Fiery Workflow Suite helps Studio Blue double its digital print volume

Challenge:

From its modest beginnings in 1954 as a blue print and photographic studio in a two-room apartment to the comprehensive print solutions provider it is today, Studio Blue is a dream come true for the Morrison family.

Late last year, Studio Blue's management team started an initiative to upgrade the company's production platform, including new print engines and technology to replace the EFI™ MicroPress®-driven print solution it was using for complex job preparation and print production.

According to Studio Blue Operations Manager Bob Barker, the upgrade plan was key to helping the company expand into new markets. "While we had been primarily serving the architecture, engineering, and construction (AEC) market, housing is a very volatile segment in that industry; and we needed to add more stability to our business. That required that we up our game in terms of quality and productivity."

Solution:

As part of the upgrade, Studio Blue switched to new cut-sheet digital printers, installing Xerox® C75 and J75 color printers and a Xerox D110 monochrome copier/printer. All of the new printers use external EFI Fiery® digital front ends (DFEs), and the company also uses advanced technologies from the EFI Fiery Workflow Suite with the EFI Fiery JobMaster™-Impose makeready solution and Fiery Color Profiler Suite color management software.

Fiery JobMaster-Impose has significantly improved the way work is completed on the company's new Xerox equipment. "We had previously been using

"We find that we have much better control over color with our EFI Fiery workflow, and that has helped us double our cut-sheet digital print volumes."

BOB BARKER,
OPERATIONS MANAGER,
STUDIO BLUE

Studio Blue
Digital Print and Copy

Studio Blue was founded in 1954 as a reprographics company serving the architectural, engineering, and construction (AEC) market with small-format black-and-white, and later, large-format color and black-and-white printing. Husband and wife Don and Marilyn Morrison purchased the original business and, in the decades since, the family has stayed ahead of technology trends. The Northern California business, which has facilities in Pleasanton, is now in its second generation of family management under the direction of the Morrisons' daughter, Wendy Betty, and her husband, Greg Betty. About 15 years ago, the company expanded into cut-sheet digital color and was well on its way to becoming the company it is today: a full-service print and copy operation serving a broad range of industry segments with 15 talented employees.

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Cristina Raridan, Color Department Manager

EFI MicroPress as our job preparation software," Barker says. "As we looked at our replacement alternatives, we found that Fiery JobMaster-Impose gave us all the capabilities we had with MicroPress plus additional features we didn't have before. It is the type of technology improvement that gives us a better growth path."

Fiery JobMaster-Impose not only does more, it is easy to use, according to Barker. "Our people are cross-functional," he explains. "On any given day, I could have five different people working with JobMaster-Impose. We all jump in to get the work out. The software has been easy to operate, and everyone has a good understanding of what is required for an efficient operation."

Fiery JobMaster-Impose makes prep work simple, even on complex jobs that require tab inserts. "We use a lot of tabs, especially on AEC work," Barker says, "and JobMaster's tab function has been great for us. We are able to create tabs on the fly, insert them electronically into the document and preview, and then print in a single pass. We benefit from a significant time savings over our previous, highly manual process for tabbed jobs. But even more importantly, the process virtually eliminates errors because JobMaster allows us to preview jobs and catch mistakes before a job goes to print.

"That's huge for us," Barker explains, "because customers depend on us to get it right the first time and get the job out quickly. That's our competitive advantage."

"We produce jobs that require tabs 25% faster using Fiery JobMaster, while virtually eliminating mistakes related to tab layouts."

BOB BARKER,
OPERATIONS MANAGER,
STUDIO BLUE

AEC documents also often include multiple sheet sizes, and many times they are not set up correctly. "With JobMaster," says Barker, "it is easy to configure odd and even pages, rescale larger pages to fit in an 8.5 x 11 or 11 x 17 inch document, or Z-fold larger sheets into the document. The software's visual interface makes it easy to pick out and deal with those pages."

Result:

While tools like Fiery JobMaster have made printer operators' lives easier at Studio Blue, from a sales perspective, the improved color quality and consistency possible with Fiery DFEs and Workflow Suite are also important. The ability to accurately reproduce client brand colors and produce higher-quality four-color work definitely plays a significant role in Studio Blue's ability to sell more cut-sheet digital printing than ever before.

In fact, Studio Blue has doubled its cut-sheet digital printing volume since installing its new Xerox printers and EFI Fiery workflow. This is partly due to the fact that the company can now handle complex jobs that competitors might have difficulty producing; but in addition, Studio Blue's customers really appreciate the company's ability to meet their strict color quality requirements.

Studio Blue's team ensures the best quality possible by creating paper profiles in the Fiery system's paper catalog for all of its stocks using the Fiery Color Profiler Suite. The company's operators also calibrate their Xerox printers regularly using the Fiery Calibrator. "As a result" says Barker, "I have seen a noticeable improvement in quality. And we have better control over color with our Fiery workflow. That is important to our customers, who are very particular about their corporate colors."

But as much as he likes the color printing he is getting with his Xerox and Fiery technologies, Barker is no stranger to those frustrating situations where a monochrome job incorrectly prints in four-color black. Not only is that a nuisance, it can be a costly error because it incurs much higher click charges.

"EFI staff have been very open to listening to our requirements," says Barker, "and that was certainly one of the key needs I discussed with them." As a result of the EFI team taking this type of customer feedback seriously, changes to the latest version of JobMaster include a new conversion-to-grayscale feature, which ensures that black-only pages only print with black toner.

Because Studio Blue produces a significant number of jobs that include monochrome and full-color pages, conversion to grayscale "has been a big deal in our workflow," Barker says. With its Fiery software maintenance agreement, Studio Blue receives software improvements and new features on an ongoing basis, such as conversion to grayscale, that improve their efficiency in dealing with complex job assembly.

Studio Blue's Fiery DFEs and Fiery Workflow Suite are integrated for seamless connectivity. The result is that the system rarely, if ever, malfunctions. "I don't think I have ever had to call EFI with a support issue for our Fiery system," says Barker. "It is always operating, and that means we can get more work out."

Fiery JobMaster makes it easy for Studio Blue to handle complex document composition tasks, such as using oversize sheets that must be Z-folded into a document.

Studio Blue and its customers benefit from the company's ability to drive higher throughput and efficiently produce even the most difficult jobs. "No customer is too small and no job is too complex," Barker explains. "We often get work referred to us from other print shops when it is too complicated for them. Fiery, and especially Fiery JobMaster-Impose, have increased our ability to handle that work."

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