ASU TACKLES BIG MIS CHALLENGES WITH AN AVANTI SLINGSHOT

When Cathy Skoglund comes to work each day at Arizona State University's Print and 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.

"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 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.

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

The ASU Print and Imaging Lab is dedicated to providing hands-on, educational experiences for Arizona State University students, faculty and staff. We serve as a self-funded academic enterprise that prepares and manufactures general commercial print and marketing collateral including digital print, graphic design, web design and maintenance, wall signage and door wraps, billboards, posters, social media marketing campaigns, dye sublimation and more. Our mission is aligned with the design aspirations for a New American University.

The entire workforce of the ASU Print and Imaging Lab is made of enthusiastic students with innovative ideas. By embracing the ASU Print Lab, you are investing in ASU's future. Upon graduation, the students who work in the Print Lab enter the workforce very well prepared and transform into successful professionals. Whether you are a loyal Print Lab customer or just gathering information about us, expect to be blown away by our unique atmosphere, innovative ideas, excellent products and services, and most importantly - educational experiences. Thank you for your past, present and future business.

Particularly troubling was their homegrown 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!"

THE SOLUTION

"Prior to implementing Avanti Slingshot, 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."

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.

Cathy Skoglund
Director, Enterprise Marketing Hub
ASU Print & Imaging Lab

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 Avanti 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!"

THE CHALLENGES

- Campus departments are under no obligation to patronize the lab – consequently customer satisfaction is very important
- Multiple "islands of automation" including estimating, FTP, job submission and web-to-print
- Excel-based and home-grown estimating system made room for error, was non-intuitive and cumbersome
- Students work at the lab, resulting in a naturally high turnover
- Only two people able to create estimates

THE SOLUTION

Avanti Slingshot Print MIS System core modules:

- Estimating
- Job Ticketing
- Job Costing and Tracking
- Inventory Management

THE RESULTS

- Management has experienced increased freedom with the ability to create estimates from a customer's office from a mobile device
- Anyone with a limited amount of training can create an estimate, eliminating bottlenecks
- The team is always aware of costs and no longer risk losing money on a job
- Database of all their internal customers can be accessed by the team from anywhere at any time

THE FUTURE

- Timely and fact-based decisions about performance
- Focus on customer relationships, thereby growing the business
- Deliver more jobs without hiring new people

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

Estimates are easily created from the convenience of a customer's office

Stays profitable and never loses money on a job by keeping on top of costs

Streamlines operations by creating a single, unified workflow

Improves sales by understanding who the best clients are and which have the largest growth potential

Student staff members can create estimates, start job tickets and track jobs

Creates the ability to deliver more jobs without hiring more people.

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WE HAVE ANSWERS®

At Avanti, our goal is to help you deliver more jobs, in less time, with the confidence in knowing that every aspect of your shop is integrated into one powerful platform.

Award-winning, JDF-certified Avanti Slingshot allows for the sophistication required by today's Print and Marketing Services Providers. The platform is able to manage multiple lines of business, handle large/grand format, digital and offset print, as well as mail and fulfillment workflows.

Connect islands of automation, eliminate breakpoints in your workflow, and get the information you want – when you want it, and where you want it – easily, with Avanti Slingshot.

From order entry through to production and billing, Avanti Slingshot enables you to work more efficiently, control your costs and move more jobs through the shop with ease.

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