

Improving reprographic quality and reducing costs at Rotterdam University



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Wim Burghout, Senior Employee of Expert Services, Rotterdam University

Background

Spread over five separate locations across the city, Rotterdam University (aka Hogeschool) supports approximately 27,000 students and 2,500 employees. It runs courses in 67 fields as diverse as science, technology, healthcare, business, engineering and art, and has a well deserved reputation for academic excellence. The university has shown consistent annual growth of between 10–15% for the last five years.

The Challenge

Just like any business, the university has to compete to attract a steady stream of new ‘customers’; in this case, fee paying students. Although its academic track record persuades many students, the extent and quality of campus facilities is also very important. The university strives, therefore, to maintain an efficient, pleasant environment with first-rate facilities.

About 18 million of the 25 million documents that the university produces each year are created by its Central Reprographics Department (CRD). About half of these are study aids and reference material and the rest are reports and student assignments. Being able to produce them quickly, conveniently and cost effectively is crucial. The CRD, which was run by a third party document services provider, had no digital links to the rest of the campus and anyone wishing to engage its services had to visit in person.

The university also had a fleet of copiers and printers which were manually inspected every day or so to make sure that they were working satisfactorily and had adequate supplies of paper and toner. The problem with this approach, however, was that any downtime caused by a paper jam or lack of consumables could remain unsolved for several hours.

Determined to improve the situation, Senior Employee of Expert Services, Wim Burghout, invited tenders from major suppliers across Europe, and professionally advised the management team of the facility services department.

The Solution

Wim's aim was to improve and expand the facilities and services of its internal reprographics department and, at the same time, modernise the fleet of copiers. Several providers submitted tenders for the contract but Xerox was the clear winner.

"We went with Xerox because we were convinced of the quality. They have the experience and resources that we were looking for and we were impressed by the proposed service levels. Price, of course, was one of the factors that we considered but it certainly wasn't the most important one," explained Wim.

Xerox quickly updated the fleet; installing the latest models at strategic locations. Not only were the new machines more reliable, also uptime was further increased with the installation of CentreWare Web – a sophisticated software tool for remotely monitoring the status and usage of each device. But renewing the fleet was just one part of the operation. Knowing that the university's reprographics department was responsible for producing the vast majority of its documents, Xerox set about improving and expanding it.

Rather than funnel everything through one central reprographics office, Xerox opened and equipped two more service points at other university sites to spread the workload and improve response time. It also established digital connections to reduce the need for students and staff to visit the reprographics offices in person. Job ticketing software was implemented to improve and control workflows.

The Results

As well as providing a reprographics service for the creation of assignments, study aids and reference material, a number of additional new services have been introduced, including creative services such as layout, design, pagination and desk top publishing. The fast digital connections and job ticketing software has transformed the workflow and made the services considerably more efficient and accessible.

Thanks to the deployment of modern, well-maintained machines and the continuous monitoring and pre-emptive maintenance of the entire fleet, uptime is now well above 98% – the level guaranteed by Xerox under the terms of the five-year contract.

Although cost reduction wasn't the primary aim, the new equipment and working practices have produced cost savings of around 10–15%. Detailed monthly reports give the university full visibility of the costs, which is something it didn't have before.

The Future

With the new relationship in place and the CRD service running smoothly, Xerox is working with the university to add even more value. One area in which this is apparent is using its knowledge and industry contacts to procure high volume offset printed material, letterheads, brochures, marketing material and more at better rates.

There is also a project underway to improve the distribution and production of study material. Although digital media is ideal for getting information to the students, reference work really needs to be printed out rather than read on screen. In the future, students will be able to log on to a web site, order the material they need and have it delivered directly to their home.

Case Study Snapshot

The Challenge

- The Central Reprographics Department (CRD) was responsible for producing around 18 million documents per year but was struggling to meet user needs
- The copier and printer fleet was not proactively managed and devices could be out of action of several hours

The Solution

- Modern, reliable copiers and printers installed in optimal locations
- Devices monitored and managed remotely further increasing uptime
- 2 new reprographic service points installed on site to spread workload and improve response time
- CRD made available online

The Results

- New CRD services including document layout, design and desktop publishing available for first time
- Guaranteed fleet uptime of over 98%
- Cost savings of around 10–15% with full cost transparency

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