

Improved productivity, greater value for the county.

“By adopting technology and adding value with new applications, we’re able to stay valuable to the county and give them what they needed.”

– Paul Sprow, Sr., Supervisor, Arlington County Digital Production and Mail Center



ABOUT ARLINGTON COUNTY DIGITAL PRODUCTION AND MAIL CENTER

The Digital Production and Mail Center of Arlington County, Virginia, takes care of the printing and mailing services for numerous county departments and agencies including police, public housing, intercounty bus system and schools, serving over 225,000 residents.

This in-house operation also manages approximately 325 printers and multifunction devices used by more than 3,700 employees scattered across 30 county departments.

CASE STUDY SNAPSHOT

The Challenge

- Keeping technology state-of-the-art, while avoiding costly capital investments
- Improving operational efficiency and optimizing workforce
- Ensuring faster turnaround time while delivering benchmark quality
- Capturing new volume and creating more value
- Keeping costs competitive to attract and retain customers

The Solution

- Continual technology upgrades to the print center by procuring the latest production print and mailing technology via lease (versus purchasing)
- Cross-training staff to perform all functions within the department
- Two new Xerox® Versant® 180 Presses and a Xerox® Iridesse™ Production Press

The Results

- \$100,000 saved for the county in 2019 through a hardware swap
- \$500,000 in postal savings on over 65,000 tax assessment mailers
- Workforce realignment improved efficiency and reduced downtime
- Faster turnaround time with improved quality output
- Automated workflows streamlined manual processes



THE CHALLENGE

Paul Sprow, Senior Supervisor at the Digital Production and Mail Center at Arlington County, Virginia, had several challenges that needed immediate attention. He had to find ways to optimize operations and fulfill the production print and mail requirements of the county while keeping costs under control.

According to Sprow, “My goal is to run the department in a cost-effective manner. The biggest challenge in print operations is to make that case that you are a vital part of the organization. A lot of companies are outsourcing anything and everything. Every year, we’re making a good case for how we’re adding value to the county.”

With no annual budget, it depends on interdepartmental chargebacks for its operations. While Paul was exploring newer avenues to increase volume, he was also determined to achieve faster turnaround time with top-notch quality output.

Another challenge was to optimize the workforce to enhance the shop’s overall productivity. Retaining existing customers and attracting new ones were another important area of focus.

THE SOLUTION

According to Sprow, staying on the leading edge of technology was the key to address many of the print center’s challenges. He made the strategic decision to lease state-of-the-art printing technology (hardware) to avoid expensive capital investments in depreciating assets.

He added two Xerox® Versant® 180 Presses to the print shop’s fleet. A Xerox® Color 1000 Press was replaced with a new Xerox® Iridesse™ Production Press. “When we saw the Xerox® Iridesse™ Production Press, I told myself I’ve got to have it,” Sprow said.

New capabilities add new value.

With the Xerox® Iridesse™ Production Press’ new Extra Long Sheet capability and Beyond CMYK specialty inks (silver and gold metallics, white and clear inks), the print center has opened up new avenues to grow its volume.

The feature-rich Iridesse has definitely captured the attention of customers across county departments. The print center can now print 12” x 28” bus signs for ART Bus, the intercounty transit system, and create a watermark effect using clear ink for the county’s seal on parking passes and other controlled documents.

The right people, in the right place.

To improve the print center’s operational efficiency, Sprow re-categorized the different job descriptions into a single one—Digital Press Operator. All five employees were cross-trained to perform all types of functions. As a result, the print center team has now become more versatile and flexible, leading to less downtime. Moreover, the new job description meant his staff also got a pay hike because of their new skills.

Benchmarking competition.

The print center does not have a right of first refusal policy with the other county departments. But Sprow aggressively keeps his rates competitive by regularly

benchmarking his pricing structure against local print shops. He also provides a variety of value-added services to retain customers and further earn their loyalty.

Marketing and promotion.

The busy print center doesn’t have a lot of spare time to do marketing. To promote the print center and its offerings, they have hosted several open house events. Thanks to the shop’s track record for high-quality output and fast turnaround time, most of their promotion happens via word of mouth.

THE RESULTS

Sprow found creative ways to save the county money. In 2019, he negotiated a hardware swap that resulted in technology upgrades and helped the county save \$100,000. With a new inserter, the print center was able to produce over 65,000 tax assessment notice letters over a weekend. Despite a tight turnaround time, it achieved approximately \$500,000 in postal savings.

For Paul, automation tops the list when it comes to data-intensive documents. Files from customers are dropped into ‘hot folders’ to get processed automatically overnight. Commission of Revenue and Census documents contain a lot of sensitive data, and must be printed securely. His department can now print them much faster with fewer manual touchpoints.

They’re doing variable data direct mailers to residents for everything from real estate assessments to recycling communications.

Sprow recognizes that traditional print volumes aren’t as high as they used to be. But by evolving with the needs of the county, he’s been able to grow the department’s revenue by finding new applications that offer greater value and maintain the print center’s strategic relevance.

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