Blue Valley, KS, School District Print Shop

Automating repetitive functions to dramatically boost volumes without adding costs.

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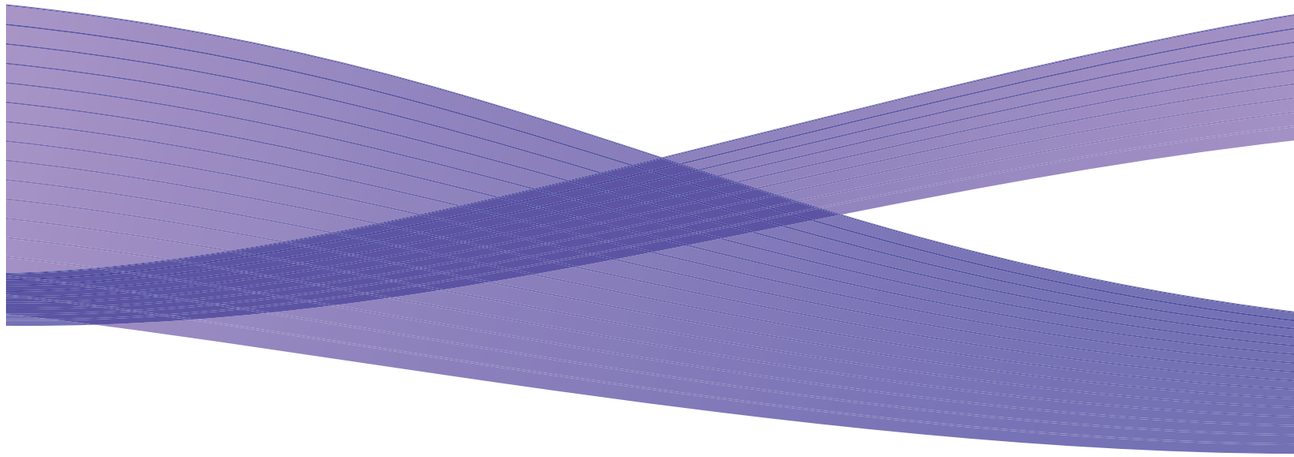

Blue Valley School District Print Shop

The district includes 34 schools spread over 91 square miles in Overland Park, KS, just outside of Kansas City. It has more than 20,000 students and roughly 3,100 staff members in its five high schools, nine middle schools, and 20 elementary schools.

This generates an enormous need for printed materials—especially when school isn't in session. "Back to school is our biggest bottleneck," says Jason Gillam, assistant director of business operations for the Blue Valley School District. Teachers putting in orders for the upcoming year generate up to 40,000 print shop orders for the summer.

Automated ordering and printing systems help the shop keep up with demand. There are nearly 2,000 curriculum and stationery template files on the district's website, which teachers can customize and order from home. This also helps decrease volume on office devices, which lengthens their life and increases cost efficiency.

"Xerox and Rochester Software Associates helped cut our response time in half. We're handling increasing demands for documents without spending more money—and teachers and staff can focus more time and effort on the classroom."

Jason Gillam
Assistant Director of Business Operations
Blue Valley School District No. 229

Digital solutions from Xerox and Rochester Software Associates help the Blue Valley School District's print shop achieve true "lights-out printing."

Challenge

Producing classroom material such as tests, class packets, and worksheets used to be a manual, time-consuming process. In fact, 90% of the orders submitted to the print shop arrived in hardcopy form. Handwritten orders could take an entire day just to arrive via interoffice mail. Then, a staff member had to manually enter order information into the system. On copy jobs, the original had to be scanned.

"We had a minimum turnaround time of three to four days," recalls Jason Gillam, assistant director of business operations for the Blue Valley School District. Needing material more quickly, teachers and staff often turned to office multifunction printers (MFPs) rather than the print shop—where the equipment came from multiple vendors and wasn't being used efficiently. "Fourteen percent of our office fleet was producing 86% of our documents. That's not the way to control costs or maintain healthy systems," Gillam says.

In addition, the number of print jobs district-wide had grown by about 40% over a three-year period. The shop was reaching critical mass. "We had to do something," Gillam says, "and just throwing more people and equipment at the problem didn't seem to be a smart answer."

Solution

Xerox and its partner Rochester Software Associates (RSA) delivered the smart answer: a digital printing solution that automates repetitive prepress functions to drastically reduce the time it takes to process jobs—without adding costs. This requires not only a great software solution, but a reliable fleet of devices that can keep up with the increased volume while delivering the quality that customers demand.

Xerox® Extensible Interface Platform®-enabled MFPs, along with QDirect.SCAN™ software and the WebCRD™ portal from RSA, have helped the shop slash turnaround times by more than half. QDirect.SCAN™ has been vital in helping teachers make the migration to electronic ordering. Today, most orders are placed electronically from the MFPs, using the touch-screen to specify ticketing options such as number of copies, two-sided printing, and billing codes. An order confirmation prints at the MFP with their selections and a thumbnail proof of the first four pages. Most "hardcopy" orders are placed electronically from the MFP's QDirect.SCAN™, then archived in WebCRD™ for reordering.

And thanks to RSA software's rules-based processing, devices are used more efficiently. If an order has certain attributes—for example, more than 200 pages—it will automatically be routed to the appropriate printer. "That's been a critical part of the solution," Gillam says. "We used to manually select the device on all jobs."

To handle the increase in volume without sacrificing quality, the Blue Valley District's print shop fleet now includes: the Xerox® 4127® Enterprise Printing System; the Xerox® 4112® Enterprise Printing System; the Xerox® DocuColor® 242 Digital Color Printer/Copier; the Xerox® iGen3® Digital Production Press; and two Xerox Nuvera® 144 EA Production Systems with a total of three stackers—which play a critical role in extending the print shop's "lights out" produciton capabilities.

Benefits

Electronic Web submission. Customers can send electronic files to the print shop using RSA's WebCRD tool. It enables file archiving so teachers and staff can easily reorder forms and other material without having to locate the original. Plus, the autostock feature lets them reorder standardized forms, tests, assignments, and stationery items. Employees use template-based ordering to typeset, proof, and order jobs. "Teachers love the new system," Gillam says. "Jobs get turned around faster, and they can get status updates online. The gravy is the ability to reorder quickly and easily."

More capacity without added cost. The Xerox and RSA solution has allowed the shop to add significant capacity without adding staff. Previously, the print shop completed less than 50 print jobs a day. Now, it's turning around more than 350 orders a day with peaks surpassing 700—which allows district staff and educators to focus more on their jobs and less on their print needs. "We want to ensure that resources are directed at students to support our mission, vision, and goals," Gillam says.

He adds that the shop now receives copy jobs that it wasn't getting before. "We always got the top-tier, long-run, high-quantity, high-quality work," he explains. "This solution helped us move into that mid-tier that would previously have been run on school MFPs." Remarkably, the shop now delivers 68% of such jobs the very next day.

Lights-out printing. Lights-out productivity. "'Lights out printing' is a reality," Gillam says. "We receive jobs that are routed to the production printers after the staff has gone home, and the documents are printed automatically. We've gained more production hours per day, even after we turn out the lights, without adding labor."

The percentage of automated jobs has increased from 42% in the 2009-10 school year to 68% in 2011-12. The shop runs a single shift with staggered start and end times to handle the volume and increase efficiency. Each job has a bar code, which allows staff to more efficiently update the status of the jobs in production so customers can check on their orders in progress.

Keeping jobs in-house. Adding new ones. The iGen3 allows the shop to produce student planners for 29 different district schools in-house. Not only can it produce them more consistently and reliably than outside vendors, it can customize text and graphics and give teachers more lead time to submit content.

Yearbooks. The shop is also using the iGen3 to produce yearbooks at one-third the cost of outside vendors. Currently it's printing yearbooks for nine schools, and anticipates that the program will eventually expand to 20 schools. Besides lower costs, the schools enjoy later submission deadlines, and features such as perfect binding and variable covers—without an upcharge.

Direct mail. The shop also uses its variable-printing capabilities to serve the district's fundraising arm—producing 15,000 mailers three to four times a year that are customized with text, images, and addresses. In addition, variable printing is used to assist with addressing other communications, including postcards, letter, and newsletters.

Posters. The shop takes advantage of the iGen3's 14" x 20" sheet size to produce posters or large-format options on cover stocks at a cost of 15¢ apiece—versus several dollars per square foot at outside vendors.