



STATE OF OREGON, PUBLISHING & DISTRIBUTION CASE STUDY

OVERVIEW

State of Oregon, Publishing & Distribution decided to simultaneously replace its aging online job submission software with RSA WebCRD and its Print MIS system with Avanti Slingshot. The company began the process in late 2016, and both systems went live in July of 2017. Since then, results have been spectacular, with dramatic time savings, more consistent billing, greater transparency, fewer errors, and a deeper business understanding.

CHALLENGE

Publishing & Distribution had been using an older-generation Print MIS system primarily designed for offset operations. When it sold its offset presses to the Oregon State Corrections print shop in 2004 and went 100 percent digital, there was no out-of-the-box solution that met the operation's needs. So the shop chose to build its own homegrown submission system and to heavily customize the older Print MIS system for new, digital workflows.

For many years, the systems worked well, but eventually they became too outdated to run a competitive operation.

"By having actual cost data, we can streamline what we are charging our customers. Plus, Slingshot's robust sales order module and job ticket have allowed us to reduce questions from the people doing the work."

Tim Hendrix, State Printer and Program Manager



State of Oregon, Publishing & Distribution (www.oregon.gov/das/PrintMail/) provides printing, mailing, and distribution services to state agencies, counties, and cities throughout the state. It uses its specialized knowledge, statewide perspective, and public and private partnerships to tailor innovative solutions for each of its customers' needs and budget.

Founded in 1844, 15 years before Oregon became a state, Publishing & Distribution has evolved and grown into a powerful in-plant printing operation. The 87-employee organization produces approximately 150,000 production documents and 240,000 to 340,000 secure printing pages per day. It also provides consultation, creative services, file preparation and conversion, production printing, print contract services, production mailing, level-3 and level-4 secure printing, and a statewide shuttle and delivery service.



THESE WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES:

- Break points interrupted the workflow, and inconsistencies appeared in the inventory and purchasing departments
- Billing reflected actual costs rather than estimates, which frustrated customers who had to deal with fluctuating prices on repeat jobs
- Capturing information to build complete jobs became impossible, forcing CSRs to re-key order information into the Print MIS, adding labor time and potential errors
- Chargebacks were difficult as they involved manually consolidating data from a variety of disparate systems
- The custom-written software, with its decade-old database, operating system, and server, was expensive and challenging to maintain

SOLUTION

Tim Hendrix, State Printer and Program Manager, decided to replace the web submission and Print MIS systems simultaneously with Rochester Software Associates WebCRD and Avanti Slingshot. Both systems are modern tools that meet the digital needs of the shop, and critically, Slingshot has integrated into many existing systems to better streamline and automate the operations.

It took Publishing and Distribution about thirteen months to implement and integrate both systems. Nearly all staff now use Slingshot to perform their jobs, a significant improvement over the old system which the staff used only for basic job status information.

"We didn't try to mirror what we were doing in our existing system; we improved upon it. We had essentially hit the ceiling, having customized our previous software to bend to everything we do. Now, we are adapting ourselves to what the software is asking, as we feel this is a more efficient way to do things."

Joe Verardo, Customer Service Manager

THESE ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS THE COMPANY HAS REALIZED:

- Jobs are submitted into WebCRD by the State's internal customers
- Slingshot automatically receives jobs from WebCRD, which eliminates rekeying time and potential errors
- Job tickets now contain all ticketing details and notes related to production, instead of notes scribbled in the margins
- Staff use barcode scanners to check into and out of jobs. These keystroke-saving devices enable staff to quickly update job progress so that anyone in the organization can track job status
- Email triggers are set up to alert the appropriate staff of incoming work or job issues
- Additional triggers are set to automatically alert customers that jobs have been received, produced and shipped
- Jobs are now consistently priced based on estimates rather than actual cost, which has significantly improved customer satisfaction
- Production work received online has increased by more than 40% to 65 to 70 jobs per day
- Chargeback reports are automatically consolidated and sent to the State of Oregon central billing system. Previously, these reports were painstakingly compiled from actual data and manually reviewed. This required a full-time, dedicated employee who can now accomplish this in about four hours per week. His time is now spent extending and enhancing operational systems
- Reports are now generated to provide detailed breakdowns of job costs. The previous MIS system was unable to provide this level of detail promptly. The in-plant manager can now make better decisions by knowing costs down to the penny



RESULTS

Publishing & Distribution has experienced significant time savings since implementing the new systems. Managers also have a better understanding of their business and their job costs. A customer recently requested copies of a specific job from several months back and Hendrix was able to go into Slingshot and retrieve details of times, change orders, delivery charges, and so forth. He had never been able to do that before. This sort of transparency is crucial to a government printing operation.

The company also finds that Slingshot increases accuracy and reduces errors because it breaks down tasks in greater detail and provides better instructions. Improved access to data at a click of a button helps field customer requests and gives managers a better understanding of business profitability.

Triggers are one of the most exciting features for Hendrix. Staff is alerted to incoming work and issues, this improves their productivity, and automated customer notifications strengthen their customers' feeling of responsiveness. The result is a more responsive, smoother-running operation.

"One of our key factors when looking into a new Print MIS was that we needed to bill from the estimates. We needed to know from the very beginning what we would be charging customers so that they would be in the know from the quote."

Tim Hendrix, State Printer and Program Manager

FUTURE

Hendrix and Joe Verardo, Customer Service Manager, wisely decided to initially implement, roll out, and utilize only the capabilities necessary for running their business. After a year of adjusting to the new operational processes, they began implementing the next wave of features to streamline their operation further, including:

"We have started to think outside the box with what we can do with Slingshot. We have it set up to assign incoming orders to one of our staff members automatically, so they get a trigger right away. None of this existed before for us, and the automation works like clockwork."

Joe Verardo, Customer Service Manager

ADVICE

Hendrix and Verardo learned numerous lessons as they worked through the implementation process. They question whether implementing an online ordering system and a Print MIS system simultaneously was a good idea, for instance. But, while it did make their job more difficult, it also ensured that both systems were integrated right from the start.

HERE ARE THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Set up a parallel test system. It will be invaluable during implementation and equally important after launch as a way to set up and test new capabilities, process changes, and upgrades without impacting your daily operation
- Use some sort of problem management software like Spiceworks Help Desk (it's free) to manage your implementation team, end users, and vendor questions and answers
- Eliminate human touches in your workflow. It costs money every time someone touches a job
- Get barcode scanners for everyone on the shop floor to save time and reduce frustration
- Take the time to get your production templates right
- Select a vendor who is responsive, knowledgeable, and with whom you are comfortable. You are going to be spending considerable time working together



BENEFITS AT A GLANCE



The central systems unifies all aspects of the business, including chargebacks and reducing re-keying and human error



Constant billing increases customer satisfaction



Capably manage increasing order volume of 50+ orders/day



Crucial transparency of the print job-level information including details of times, change orders, and delivery charges



Alerts and notifications keep everyone in the know about incoming work and issues, improving productivity and customer responsiveness



Reduced order input errors with web-to-print integrations leveraging industry protocols such as JDF and XML

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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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