

PRO INKJET EXPRESS

A Print Service Provider Successfully Migrates their Workflows to an Inkjet Press



BACKGROUND

A growing print service provider in the Midwestern United States was evaluating several potential high-speed color inkjet presses for suitability to replace their aging laser printer fleet. Prior to building their comprehensive business plan, they interviewed the major inkjet press vendors, and one of their executives attended an Inkjet Summit conference.

The Challenge

The inkjet planning team identified many workflow changes they would need to make in order to ensure a successful migration to a new production platform. In order to make both the economics and operational aspects of their plan work, the selected solutions would have to support revised workflows to enable them to take full advantage of the capabilities of the new presses. The teams understood that installing inkjet technology would create many new challenges, and they would need to deploy the new workflow solution modifications to mitigate those challenges. Most important, they wanted to move the majority of their print volume over to inkjet technology as quickly as possible to achieve an immediate return on the \$10 million+ investment they would make.

Planning and Implementation

Consequently, the company decided to install the workflow components and changes long before they chose which inkjet presses they would acquire. The team felt strongly that the modified job setups had to be made and tested prior to the arrival of the first press.

The PSP planned to send samples of their production print files to several vendors during the buying cycle not only to support their technology evaluation, but also to generate sample output to share with their customers. Securing the “buy-in” of their customers was a key consideration for the successful adoption of inkjet technology. Since most of their production print jobs contain sensitive personal information (SPI), the team needed a way to redact the SPI from the sample files they would send to the vendors. They needed to ensure that all data fields remained the same lengths so that they could also use the sample output for testing their post-processing equipment and processes. These test runs would be critical for their making the right equipment decisions, and could save the company tens of thousands of dollars in the overall project costs.

While they use GMC Inspire to compose new applications, the company needed something that would be complementary to Inspire, that could handle post composition tasks like combining small jobs, and that could also process print-ready files that many customers would submit for printing.

At a Glance

A Print Service Provider wanted to ensure a fast and smooth transition to their new inkjet presses, with a number of requirements:

- Combine small jobs together to make large jobs to ensure that the presses would run profitably
- Segment the large jobs for optimization of rolls, inserters and mailing processes
- Adjust inserter barcodes and inserter control files to handle the larger print files
- Tweak some applications' name and address positioning to fit standardized envelopes
- Deploy a GUI-based job setup tool
- Add IMb barcodes to some of their print files for postal optimization
- Replace pre-printed shells with inline color forms
- Ensure that all print files are optimized for best RIP processing speed
- Change some fields to color to provide their clients with improved customer communications
- Automate file processing to ensure that the new presses will run optimally
- Implement step-by-step SLA and job tracking improvements to improve their operations management and control

Solution

The team secured management approval for their proposed test and migration strategy a year before they expected to acquire their first inkjet press. They installed the necessary software and put the required effort into preparing the job setups required to test their applications in time for the arrival of the first presses.

After a thorough evaluation, the company selected Crawford Technologies to provide the new workflow components. An important factor in the decision was that many of the inkjet vendors were confident of Crawford Technologies' support for their presses and had offered to include CrawfordTech software in their proposals. CrawfordTech's modular, high speed, flexible and powerful product line appealed to the team.

During the testing cycles, the company also discovered that they could revise their equipment requirements, which ultimately saved them hundreds of thousands of dollars when they purchased the presses.

CrawfordTech software solutions were chosen due to their speed and flexibility. The ability to install only the modules that the company needed allowed them to preserve many existing workflow processes and eliminate any unnecessary disruptions. CrawfordTech's solution and expertise made their staff much more comfortable with the project, which helped get them onboard and in alignment.

- PRO Concatenator was chosen to combine small jobs into larger jobs that print more efficiently on the presses.
- PRO PDF Normalizer was implemented when they realized that some of the PDF files their customers send them were not efficient enough to drive a high speed RIP. For example, one job was reduced from a 20 hour RIP time down to 20 minutes.
- PRO AFP to PDF was put in place to convert their mainstay AFP/IPDS workload to PDF so they could combine those jobs to create efficient job mixes for the inkjet presses.
- PRO Meta to PDF was installed to convert some legacy Xerox LCDS applications to PDF to move onto the Inkjet press. Legacy output accounts for a significant volume of their daily production pages.
- In order to orchestrate and automate all of the necessary processing steps and to provide both job and piece level tracking, the company installed PRO Production Manager. In addition to automating the entire workflow, PRO Production Manager provides a powerful operations dashboard, creates the needed audit logs and SLA warnings, and provides a wealth of operational management reports and data.
- Finally, PRO Designer was provided to the production support staff for them to use for application setups. This allowed them to quickly implement the application changes needed to optimize inkjet press usage and to configure redaction for testing and proofing when needed.

Results

The inkjet migration project was a big success. Applications were migrated quickly and smoothly and the company is now planning their second inkjet install. The team found CrawfordTech's tools and expertise to be instrumental in their success, and Crawford Technologies will be involved in several upcoming projects.

Results

Using CrawfordTech's PRO Inkjet Express modular components, the Print Service Provider:

- Took full advantage of the speed and throughput of their new inkjet presses
- Leveraged press capabilities and enhanced customer communications by adding color without having to re-compose existing print streams
- Combined small jobs together to maximize press performance
- Segmented large jobs for optimization of rolls and mailing processes
- Added IMb barcodes to print files for postal optimization
- Automated and optimized file processes to run presses at optimal capacity
- Realized ROI on press investment in a short time

