

ASU Tackles Big MIS Challenges with an Avanti Slingshot



CLIENT: ASU



THE CLIENT

When Cathy Skoglund comes to work each day at Arizona State University's Print & Imaging Lab, she has two important goals in mind: provide hands-on training for tomorrow's graphic communication industry leaders — and sell enough print to fund goal #1.

The Lab, which operates as a self-sufficient print shop, is home to at least 16 students at any given time, delivering print fulfillment and design services for the Arizona State University community. Web-to-print represents nearly 70% of its business. It has a range of equipment including digital presses, digital large-format printers, offset presses and a wide array of finishing equipment.

The operation needs to work efficiently, accurately, within deadlines and - since campus departments are under no obligation to patronize the lab - maintain a high level of customer satisfaction. There were challenges. Full-time employees and students were trying to manage multiple "islands of automation" — standalone systems for functions such as estimating, ftp & job submission, web-to-print, invoicing, shipping and purchase order generation.

The systems were only tied together by manually re-entering the information among disparate applications.

Particularly troubling was their home-grown estimating system, which was non-intuitive, cumbersome and left much room for error. The system was based around two Excel spreadsheets, with cell formulas constantly in need of fine-tuning to accommodate the nuances of each job. "As a print and imaging lab, it's natural to experience a high turnover rate," states Skoglund. "Our old system was simply too complicated and difficult to understand. Only two of us had the experience needed to produce an accurate estimate, including myself!"

"As a print and imaging lab, it's natural to experience a high turnover rate and our old system was simply too complicated and difficult to understand"

THE SOLUTION: AVANTI SLINGSHOT

"Prior to implementing Avanti, we faced a multitude of challenges including varying workflows, lack of automation, lack of interdepartmental communication, errors due to manual entry systems, and poor reporting systems", says Skoglund.

The ASU Print & Imaging Lab has used Avanti Slingshot to streamline their operation by creating a single, unified workflow starting with the request for quote and covering each step of production through to shipping and billing.

Because students comprise most of the staff, the Lab's employee turnover rate is high. As a result, a key consideration for Skoglund was ease-of-use. "I'm finding that Avanti Slingshot is so intuitive that anyone with a small amount of training can create a job ticket and track the job's progress throughout the shop."

"Although not an easy process, the training and technical support that we received was the best that we have ever experienced", declared Skoglund. "I would challenge any company to offer the level of support, service, and patience shown to us by the Avanti team. They are true professionals who pride themselves on putting the customer first, listening to our suggestions, and including us as we fine-tuned our installation."



Cathy Skoglund
Manager of Operations &
Business Development
ASU Print & Imaging Lab

Avanti Slingshot is extremely intuitive, which is a huge plus given the high student turnover rate. With a minimal amount of training, any of the staff can create estimates, start job tickets, and track jobs throughout the shop. It has allowed the lab to automate processes so that they could spend more time on quality.

The lab now has a database of all its internal customers that can be maintained by any employee from any computer. The inventory process also has been automated, alerting staff when an order for paper should be placed. Regular reports from the Avanti system enable Skoglund to make timely, fact-based decisions on her operation's performance.

The platform has allowed the lab to streamline workflows, maximize efficiencies, and connect the Islands of Information that they were slaves to from so many disparate systems.

"I wasn't able to determine where we were making vs. losing money, who our best clients were, and which clients had the largest growth potential", said Skoglund. "Answers to the most common business questions are now easily at my fingertips, including cost, inventory, and job tracking." Avanti Slingshot captures all of the Lab's costs, keeping Skoglund always aware of the margins so, as she puts it, "we never risk losing money on a job." Of all its advantages, Skoglund credits Slingshot's cloud-based architecture with a particularly valuable benefit: her freedom. "I am no longer a bottleneck when it comes to estimating," she says. "I have experienced 'freedom from my desk'. I can create an estimate right in a customer's office, or access my operation from any laptop or mobile device using just a browser."

Cathy and her team can deliver more jobs, without hiring more people, and know with 100% certainty what their job costs are. "With Avanti Slingshot, we can focus on building our own customer relationships and have the tools at our fingertips to make money!"

Avanti Slingshot is the next generation Print MIS (Management Information System), incorporating business intelligence, (CRM, dashboards, and reporting), production planning (estimating planned purchasing, sales orders, inventory management and scheduling), fulfillment, shipping and billing into one easy-to-use, modular and scalable system.

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