

Automation Case Study

Buffalo Printing

Using technology to streamline success



The Challenges:

- Redundant, time-consuming, and labor-intensive re-keying of information, causing backlog of orders waiting to be ticketed
- Inefficient method of ticketing a large number of low page-count jobs
- Allocating several customer service reps to a single client during peak periods
- Poor time-to-payment due to slow billing process

The Solution:

- Avanti Graphic Arts Management System
- Xerox FreeFlow™ Process Manager
- Xerox FreeFlow™ Scanner
- Xerox FreeFlow™ Print Server
- Two Xerox DocuColor™ 5000 Digital Presses, a Xerox DocuColor™ 7000 Digital Press, and a Xerox Nuvera™ 120EA Production System

The Results:

- Automated order-to-ticket process
- Automated prepress for most jobs
- Automated routing of jobs to the print queue
- Enhanced inventory management
- Accurate, automatic, and timely billing
- Ability for customer service reps to concentrate on customer satisfaction instead of re-keying data



Customer Profile

Buffalo Printing has earned its place among Western New York's leading print providers by establishing and nurturing mutually beneficial relationships with clients. By offering a full range of print services—including digital and offset printing, graphic design and typesetting, and a variety of niche applications—and offering them with exceptional quality, Buffalo Printing can legitimately call itself a true “one-stop-print-shop”.

The Challenge

Typically, print companies don't change the way they work to accommodate a single client. But when that client represents almost a quarter of their workload, exceptions can justifiably be made. Such was the case with Buffalo Printing.

Buffalo Printing stores approximately 12,000 digital SKUs (Stock-Keeping Units) for its largest client. During the busy season, the client orders between 200 and 500 jobs every day via an Excel spreadsheet that provides print requirements, such as SKU number, quantity, paper stock, color versus monochrome, etc. To manage such a large volume of requests, Buffalo Printing dedicated two customer service representatives to re-key the information from the spreadsheets into the job ticketing system—a process that is extremely time- and labor-intensive and prone to human error.

Joe Farage, President of Buffalo Printing, says that “allocating our customer service reps in such a way was hurting our brand. We sell on our customer service, and if our CSRs are performing manual, redundant tasks, they're not able to add value to our clients.”

Even with the staff dedicated solely to ticketing, Buffalo Printing still found itself with an average of a three to four day backlog of jobs that needed to be ticketed. Naturally, jobs can't be printed, finished, and billed until they are entered into the system, so this backlog had some severe consequences for Buffalo Printing. Farage explains that “we promised turnaround in a week. So if it took three or four days to get the job ticketed, we had to scramble to produce, finish, and fulfill the order in a day or two. We still made our deadlines, but it was really stressful.”

To add to the stress, Buffalo Printing put other clients' satisfaction at risk, as they had to wait in the back of the print queue until the backlog of jobs cleared. Farage says that “we had to put other customers 'on hold', in fear of missing a deadline with our large client.”

Manual entry on the back end had an impact as well. On average, it would take another two weeks after the job was shipped before the bill could be generated and mailed because of manual processes. Time-to-payment was therefore often over 45 days. If there were transcription errors or any other discrepancies, which according to Farage occurred in about one-third of its invoices, it could be three months before Buffalo Printing received payment. Buffalo Printing's cash flow suffered significantly as a result.

For more information on Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System, visit

<http://www.avantisystems.com/>

For more information on Xerox FreeFlow Process Manager, visit

<http://www.xerox.com/digital-printing/workflow/freeflow/process-manager/enus.html>

The Solution

As Xerox's largest digital color commercial printer in Western New York, Buffalo Printing had built a strong and trusting partnership with Xerox. So when Xerox recommended a solution that would overcome current challenges and position the printing company well for the future, Buffalo Printing was receptive.

The solution begins with technology from a Xerox Business Partner, Avanti Computer Systems.

When the client submits its electronic spreadsheet to Buffalo Printing, it is directed to Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System, Optimized for Xerox FreeFlow, which automatically imports all the data and creates a job for each individual order. Since there is no need to re-key the information into a job ticket, customer service reps can focus on core competencies, even during peak periods.

There is also no backlog of jobs waiting to be ticketed because what took days now takes hours. "It went from a very stressful situation, where we spent three or four days on ticketing, leaving one or two days for production," explains Farage, "to a stress-free situation, where we have an hour for ticketing and a full week for production."

Production got easier, too, with the help of Xerox software. Once ticketed, the jobs are automatically routed by Avanti without operator

involvement to Xerox's FreeFlow Process Manager, which automatically performs prepress tasks—again, without operator intervention.

For instance, workflows can be set up within FreeFlow Process Manager for all common SKUs. When Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System creates the job ticket, it determines which workflow can be employed. The job is routed through that particular workflow, which performs all required prepress activities automatically, such as adding page numbers, barcodes, imposition, etc. Once prepress is complete, the job is simply released to the appropriate Xerox production device based on quantity, color/mono, and in-line versus offline finishing capability. "At the end of the day," says Farage, "the combination of Avanti and Xerox has made an impact well beyond what I expected. They resolved my immediate bottleneck challenges, and at the same time, enabled me to grow my business and pursue other clients who I was hesitant to call on before, because I was reluctant to put my biggest client's work at risk. With Avanti and Xerox, I know we can master the added workload."

While the ticketing and production automation immediately satisfied Buffalo Printing's need to handle more jobs... in less time... with less effort... and less cost, Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System also provided additional and significant benefits on the back end.

Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System captures data from the FreeFlow Print Server accounting log, which is exported into Avanti with detailed information on every aspect of what, when, and how each job was printed, which is leveraged by Buffalo Printing in a number of ways:

- Inventory for all paper and consumables is tracked, so as they reach a pre-specified level, a "low stock" notification is automatically sent to purchasing.
- Billing can be provided with line-item detail—from actual clicks to finishing to supplies used—offering a "big picture" view of costs and enabling informed decision-making.
- Bills are generated automatically by Avanti's system in hours rather than weeks—and without human error. Farage states that, "in the past we were waiting 45-90 days for payment. Now it's less than 30 days." This accelerated time-to-payment has had a tremendous effect on cash flow.

"One final note", continues Farage, "With any major implementation like ours, there's going to be speed bumps. How you handle them makes the difference. With my previous supplier, those speed bumps turned into wide chasms in a hurry. But with the phenomenal communication, problem-solving, and effort on the part of Avanti and Xerox, those speed bumps turned into flat plains and smooth riding just as quickly. That's what I look for in partnerships."

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Benefits at a Glance

- Orders that arrive in an Excel spreadsheet are automatically converted into XML for ticketing via Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System
 - No need to utilize customer service reps to re-key information, enabling them to focus on providing value-add services to clients
 - The process of ticketing an entire spreadsheet including hundreds of jobs improved from days to hours
- Xerox FreeFlow™ Process Manager automates prepress for all common jobs
 - The production workflow becomes virtually "touchless"
 - Human error is eliminated from prepress activities
 - Prepress tasks are significantly accelerated, which shortens turnaround time
- Avanti's Graphic Arts Management System captures all print activity for back end billing and inventory
 - Automated low-stock notifications simplifies inventory management
 - Accurate, timely, line-item detailed billing, translates into fewer errors and faster time-to-payment
- Buffalo Printing can pursue new business because they feel comfortable that they can grow without needing to add staff or putting their biggest client's work at risk

Xerox equipment:

- Xerox FreeFlow™ Scanner
- Xerox FreeFlow™ Print Server
- Two Xerox DocuColor™ 5000 Digital Presses, a Xerox DocuColor™ 7000 Digital Press, and a Xerox Nuvera™ 120EA Production System

Software:

- Avanti Graphic Arts Management System
- FreeFlow™ Process Manager

Working together...
getting results.

Together we can.

For more information

visit <http://www.partner.xerox.com/xeroxbusinesspartners>

