user customer base. Ultimately, the new business entailed an additional 200 to 300 new print-on-demand orders each day. What's more, the customer also required 36-hour turnarounds and a 40 percent reduction in costs.

To accommodate this impressive list of requirements and win this customer's business, Ai revamped its existing workflow and staff extensively. Rising to the challenge, it developed an award-winning, proprietary digital workflow branded as AiConnect™ Enterprise Storefront. With AiConnect, users are able to customize and order documents right from their Web browser. Prepress, printing, finishing and shipping processes are all automated. AiConnect effectively enabled Ai to meet the customer's printing needs while delivering an average turnaround of 24–36 hours and a 40 percent cost reduction for the process.

The Challenge

With AiConnect, Ai was able to automatically run hundreds of orders daily. But it still required post-production data entry to collect job costs—often delaying invoicing for seven to ten days while job costs were gathered. Missing or lagging job entries resulted in inventory shortages or overstocks. As game-changing as the AiConnect workflow had been, further improvements were required. Clearly, Ai's production scheduling function demanded a more accurate way to analyze the utilization of each of the three Xerox® iGen digital presses and automatically load certain job costs.

An Improved Solution

To enhance the AiConnect workflow and meet its production scheduling demands, Ai carefully evaluated objectives, solutions, vendors and ROI. Ultimately, it decided to leverage software solutions from Xerox (Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager®), Avanti (JDF-certified Print MIS software) and CREO Spire Color Services. Implementation of the CREO/Avanti JDF and Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager solution began in January 2009.

With this new integration, after the job is opened, the Avanti system automatically generates and transfers a manifest file to Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager by way of Process Manager's MAX (Manifest Automation from Xerox) integration module. MAX drives electronic orders into automated workflows, taking a job through the prepress stage without operator intervention, as well as allowing Ai to "gang" run or "batch" run like pieces from its traditional digital workflow.

The manifest contains workflow routing instructions, quantities and other essential information. Based on how the workflow is defined in the manifest, the associated PDF is processed through a predefined sequence of nodes (functions). MAX delivers improved manifest performance when jobs are being submitted to workflows with a large number of print process nodes. Each node transforms the PDF, for example, nodes include imposition, watermarking and joining multiple PDFs. Conditional nodes make further routing decisions based on factors such as quantity.

For those jobs continuing through the digital workflow, Process Manager creates integrated job tickets to send printing instructions to any of the three Xerox® iGen Presses. Those instructions may, for example, direct the press to hold the job until after business hours, when Process Manager will trigger printing in the middle of the night if desired, running jobs with no operators on the premises—truly "lights out" printing. No intervention is required until finishing and shipping. Or it might instruct the press to hold similar jobs and print them at the same time for economies of time, labor and materials.

Results

With the additional integration provided by these solutions, all job numbers, labor information, paper costs and click charges go back to the Avanti MIS automatically, delivering better analytics and more precise workflow usage data. Other benefits, including automated stock management and significant improvements in timely invoicing—less than 24 hours versus seven to ten days—have enhanced productivity and cash flow.

The single largest cost saving, however, has been the "lights out" automation enabled by Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager. This has enabled Ai to eliminate one entire shift of manned operation. It can move more jobs through the shop faster while maximizing productivity, cutting costs and improving turnaround times for customers—all without sacrificing job cost and inventory data. Ultimately, Ai is free to focus on taking on more jobs and growing its business—happy in the knowledge that even when it is sleeping, the business just keeps churning ahead!

Xerox® FreeFlow® Digital Workflow Collection

The Xerox® FreeFlow® Digital Workflow Collection is an extensive portfolio of tools that will accelerate your business with a custom-blended, streamlined workflow created to fit your unique business needs. FreeFlow solutions are designed to help you in three ways: connect with your customers, reduce costs through automation and enable new applications that make you indispensable to your customers.

Xerox® FreeFlow Process Manager automates labor-intensive prepress activities for you and improves your production productivity. Process Manager efficiently processes up to thousands of incoming jobs without operator intervention. With this touchless workflow, you can complete jobs in less time, reduce costs and assure consistent quality, print after print.

Process Manager includes MAX (Manifest Automation from Xerox), which enables you to take on more jobs and get them out the door faster than ever before. MAX delivers improved manifest performance when you are submitting jobs to workflows with a large number of print process nodes. It is a configurable interface that enables integration with upstream systems to create a highly efficient automated job submission. You'll achieve error-free submission for large numbers of jobs in a short time, without operator involvement. Plus, MAX allows you to include production information on individual jobs to make your post-print operations more efficient. For more information, visit xerox.com/freeflow.

About Xerox Services. Xerox Corporation is a world leader in business process, information technology and document outsourcing services. Our unique combination of industry expertise and global delivery capabilities helps you reduce costs, streamline operational processes and grow revenue while clearing the way for you to focus on what you do best: your real business.

For more information, please contact your local Xerox representative, visit www.xerox.com or call 1-800-ASK-XEROX.

xerox