

Automated EFI Digital StoreFront and Fiery workflow boosts quality and service

Challenge:

The Arlington County, Va., Digital Production and Mail Center was looking for a way to streamline its operation and keep costs in line with local commercial printing companies. It was essential to the centre's continued success, as the county offices and schools it prints for can easily decide to send their work to the private sector. "We don't have first right of refusal," says Paul Sprow, the centre's manager. "So we benchmark our work to prices in the local area every three months. As our competition becomes more efficient, so must we."

And Sprow knew just what was making his operation less efficient: "The configuration we had in place left too many automation gaps," he says.

Ease-of-use and customer service were the first big steps in improving the operation. After speaking with his Xerox salesperson and attending a Xerox seminar on web-to-print technology, Sprow could see that EFI™ Digital StoreFront® was the key to making his customers' lives easier.

Solution:

The EFI web-to-print software exceeded their expectations: "Our customers have definitely expressed their satisfaction with how much easier it is for them to submit work to us," says Sprow. "Not only do they like that they can view their documents through Digital StoreFront, they appreciate that they can obtain the cost of jobs up front.

"Digital StoreFront was the perfect solution to getting more work into our department," Sprow adds. "It has increased our print volumes, and we are looking for even more growth."



Paul Sprow, manager, and Donny Smallwood, business analyst, for the Arlington County Digital Production and Mail Center

"Our Fiery workflow makes it easier to process files, and because of that we are now able to do time-sensitive work for the County Commissioner of Revenue and the County Treasurer that we couldn't handle before."

PAUL SPROW, MANAGER,
ARLINGTON COUNTY
DIGITAL PRODUCTION
AND MAIL CENTER



The Arlington Digital Production and Mail Center has been serving the county's printing needs for more than 40 years. The centre prides itself on delivering quality work with fast turnaround times at competitive prices. About 98% of the centre's volume is now produced digitally using Xerox Color 1000 Press and two Xerox Versant 2100 presses. The centre uses an offset press for long runs of two-colour stationery, while three Xanté DP50 digital presses handle the centre's needs for shorter runs of envelopes and letterhead.

Once it substantially improved customer service with the web-to-print platform, the centre, which also uses EFI PrintSmith™ business management software, sought out a fully integrated workflow that could use Job Definition Format (JDF) specifications for even more reliable, consistent production.

"We initially implemented Digital StoreFront to improve our job submission process and make it easier for end users to manage their own content," Sprow says, "We quickly realised that to get the full benefit of this workflow, we needed JDF-compliant digital front ends for our digital presses, and EFI Fiery® servers were the logical choice."

The centre, which uses Xerox colour and monochrome digital presses for nearly all of its work, added EFI Fiery digital front ends (DFEs) on all of its Xerox equipment. The centre also adopted industry-leading digital print production workflow tools from the EFI Fiery Workflow Suite portfolio, including:

- Fiery Compose software for simple and quick document assembly.
- Fiery JobMaster, an advanced, PDF-based job-preparation product that combines late-stage editing with intuitive tab insertion and design, media assignment, page numbering and finishing management.
- Fiery Central, a PDF production solution that maximises throughput and automates colour and monochrome workflows.

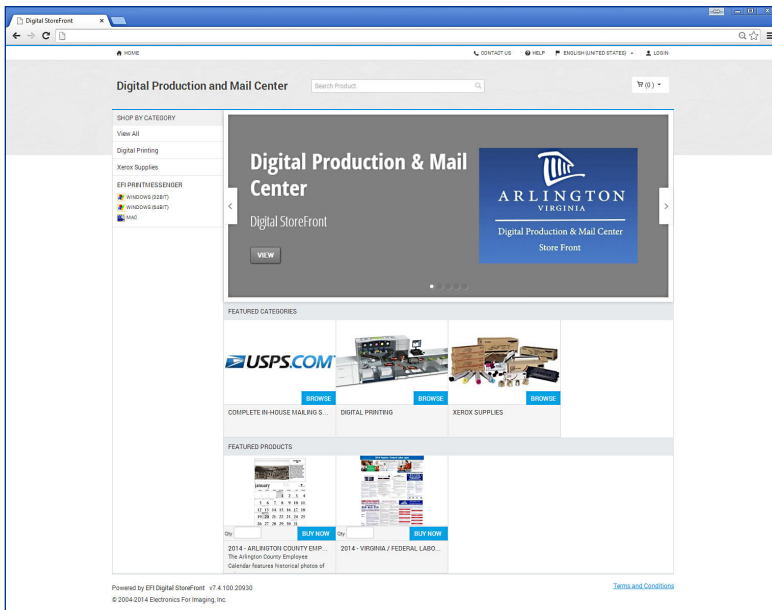
Another Fiery Workflow Suite component the centre uses, Fiery Impose, "is almost the greatest thing since sliced bread," for county IT personnel who assist in the centre's print operations, says Sprow. That's because Fiery Impose automates imposition even on complex jobs, handling complex and time-consuming tasks in scenarios where it is all too easy to make a costly mistake.

With its complete Fiery Workflow Suite installation, the centre now has an advanced, end-to-end JDF workflow that boosts quality and productivity. An added bonus is the fact that the centre can outperform several local commercial print shops that do not have the same level of efficiency.

Results:

Before Sprow added Digital StoreFront, the centre's customers dropped files into a network folder for printing. This could often result in calls back and forth and/or misunderstandings about exactly what needed to be done. Now, when jobs are submitted, a complete job ticket accompanies them. A customer service representative reviews the job and then it goes straight to a press operator, or into a hot folder in the case of the centre's Xanté printers. "Our customers really like the new process," Sprow says.

"Our JDF implementation with Digital StoreFront and Fiery was vital to our success," he adds. Web-to-print had made it easier for customers to send work, but automated Digital StoreFront to Fiery integration through the entire workflow made it easier for centre personnel to get jobs right the first time.



“With our Digital StoreFront software and Fiery DFEs working together in a JDF-based environment, we produce 25% more work with the same staff.”

PAUL SPROW, MANAGER,
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The centre’s EFI Digital StoreFront-powered web-to-print offering has proved to be a hit with county departments, increasing the amount of work the centre produces.

“Without automation, it is too easy to click a button and run 1,000 sheets before you realise that it was a two-sided job that should have only used 500 sheets,” according to Sprow. “While there is an investment cost to operating with Fiery and Digital StoreFront, it benefits you in the long run through cost savings and increased efficiency.”

The centre produces a wide variety of work for departments in Arlington County and now that those departments are comfortable sending their work to the centre, many of them have come to appreciate higher-quality options the centre offers.

For example, the centre’s Xerox Color 1000 Press has a clear dry ink option. “We have been able to make good use of that,” says Sprow, “because the Fiery DFE makes it easy to manage that clear dry ink layer using its real-time preview feature.

“We produce bookmarks for the county fair with DMV information,” he adds, “and the clear ink really makes them pop. We produce parking decals too, and we are looking at using clear ink as a security and anti-counterfeiting measure.”

The volume of colour printing is increasing, all because of the better customer service and higher quality the centre has been able to offer.

While the Digital StoreFront/Fiery configuration helps the centre operate more efficiently and execute on new, high-quality projects, Sprow found that it also could make the staff nearly as productive on the road as they are in the shop. "Donny Smallwood, the centre's business analyst, and I were at EFI's user group conference, Connect, when an emergency rush job came up," Sprow explains. "We both have Fiery Command WorkStation on our laptops, and we were able to get the job prepared for production from our remote location in time to meet a 10:00 a.m. deadline."

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