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## Partners in Paperback Production

When you buy a paperback book in the United States, there's an even chance that it was manufactured in the hills of northeastern Pennsylvania at Offset Paperback Manufacturers. In Dallas, a suburb of Wilkes-Barre, OPM churns out 360 million books—literally billions of pages—a year. A few miles away in Latlin, a mix of color and black-and-white Xerox digital printers quietly, quickly and profitably turn out millions of pages every month.

Both operations boast levels of automation unprecedented in the publishing industry. According to Executive Vice President Joe Makarewicz, the visionary leader who led the shift to automation, it is a key means of ensuring the company continues to thrive.

**“What has made us successful has been the ability to change by updating the technologies we use and automating our processes. The more we do that, the better we can serve the marketplace,” says Makarewicz.**

Makarewicz first guided the transition at the offset plant in Dallas which produces paperback editions of books by such best-selling authors as Tom Clancy, Nora Roberts and John Grisham. At that plant books are barely touched by humans until they are shipped out. “When we first began automating our operations our people were concerned they would be losing their jobs. Instead we actually have more people working here than before we automated, because it has enabled us to grow the entire business.” As the company demonstrated how automation enabled it to handle more volume, publishers were ready to have more titles produced in Dallas.

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Joe Makarewicz, Executive Vice President  
Offset Paperback Manufacturers, Inc.

Look at our partnership with Xerox, our employees, our customers and our vision, you can see why it's successful.”

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“FreeFlow has improved our productivity immensely by making sense of our processes and workflow. Where we once opened a file eight times, we now open it once or not at all.”



“We strongly believe that the same trend we've seen in productivity gains so far will allow us to print tens of thousands of titles, and go from five-day turnarounds to one-or two-day turnarounds. And those are things you can track.”

OPM's clear goal is to become a dominant part of a digital book market, while making their customers very successful.

“At the end of the day we can be quite clear on whether we are successful or not. As we move forward and go from doing hundreds of millions of pages a year digitally to billions of pages, the profitable new revenue streams that result will carry us to a tremendous future,” says Makarewicz. “One where our businesses continue to evolve, our markets continue to be serviced, and our customers continue to grow. And it gives our customers new opportunities they didn't think possible before because the products and services are different. When we do that well, the rest of our organization will show it and that's when we know we've been successful.”

**“A few years ago we did about 20 million pages a year digitally. Today, OPM can produce 1.5B. Tomorrow, we'll do 5B. That's a tremendous step towards becoming a dominant part of the digital market.”**

Joe Makarewicz, Executive Vice President  
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**“Just as clear,” says Makarewicz, “is that the relationships, partnerships, tools and people that are all involved in this process between OPM and Xerox make sense for us and for our customers. They are going to make it easy to achieve our goals. It's going to be the most exciting time for our business.”**

## The challenge of digital

Makarewicz recognized the potential for digitally printed books almost a decade ago, and began looking for the technologies that would make it a reality.

“There’s a new customer base. When you look at digital technology and the way the digital world will continue to evolve, it’s clear there are great opportunities in front of us,” he affirms.

As he and his team began building a digital operation—and the volume grew—he quickly saw that having a powerful, streamlined workflow was essential to growth, profitability and success.

Digital printing enables OPM to offer print runs ranging from as few as 50 books into the low thousands, and workflow automation is the key to making it all work.



Dale Williams, director of Prepress, Sheetfed and POD Operations at OPM’s digital book manufacturing operation says the workflow once contained multiple steps and required opening files several times before a job could be run. That might be alright for offset print runs of several hundred thousand copies, but not for digital print runs as short as 50 copies.

“We were using up to eight different steps to prepare a job,” recalls Williams.

Each job file had to be opened to ensure basic printing resources were present, such as fonts and graphics. Next, pages often had to be resized to fit the format of the final

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printed book with minimum waste and any resulting widows and orphans eliminated, front matter such as ISBN and copyright information added, and front-to-back registration checked. Then the job was ready to print. Covers, typically full color, had to be produced as well and went through similar steps. It was a costly and time-consuming process that affected OPM’s ability to control costs while meeting customer demand on short print runs.

“Joe [Makarewicz] said we had to get that down to five steps, then three steps,” relates Williams. “We did that, and have been able to get it to one step for those customers sending in properly prepared files. Jobs we have run previously that are in our document library can be run without opening them even once: they can go right into production. And it’s all fully automated.”

Today, when a file comes in, it is opened and run through a process that converts it to a PDF—designed to meet OPM’s specific criteria—that can be adapted on the fly to run on any of the company’s cut-sheet or continuous-feed print engines, whether they are from Xerox or another vendor.

## FreeFlow-enabled printing

The processes that gave OPM their initial reduction in processing time were primarily internal developments. To further streamline the process OPM worked with a team of Xerox document workflow professionals who understood the processes needed, recognized the value of automating them and shared Makarewicz’s goal of minimizing all the steps involved.

“Xerox has been a true partner in this because some of the things they were able to offer could do mass conversions,” relates Williams. We can take 12,000 titles and put them through a filter and it comes out with one particular aspect of the file taken care of. Then they go through a second filter and another item is taken care of. This all works in the background and gives you a print-ready file without ever opening it.”

## Job ticketing key

Xerox FreeFlow™ is at the core of this process, drawing on a variety of software tools and additional customized programming to deliver the nonstop production system at the Laffin plant.

“The Xerox team took our workflow, which was already down to just one or two steps, and made it a step better with the use of job ticketing,” says Williams.



Instead of sending the whole job over to the printer, FreeFlow sends only the job ticket. The actual job is then pulled from the servers and reconfigured on the fly depending on which Xerox printer will be used for the book block. The cover, meanwhile, is routed to one of the company’s three Xerox iGen3® Digital Production Presses, then laminated or UV-coated and mated to the book block in the bindery.

The process has become so streamlined and efficient that events that would disrupt any other book manufacturer are just business as usual. About 2 p.m. one afternoon,

not long after the fully automated system went online, a customer called needing 500 copies of a book delivered the next day. But the last UPS pickup was at 4 p.m. The file in question was already in OPM’s library, and it was quickly checked to ensure it would print correctly—a 15-second process—and sent to the printer. On the shop floor, the job was placed at the top of the print queues on the Xerox DocuPrint® 1050 CF and the iGen3 and began to run. The book blocks were assembled, the covers loaded into the perfect binder and the books were bound, trimmed, boxed—and ready for the UPS truck at 4 p.m. “It didn’t disrupt other jobs at all, and we can do that because we have an automated workflow,” says Williams.

## Partnership essential

Makarewicz says digital book printing is successful as long as the strategy, plan and vision are correct. These have to be tied to customers’ needs but also to the capabilities and willingness of a technology partner to help develop the right solutions. He recalls when OPM first started looking at digital book production and came to understand how Xerox was evolving the technologies for digital printing, they realized the opportunity for OPM was real.

But seeing an opportunity and making it a reality are different things, and a print provider cannot succeed on technology alone.

“When we partnered with Xerox they also partnered with our employees. They came in and taught our employees about digital book

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