



CASE NOTE: FG WILSON

The growing Northern Irish company FG Wilson's runaway success presented them with a problem: having to export to 180 countries meant their spiralling document workload had become a serious challenge. So, they called Xerox in...

The trouble with sudden success

Xerox helped Northern Ireland's FG Wilson stay in front as a world-leader in its field by implementing some unique – and far-reaching – document management solutions. By **Robert Dineen**

“ Under the old document management system, we had to employ additional personnel and increase stock to cope with our growth. Now we don’t... ”

Even when business is good, there are problems. Just ask the men and women at FG Wilson, who were exporting so many diesel and gas-powered generators from their Northern Ireland plant that their document processes became too complex to manage efficiently.

In part, this subsidiary of the fabled engineering giant Caterpillar was a victim of its own success.

From its base in Larne, a picturesque port town 25 miles north of Belfast, it had built a customer base that covered more than 180 countries and had to produce a manual pack in myriad languages. By law, that included each language in the European Union but it also meant catering for the Middle and Far East, Africa and South America.

As anyone who produces a high volume of printed materials will appreciate, that created a formidable workload. To further complicate the situation, customers often requested new manuals – when theirs had been damaged or mislaid, or a second archive copy was required. And as the client base continued to grow, the job became increasingly difficult to manage.

A system in need of change

As it stood, FG Wilson had a complex document production system. For one pack, it would often outsource the printing to as many as 17 different offset suppliers. A dedicated in-house team of 10 staff would then collate that material and send it to the customer. Not only was this method costly and time-consuming, but by having so many people involved, it also involved too high a margin for error.

Time and again the wrong pack was shipped abroad; or it was the correct one but printed in the wrong language; often there were vital documents missing.

“There was a quality issue we needed to address to maintain our high levels of customer service,” says John Stewart, Six Sigma Project Manager on the team that reviewed FG Wilson’s document management. “We had a lot of inventory we needed to eliminate – we had one person spending one and a half days of the week just ordering new books from our suppliers. It was very expensive.”

To review the process, the company created a tailored Six Sigma project. Six Sigma is a method of improving

a business process that was first applied by Motorola in the 1980s. Successfully adapted by many corporations since, it involves five essential steps: define, measure, analyse, improve, control.

FG Wilson asked several document management providers to analyze and then design a solution but only Xerox Global Services – the Xerox unit that manages a business’s document-intensive processes – provided one that allowed the Northern Irish company to keep the printing in-house. It was also the most flexible and cost-effective answer, winning Xerox the chance to show what they could do.

“Having our manual production handled off-site did not suit our needs,” says John Stewart. “Now we can change things in an instant.”

Streamlining time

Xerox created a ‘Just In Time’ system that increased the flexibility of the production and allowed FG Wilson to output personalised material on a wider range of formats, including CD-Rom and the web as well as digital print.

In a solution tailored specifically for FG Wilson’s unique situation, Xerox installed just two DocuTech 6135 digital printers, running them on a Sun Microsystems’ Blade server. The DT6135’s capabilities are perfect for the high-volume production of black and white manuals. It has automatic two-sided printing and sports internal features that include stitching, binding, booklet-making and cover insertion, among others. It is easy to use, with operator settings enabled by the push of a few buttons and, if you add a FreeFlow Makeready System, it can scan documents and receive electronic documents concurrently. Crucially, it enabled FG Wilson to print on demand.

Xerox also redesigned the manual pack so that it would reduce the margin for error by accessing the details of a customer’s order directly from their SAP software system. The system uses less manpower, too, with five personnel employed full-time at FG Wilson’s plant to run the department.

The joint project team worked on the first five stages over a six-month period before FG Wilson ran a six-month assessment – the final stage in the Six Sigma project.

By then, the number of manuals that FG Wilson needed to produce in a week





Cutting through:
FG Wilson invests in process reengineering on an ongoing basis

What began as a family firm in a textile mill in 1966 now employs more than 2,500 staff at a 700,000 sq ft factory, producing 50,000 generators a year and generating profits that allow it to boost the local economy and play a vital role in the community, where it runs education programmes and supports local charities.

And while the success is down to FG Wilson, it's fair to say that Xerox can be proud of its role in helping this forward-looking flagship company sustain its lead – now, and for a long time to come.

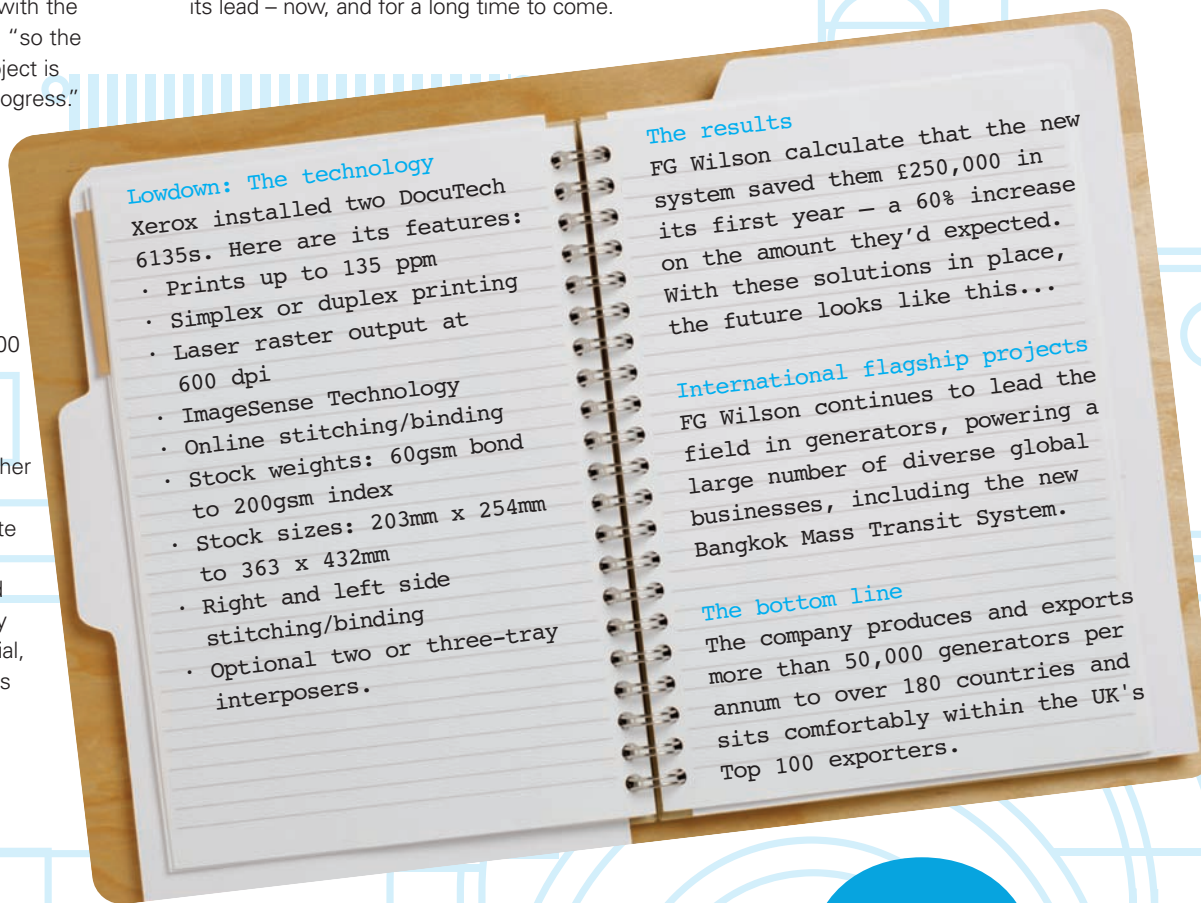


had doubled from “around 600-700” to more than 1,200. Thanks to the new Xerox process, they coped... with ease.

“Under the old system we would have had to employ additional personnel and increase stock to cope with the growth,” says John Stewart, “so the document management project is integral to the company’s progress.”

The benefits were startling. Taking into account staff redeployment and the reduction of the cost of inventory and materials, FG Wilson calculated that the new system saved them £250,000 in its first year – 60% more than the Northern Irish company had forecast.

“The project has also further improved customer service because delivery of complete manual packs is now guaranteed to be timely and their content is controlled by the SAP-based Bill of Material, eliminating the quality issues of the old system,” says John Stewart.



Lowdown: The technology

Xerox installed two DocuTech 6135s. Here are its features:

- Prints up to 135 ppm
- Simplex or duplex printing
- Laser raster output at 600 dpi
- ImageSense Technology
- Online stitching/binding
- Stock weights: 60gsm bond to 200gsm index
- Stock sizes: 203mm x 254mm to 363 x 432mm
- Right and left side stitching/binding
- Optional two or three-tray interposers.

The results

FG Wilson calculate that the new system saved them £250,000 in its first year – a 60% increase on the amount they’d expected. With these solutions in place, the future looks like this...

International flagship projects

FG Wilson continues to lead the field in generators, powering a large number of diverse global businesses, including the new Bangkok Mass Transit System.

The bottom line

The company produces and exports more than 50,000 generators per annum to over 180 countries and sits comfortably within the UK's Top 100 exporters.

Before

- Outsourced printing to 17 suppliers
- Employed 10 in-house staff on the process – and were planning to expand the team
- Received and processed customers’ order details manually – customers often received incorrect or outdated documents.

Solution

- Xerox Global Services carries out analysis and makes recommendations
- Five dedicated staff to run all processes
- All printing done in-house.

Benefit

- All printing is carried out much more swiftly
- Costs cut dramatically
- Documents managed automatically – and systematically
- Customer always receives manuals that are in the correct languages and are customised to suit their needs.